

Exploration of Practice-Oriented Educational Reform in “Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students”

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Abstract: “Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students” is a compulsory course offered by higher education institutions, serving as an essential form of employment counseling for students. It plays a significant role in shaping students’ vocational literacy and enhancing their employability, thereby addressing the issue of employment pressure faced by university students. This paper investigates the existing issues in the teaching of “Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students” and proposes specific measures to improve the quality of instruction: adopting a practice-oriented approach, optimizing teaching methods, and fostering a diverse teaching faculty. The implementation of these measures has yielded positive results, as evidenced by students’ enthusiastic participation, the cultivation of a proper career outlook, and the enhancement of students’ vocational planning and employability, ultimately leading to high-level employment outcomes.

Keywords: Practice-oriented; Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students; Educational Reform; Compulsory Course; Teaching Faculty; Employment

1. Introduction

The employment of university graduates has always been a top priority for the nation in addressing employment issues, and higher education institutions also attach great importance to the employment of their graduates. The employment of graduates serves as a direct criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of talent cultivation programs in universities, and the Ministry of Education publishes the employment rates of various universities each year. Influenced by factors such as the COVID-19 outbreak and increased

economic pressures, the employment situation for the graduating class of 2023 is extremely challenging, and the task of ensuring employment is formidable. Solving the employment issue for university graduates is not something that can be achieved in the last moments before graduation; rather, it requires cultivating students’ career planning abilities from the first year onwards, helping them develop skills in self-exploration, environment exploration, career decision-making, and career management. How to promote higher-quality employment and more comprehensive employment opportunities is a question that universities should consider carefully [1]. In May 2022, the *Notice on Further Enhancing the Work of Employment and Entrepreneurship for University Graduates and Other Youth* emphasized that the employment and entrepreneurship of university graduates and other youth are closely related to the well-being of the people, economic development, and the future of the nation. It also approved various measures related to youth employment and entrepreneurship [2]. *Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students*, as a compulsory course for university students, can help students open the doors to career exploration. Drawing on the author’s two years of teaching experience in this course, this paper explores the existing issues in teaching and proposes reform measures to enhance the quality of instruction and meet the practical needs of students.

2. Teaching Status of the Course

Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students is a compulsory course offered to all majors at Zhaoqing Medical College. It consists of 32 class hours and is taught in the first and fourth semesters of vocational students’ enrollment. Based on a written survey conducted among a total of 16 classes (consisting of 1,053 students)

from the Nursing School, the following issues were identified in terms of teaching:

2.1 Course Interest

Freshman students generally have a sense of novelty towards their university courses and are eager to explore their career development. They often engage in pre-reading the course materials and demonstrate strong self-discipline, actively participating in class and expressing their sincere interest. Approximately 90% of the freshman students find this course interesting. However, sophomore students tend to perceive the teaching as overly theoretical and lacking practical guidance for their future employment. Consequently, they lose interest in the course. This diminished interest is evident in the behaviors of the junior students, such as working on assignments for other courses, browsing the internet on their mobile phones, and feeling sleepy during class. It is crucial to consider how to transform this course into a “sought-after” or “golden” course, which poses a significant question for reflection.

2.2 Course Content

The current teaching content of the course *Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students* exhibits a lack of proper balance. Some universities prioritize the formal aspects of employment guidance courses, focusing heavily on theoretical content that is significantly disconnected from the current employment landscape and the specific needs of university students. This disconnect directly impacts the effectiveness of career development and employment guidance for students. Most teachers tend to emphasize lecturing over practical training during classes. However, this course is distinct in its strong emphasis on practical application. The primary focus should be on cultivating students’ awareness and essential capabilities in employment and entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, due to limitations in teachers’ perspectives and knowledge structures, the current teaching approach remains predominantly centered on the delivery of theoretical knowledge by the teachers, with minimal emphasis on incorporating practical components into the employment guidance curriculum to enhance students’ understanding of career development, employment, and entrepreneurial skills[3].

2.3 Teaching Faculty

Currently, the course *Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students* is primarily taught by university counselors. These counselors are generally young, energetic, and have strong learning abilities, but they lack firsthand employment and entrepreneurial experience. Additionally, university counselors are responsible for administrative tasks outside of teaching, such as student organizations and community engagement. These additional responsibilities prevent them from fully immersing themselves in course instruction. Furthermore, counselors themselves lack professional training in employment and entrepreneurship, which hinders their ability to effectively guide students in career planning. Students expect more lectures from practitioners with practical experience, such as entrepreneurs, corporate executives, employment mentors, psychologists, and alumni. In the eyes of students, these industry experts are perceived as more “professional” [4]. The deviation between the composition of the teaching faculty and the expectations of the students has resulted in poor teaching outcomes.

3. Teaching Reform Measures

3.1 Implementing Practice-oriented Teaching Methods

Currently, teachers of the course *Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students* have a stronger inclination towards delivering theoretical knowledge, while finding it more challenging to teach practical skills. This indicates that the teaching style of the teachers is more focused on theoretical knowledge, whereas students are more inclined towards practical knowledge. Prolonged theoretical lectures in the classroom can diminish students’ interest in learning. To enhance students’ employability, the delivery of theoretical knowledge is essential but should be proportionately reduced [5]. It is recommended that teachers of this course adopt a practice-oriented teaching approach to increase student engagement. Relevant departments within the university, such as entrepreneurship institutes, should allocate more resources to establish practical training centers in collaboration with various

companies, allowing students to visit these facilities and experience the real corporate environment. Given the course's emphasis on practical application, teaching methods should be more diverse compared to other courses. In addition to common methods like lectures, case studies, and group discussions, other approaches such as guest lectures, simulations, professional assessments, and field visits should be utilized more frequently [6].

3.2 Building a Diverse Teaching Faculty

The teaching faculty plays a crucial role in guiding university students in career development and entrepreneurship education. However, the current structure of the teaching faculty is relatively homogeneous [7]. Therefore, it is necessary for universities to make significant efforts in building a diverse teaching faculty, consisting not only of individuals with strong professional abilities but also of those with comprehensive qualities [8, 9]. While counselors serve as the primary instructors for the course *Career Development and Employment Guidance for University Students*, their role is often undervalued by students. Conversely, students have higher expectations for alumni, executives, and entrepreneurs who have practical experience to guide their employment courses. These professionals are more likely to provide practical, honest, and tangible insights during their course instruction. Moreover, they can offer students substantial employment resources and opportunities. However, the role of counselors should not be disregarded. As the main instructors, counselors need to actively participate in training programs for employment guidance and entrepreneurial practices, solidifying their theoretical foundation. The establishment of a diverse teaching faculty can provide strong support for students' employment prospects and contribute to the improvement of teaching outcomes [10, 11].

4. Conclusion

The employability of university graduates should be nurtured in a "holistic", "comprehensive", and "long-term" manner, starting from the first year of their studies, rather than being trained shortly before graduation. The course *Career Development and Employment Guidance for University*

Students serves as the key to opening the door for students' career exploration. Therefore, it is crucial to explore educational reforms for this course. By adopting practice-oriented teaching methods, building a diverse teaching faculty, and utilizing various instructional approaches, the quality of teaching can be significantly improved. The main manifestations of these improvements include a noticeable shift in students' learning attitudes, effective stimulation of classroom interest, guiding students to develop proper career perspectives, enhancing their vocational planning and employability qualities, ultimately leading to high-level employment outcomes.

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