The Interactive Relationship between Higher Education and Economic Situation in Society: From the Perspective of Employment

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Abstract. As the country progresses and develops, students access to higher education has received widespread attention, but the link between higher education and the country's economic development needs to be discovered and researched so that it can better contribute to the country's long-term development. This paper analyzes the current employment situation and employment problems. This paper analyzes that higher education can promote the country's economic development, but there are some problems such as the difficulty of employment for graduated college students, the lack of harmony between industry and education, and the single skills that students have. Based on this, this paper puts forward the following suggestions: first, strengthen the personalized counseling in colleges and universities, and give students relevant advice in time. Secondly, to strengthen the integration of industry and education, schools should pay more attention to the learning process and strengthen practical learning. Thirdly, more talents with 21st-century skills should be cultivated so that students can develop in various aspects.

Keywords: Higher education, economic growth, employment.

1. Introduction

According to the statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, China's per capita GDP in the first quarter of 2024 has reached 2.963 billion yuan, and China's GDP growth rate is 5.2 %. Among them, the industrial and service sectors have made great contributions to the growth of per capita GDP [1]. The economy in China has recovered since the end of COVID-19, but the negative effect on unemployment still can't be ignored. The unemployment rate of young people is generally rising, especially in February 2020, the national urban unemployment rate is the highest in recent years, reaching 6.2% [2].

In recent years, the Internet buzzwords "Goblin Mode" and "Lying Flat" indicate the psychological state of modern youth to a certain extent.

With the improvement of people's living level and quality, new generations are growing up in a superior and wealthy social environment and family condition, which serves as one of the contributory factors for not being prepared to enter the workforce.

As the transition from traditional occupations to new occupations, the requirement of professional-level employees is higher and higher which directly causes the fiercer competition in employment. More and more graduates tend to pursue a higher diploma without deliberating about their future careers. As a result, this craze for postgraduate and PhD degrees also leads to great competition. The other chooses to postpone their employment to improve their overall quality and competitiveness and polish their resume. These behaviors do not promote social and economic development. However, in the context of the popularization of higher education, more and more people in society are highly educated, and the number of college graduates in 2024 is expected to reach 11.79 million, an increase of 210,000 compared with last year. This study discusses social issues such as whether a high degree is still the main gateway to a high-income enterprise, what is the relationship between receiving higher education and employment, and the relationship between social and economic status, providing some strategies and methods for the future of higher education.

2. Current Employment Situation and Existing Problems under the Social Economy Background

2.1. Unbalanced Regional Economic Development and Industry Structure Transformation

In China, the number of white-collar workers is relatively high. But in terms of China's industrial structure, the number of employment positions for the white collar is less than blue collar. The society has relatively higher requirements for the comprehensive quality of white-collar workers [3].

Especially in the coastal east-southern area of China which has more opportunities, resources, and a booming economy. These places are more attractive for the talented. One example is that numerous students prioritize the economic and future development of a city when choosing colleges. As time goes on, talented people will gather in the eastern regions, leading to the phenomenon that developed areas are more developed and backward areas are more backward, which increases the problem of unbalanced regional economic development.

With the continuous development of the Internet and the rise of social media and other industries, many emerging professions, such as network anchors and online shop owners, do not require a high educational threshold. College students are innovative, open-minded, and diverse, they like to accept thrilling and challenging things. Compared with traditional industries, these industries are more interesting and novel, which are very attractive to college students. These industries particularly test personal innovation ability, market research ability, and professional level. People are suggested to be sensitive to have insight into the public demand, keeping up with the trend and mastering the so-called "attention grabber". Nowadays, with the advent of the era of artificial intelligence, the demand for manpower in many jobs is becoming less and less, such as the replacement of waiters by robots in the catering industry has increased the problem of difficult employment.

2.2. The Ambiguity of Employment Consciousness among Recent Graduates

With the continuous development of society, the new generation's employment value, value of life, and value of the world are different from the previous generation, and the new generation pays more attention to the satisfaction of their spiritual aspirations. They have a strong ambiguity of employment consciousness and are unclear about their future career. "Have fun in time" is the main value of modern youth, it also serves as one of the dominant reasons for college students' slow employment and one of the primary performances of the lack of consciousness of being employed. Underemployment means that recent college graduates put off looking for a job and spend more time with their parents, travel abroad, or do things they love. From the positive perspective, most of the graduates choose to delay their career to enhance their self-competitive ability, they do not want to be randomly employed, instead, they hope to slowly explore the career that they love and is suitable for them [4].

Currently, the existing majors in most higher educational institutions are not suitable for market practical demands. Some professional domains are still urgent for interdisciplinary talents. So talents are still rare in the employment market. Talent is an important factor driving social, cultural, economic, and other aspects of development, and is the main driving force for innovation and development. The contribution of higher education in international exchanges and elite training is conducive to the sustainable development of China's economy and society [5]. The creation of interdisciplinary disciplines is conducive to the development of national science, technology, and economy.

The reasons why being employed is so difficult can be explained from two aspects. On the one hand, college students are not equipped with some basic skills that are required in the employment market [4]. In the past few years, all the students only focused on how to get a higher grade, they can handle the exam pretty well, but they are deficient in comprehensive quality which requires the integration of thinking logically, creatively, and rationally. On the other hand, the bar for hiring staff is too high for some enterprises. Especially in positions with technical barriers, it is difficult to recruit employees who can bring economic benefits to the enterprise. Having a good command of professional skills is the basic request for talent. Nowadays, the ability to transfer and apply

technology is especially important. The previous research has indicated that emerging service industries such as information transmission, software and information technology services, scientific research and technology services, water facilities, and public environmental management have a large talent gap, and these fields require relatively high-skill endowments and professional capabilities [6].

2.3. Craze for Postgraduate and PhD Degrees Leads to Great Competition for Employment

According to the statistics from the Ministry of Education, the number of postgraduates was constantly increasing from 2021 to 2023, from 3.77 million to 4.74 million. However, some of the students who take the postgraduate entrance exam are only to improve their academic qualifications and increase their competitiveness in employment without knowing their real professional aspirations. This trend leads to increasing peer pressure and more and more difficulties in future employment. In the future, employers will inevitably pay more attention to employees' comprehensive ability rather than purely academic ability when hiring employees. Another part of the students decide to take the postgraduate entrance exam because they are not ready to leave school and get a job, so they decide to study for another few years to delay their step into society and employment.

2.4. The Deficiencies in Higher Education

Higher education is the main means and strategy to revitalize the country, promote national rejuvenation, and enhance the overall cultural level of society. However, there is still a certain gap between the development of China's higher education and the level of economic development, and the number of higher education institutions is far from that of foreign countries. Besides, higher educational constitutions should be more active in participating the society development, deeply study the frontier issues of various disciplines, and enhance their scientific research capabilities. Especially in the era of the integration of industry and education, the industrial chain should be combined with information technology to maximize the needs of industrial development [7].

Higher educational institutions should not only be the place that helps students acquire knowledge and enrich their experience and horizon, but also be obliged to guide students to clear their line of thoughts, set life goals, and have a clearer plan for their future careers. Even though most higher educational institutions have already set career planning courses and employment counseling courses, the effectiveness is still low and the practicability and pertinence are evaluated less.

3. Contribution of Higher Education to the Socio-Economic Situation

3.1. Higher Education Promotes Employment

Higher education mainly contributes to employment in two aspects. Firstly, higher education provides the society with rich human resources [8]. After graduation, these talents enter various trades and industries and promote the economic development of society. Secondly, according to scientific research activities, higher education promotes scientific and technological progress and technological innovation and creates new opportunities for society. Besides, the correlation between higher education and the employment rate of students is also obvious. The employment rate after graduation is higher for students with tertiary education than for those without [9]. This is because tertiary education not only provides specialized knowledge and skills but also develops students' innovation, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, which are important qualities needed in modern society. Finally, the relationship between the quality of higher education and the competitiveness of students in employment is also inextricably linked. High-quality higher education can provide better educational resources and learning environments, enabling students to master specialized knowledge and skills and improve their competitiveness in employment. At the same time, high-quality higher education can also provide more practical opportunities and internships, so that students can improve their abilities in practice and enhance their employment competitiveness [10].

3.2. Higher Education Redistributes and Increases Income and Promotes Economic Growth

Higher education boosts economic growth by improving the structure of income distribution, increasing personal income, and contributing to the expansion of consumption. Li Yining analyzes that education improves the ability of workers to earn income in the future and enhances their mobility by raising their level of culture and technology, thus narrowing the gap in social income distribution and promoting economic growth. Lai Desheng argues that education affects income distribution more importantly because it improves the allocation capacity of educated people, and the ability to optimize the allocation of given resources to increase output [11]. Education has a significant impact on the formation and distribution of individual income. Besides, Higher education can influence the region and industry in which people work or live, and factors such as region and industry, along with urban and rural areas, have a huge impact on income [12]. People who work in large cities tend to have more employment opportunities and better jobs, so they are more likely to earn higher incomes. Tier 1 cities usually have higher average incomes than people in smaller cities [13]. Education plays an important role in the screening that determines what regions, industries, cities, or rural areas people can enter. College students go through their schools to find internships that are in the same city as their college. Thus, access to higher education is linked to the city in which one might work in the future [14].

3.3. Higher Education Contribute to Economic Growth

Higher education has a significant positive effect on regional economic growth and can significantly enhance regional economic development.

Firstly, correlation analysis shows that graduates of higher education have a significant positive effect on the per capita GDP of the province, and the correlation coefficient is 0.505, which initially proves that higher education plays a positive role in regional economic development [15]. Besides, the level of urbanization affects the contribution of higher education to economic growth. The higher the level of urbanization, the more significant the impact of higher education on economic growth. Firstly, it is because The demand for highly qualified personnel in areas with high levels of urbanization influences the contribution of higher vocational education to economic growth. On the other side, high urbanization level areas can provide more employment positions and entrepreneurial opportunities for the employed, thus attracting the inflow and residence of high-quality talents and attracting high-quality talents to enter and stay in the area. On the other hand, the construction and development of cities cannot be achieved without the participation of high-quality talents. The technical and skilled talents cultivated by higher education for the city play an important role in the city's infrastructure and technological progress, thus driving regional economic development. Secondly, the adjustment of industrial structure in areas with high urbanization levels influences the impact of higher vocational education on economic growth. The public infrastructure of high urbanization level areas is perfect, production factors are concentrated, and the industrial structure is gradually changing from labor-intensive to more advanced. Higher education provides a high-quality material foundation and economic environment for the development of higher education. Higher vocational education provides sufficient factors of production and development momentum for urban construction by upgrading the quantity and quality of the labor force, enhances innovation vitality for urban construction through the agglomeration of innovation factors and the dissemination and diffusion of knowledge, drives the upgrading of traditional industries and the development of new industries, and thus promotes economic growth.

4. Enlightenments and Suggestions

4.1. Enhancing Individualized Employment Counseling in Higher Education

Against the background of the ever-expanding scale of higher education in China, college students are faced with a severe employment situation and fierce competition for jobs, which leads to problems in the employment psychology of some college students and has a great impact on their employment quality and values. Therefore, colleges and universities should introduce positive psychology in the process of career planning and employment psychological counseling to improve the resistance to setbacks of college students and help them channel and regulate psychological barriers. High school teachers can help students discover their strengths and advantages. This can effectively prevent or alleviate students' psychological disorders and problems, thus nurturing and developing personal positive strengths and allowing people to grow in overcoming difficulties and challenges. Teachers in colleges and universities should also actively strengthen psychological intervention education, apply it to the curriculum of career planning, and teach students positive psychological hints, objective evaluation methods, and other psychological interventions, so that students can choose the most suitable psychological interventions for their different psychological problems, to realize the self-adjustment of the individual's psychology, thereby reducing the difficulty of the subsequent intervention of psychological problems. In particular, it should be pointed out that, because there are great differences between individual students, they have different educational requirements for psychological interventions, so college teachers should carry out psychological interventions in a targeted manner to ensure that each student can master some positive psychological interventions and skills so that they can actively solve their psychological problems of employment, to enhance the ability of psychological self-regulation.

4.2. Adapt to the Development Trends of the Digital Economy and Strengthen the Integration of Industry and Education

With the development of the digital economy, the curricula of colleges and universities suffer from conflicting academic-educational and higher-educational curriculum planning and construction, as well as fragmented knowledge of the application of new technologies. Therefore, the search for a model of teaching and practice based on the integration of "knowledge and skills" in the curriculum should be strengthened. Firstly, universities can cooperate with enterprises to establish internship bases, for example, preschool education colleges and universities can establish long-term cooperation with kindergartens, nurseries, and other practice teaching bases to carry out internship activities together. Through cooperation with enterprises, students can deeply understand the industry demand and development trend, master practical operation skills, and enhance professionalism and employment competitiveness. Secondly, practical courses should be set up, and the curriculum should focus on practicability and applicability, such as preschool education majors should focus on educational internships, educational research, early childhood education teaching design, and so on. The setting of practical courses can help students transform theoretical knowledge into practical application skills and exercise the ability to solve practical problems. Thirdly, by combining curriculum design with practice, professional curriculum design should also be combined with practical teaching. For example, different practical courses are set up according to the internship base, so that students can carry out teaching practice and practical operation in the actual educational environment and improve their practical ability. In addition, it is also necessary for students to participate in practical research. Pre-school education colleges and universities can encourage students to participate in practical research, such as carrying out experiments in early childhood education and childcare service programs. With practical research, students can master practical skills and practical operation experience and improve their ability to solve practical problems. These measures can effectively improve students' practical operation ability and professionalism, and enhance their employment competitiveness and ability to adapt to the development of the industry.

4.3. Focusing on the Development of Human Resources with 21st Century Skills

To meet the challenges of globalization, the knowledge age, and scientific and technological development, countries or regions have proposed core literacies for the twenty-first century from different perspectives, taking into account their own economic, social, and educational development needs. In the current century, what students need is not merely academic knowledge. Contemporary students need core literacies that include not only knowledge but also: Cognitive skills (problem-solving, critical thinking), Interpersonal skills (complex communication, social skills) Technical skills (entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy), Intrapersonal skills (intellectual openness, work ethic and conscientiousness, and positive core self-evaluation). Therefore, the development of these literacies requires students to learn and apply relevant knowledge and skills in real-life contexts, rather than focusing on a single subject matter. For example, the selection and design of curriculum content that incorporates knowledge from one discipline and builds on interdisciplinary experiences requires effective interdisciplinary content learning.

This kind of learning also provides a rich learning experience and accumulation of experience for students to become new talents who can cooperate with others in multi-disciplinary collaboration when they enter the workplace. Besides, it is also important to develop appropriate curriculum resources to promote the education of core literacy in the 21st century. In the process of promoting the educational practice of 21st-century literacy, whether it is trying to integrate core literacy into the existing school subject curricula or selecting appropriate cross-disciplinary content for learning, it is necessary to provide curriculum resources to match. Among many curriculum resources, teaching materials are an important vehicle for implementing and promoting 21st-century literacy programs. Therefore, in addition to including the learning of knowledge, teaching materials should emphasize more on the process and performance of learning, and the content of teaching materials needs to provide students with high-level cognitive thinking skills so that they can learn and apply their knowledge to solve problems. The choice of materials should be inspiring and creative, providing students with opportunities to observe, explore, discuss, create, and demonstrate.

5. Conclusion

This research argued that higher education significantly promotes employment, redistributes, and increases income and economic growth. Considering the existing social problems, this paper suggests that individualized employment counseling in high educational institutions that helps students to find their vocational location and personal value are indispensable and the development of higher education should train students to be equipped with skills and knowledge that are needed in 21 century. From a human historical perspective, labor is the very first productive force and the main body engaged in labor is the people. As one of the primary formations of labor, employment has always been a big issue that both people and government paid much attention to. For the sake of the positive role that higher education plays in economic growth and employment, the uneven disparities in high-quality educational resources between rural and urban, the rich and the poor still need to be considered and taken further strategies. Other factors such as gender discrimination, illnesses, and stigma which might affect the inequity and inability to receive education and be employed are not mentioned. Based on this research, this paper hopes that future research can continuously focus on the development of higher education and excavate more data globally.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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