Improving student employment rates through education in modern higher vocational colleges

Jianjian Luo†‡

Soochow University, Suzhou, Jiangsu, People's Republic of China†
Changzhou College of Information Technology, Changzhou, Jiangsu, People's Republic of China‡

ABSTRACT: Three important components of the employment system in higher vocational colleges are the basic system, the matching system and the feedback system. The feedback system is the one most likely to be overlooked. Based on a survey of a college graduates, this article showcases the specific implementation measures and main focus in employment policy. The survey included research on three broad categories: job hunting, occupational direction and employment status.

INTRODUCTION

The three major functions of a modern university are personnel training, scientific research and social service. Employment is the most important standard against which to weigh whether colleges and universities, especially higher vocational colleges, have done a good job [1]. To improve the employment situation, it is necessary to set up a series of systems and measures. These systems include a basic system of cooperation between colleges and enterprises before employment, a compatibility system and a feedback system to provide a full support system when looking for a job and track surveys after employment, respectively. Based on the above ideas, Changzhou College of Information Technology carried out a series of employment surveys. They undertook this through independent investigations and the introduction of Mycos (My China Occupational Skills) to carry out specialised social services [2]. These jobs are of great help for the improvement of the employment management system. In 2010, for example, the College issued 1,194 questionnaires to graduates employed in 2008, and 1,064 valid questionnaires were returned. The questionnaires included three categories: job hunting, occupational direction and employment status, divided into 12 smaller specific issues.

JOB HUNTING

Job Hunting Channels

In terms of job hunting, the survey covered mainly the employment information channel, starting time, the adoption of employment services and the costs of job hunting. A follow-up investigation found that organised job fairs, information from relatives and friends and direct application to the employers were the top three information channels. They accounted for 29%, 19% and 17%, respectively. Other important channels were college recommendation and use of specialised job sites, each accounting for 9%. Participation in government-organised fairs and information from the media contributed 6% and 5%, respectively, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Job hunting channels.

College organised job fairs	29%
Information from relatives and friends	19%
Direct application to the employers	17%
College recommendation	9%
Specialised job hunting sites	9%
Participation in governmental organised fairs	6%
Access to information from media	5%
Others	6%

STARTING TIME

In this term when the survey was conducted, students from Changzhou College of Information Technology were ahead of those from high vocational colleges in other areas [3].

47% of students started looking for jobs one year before graduation. 26% started six month before. Only 4% of them started hunting jobs four or five month before graduation and 8% started two or three months before. The rest got down to job hunting only one month before graduation (as shown in Table 2).

Table 2: Job starting time.

Changzhou College of Information Technology	1 year before graduation or earlier	47%
	6 months before graduation	26%
	4-5 months before graduation	4%
	2-3 months before graduation	8%
	1 month before graduation or latter	15%
Higher vocational colleges in Jiangsu	1 year before graduation or earlier	8%
	6 months before graduation	54%
	4-5 months before graduation	11%
	2-3 months before graduation	12%
	1 month before graduation or latter	15%
Higher vocational colleges around the country	1 year before graduation or earlier	9%
	6 months before graduation	40%
	4-5 months before graduation	16%
	2-3 months before graduation	14%
	1 month before graduation or latter	21%

Job Hunting Service

In this term when the survey was conducted, most students preferred the services provided by the colleges. 40% of them agreed that university job fairs are quite efficient and 14% of graduates thought the training of interview skills work well. 6% of graduates benefited from résumé training, and the same number of students thought that other forms of interview skills coaching made sense.

At the same time, 34% of graduates considered that those services did not work at all (as shown in Table 3).

Table 3: The most efficient services.

College organised job fairs	40%
Training of interview skills	14%
Training for making resumes	6%
Training for job seeking strategy	6%
Meaningless	34%

Job Hunting Cost

On the issue of job hunting cost, Changzhou College of Information Technology graduates had to spend an average of 659 Yuan. This is relatively low compared with the average cost in Jiangsu that is 932 Yuan, and lower than the national average of 839 Yuan.

Meanwhile, graduates needed to post an average of 3 resumes, less than the 10 posted in Jiangsu and the nation-wide average of eight (as shown in Table 4).

Table 4: Job hunting cost.

Changzhou College of Information Technology	Average job hunting cost	659
	Number of posted résumés when received a job invitation	3
Higher vocational colleges in Jiangsu	Average job hunting cost	932
	Number of posted résumés when received a job invitation	10
Higher vocational colleges around the country	Average job hunting cost	839
	Number of posted résumés when received a job invitation	8

EMPLOYMENT FLOW

Vocational Category

In terms of vocational category, the College investigated the graduates' information from 2008 as follows: major vocational category, industry, types of employer and work city. The main vocational category was related to graduates' majors, specifically, 6% for electronic engineering personnel, 5% for various types of civil personnel, 4% for computer programmers, 4% for customer service representatives, 4% for electronic engineers, 3% for executive and administrative assistants, 3% for sales managers, 2% for product safety engineers, 2% for electric technicians and 2% for accountants (as shown in Table 5).

Table 5: Vocational category.

	Shares	Salary
Electronic engineering personnel	6%	2,013
Civil personnel	5%	1,768
Computer programmer	4%	2,838
Customer service representative	4%	2,206
Electronic engineer (except for computer engineers)	4%	2,313
Executive secretary and administrative assistant	3%	1,823
Sales manager	3%	2,873
Product safety engineer	2%	1,989
Electric technician	2%	1,795
Accountant	2%	2,488

Industry Distribution

On the matter of industry distribution, 20% of the graduates found jobs in the electronic and electrical equipment and parts manufacturing industry, and 11% in the telecommunications and other electronic information transmission industry. Computer management, system maintenance and other services industry accounted for 7%; and commercial and industrial machinery and computer equipment manufacturing industry for 4%. The software industry also accounted for 4% (as shown in Table 6).

Table 6: Industry distribution.

	Shares	Salary
Electronic and electrical equipment and parts manufacturing industry (except for computer equipment)	20%	1,997
Telecommunications and other electronic information transmission industry	11%	2,203
Computer management, system maintenance and other services industry	7%	2,807
Software industry	4%	2,457
Commercial and industrial machinery and computer equipment manufacturing industry	4%	2,512

Employer Type

In terms of employers, private enterprises and individual businesses represented 60%, an absolute majority. Joint ventures or wholly foreign sole ownership enterprises accounted for 32%. In addition, state-owned enterprises accounted for 7%; government organisations and scientific institutions accounted for 1%; and non-profit and non-government organisations only accounted for 0.2% (as shown in Table 7).

Table 7: Employer type.

Private enterprises and individual business	60%
Joint venture enterprises or wholly foreign sole ownership enterprises	32%
State-owned enterprises	7%
Government organisations and scientific institutions	1%
Non-profit and non-government organisations	0.2%

Employment City

The survey showed that 85% graduates found jobs in Jiangsu province in 2008, while the rest were employed in other provinces. For the graduates working in Jiangsu, 70% worked in Changzhou, while Wuxi or Suzhou and other areas accounted for 30%. Of the students who worked in Changzhou, Wuxi or Suzhou, Changzhou accounted for 53% (as shown in Table 8).

Table 8: Employment site.

<table>
<tr><td>Other provinces: 15%</td><td colspan="2">——</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Jiangsu province: 85%</td><td>Other areas: 30%</td><td>——</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Changzhou, Wuxi, Suzhou: 70%</td><td>Other cities: 47%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Changzhou: 53%</td></tr>
</table>

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Employment Rate

In terms of the employment situation, the College and Mycos focus on overall employment rates, profession related rate, leave-on-job status and pay levels. They found that Changzhou College of Information Technology had a good employment rate in 2008. In graduate season, 69% students were employed, more than rates of 46% and 56%, that pertained in China overall and Jiangsu, respectively. One year after graduation, 95% students were employed. This was also better than the national average level and Jiangsu province, i.e. 84% and 89% (as shown in Table 9).

Table 9: Employment rate.

Employment rate when graduated	Changzhou College of Information Technology	69%
	Higher vocational colleges in Jiangsu	56%
	Higher vocational colleges around the country	46%
Employment rate after graduation	Changzhou College of Information Technology	95%
	Higher vocational colleges in Jiangsu	89%
	Higher vocational colleges around the country	84%

Specialty-Fitting Rate

The survey shows that the situation is not positive. Although 93% of the students were employed, only 47% of them had jobs that matched their specialty. This is lower than the national and Jiangsu province average levels. Of the remaining 7% of students, 2% are self-employed. 3% were unemployed job hunters, 2% do not wish to work for personal reasons, including 0.2% chose to continue studying (as shown in Table 10).

Table 10: Specialty-fitting rate.

Changzhou College of Information Technology	Having a job related to own major	47%
	Having a job not related to own major	46%
	Self-employed	2%
	College to undergraduate	0.2%
	Job hunters without a job	3%
	Unemployed for other reasons	2%
Higher vocational colleges in Jiangsu	Having a job related to own major	51%
	Having a job not related to own major	36%
	Self-employed	2%
	College to undergraduate	0.1%
	Job hunters without a job	9%
	Unemployed for other reasons	2%
Higher vocational colleges around the country	Having a job related to own major	50%
	Having a job not related to own major	33%
	Self-employed	1%
	College to undergraduate	0.1%
	Job hunters without a job	12%
	Unemployed for other reasons	4%

SITUATION OF TURNOVER

In this term, 46% of the graduates stayed in their positions for less than a year. 2% of those graduates were fired because of personal ability or poor performance. 92% of them resigned due to pressure, interest, salaries or personal ambition. Leave-on-job caused by two reasons account for 6% (as shown in Table 11).

Table 11: Situation of turnover.

Resignation	92%
Dismissal	2%
Leave-on-job	6%

SALARY LEVEL

About salary levels, graduates in Changzhou College of Information Technology in 2008 had a starting salary of 1,833 Yuan, but could expect to receive 2,205 Yuan after working for a year. The highest monthly payment that employers were willing to pay was 2,387 Yuan. These salary levels are better that the national averages of 1,237 Yuan (starting salary) and 1,647 Yuan (after one year) and 1,873 Yuan (highest) and Jiangsu province averages of 1,293 Yuan, 1,873 Yuan and 1,913 Yuan, respectively (as shown in Table 12).

Table 12: Salary level.

Changzhou College of Information Technology	Expected starting salary	1,883
	Salary after one year	2,205
	Highest salary agreed by employers	2,387
Higher vocational colleges in Jiangsu	Expected starting salary	1,293
	Salary after one year	1,873
	Highest salary agreed by employers	1,913
Higher vocational colleges around the country	Expected starting salary	1,237
	Salary after one year	1,647
	Highest salary agreed by employers	1,720

IMPACT

By analysing the above four aspects, the basic rule regarding job hunting and employment of students in vocational colleges has been presented. Colleges, enterprises and students have also gained valuable guidance from it. For colleges, they have improved the targeting of time for employment counselling and employment information for students. Students' satisfaction with employment guidance increased to 83% from 69%. For enterprises, they have more channels through which to recruit graduates and offered more reasonable salaries. The signing rate between enterprises and graduates has increased to 57% from 32%. For students, they have clarified their position better and made differentiated competitive strategies thereof. The overall employment rate of graduates has increased to 98% from 92%. To sum up, these are the influences and practical impacts of this study.

CONCLUSIONS

The three most important components of an employment system in higher vocational colleges are the basic system, the matching system and a feedback system. The feedback system is most likely to be overlooked [4]. Employment tracking, in fact, has irreplaceable value as a component of the employment management system. It is the bridge between college training and social needs [5]. Discrepancies in talent output and the changing social needs always exist.

Only through tracking investigations can the College catch up with variations and adjust their training system to adapt better to the needs of society. Changzhou College of Information Technology has made a valuable attempt to track the employed graduates by the introduction of Mycos. These investigations show not only the overall employment situation, but also the specific circumstances for every major. They provide the answers to *What is it?*, as well as *Why is that?* and give effective guidance for perfecting the talent cultivation system. They are not only social investigations, but also an important supplement of the modern management system in higher vocational colleges.

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