



Employment issues of Chinese University Graduates: on the Spring Employment Rate of Urban and Rural Planning

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Abstract. Due to the prominent employment problem of university graduates in China, this paper studies the four ways of graduates' employment, reveals the problems of existing in the statistics of employment rate, and puts forward the concept of employment rate in spring. The paper chooses the urban and rural planning major of a domestic general university in the middle rankings to count the graduate employment rate in spring from 2014 to 2018. Studying the signing rate in March, the acceptance rate of postgraduate school, the acceptance rate of the civil servant, and the flexible employment, the paper concludes that the employment problem is very serious in Chinese university. It is even more undesirable to bundle the employment rate with the indicators for assessing the quality of university education. The construction of education ecology of the whole society should be strengthened. The correct view of career and life should be set up. The education reform should be carried out with the concept of OBE, which is an important way to improve the practical ability and employment rate of college students.

Keywords: The urban and rural planning, University graduate, Employment, The employment rate in Spring

1 Introduction

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the public funded education system has always been implemented in universities. College graduates have been recruited and allocated uniformly. There was basically no need to worry about tuition fees and problems of employment. But in 1993, the Ministry of Education began to implement educational reforms, abolishing the unified allocation. In 1999, it implemented the strategy of industrialization of education. Many universities have begun to charge tuition fees and expand enrollment from 1996. The number of college students enrolled increased from 650,000 in 1998 to 1.59 million in 1999, which was 7.45 million if the junior college students were included ^[1]. The enrollment rate of the college students rose from generally not exceeding 30% (before 1998) to over 50%

(after 1999), and which is about 75% in 2018. The enrollment rate even exceeded 90% in some places ^[1,2].

The reform of the enrollment rules has brought about the vigorous development of universities, greatly improving the utilization of educational resources and the proportion of national education, promoting the construction in campus infrastructure, and upgrading the status and treatment of teachers. However, the system of unified recruitment and distribution has also been abolished at the same time. College graduates no longer had been guaranteed their assignments, who would find jobs on their own. Teachers and students, who had always been "feeding in safe house", were pushed into the society and employment market. They had to begin to face the heavy survival pressure. With the rapid growth of the number of graduates year by year, this pressure became greater and greater. In order to promote the development of majors and the guidance for graduate employment, in 2004, the ministry of education began to take the employment rate as an important indicator for evaluating college majors. Universities with an employment rate of less than 50% for two consecutive years will have been controlled their enrollment quotas and reduced their economic subsidies. If it is less than 30% for three consecutive years, the major may be cancelled ^[3]. Employment issues have become a fundamental survival issue that both teachers and students must be great concern.

2 Employment Pathways

2.1 The employment rate in Spring

The employment rate is an indicator that reflects the employment situation of college students in China. In recent years, employment reports of Chinese universities have shown the average employment rate over 90% ^[2], but this employment rate is usually counted in September or December, which is always called as the first employment rate. Although the first employment rate reflects a certain kind of statistical value, it cannot fully reflect the quality of employment. For example, the employment rate of college students is 90.58% in 2016, but the satisfaction is only 66% ^[2]. If we want to study accurately the market demands for majors and the occupational expectations of college students, we can research the data of employment rate at the end of March, which is called as the spring employment rate. The spring employment rate of higher quality is active employment for college students, but the employment after March is more likely to be passive employment.

2.2 The four main employment ways

In China, the four main employment ways of university students include signing to employment, the acceptance of postgraduate, the acceptance of the civil servant, the flexible employment.

Campus-recruitment and Society-Recruitment. In China, there are two main ways to recruit graduates, one is campus-recruitment and the other is society-recruitment. The campus-recruitment is organized by education management departments or

schools, and enterprises are invited to enter schools to promote itself and employing new staff directly. The society-recruiting refers to obtain information through recruitment websites, job markets and other channels. Graduates must go to the enterprise to participate exams in according to the recruitment process of the enterprise. Society-recruiting is mainly for the people with work experience, not friendly to fresh graduates, which is poorer in the treatment conditions. Therefore, for fresh graduates, Campus-recruitment is relatively better than society-recruiting, the grade and quality of the company that came to recruit is higher, and the jobs offered are relatively better and safer.

Fall recruitment and spring recruitment. Campus-recruitment consists of both fall recruitment and spring recruitment, with fall recruitment dominating but spring recruitment being less. Fall recruitment usually starts in October of the previous year, and spring recruitment is mainly concentrated in March of the current year. Most domestic enterprises and institutions will formulate employment plans before October of the new year, and try to complete recruitment before this year to avoid affecting the work plan for the following year. At the latest, supplementary recruitment will be carried out in March of the following year to complete the employment needs. So, most of campus-recruitment basically ends before the end of March.

The acceptance rate of postgraduate. At the end of March, the postgraduate entrance examination has ended, and the data on the postgraduate acceptance rate can be confirmed. The acceptance rate of postgraduate is an important component of graduate employment rate. Although many people do not consider it as employment data, it is still considered the highest quality employment in current national statistics.

National civil servant and provincial civil servant. At the end of March, both the written and interview exams for the national civil servant examination have ended and entered the political review stage. The spring written test for most provincial civil servant has also been completed. So, the acceptance rate for civil servant has also been released. In summary, most of the jobs with high expectations for graduates were completed before the end of March. At this time, the employment data is relatively accurate and high-quality. The employment rate is more reliable and authentic, which can relatively reflect their willingness to actively seek employment.

Flexible employment. After March, there will be fewer opportunities and information for campus-recruitment, and the company that come to recruit will be smaller. At this time, college students can only participate in society-recruitment, and the success rate is even lower. A large number of graduates can only find flexible employment, and the passivity of employment is relatively high. Flexible employment refers to engaging in non-professional individual occupations. These employments include freelancers, individual businesses, temporary workers, street vendors, etc. The job satisfaction rate after March is very low, the authenticity is poor too. It may also be passive employment based on various pressures. So, the employment data before April is chose as the basis for the research.

3 Employment Data Statistics

The period from 1998 to 2018 is known as the golden 20 years of China's real estate industry. During these 20 years, urban and rural planning has always been one of the majors with the highest employment rate and the best treatment in China, which is quite representative. Therefore, the urban and rural planning major is chosen as the research object for this paper. According to statistics from the Ministry of Higher Education, at the end of 2017, there were 2914 colleges and universities in China, including a total of 1243 undergraduate universities, of which 817 were public undergraduate universities^[4]. We selected a graduating class that is urban and rural planning major from a public university ranked around 400, whose data of spring employment rate is counted from 2014 to 2018.

3.1 The total employment rate in Spring

From 2014 to 2018, the spring employment data shows that the number of successful signings in March was very small, less than 10 people one year. The highest was in 2018, but it also accounted for less than 20% of the total number of graduates. Over the course of five years, the acceptance rate of postgraduate ranged from 2.04% to 19.05%, while the passing rate for civil service exams was consistently zero. The total employment rate averages 22.31%, with the highest not exceeding 38.1%. The number of unemployed and wait-and-see graduates is close to more than half of the total number, with an average non-signing rate of 74.55%, the highest being 87.76% in 2016 and the lowest being 54.76% in 2018. (Figure 1)

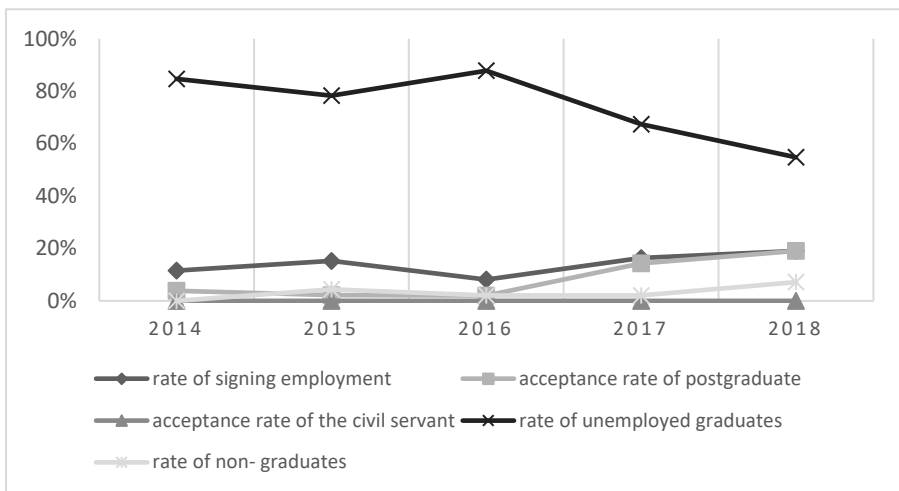


Fig. 1. General University Graduates Employment Statistics for Urban and Rural Planning, March 2014-2018

From 2014 to 2018, a better era for the real estate industry in China, the enrollment and employment of urban and rural planning are in the top 10, or even the top 3, but

the singing employment rate is still less than 1/5, and the total employment rate is no more than 38.1%. The employment rates of non-popular majors in other common universities can be predicted conceivably. Of course, it may be higher employment rate of “985” universities. However, there are a large number of postgraduates and recommend postgraduates in “985” universities, all of which are included in the employment data.

3.2 Statistics of postgraduate entrance examination

The data reflects a significant correlation between the employment rate and real estate development. The period from 1998 to 2018 is known as the golden 20 years of China's real estate industry. However, in the last decade from 2008 to 2018, the competition pressure gradually increased, with a sharp increase in work intensity and relatively low salaries. The salary provided by enterprises is significantly different from the expectations of graduates, and the intention of graduates to sign contracts is not high. At this time, good opportunities with better salaries are gradually inclined towards postgraduates. Therefore, from 2014 to 2018, the application rate of postgraduates has been increasing year by year. In 2018, the admission rate of postgraduates even exceeded 50% of the number of applicants.

In 2014, the government proposed to reduce inventory in the real estate. In 2015, there was a significant turbulence in the real estate, which made employment very difficult in 2016. So, the data for 2016 was clearly abnormal. According to statistical data, before 2015, the number of postgraduate applicants was relatively small, and many students chose to work directly. After 2015, the number of postgraduate applicants increased significantly. In 2016, the number of postgraduate applicants surprisingly reached 37.50%. In 2018, many students began preparing for postgraduate entrance exams in their first year of college, resulting in a postgraduate admission rate of 57.14%. Many students hope to improve their educational qualifications, enhance their competitiveness, so that they can find better jobs in campus-recruitment. Even if they fail in the first postgraduate entrance examination, many students will not find employment, and prepare for a second one. So, the first employment rate of many universities is relatively low because many students will take the postgraduate entrance examination for the second time. (Figure 2)

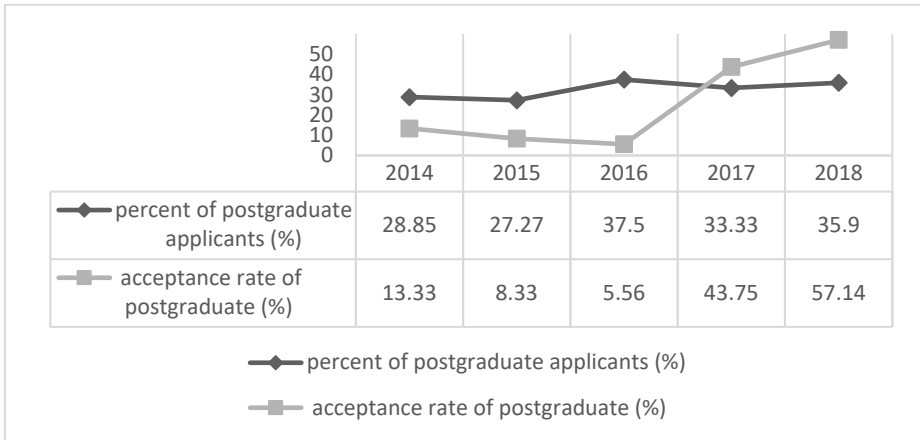


Fig. 2. Postgraduate Statistics Data (Total number excluding non-graduates)

3.3 Statistics of civil servant application

In 2014-2018, most graduates are optimistic about the prospects of the planning and design, and they are also prepared to stick to the development in this profession. There are very few people who change their careers, and there are no more than five people in one class. Correspondingly, the number of graduates who are prepared to apply for the civil servant examination is also very small. Due to the lack of full preparation, the admission rate of civil servant examination was 0 in these 5 years. After 2020, with the overall downward trend of real estate, the enthusiasm for civil servant application began to surge, and it became an important part of the employment rate. After failing in the first civil service examination, most college students would choose to apply for a second civil servant examination, and refusing employment, which leads to an even lower employment rate.

4 Types of jobs that have been employed

Even with such a large job market as real estate, the employment pressure of applied engineering majors as urban and rural planning is very high. It is difficult to achieve an employment rate of more than 90%. Even if they are employed, undergraduates are generally engaged in positions of a low threshold and a low level. In June 2019, a simple online employment survey of former graduates of this university was conducted through the graduate's QQ group. Among the 85 valid questionnaires, 49.4% of the graduates were engaged in drawing work in architecture design, 11.8% were engaged in marginal real estate sales, 11.8% were engaged drawing work in urban planning. The proportion of those engaged in drawing and sales at the bottom reached a total of 73%. The rest were engaged in municipal engineering, construction, interior design or building materials and other related work. The proportion of graduates in higher and relatively easy management positions accounted for only 9.4%. (Figure 3).

On the whole, students' employment is closely related to their majors. Limited to the major, the employment idea is single. It is rarely engaged in irrelated jobs, but there are diversified choices of college students' employment in Ireland [5].

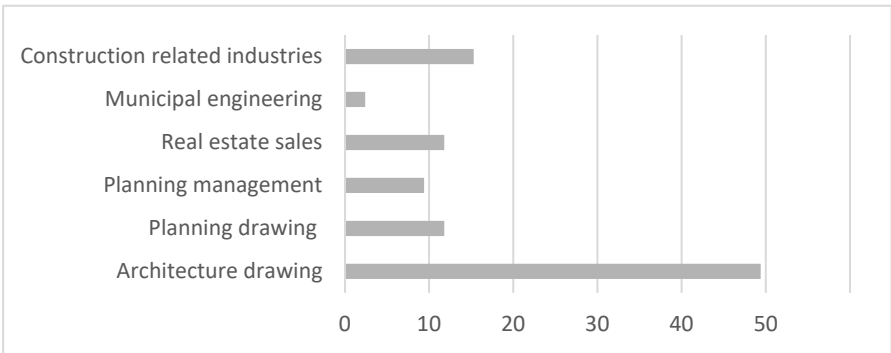


Fig. 3. Histogram of the employment direction of undergraduates in urban and rural planning

5 Conflict between education and employment

The employment rate is a social evaluation standard rather than a scientific evaluation standard. For example, a certain university produces a famous scholar, while another university produces a traffic star or a business magnate. It is obvious that the latter has gained great social success, while the former, despite his outstanding scientific contributions, is difficult to convert his achievements into economic value or reflect economic value. It is difficult to be recognized by the society, so it is very likely that he cannot find a job in China.

The conflict between competence and employment actually reflects the contradiction between schools and students in terms of the objectives and nature of teaching. Universities are places for the dissemination of knowledge and the pursuit of truth. Population has led to unprecedented employment pressure and the deterioration of the ecology of education. The pursuit of employment rate has had a serious impact on teaching. For example, the low quality of the graduation design has been a common problem, even in many famous universities as Tongji Universities, whose quality of the graduation design is not as good as that of the usual course design [6]. In the last year, many college students are busy with submitting resumes, interviews, applying for postgraduate exams and civil servant exams, and cannot focus on graduation design at all. Students are in the state of “lost” in the whole semester, and some of them even come back to the school only one week before the defense. The management of graduation design has become a de facto vacuum.

6 Conclusion

The inverted ratio of job market supply-demand is a common and peculiar phenomenon in China. On the one hand, the employment rate of graduates is not high, and on

the other hand, the gap for demands in the job market is increasing. In the third quarter of 2018, the job market had an inverted ratio of 1.25, and which even above 2.0^[7]. As the employment rate survey mentioned above, even architectural design with high market demands and high benefits, the spring employment rate does not exceed 20%. This reflects a distorted occupation values and life values. In fact, there are over 10 million college graduates each year in China, and the employment competition in every major is fierce. This low employment rate is not only due to a shortage of job opportunities in the market, but rather a single channel for college students to seek jobs, as well as a one-sided pursuit of economic benefits. So once the market offers lower compensation and students do not have the correct occupation values and mentality, there will be a huge deviation between their career expectations and benefits, resulting in an inverted recruitment ratio.

Meanwhile, another idea is to acquire additional skills and abilities^[8] Chinese students have always been confined to campus and engaged in exam-education, lacking social practical abilities. Low practical ability and high salary expectations are also important reasons for the low success rate of enterprise recruitment. Focusing on employment, bundling employment rate with professional evaluation and teaching quality evaluation is biased^[9]. However, the indicator of employment rate still shows the weakness of practical teaching in domestic universities, and the disconnect between theory and practice. Therefore, adopting the CBE philosophy, collaborating cultivation with enterprises, and strengthening practical abilities, are important ideas for unlocking the contradiction between graduation and employment^[10].

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