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Research and System Construction of Employment Education Path of Local Universities in the New Era

Yanping Qi

School of Materials and Metallurgy, Liaoning University of Science and Technology, Anshan, Liaoning 114051, China

Abstract: In the context of new-era development, how to fully leverage the talent advantages of college graduates has become a key challenge for higher education institutions in employment-oriented education. As core regional talent cultivation forces, local universities are undergoing a profound transformation in their employment education approach, shifting from traditional "employment services" to an integrated model that combines "value guidance, capability development, and employment support." This paper, grounded in the fundamental mission of local universities to serve regional development, systematically analyzes current challenges in employment education. Through three dimensions—conceptual rethinking, innovative pathways, and systemic frameworks—the study explores new approaches tailored to local universities' characteristics, aiming to enhance the alignment between talent cultivation quality and regional employment needs.

Keywords: New Era; Local Universities; Employment-Oriented Education; Path Research; System Construction.

1. The Core Significance of Employment Education in Local Universities in the New Era

Employment-oriented education serves as a cornerstone of the "Three-Aspect Education" system in higher education institutions. Its essence lies in aligning career values with professional competencies through vocational training, thereby achieving synergistic development between education and employment. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core has prioritized graduate employment. The 20th National Congress report emphasized strengthening employment-first policies, improving employment promotion mechanisms, and advancing high-quality full employment. These directives provide clear guidance for contemporary employment education in universities. For regional universities, this era imposes dual responsibilities: actively supporting national strategies to "stabilize employment" and "ensure job security," while enhancing graduate employment outcomes; and aligning applied talent development with regional economic needs to foster precise integration between talent cultivation and local growth.

From the perspective of contemporary development trends, the core mission of employment-oriented education in local universities lies in addressing the following challenges: China's higher education achieved a gross enrollment rate of 60.2% in 2023, marking its official entry into the massification phase with continuously improving accessibility. [1] As the scale of higher education expands, both the quantity and composition of university graduates have undergone significant transformations. Concurrently, with ongoing economic restructuring and evolving social environments, graduates now demonstrate more diverse career perspectives, flexible employment choices, and adaptable career paths. This necessitates corresponding adjustments in universities' employment-oriented education strategies.

2. Current Challenges in Employment-Oriented Education at Local Universities

(1) The lag of the educational concept and the disconnection with the market demand for employment

Employment-oriented education is a key and strategic link in the talent cultivation work of schools. It is essential to adhere to the fundamental task of moral education in higher education institutions, firmly grasp the fundamental issue of "for whom we cultivate people" in higher education, guide the construction of the employment-oriented education system with Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and use socialist core values to guide students in academic planning, career planning, and life planning, helping them establish correct views on talent development and career choices.

Research reveals that some local universities still exhibit a tendency to "prioritize specialized education over career-oriented education," reducing employment efforts to mere "employment rate statistics" without fully integrating career development concepts throughout the talent cultivation process. On one hand, the pace of program updates and curriculum reforms lags behind regional industrial upgrading. For instance, at a central China polytechnic institution, traditional mechanical principles courses account for 62% of core curriculum in its Mechanical Design and Manufacturing Automation program, while smart manufacturing-related courses make up only 18%—a stark mismatch with the technological upgrading needs of local equipment manufacturers. On the other hand, vocational values education remains superficial, lacking systematic cultivation of students 'career planning awareness and local employment identity. According to the education department's employment quality report, only 38% of graduates from local universities in the province choose local employment, with some exhibiting phenomena like "blindly pursuing postgraduate studies" and "concentrating in first-tier cities," which intensifies employment competition and wastes regional talent resources [2].

(2) The approach to collaborative education is too limited.

Employment education is designed to help students better align with societal and national needs, building their capacity for career development. The construction of an employment education system must keep pace with the times, adapt to the characteristics of students at different developmental stages, and ensure the sustainability of individual growth. This system should focus on students' lifelong development, guiding them to view employment education through a developmental lens. It requires constant attention to the latest social demands, continuous updates in career awareness, and dynamic adjustments to career goals. Moreover, it should emphasize staying abreast of technological advancements, national strategies, and societal needs, encouraging continuous learning and progress to lay a solid foundation for lifelong development.

Currently, most local universities still adhere to the traditional "career guidance courses + job fairs" model for employment education, lacking multi-stakeholder and multi-dimensional collaboration. Within the institution, there are noticeable "information barriers" between career services, academic affairs offices, and secondary colleges, preventing career guidance from being deeply integrated with specialized and practical teaching. Externally, partnerships with local governments and industries often remain superficial, limited to "industry-academia agreements" and "internship base certifications," with insufficient corporate involvement in talent development. Research indicates that 83% of local universities' industry-academia agreements fail to specify corporate responsibilities in curriculum design and teaching evaluations, making it difficult for businesses to provide precise guidance aligned with job requirements. The "last mile" of school-enterprise collaborative education remains unaddressed [3].

(3) Lack of scientific coordination in education

Employment-oriented education serves as a vital platform for talent development in higher education. By integrating ideological and political education, we can continuously enrich the content and formats of career guidance while broadening its perspectives. By fully leveraging both on-campus and off-campus resources, we establish a collaborative framework featuring interdisciplinary integration, university-enterprise partnerships, and multi-stakeholder engagement. This creates a three-tiered employment education model spanning university, college, and class levels. Through effective incorporation of career education into specialized courses and collaborative innovation among all parties, we collectively enhance educational efficiency and jointly cultivate top-tier talents for the new era.

The current employment-oriented education system exhibits a tendency to prioritize outcomes over process, predominantly using quantitative metrics like "employment rates" and "average starting salaries" while neglecting the "educational process" and "long-term development." It overemphasizes short-term results while overlooking qualitative indicators such as the enhancement of students' professional competencies and the cultivation of career values. The involvement of stakeholders remains limited, with insufficient participation from local governments, industries, enterprises, and graduates. This approach fails to comprehensively reflect the alignment between employment education and regional development needs, nor does it provide effective feedback for optimizing educational pathways [4].

3. Innovation Strategies of Employment Education in Local Universities in the New Era

(1) Establishing the "Three-dimensional" Employment Education View

Local universities must break free from traditional employment-oriented education paradigms and establish a three-dimensional educational philosophy integrating "value guidance, competency development, and career support". First, with value guidance as the core, they should integrate local sentiment and professional ethics throughout the educational process. For instance, Shandong University of Technology regularly invites outstanding local entrepreneurs and industry experts to campus for "Local Industry Development Forums", organizes students to visit regional leading enterprises for "Industry Awareness Practices", and enhances students 'sense of regional industrial identity through real-world experiences. Over the past three years, the local employment rate of graduates has increased to 56%. Second, with competency development as the focus, they optimize professional curriculum systems around regional characteristic industry needs. Taking a local university in Zhejiang as an example, in response to regional digital economy development demands, the university added interdisciplinary courses like "Big Data Analysis and Application" and "Fundamentals of Artificial Intelligence" to its Computer Science and Technology program, collaborated with local internet companies to develop practical teaching modules, and achieved a 32% increase in graduate job fit rate compared to previous years. Finally, with career support as the foundation, they establish a "comprehensive and personalized" employment guidance system. Starting from freshman year with career planning enlightenment education, using career interest assessments to help students clarify development directions; sophomore year focuses on career skill enhancement training through skill competitions combined with professional characteristics; junior year emphasizes job matching guidance with specialized job-hunting training for different industries; senior year strengthens job-seeking techniques and rights protection guidance, achieving precise alignment between employment guidance and students' growth patterns.

(2) Deepening the value guidance and strengthening the employment education

Universities must integrate value-oriented education throughout the entire academic journey from enrollment to graduation. They should implement comprehensive career development programs that emphasize ideals, dedication, talent cultivation, ethics, professionalism, and integrity. These initiatives help students establish sound perspectives on life, the world, and values. Graduates should be guided to pursue knowledge with practical dedication while maintaining visionary aspirations, while objectively assessing personal capabilities against societal demands to make informed career choices. Educators must prioritize national interests, balance the relationship between the state, collective, and individual, and align personal growth with the advancement of socialist causes. Through targeted guidance, exemplary role models, and the creation of outstanding career success stories, universities should cultivate graduates who integrate their

aspirations with the Party and national development. This approach encourages graduates to address national priorities, fulfill societal needs, and contribute their talents where the country requires them most.

(3) Innovation, coordination and linkage to form a joint force inside and outside the school

Higher education institutions must prioritize employment strategies, continuously advancing a comprehensive employment education framework under unified institutional leadership. This system requires coordinated efforts between university and college levels, integration of full-time and part-time teams, and close collaboration across all departments. Career guidance offices should proactively plan initiatives, focusing on key educational elements while strengthening coordination with relevant departments. They should expand employment education platforms and integrate career development components into other talent cultivation processes. Departments should conduct regular discussions led by administrative teams, with participation from academic and program directors to advance career education. Mentors should leverage their research expertise to guide students in career planning and establish proper professional values. [5] Career counselors must accurately track graduate employment trends, provide targeted guidance, and collaborate with industry associations and enterprises. By inviting industry experts and professionals to participate in campus career education, institutions can help students gain practical insights into careers and industries, directly shaping their employment perspectives. Employment education impacts not only graduates but also countless families. Establishing a "home-school collaboration" mechanism is essential to achieve genuine synergy between educational institutions and families in fostering career readiness.

4. Framework for Constructing Employment Education System in Local Universities

(1) Constructing a "Full Process" Education System and Integrating It into All Stages of Talent Training

Guided by the "Three-Aspect Holistic Education" principle, we integrate career-oriented education into all aspects of talent development, including curriculum design, course instruction, practical training, and campus culture. During the program formulation phase, a multidisciplinary review team comprising university faculty, local government representatives, and industry experts ensures that academic programs align with regional industrial demands. In course delivery, we implement a "ideological education + career guidance" approach. For instance, the "Grassroots Legal Services" course in law programs incorporates professional ethics and localized service awareness for frontline legal practitioners. Practical training links internships with employment opportunities, requiring students to complete a closed-loop development process of "position awareness, skill enhancement, and career adaptation." Campus culture fosters an environment that prioritizes and encourages proactive career engagement through initiatives like career planning competitions and simulated recruitment events.

(2) Constructing a "multi-subject" evaluation system and improving the feedback mechanism of educational effectiveness

To break the monolithic evaluation model, we establish a multi-stakeholder employment education evaluation system involving universities, governments, enterprises, and graduates. First, we optimize evaluation metrics by adding qualitative indicators such as "regional employment proportion," "job fit," and "graduates 'satisfaction with career development over three years," in addition to traditional ones like "employment rate" and "average starting salary." For instance, a local university in Jiangxi Province has incorporated "no less than 50% local employment rate" and "enterprise satisfaction with graduates' professional competencies exceeding 85%" as core evaluation criteria. Second, we introduce third-party evaluations by commissioning local talent service agencies to conduct three-year tracking surveys on graduate employment quality, collecting industry feedback on graduates' professional capabilities to form a closed-loop mechanism of "evaluation-feedback-optimization." Third, we establish a dynamic adjustment mechanism to promptly optimize curriculum systems and career guidance models based on evaluation results, ensuring employment education aligns with regional development needs.

(3) Constructing a "Guarantee-type" Support System to Consolidate the Foundation of Education

Local universities should establish a comprehensive support system for career education through three key dimensions: institutional frameworks, faculty development, and resource allocation. First, strengthen institutional safeguards by implementing the "Implementation Guidelines for Career Education," which clearly defines the educational responsibilities of all university departments and secondary colleges. This system integrates career education into departmental performance evaluations and faculty promotion criteria, fostering a collaborative environment where "all staff participate in career education." Second, enhance team capabilities by forming a career education team comprising subject teachers, career counselors, and industry mentors. Regular professional training should be conducted to improve the team's expertise and practical skills. Third, increase resource investment by establishing a dedicated career education fund. This fund will support practical training bases, career guidance curriculum development, and digital platform construction, ensuring adequate resource allocation for career education initiatives.

5. Conclusion

In the new era, local universities face both opportunities and challenges in employment-oriented education. To thrive, these institutions must align with regional development strategies, break free from traditional educational paradigms, and transform career guidance from a 'terminal service' to an 'end-to-end integration' through conceptual innovation, pathway development, and systemic restructuring. Only by establishing a collaborative 'university-local-enterprise' framework with full-process coverage and multi-stakeholder evaluation can universities truly achieve deep integration of education and employment. This approach not only enhances graduates' career quality and professional capabilities but also provides robust talent support for regional economic and social development, ultimately creating a win-win scenario for local universities and regional progress.

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