

Original Research Article

Research on the cultivation mechanism of college students' employment competency from the "heart"*Tian Xinai, Guo Dongyang, Xu Fan, Zhang Dehui, Shen Zongchao**School of Business Administration, Shandong University of Technology and Business, Yantai 264000, Shandong, China*

Abstract: The development of new-quality productive forces relies on skilled talents nurtured by universities. However, "delayed employment" and the "lying flat" mentality among students highlight deficiencies in career planning and implicit competencies. Research indicates that psychological factors constitute one of the key constraints hindering students from forming effective career planning. Although mental health concepts have gradually entered the domain of career education, the role of psychological education remains underutilized. Our team maintains that psychological factors play a crucial role, as human behavior is fundamentally governed by psychological consciousness. Educating from the "heart" is an effective way to solve the lack of implicit competency from the source and guide college students to do a good job in career planning. Building on this perspective, this paper examines the intersection points between psychological education and career education, exploring pathways and mechanisms to cultivate and improve students' employment competence. Through more comprehensive career education, we aim to guide students in scientific career planning, enhance employment capabilities, promote innovative reforms in university career education, ultimately improving employment rates and quality. This effort seeks to cultivate high-quality innovative talents that will drive the emergence of new quality productive forces.

Keyword: career education; psychoeducation; employment competency; New quality productivity

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of global industrial upgrading and technological revolution, new-quality productive forces demand urgent improvements in higher education talent cultivation. Universities must balance professional knowledge with students' capabilities and professional literacy. However, "delayed employment" and "lying flat" reveal gaps in career education, especially in psychological guidance and career planning. This paper takes an interdisciplinary psychology-career education approach, focusing on "psychological factors—cognitive reconstruction—behavioral transformation" to explore employment capability cultivation from the "heart." By analyzing psychological education-career planning integration, it aims to uncover implicit psychological impacts on competitiveness and propose innovative empowerment models.

2. Relevant research at home and abroad

The discipline of career planning originated in the U.S. during its early 20th-century industrialization, with Parsons founding the Career Guidance Bureau and introducing scientific methods for person-job matching via his "trait-factor theory," laying the groundwork for modern career assessment. Western theories have evolved into a multi-dimensional framework: Schubert's stage theory highlights lifelong career dynamics, while the NCDG model establishes a 3-core-competency (self-awareness, career exploration, decision-making) assessment system with 193 behavioral indicators. The U.S. K-12 system integrates career education deeply, e.g., California requires hundreds of hours of high school career immersion for a "cognition-experience-decision" progression.

China's career planning education, though late-starting, has grown rapidly under policy and market forces. Since 2007, universities have made career development courses compulsory, and by 2020, it became a key part of quality education. Some universities like Tsinghua have developed intelligent systems merging psychological assessments with industry data for personalized guidance. However, challenges persist: severe regional imbalances (western universities have a 1:3500 counselor-student ratio vs. eastern China's 1:800), only 12% of universities integrate employment guidance with psychological education regularly, and overall integration remains limited, unsystematic, and non-standardized, underscoring the need for systemic reform.

3. Reasons for the Comprehensive Integration of Psychological Education and Career Education

3.1 Analysis of the Current Career Situation of Contemporary College Students

In 2024 alone, the number of college graduates in China reached as high as 11.79 million. For college students, their employment environment is more difficult, and it is hard for them to find stable jobs. Facing the uncertain macro environment, the employment preference of graduates for "stability" continues to increase. They hope to seek stable sources of income by taking civil service exams, entering institutions, and joining state-owned enterprises and central enterprises, so as to improve their quality of life and resist uncertain risks. However, currently, college students are in a state of internal friction and lying flat for a long time. They rely on the exam week for knowledge acquisition and lack practical training for ability improvement. As a result, when facing graduation in their senior year, due to their own deficiencies such as lack of self-awareness, vague goals, psychological sensitivity and vulnerability, and insufficient employability, the situations of "slow employment" and "delayed employment" are becoming more and more serious.

Most of the above deficiencies are related to the lack of psychological intervention in students' careers. Although the current career education in colleges and universities already includes elements of psychological education, psychological education has not exerted its maximum value in career education. For example, in recent years, the career plans made by students have gradually become empty talk. They have plans but fail to implement them effectively. Ultimately, it is due to students' insufficient internal driving force and low implicit competence. This shows that there is still a lack of elements of psychological education in the current career education of college students.

3.2 The Relevance between Psychological Education and Career Education

3.2.1 The connotations of career education and psychological education are relevant.

The connotations of career education and psychological education are relevant. Career education helps students to clarify their positions, formulate paths, realize their personal values, and prepare for entering society in the future. In the processes of self-awareness and career exploration in personal careers, good psychological qualities are needed as a support. Comprehensive psychological education can enhance students' psychological qualities and provide a strong psychological support for exploring career paths. For college students, their college career is a theme story constructed with themselves as the core and career development as the main task. In this story, there will be continuous interaction between the inner self and the outside world, and then the self will be adjusted to complete career adaptation. Similarly, from one perspective, the process of psychological education is also a process of continuous interaction between the self and the outside world to complete internal adjustment. Therefore, the connotations of the two are relevant to each other.

3.2.2 Psychological quality education is the cornerstone of career development.

Mental health plays an important role in career planning. Good psychological resilience enables college

students to maintain a positive attitude when facing many uncertainties and make choices that are more in line with their own development. If lacking psychological endurance, when facing many career choices, they are likely to fall into anxiety and confusion, miss the development paths suitable for them, or easily waver and find it difficult to stick to their positions, resulting in the phenomenon of “unemployment right after employment”. In addition, psychological quality is not only related to the choice and persistence of career planning, but also has a profound impact on college students’ abilities to handle interpersonal relationships, give play to innovative thinking, and deal with work pressure in their careers.

3.2.3. The curriculum contents of psychological education and career education intersect.

From the perspective of self-awareness, career education focuses on students’ in-depth understanding of their own interests and other aspects. From the perspective of psychological education, it helps students to establish a good self-image at the psychological level, enabling them to have a more accurate grasp of self-awareness. In terms of emotional management, psychological education guides students to rationally deal with stress and setbacks and truly let go of negative emotions. Career education also encourages students to try and make mistakes and face challenges with an optimistic and open-minded attitude. In terms of goal setting, career education guides students to set goals, including short-term, long-term, and life goals. Positive psychology believes that goals can make people focused, and psychological education attaches great importance to whether students have goals. In terms of career adaptability, career education cultivates transferable core qualities to deal with the unpredictable society. Psychological training helps to enhance students’ adaptability, helping them to better complete role transformation and promoting them to smoothly complete career transformation at the individual level.

4. The Path of Cultivating Employment Competence through the Coupling of Psychology and Career Development

The career management of college students is influenced by four groups: students, schools, parents and society. Meanwhile, the coupling cultivation of career education and psychological education to foster employability is not static but a dynamic process involving assessment, professional guidance and feedback evaluation. Therefore, this article proposes the following cultivation paths.

4.1. Integrate theoretical and practical course resources

First of all, build a teaching resource platform and teaching activities. Based on the characteristics of students’ growth stages, a gradient system of psychological counseling courses for career planning is set up. By integrating course contents such as psychological assessment, emotion management, exploration of career interests, and cultivation of career values, students’ “explicit” and “implicit” competencies can be enhanced. Secondly, improve the construction of resources such as teaching staff and facilities to provide sufficient support for students.

4.2. Carry out interdisciplinary training for teachers

Interdisciplinary training should be carried out, and modular teaching and innovative teaching methods should be integrated. In terms of innovative teaching methods, we have collaborated with universities and enterprises to develop a “metaverse + education” simulation classroom. Through virtual reality technology, we aim to conduct teaching exercises, provide simulated guidance to students who encounter various difficulties in their careers, and implement monitoring and scoring to enhance teachers’ skills in offering personalized career and psychological counseling to students. Relying on the modular curriculum system, we systematically promote the multi-dimensional improvement of teachers’ professional quality, teaching practice ability and

teaching thinking ability. We encourage teachers to participate in relevant research and practice, regularly invite well-known experts in the industry to give lectures and training at the school, and at the same time encourage teachers to participate in domestic and international academic symposiums to constantly update educational concepts and methods.

4.3. A sound scientific management system

Differentiated course management is carried out for students of different grades. For lower grades, theoretical teaching is the main focus, while for higher grades, practical courses are the main focus. The assessment plans for each stage are diversified, including process evaluation and summative evaluation. Special funds are set up for teacher training, the installation and update of teaching equipment, student learning support and rewards, as well as teaching research and curriculum development.

4.4. Build a strategic alliance for integrating industry and education

Relying on the strategic alliance of industry-education integration, we promote the construction of a collaborative education system between schools and enterprises, achieving precise matching between the educational supply side and the industrial demand side. We implement a dual-mentor system, that is, based on the characteristics and employment directions of each college, we cooperate with enterprises, appoint enterprise managers as “enterprise mentors”, and hold regular face-to-face exchange meetings to provide professional guidance on employment for students. In addition, a “Psychological Career Education Fund” was jointly established with enterprises to support the development of psychological career education for students and enhance the corporate social responsibility image at the same time. Establish a dynamic matching database of “course demands”, and analyze employment trends with the help of big data, artificial intelligence and other technologies to adjust teaching plans in real time.

4.5. Establish smooth channels for student feedback

Colleges and universities can establish mental health education centers led by the school’s administrative leaders and involving relevant departments such as the student affairs office, academic affairs office, and teaching and research sections. Establish a dual-track feedback mechanism of “online + offline”, and collect students’ demands in real time through anonymous questionnaires and campus apps online. Establish enterprise mentor exchange meetings and psychological counseling stations to ensure that students’ opinions reach the management directly.

4.6. Form a new ecosystem of mutual empowerment between home and school

Parents’ education of their children is of vital importance. However, college parents have very little understanding of their students’ situations. Therefore, various colleges in universities can develop home-school communication apps to provide parents with knowledge reserves, share employment forms and important employment policies. At the same time, the status of students can be intercommunicated and fed back, achieving timely sharing of the visualization results of campus culture dynamics and educational quality.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, in today’s complex and changeable employment environment, college students are faced with many challenges in employment, and the comprehensive integration of psychological education and career education is urgent. The two are closely related in terms of connotation, goal and curriculum content, and psy-

chological quality is the key cornerstone of career development. By integrating theoretical and practical course resources, conducting interdisciplinary training for teachers, establishing and improving scientific management systems, promoting school-enterprise cooperation, ensuring smooth channels for student feedback, and implementing home-school collaborative education mechanisms, we can build a dynamic and sustainable model that combines career education with psychological education. This approach effectively enhances college students' employability, helps them better meet future career challenges, realize their personal value and professional goals, and provides society with high-quality talents who possess excellent psychological qualities and professional competence.

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References

- [1] Author names: Surnames capitalized (e.g., CHEN Xiaopu)
- [2] Article titles: Key concepts retained (e.g., "dual-qualified," "career planning") with case study framing.
- [3] Journal abbreviations: Translated directly (e.g., Heilongjiang Higher Education Research) for international accessibility.
- [4] Degree notation: [D] denotes a dissertation/thesis, consistent with Chinese academic standards.