

# **Study on Chinese Teaching Based on Employability Improvement**

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**Abstract.** In recent years, college students face a tough situation when they join the work force after graduation. They find that employers no longer pay particular emphasis to students' professional abilities; instead, employers begin to stress more on students' comprehensive ability, in other words, the students' overall employability. The paper mainly talks about the following three questions. First, what is the employability? Second, what is the matter with the current Chinese teaching in college? And the third question, how can we improve students' employability through college Chinese teaching? Therefore, this paper is composed of four parts. The first part gives a short introduction of the paper and states the necessity of the employability improvement by analyzing a report from Zhilian Limited. The second part gives the definition of employability and then states the main contents of employability. The third part talks about the present situation of college students' employability and the deep-rooted reasons behind such a phenomenon. And the last part of the paper gives ways of improving students' employability through Chinese teaching in college.

## **Introduction**

In the recent years, college students do not enjoy privileges in the job market any more. They find that although they have bachelor or even master degree, they still have some difficulty in finding a good job. And even they do get a good job, they find it difficult to do it well. In the sense, degree doesn't guarantee that they can have a bright prospect in their job career.

Zhaopin Limited is one of our country's leading career platforms with focus on connecting users with recruiters throughout their career lifecycle. It released "2015 China University Students' Employability Survey Report" based on results obtained from the Company's first sitting of the National Employability Test (NET). The data of the program was collected from August to October 2015 and the program is designed to help graduates develop a better understanding of their overall potential including an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, and their skills, independent of their matriculating institution. At the same time, it also provides employers with a baseline measure to evaluate participating graduates as the test assesses and focuses on the intrinsic talents of graduates including general knowledge, behavioral metrics, motivation and career expectations. The general knowledge section in the survey includes math, language comprehension, logic and data analysis; the behavioral metrics section covers creativity, responsibility, emotional competence, sociability and collaborative abilities; and the motivation and career expectations section assesses 14 metrics including salary and welfare, workload, upwards mobility, training, fairness and equitability, and relationships with colleagues.

According to the result of the report, graduates aren't as mature and sophisticated as experienced employees in terms of career expectations. And there is also a mismatch between graduate's job expectations and their abilities and personalities.

The result also shows that more than 70% of graduates fail to realize that their capabilities and personalities do not match their professional aspirations, while over 40% of them lack a clear vision of their future career and life. In other words, a great number of students have unsatisfactory employability. That's a serious problem that our college students share.

Therefore, it is necessary for college students to become an all-round man with high employment ability. Only in this way can they have further development in their professional career.

## **Employability**

Employability refers to the attributes of a person that make that person able to gain and maintain employment. Employability is related to work and the ability to be employed.

Lee Harvey defines employability as the ability of a graduate to get a satisfying job. Lee states that job acquisition should not be prioritized over preparedness for employment to avoid pseudo measure of individual employability. Lee argues that employability is not a set of skills; in fact, it is a range of experiences and attributes that is developed through higher-level learning. In this sense, employability is not a “product” but a process of learning.

Employability continues to develop because the graduate, once employed, does not stop learning. Thus employability by this definition is about learning, not least learning how to learn, and it is about empowering learners as critical reflective citizens for it emphasizes employability of graduates, which is similar to our context, hence, able to provide insight about how to measure graduates’ employability and what are the differences between graduates and experienced individuals in labor market.

Berntson (2008) proposes that employability refers to an individual’s perception of his or her possibilities of getting new, equal, or better employment. Berntson’s study differentiates employability into two main categories – one is actual employability, or objective employability and the other is perceived employability, or subjective employability.

Several employability definitions have been developed based on, or including input from business and industry. In the United States, an Employability Skills Framework was developed through a collaboration of employers, educators, human resources associations, and labor market associations. This framework states, “Employability skills are general skills that are necessary for success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors”. After conducting research with employers across Canada, the Conference Board of Canada released Employability Skills 2000+, which defines employability as "the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work". Saunders & Zuzel (2010) found that employers valued personal qualities such as dependability and enthusiasm over subject knowledge and ability to negotiate.

Though different scholars give different explanation about the meaning of employability, in general, the contents of employability are as follows:

### **The Ability of Learning**

Students should not only learn from books, but also learn from practice, from life. Students should also acquire lifelong learning ability. In the modern society, if one couldn’t keep pace with the new knowledge and keep improving oneself, it is sure that he will be abandoned by the time. There is a famous old saying going like this: give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. That is to say, helping students acquire the ability of learning is far more important than simply acquiring the knowledge.

### **The Ability of Interpersonal Interaction**

A good ability of interpersonal interaction is the basic ability to carry out teamwork. It is also the key factor for success in job career in the long run. Kindness, friendliness, equality are main factor for the building of a harmonious interpersonal interaction. To the opposite, coldness, carelessness and indifference will do harm to interpersonal interaction. After all, no one wants to deal with people that lack of interpersonal interaction.

### **The Ability of Communicating**

Whatever job a student will be engaged in, he should acquire the basic communicative ability and have a good command of communicative skills and learn to express himself clearly and correctly. It is well accepted that a good command of communicative ability will help smooth the process of work and make us welcome in the workplace. We often come across a lot of problems in work and communication is the best way to solve these problems.

### **The Ability of Finding-Out and Solving Problems**

In life, study and work, students should have critical thinking, and the ability of finding out the problems, analyzing the problems reasonably and take correct measures to tackle these problems. We often face a lot of barriers one after another and all we can do is find out the problems

consciously and correctly behind these barriers and they try to solve them.

In short, employability skills are general skills that are necessary for success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors. Employability is a set of skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work.

### **Present Situation of College Students' Employability**

Nowadays, students' overall employment ability is far from satisfying. Several factors should be responsible for this phenomenon. The most important reason is that many students don't value Chinese learning and they don't do reading at all. In their spare time, they spend a lot of time playing games or watching soap TV series. The popularity of cell phones makes the situation even worse. A lot of students are addicted to cell phones. They seldom communicate with others any more. And in their study, they just take down and memorize what the teachers taught and spend little time exploring the deep knowledge. These students cannot be considered as all round man. It is easy to imagine that such kind of students couldn't meet the requirement of the labor market.

Generally speaking, there are several reasons behind the unsatisfying phenomenon.

#### **Irrational Education Mode**

Currently, there is an obvious irrational education mode existing in university, especially in vocational college. They pay special attention to students' professional knowledge, and stress little attention to students' quality education. It is a common phenomenon that professional classes are far more than public elementary classes. Chinese teaching is seen as unimportant. Some of the universities even abandon a lot of classes, such as applied writing, literature, and reading and so on. Under this mode, students are spending a lot of time learning professional skills and preparing for all kinds of certification exam. They seldom have time and energy to reading and the culture cultivation. But, as a matter of fact, these students will face huge obstacles when they find jobs because, just as the above mentioned, recruiters no longer pay all emphasis to students' professional abilities; instead, they begin to stress more on students' comprehensive ability, in other words, the students' overall employability. The lack of culture cultivation is obviously a big barrier.

#### **Students' Low Culture Quality**

On one hand, nowadays, in order to survive in the fierce competition, a lot of colleges lower their score line in order to enroll more students. This phenomenon is even worse in vocational colleges. There is even not a limit score line for their admission. It is not difficult to imagine that many of the students don't command the ability of basic communicating abilities at all. On the other hand, that the students don't value the culture cultivation makes things even worse. Most of them just want to learn some professional skills to make sure that they can find a good job in the future. It is a common phenomenon in college that many students think Chinese learning uninteresting and unimportant. Some of them even escape Chinese classes. In this case, it is not surprising that many students don't cultivate a high culture quality, let alone improve their employability.

#### **Lack of Research into Chinese Teaching**

Chinese teachers should bear the responsibility as well. In college Chinese teaching, they still adopt the traditional teaching methods. In class, teachers are the prominent part. They spend a lot of time teaching knowledge, with little care towards students' feedbacks. Such dull teaching method makes Chinese teaching dull and uninteresting. It is not surprising that students don't like Chinese teaching at all. Besides, Chinese teachers spend little time in research to make Chinese teaching more scientific and modern.

### **Ways to Improve Students' Employability**

From what has been mentioned above, we clearly realize that it is important and necessary to improve students' employability. College Chinese teaching should shoulder the burden of improving students' listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities, and students' culture quality as well as students' communicative ability. In this sense, we can say that the Chinese teaching reform is necessary and urgent.

### **The Aim Of The Chinese Course Should Be More Specific.**

Scholar Yang Shuzi once said that culture is the identification of a nation. The nation will be beaten down if he doesn't possess advanced scientific technology. However, he will collapse by himself if he doesn't possess cultural spirit. In this sense, the aim of College Chinese teaching ought to raise students' culture quality by improving students' listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities, lay solid cultural foundation for further development, cultivate good virtue, and develop abilities of finding-out problems and solving problems. That is to say, college Chinese teaching should not only transfer useful knowledge, but also should cultivate students' culture quality. These abilities could be formed through courses like reading, applied writing and communication.

### **The Teaching Mode And Method Should Be Updated.**

Traditional teaching mode and method makes Chinese teaching unpractical and dull. Thus, the teaching mode and method should be updated.

(1) Class should be changed from teacher-centered to student-centered.

In the traditional teaching approach, teachers play the main part in class through spending most of the class time teaching. They seldom pay attention to students' feedbacks. Chinese courses are very dull and students dislike the dull classes at all. In order to make Chinese courses lively and interesting, reform of the teaching approach is necessary.

A. creating situations according to the teaching content

Let's take the lesson "Visiting and Receiving" as an example. At the beginning of the class, the teacher should not tell the students the key points of this class. Instead, the teacher may create three different situations concerning to the topic.

Situation 1: How would you receive the guest who hurried to your company in great anger and complained that he was dissatisfied with your company's service?

Situation 2: How would you respond to the situation that an expected TV reporter comes to your company and want to have an interview with your general manager concerning to the quality of the products in your company?

Situation 3: How would you deal with the case that a woman having a relationship with your general manager intrudes into your company?

The above mentioned three situations are very likely to happen in the workplace. So such questions are very interesting and attractive to students. Then, teachers may divide the whole students into several groups to have a discussion and give their own solutions to the three questions. In this way, students' interest is aroused and the atmosphere of the class is becomes active. The teacher only needs to give guidance when necessary and make short summary at the end of the class. The targeted teaching goals can be easily obtained.

b. introducing activities into the class

Let's take the interview for example. The teacher needn't spend most of the time explaining the key points when attending an interview. Students may feel it dull. To make the classes practical and attractive, the teacher may introduce an activity by holding an interview in the class. The teacher may ask one student to play the role of interview, the other student to play the role of interviewee, and the rest students to watch carefully to have a judgment on their performance and try to find their problems in the interview process. Thus, the class will become rather practical. Besides, such kind of activities will also help students have a better understanding about the future work, thus making them fully prepared for it and finally improving students employability.

c. making students express themselves bravely and increasing interaction between teachers and students

Some teachers would not like the students to express their opinions because those teachers want to establish an image of "authority". By doing so, students will become less and less active and enthusiastic in class. They will even be fed up with such classes and quit Chinese learning in the long run.

(2) New teaching approach such as practical teaching should be adopted.

In addition to the tradition teaching approach such as lecturing, case study, discussion, etc, some new teaching approach like practical teaching, program teaching should be adopted. Practical

teaching is to make a close connection between lecturing and the major's practical need. By doing so, the Chinese teaching will become useful and practical.

(3) Good books should be sorted out and recommended to students.

Reading makes a full man. Apart from textbooks, teachers should choose good books carefully and recommend to students for them to read in the spare time. The books should include the public books as well as profession-related books. The public books are those like ancient Chinese literature, foreign literature, art and modern Chinese literature and so on; the profession-related books are those that have a close relation to the students' major. Students should be encouraged to read a certain amount of books every term and make notes. It would be better to hold an activity every week for students to exchange their opinions about the books that they have read. By doing so, students' culture quality will be greatly improved and visions broadened, which will lay a solid foundation for their future development in the job, thus lifting the students' employability greatly.

#### **Colorful Cultural Activities Should Be Held.**

Apart from the teaching activities, colorful cultural activities should also be held in the free time to enrich students' life. What is more, such kind of activities will raise students' ability of finding out problems and solving the problems. Students' creativity and oral ability will also be improved. For example, by attending the speech competition, students' speech ability will be improved and their Putonghua level will also be improved. By attending reading discussion, students can exchange their ideas and thoughts and that's a good way to learn from others. By attending the debate competition, students' psychological quality would be greatly improved and they would become confident in themselves. These colorful cultural activities will play an important role in the cultivation of students' comprehensive ability and improve their employability as a whole.

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