

Empirical Research on Gender Differences and the Optimization for the Training of College Students' Employability

—Taking Nanjing University of Finances and Economics as an example

Zhang Xiaorong

School of Finance, Nanjing University of Finances and Economics
Nanjing, China

Abstract—Significant gender difference is a prominent problem in the realization of employment equity. In this paper, SPSS18.0 software is used to conduct statistical analysis of data of 532 valid questionnaires, and it is concluded that: 9 abilities, such as problem solving ability and internship experience, are the core employability recognized by college students. But there are gender differences in the ranking of essential core employability. Female college students more emphasize on problem solving, communication, psychological adjustment and other abilities than male students, and female students have great demand on training for internship experience, team work ability, information processing ability and other core abilities, but the actual training effect of colleges and universities makes female college students more dissatisfied than male students significantly, and this paper proposes management suggestions that can narrow the gender difference in employment such as paying attention to the training of the core employability of female college students, strengthening the internship platform construction and classifying the implementation of the employment guidance.

Keywords—Gender differences; employability; performance gap; classified cultivation

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the enrollment expansion in 1990s, the employment scale of graduates has increased year by year. According to statistics in 2010, the number of domestic graduates of ordinary universities and colleges is 5.754 million, and it is 7.5 million in 2015 and it will reach a peak of 7.95 million in 2017, with an average annual increasing rate of about 14%. The employment situation of college students is grim, the pressure of competition is increasing, and structural unemployment is widespread, which is still an important problem for college students' employment. The gender employment structure imbalance and female employment difficulty problems have become increasingly prominent, which becomes the focus of attention for the employment work of colleges and universities. Whether in employment rate, level of wages or employment satisfaction, the employment situation of female college students are lower than male college students, which is the objective reality universally accepted. Pay attention to gender

iniquity in the employment, explore effective path to improve the female college students' employment ability and realize the difference, fine differentiation and specialization in employment management have become important measures to improve the employment competitiveness of graduates and promote social employment equity.

The promotion of employability is an effective way to enhance employment competitiveness, raise employment level and promote career development. Currently, there is not defined the employability uniformly, and the representative view is Fugate (2004) [1]; Brown (2004) [2]; and Confederation of British Industry (CBI) [3]; in the definition of concepts, they generally agree that employability is the opportunity or ability to obtain employment and development. In addition, Pallard further pointed out that the employability structure should include four components: ① Assets; ② Development; ③ Expression; ④ Individual environment and labor market environment [4]. Law, Wong & Mobley believe that the employability is mainly composed of three dimensions: individual adaptability, interaction of individual and market and occupational identity. In recent years, research on the structure of employability has become the focus of attention of domestic scholars. Zheng Xiaoming (2002); Wang Yi (2005); Zhao Dong (2009); Hu Zunli (2008) and others have defined the concept of employability. Normative research is in the majority, but the number of empirical researches is relatively small. It mainly includes: Zhang Lihua (2009) analyzed the structure of employability from five dimensionalities, namely, ability of thinking, social adaptation ability, independence ability, social practice ability and application ability [5]; Song Guoxue (2011) held that the structure of employability of college students includes professional skill, communication skill, personal attribute, learning ability and human skills [6]; Wang Ting, Zeng Xiangquan and Yang Yumei (2013) constructed the three-element model (knowledge, ability and attitude) [7]. The research on the influence of gender difference on employability has been gradually deepened: Qiu Yuxing (1992) compared the difference of employment competitiveness between male and female college students and pointed that the job expectancy and achievement motive are significant influence factors [8]; Cao Xing (2010) analyzed the

current gender difference from the three dimensions, namely, employment rate, commencing salary and work satisfaction [9]; Liu Min (2016) paid more attention on the gender difference on the commencing salary and the analysis on its influence factor [10]. These studies focus on different aspects, but are limited to the current situation and influencing factors, how to eliminate unfair employment problem caused by gender differences and improve employability of female college students, promote the harmonious employment, also need in-depth analysis of gender differences in employability.

II. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS ON GENDER DIFFERENCES AND THE OPTIMIZATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' EMPLOYABILITY

In view of the obvious gender differences in employment, this study first identifies the core capacity elements that affect the employment of female college students. Based on the discussion with students and teachers and literature research and analysis, the elements of college students' employability is divided into four dimensions, namely character quality ability, basic work ability, planning and self-examination ability and emotional management ability, and 24 specific indicators are adopted to reflect the employability element of college students covering in the four dimensions.

TABLE I. BREAKDOWN TABLE OF EMPLOYABILITY ELEMENTS

Employability elements	Character quality ability	Honesty, integrity, devotion, self-confidence, sense of responsibility and social morality
	Basic work ability	Adaptability for changes, communication ability, self-marketing, interpersonal coordination, problem solving ability, anti-pressure ability, information collection and processing, teamwork ability, academic record, internship experience
	Planning and self-examination ability	Planning ability, time management, sense of independence, sense of competition and attitude towards employment
	Emotion management ability	Self-control, mental regulation, endurance

Collect data through the method of questionnaire survey, by asking in the research: 1. How importance of this ability in the employment of college students? There are 5 options in the above problems, namely: A Not necessary; B less important; C general; D more important and E very important, and 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 points are attached to the 5 options, thus the core employability accepted by male and female college students can be determined; By asking: 2. How do you think the effect of the ability training in your university? To determine the training effect of universities and colleges in respect of core employability of male and female college students. Each

question also has 5 options, namely: A very bad effect; B relatively bad effect; C general; D relatively good effect and E very good effect. The scoring method for each option is as same as above. The high scoring option in Question 1 is an important element that affects the employability accredited by the college students participating in the research. The low scoring option is a secondary factor that affects employability. The high scoring option in Question 2 shows that college students are satisfied with employability training effect of the universities and colleges. On the contrary, it indicates dissatisfaction. In addition, measure the difference between subjective expectations and objective reality of employability training through the use of performance gap (importance minus satisfaction), and evaluate the employability training effect. If the performance gap value is large, it indicates that the students' employability training services are not satisfied, and the training expectations of students are not met, and the training effect is poor; If the performance gap value is small, it indicates that employability training meets the needs of students' employment services, conforms to the subjective expectations of students, and the training effect is general; If the performance gap value is negative, it indicates that the training effect of this employability of the students is beyond the expectations of the students, and the training effect is good. According to the general standard, if the performance gap value is greater than or equal to 1.5, it is big and if the performance gap value is less than 0.5, it is small.

The subjects of this research are undergraduates in Nanjing University of Finances and Economics. The survey involved several subjects among 16 specialties, including 292 male students and 304 female students; there are 258 liberal arts students, 210 science and engineering students, and 128 other students. A total of 596 questionnaires were sent out, 548 questionnaires were recovered, and 532 questionnaires were valid. Statistical analysis of 532 questionnaires was conducted by using SPSS18.0 software to investigate the gender differences in the core employability of college students, and the subjective and objective gap of employability training and the training effect was analyzed.

A. Analysis of gender differences in the importance of core employability

Through the statistics, the mean value of 24 specific employability elements is distributed between 3.72-4.49, and all of them are more than 3.36, some of them are more than 4.45, indicating that 24 specific employabilities are very important in the employment. Overall, 9 ability elements, teamwork ability, problem-solving ability, communication ability, internship experience and sense of responsibility, information collection and processing ability, attitude towards employment, competition consciousness and psychological adjustment are relatively prominent, which can be regarded as the core elements of employability is employability, and mean value of them is higher than 4.10, ranking from high to low. This shows that these 9 abilities are considered as key influence factors in enhancing employment competitiveness by both male and female college students. But the research results show that: There are differences in the ranking of the core elements of employment between male and female college

students. The first 5 core elements affecting the employment as generally agreed by female students are successively: Problem solving ability, internship experience, psychological adjustment, self-confidence and sense of responsibility; the first 5 core elements affecting the employment as generally agreed by male students are successively: Teamwork ability, problem solving ability, communication ability, attitude towards employment and sense of responsibility.

The analysis for gender differences among the core elements of employability is made as follows and the test results show that: Differences in 6 items, such as internship experience, teamwork ability and so on are not significantly,

and difference in problem solving ability is significant at the level of 5%, and the differences in internship experience, psychological adjustment and sense of responsibility are significant at the level of 10%, and the mean value of the female college students is higher than that of male college students, as shown in Table 2. It shows that female college students more emphasize on problem solving, internship experience, psychological adjustment and other abilities and importance of sense of responsibility in employment than male students and the female students expect to obtain the corresponding training, and the results coincide with the ranking of the female student recognized core employability.

TABLE II. ANALYSIS OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE IMPORTANCE OF CORE EMPLOYABILITY

Core employability Project		Problem solving ability	Internship experience	Psychological adjustment	Sense of responsibility
Male	M	4.25	4.14	4.30	4.47
	SD	0.63	0.65	0.63	0.64
Female	M	4.35	4.28	4.48	4.50
	SD	0.58	0.55	0.55	0.56
F		12.804**	11.496*	10.674*	9.382*

^a. Note: **, * respectively represent that it is prominent at the level of 5% and 10%.

B. The effect of training effect of training on college students' core employability in universities and colleges and analysis of gender differences

According to statistics, the 9 items of core employability shall be ranked on the basis of training effect of universities and colleges from high mean value to low mean value, successively as information collection and processing ability, internship experience, attitude towards employment, communication ability, teamwork ability, problem solving ability, sense of responsibility, competition consciousness and psychological adjustment, and the mean value is released in the range of 3.52-4.07, belonging to a better level of training effect, which indicates that college students think that the training effect of universities and colleges in respect of their core employability is good, but has not reached a higher level.

The inspection results of gender difference show that the differences are not significant, and the training effect in respect of core employability of male and female college students is evaluated similarly. It shows that the universities and colleges do not pay attention to the gender differences in training the core employability of college students. It is necessary to improve the division of demand difference in respect of employability of male and female college students and professionalization of employment management work.

C. The performance gap of training on college students' core employability in universities and colleges and analysis of gender differences

Calculate the performance gap of 9 items of core employability, and the mean value of performance gap is ranked successively from large to small: Problem solving

ability, teamwork ability, internship experience, communication ability, information collection and processing ability, psychological adjustment, sense of responsibility and competition consciousness, and the mean value of performance gap is distributed in the range of 0.81 - 1.04. The performance gap for all of core employabilities is more than 0.8, indicating that there is a certain distance from the training effect of universities and colleges in respect of core employability to expectation and demands of students, which does not meet the psychological expectations of college students. Inspection results of gender differences show that the performance gap of partial core employability has no significant difference, but the performance gap of internship experience is significantly different at the level of 1%, and the performance gap of information processing ability is significantly different at the level of 5%, and the performance gap of communication ability and performance gap of teamwork ability are significantly different at the level of 10%, and the mean value of female students is higher than that of male students. The results shows that as for the effect of universities and colleges in respect of providing internship experience, and training the teamwork ability, information processing ability and communication ability, female students have strong demands on the employment ability training of universities and colleges, and the reality gap of the actual training effect of universities and colleges makes female students more dissatisfied than male students significantly, which due to the female students have more employment pressures and have been fully recognizing the importance of the internship experience, information processing, teamwork ability and communication ability in the course of employment, and with the urgent needs to get relevant training. See Table 3 for details.

TABLE III. INSPECTION OF GENDER PERFORMANCE GAP DIFFERENCES IN CORE EMPLOYABILITY TRAINING

Core employability Project		Internship experience	Teamwork ability	Information processing ability	Communication ability
Male	M	0.76	0.81	0.75	0.67
	SD	0.91	0.88	1.02	1.044
Female	M	0.83	0.92	0.80	0.69
	SD	1.12	0.93	1.02	1.12
F		12.132***	9.285*	9.536**	8.684*

b. Note: ***, **, * respectively represent that it is prominent at the level of 1%, 5% and 10%.

III. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Attach importance to the training of students' core employability, and effectively improve the quality and the level of employment

Higher education has entered the stage of connotative development with the improvement of quality as its core. The idea of employment management work should also be changed from extensive management to connotative management. Intensive cultivation and improvement of the employment quality are always key points of employment management work. When carrying out employment management work, universities and colleges should take the gender differences, academic differences and grade differences into full consideration, divide college students into male students and female students with the gender and learning ability as the standard; For research type and practice type, implement the classification management and differentiation training, which can effectively improve the employment competitiveness of students. With combination of 9 elements of core employability, such as teamwork ability, problem solving ability and so on, customize vocational training program modules for different types of students, conduct the different vocational training and achieve the maturity, standardization and procedural of vocational training are the development trends of future employment work.

B. According to gender differences, classify to implement the employability training

Empirical research shows that: Male and female college students pay attention to different aspects of employability. The female students more emphasize on the provisions of internship experience and training of problem solving ability, as well as psychological adjustment, and male students and female students have similar evaluation in respect of the training effect of the majority of universities and colleges in core employability of students, but lack of differentiation in the employment work; Female students believe that universities and colleges should improve the service level and carry out training activities in the internship experience, teamwork, information processing and communication abilities. This point out the direction for the employment guidance of female college students: Improve weak links and strengthen foundation. On the one hand, it analyzes the reasons for the inferior position of female students, and focuses on the core elements that affect the employment of female students. On the other hand, it strengthens the weak links training and promotes

the improvement of the employment strength of female students.

C. Pay attention to internship platform construction, and emphasize on the ability training

Pay attention to students' employment work, and adopt the "bringing in and going out" strategy, organize and mobilize all forces concerted efforts, strengthen the "three types" practice platform construction in multiple channels with enterprises, firstly, establish the employment internship base and summer practice base, and maintain internship platform in a good operation and attach importance to tracking feedback in the internship process of students, classify to guide from the pre-internship, mid-internship and post-internship stages, emphasize the problem-oriented in the internship so as to cultivate students' problem solving ability and team cooperation ability. Secondly, highlight the role of network platforms, establish mobile phone QQ group, WeChat group and other network platform to publish job information, organize occupation development planning, resume production skills, etiquette seminars and other activities so as to improve students' information processing and communication abilities, and assign employment specialist to answer questions online on the employment problem of female students. Thirdly, pay attention to the construction of local alumni platform. According to the graduate employment return visit system, establish alumni archives database, mine alumni resources, integrate and utilize. Take a number of measures to provide more internship and employment opportunities for female students and strengthen employability training and reverse the unfair employment situation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Fugate, M, A. J. Kinicki, B. E. Ashforth.. Employability: A Psycho-social Construct, Its Dimensions, and Applications [J]. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 2004, (1).
- [2] Brown, L. D. P, Sewell. The Key to Employability: Developing a Practical Model of Graduate Employability [J]. *Education and Training*, 2007, 49, (4).
- [3] Inserch of Employability [R]. A Response by NIACE to the CBI Discussion Document, 1998.
- [4] J. Hillage, E. Pollard. Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis [R]. London: Department for Education and Employment, 1998.
- [5] Zhang Lihua, Liu Shengnan. Research on the Faculty Structure and Development of College Undergraduates [J]. *Maritime Education Research*, 2005, (01): 49—56.
- [6] Song Guoxue. Research on the College Undergraduates' Vocational Ability Structure and Dimension Based on the Perspective of Employability [J]. *China Soft Science*, 2008, (12): 67—73.

- [7] Wang Ting, Zeng Xiangquan, Yang Yumei. Improving Employability for Resolving the Problem of the Structural Unemployment of University Graduates [J]. : Population & Economics, 2011, (3): 49–56.
- [8] Qiu Yuxing, Luo Guifen, Pan Jintang. Comparison of the Employment Differences between Male and Female College Undergraduates J. Journal of Renmin University of China, 1992, (06): 95–02.
- [9] Cao Xing, Yue Changjun. Study on the Gender Differences in the Employment Status of College Graduates in China [J]. Journal of Higher Education, 2010, (01): 67–73.
- [10] Liu Min, Lu Genshu. Status of Gender Differences in Commencing Salary of College Graduates and its Influencing Factors [J]. Journal of Higher Education, 2016, (5): 43–50.