

Reflection on “Occupational Planning Education” in Contemporary Institutions of Higher Learning

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This article is a periodical research achievement of cultivation subjects among young backbone teachers in the “Blue Project” launched by the Department of Education in Jiangsu Province in 2010.

Abstract

It is true that occupational career planning education at the stage of studying in universities is merely a starting stage in the occupational career of university students, it is of great significance to the sustainable development of university students in the future. Guiding students to know about and understand the idea of occupational planning at a new period is the theoretical premise for occupational planning among university students, whereas planned, scientific and rational formulation and implementation of measures for cultivation of occupational planning consciousness in institutions of higher learning is exactly the key for students to make a correct occupational planning.

Keywords: education in institutions of higher learning, occupational planning

1. Introduction

Under the circumstance when the employment situation in the whole society becomes increasingly austere, there are more and more university graduates who are out of work or are unemployed temporarily. However, one of the fundamental purposes of higher education is to let university students to acquire employment capacity, grasp means of livelihood and lay a foundation for their development in the future, which requires universities to offer comprehensive education and correct guidance in terms of students' employment, their occupational planning and their development of life, ask students to set up the consciousness of occupational planning ever at the stage of learning in the universities, and increase the rate of success in students' employment and venturing. Strengthening the occupational career planning education among university students helps students to find a correct position, set up a correct concept of employment and facilitate comprehensive development of students. At present, some universities in China have opened a series of curriculum for occupational and career planning education among university students. Nonetheless, generally speaking, occupational and career planning education has been developed for a short time in China, so there is still a long way to go to grow into mature individualized occupational and career planning guidance service. For the time being, a large majority of universities in China concentrate more on the form of occupational education than the process of occupational education, which causes a lot of occupational and career education curriculum to merely serve as a tool to “start to prepare at the last moment”. There are a large number of universities only intensively set up some occupational planning lectures or launch a series of expert consulting activities in order to increase the one-time employment rate of university students, but they ignore education of occupational planning for students during the whole period of university study and fail to regard occupational education and planning of university students as an important project and a systematic project to plan and implement. This kind of short term occupational education objective behavior does not have sustainable development, in which students only partly know about knowledge of occupational choice, so it does not have any real effect on development of students' occupational career in the future. Thus, the universities should correctly guide and cultivate students to have an idea about their own professional competence, come to know the occupation they may be engaged with in the future and learn to grasp skills and methods for occupational planning. Leading students to know about the

occupational planning at a new period and pioneering of measures to strengthen cultivation of students' occupational planning consciousness is one of important approaches for students to set up a correct concept of growth, concept of job hunting and concept of employment and to attempt to improve students' practical capacity, employment capacity and venturing capacity and is also one of the important approaches to enable students to become advanced application-based talents with comprehensive development and harmony of personality and occupation.

2. The Concept of Occupational Planning at a New Period

2.1 The Occupational Planning Concept of "Riding on a Camel to Look for a Horse"

In previous related occupational education, students are usually required to "love what they learn and do what they learn" and practitioners are required to go through to the end so as to succeed in an undertaking. However, at present, in the face of the fierce market competition, the traditional occupational concept can no longer adapt to the development of the society and, on the contrary, the concept of "riding on a camel to look for a horse" in employment seems especially important (Yao Yuqun, 2003). "Institutions of higher learning require students to have to possess the ability to respond to the changes since the market is changing each day and each student has to be flexible in order to survive and develop themselves. They are asked to be good at discovering any change and adapt to the change. No matter what kind of change takes place in the surrounding environment of the universities or at a certain stage of the life of students, they have to be good at discovering all kinds of opportunities and manipulate these opportunities." They should learn to "ride on a camel to look for a horse" because no one can ensure that they can find a suitable or a satisfying job and the contemporary social employers should often change their occupational roles, which requires the practitioners to be good at flexibly and swiftly change from a role to another role so as to adapt to the changes in the times and in the environment, to adjust their occupational quality in the continuous changes of the occupation and to search for an occupational that suits themselves and in which they can play their energy to the largest extent.

2.2 Strengthening the Innovative Consciousness of Creating a New Occupation

With the rapid development of the contemporary science and technology, newly emerging occupations emerge in a large number and some traditional occupations gradually die out. For instance, with emergence of the network, some new related occupations and positions continue to emerge, such as, "online store", "online model" and so on. The occupational planning of university students should also be in a repeatedly dynamic adjustment condition. If university students still keep their eyes closely on the traditional industries and occupations, it will necessarily lead to fierce competition of employment, which may put them in a quite unfavorable situation. The market needs to be continuously forged ahead and should be continuously developed for new skills. A compound society will not only demand professionalized knowledge of talents, but will also need universalized and multi-directional transferred skills. Considering the occupations of university students in the future, an individual should absolutely not merely concentrate on the temporary working environment and occupational development and commit himself to a certain sort of knowledge, but should meanwhile look forward at the front of social development and the routine development space and potential of this sort of professional knowledge in the social development in the future as well as the multi-directional expansion space it may bring. Generally speaking, the innovative consciousness to strengthen creativity and search for a new occupation with a long-term vision is more promising than mere proficiency in a narrow and professional knowledge in the competition of the occupational field.

2.3 The Employment Consciousness of "Returning of the Phoenix"

With the change in the social development model, the contemporary China has entered a rapid industrialized period and such labor intensive industries as manufacturing industry and service industry that did not receive any emphasis formerly have got rapid development, which offers a large amount of venturing and employment positions for a huge number of rural population and becomes a strong and powerful support for urbanization. At the same time, the government also makes great efforts to propel progress of urbanization and the government at all levels have promulgated corresponding encouraging measures. It is exactly the entire leap of Chinese economic development and the rapid boosting of urbanization and industrialization that venturing and employment opportunities in small towns and rural areas increase. On the contrary, almost all the vast majority of university graduates place their eyes upon developed cities, as a result of which the large cities are faced up with austere employment pressure. This social reality requires universities to guide students to change their consciousness of employment and to change from breaking from rural areas after graduation and realizing the fact that "a carp jumps over the dragon gate" previously to return to rural areas

university as a springboard to break away from rural areas previously to return to rural areas to search for greater employment consciousness of development after going to the university for further study (Feng Jin, 2009). At the time when university students make their occupational planning, the first thing they should take into consideration is to correctly and objectively recognize themselves and evaluate themselves, have a comprehensive and objective evaluation on their knowledge, capacity, morality and personality, etc., have a perfect perception of themselves, confirm a rational value of expectation, ask themselves to know fairly well in the process of searching for a job and place themselves on a suitable position to hunt for a job". Students should not confine themselves to the fierce competition of "carp jumping over the dragon gate". On the contrary, "return of the phoenix" might open a capacious door of life development for the employment and venturing. Determination of an occupational goal needs to be formulated at different stages according to the social development characteristics at different periods and according to the professional characteristics, work capacity and interest and favor of students and should be adjusted according to the degree of maneuverability in implementation. They are prohibited to ignore the objective society and follow suits blindly.

3. Measures to Strengthen Students' Cultivation of the Consciousness of Occupational Planning

3.1 Construction and Cultivation of Excellent Professionalized Occupational Guiding Teachers

Guidance and education for occupational and career planning of students call for participation and cooperation of professionalized teachers. Hence, the premise to strengthen cultivation of occupational planning consciousness among university students is to have excellent and professionalized occupational guidance teachers. University students are at a stage from dependence to independence and their self-control power is relatively weak. Especially, the contemporary university students' living circle has been largely expanded, so they are faced up with much more temptation than before and it is unscientific and difficult to realize to merely depend on students themselves to make a plan for occupational and career planning. Therefore, the key to occupational and career planning and counseling of university students lies in high-quality and professionalized occupational education guidance teachers (Wang Chen, 2005). "On one hand, the universities need to train backbone teachers and disciplinary teachers as the part-time personnel for occupational and career counseling and education of students, enhance the consciousness, skills and guiding capacity of teachers in terms of conducting occupational and career counseling and education, require the professional teachers to integrate occupational and career planning materials in the process of disciplinary or professional teaching, influence students unconsciously and let students progressively establish the consciousness and thinking of occupational and career planning." Western European and American countries that are developed in terms of occupational education have high demand on the professionalized level and quality of teachers who are engaged in employment guidance. Generally speaking, the director of a center is required to possess a master or doctor degree in tutoring, counseling, and higher education, counselor for student employment is required to possess a master or doctor degree in psychology and even common full-time working staff are required to possess a master degree in tutoring and counseling. In the meantime, these working staff are required to have some experiences in conducting social business or teaching, have perfect interpersonal communication competence, high sense of responsibility, encyclopedical social knowledge and have close contact with and understanding of the enterprises and social associations, etc. Excellent and professionalized occupational guidance teachers should not only depend on continuous cultivation of the institutions of higher learning, but should also absorb and bring in excellent producers and managers with rich experiences in production and management in a variety of enterprises through multiple channels. It is also necessary to strengthen the cultivation model of cooperation between university and enterprises. Only excellent and professionalized occupational guidance teachers may offer practical and feasible guidance for occupational planning of students and provide suggestions of important reference value.

3.2 Perfect and Highly Effective Employment Service System

In addition to efforts by university students and positive guidance by teachers, realization of their occupational planning and occupational ideal also needs the society to form a complete and highly effective university student employment guidance system with the subjects of the government, institution of higher learning, intermediary institute and employing unit and offer employment guidance and service with overall content, diversified patterns and advanced methods for the vast majority of university graduates. All these subjects should each perform their own function and cooperate with a division of responsibilities to complete employment and venturing of university students together. The major function of the government is to organize survey about employment, carry out related employment and venturing policies and measures and set up a nationwide popular employment guidance and service network platform. Institution of higher learning should make efforts to strengthen reform in cultivation of talents and strengthen education and guidance in the process of employment planning and venturing exploration. The employing unit is supposed to provide positions of internship for

university graduates based on the principle of fairness and honest. These institutions and units supplement each other and positively cooperate to form a complete and highly effective service system. Institution of higher learning should take an initiative in cooperating with enterprises and public institutions and scientific institutes to construct a cooperative relationship of industry, university and research institute, practically enhance students' practice ability, combine students' production practice and assuming a project of the production units, try to make a large part of the selected topics in curriculum design and graduation design come from an authentic enterprise project and realize connection of the cultivation process and production reality. Combination of industry, university and research institute helps students to take part in the production projects of the enterprises, finish the production task and scientific research task, convert the knowledge they have learnt in the university into the productive capacity in the enterprises in practice, internalize the capacity into quality and get overall exercise and growth in practice. Meanwhile, the universities should positively invite managers and chief engineers of the enterprises to the universities to take the part-time position as a professor to participate in the curriculum setting of the universities. On one hand, they may directly bring their experiences in engineering cases and engineering spirit into the classroom. On the other hand, they may be invited to take part in revision and improvement of the project of talent cultivation, make talent cultivation closer to the engineering reality so that students may be able to be integrated earlier into the actual working environment of the enterprises. Only if multiple departments cooperate together can it be really possible to form a complete and highly effective employment service system and occupational planning of students may be really tried and fulfilled in the future.

3.3 Construction of Occupational Planning Curriculum System

Curriculum education is an important aspect in the occupational planning education system of university students and is also an important carrier for implementation of occupational guidance of the entire process. Occupational and career planning started late in China, so students have a weak consciousness in this regard. In order to let students come to know about it and accept it, the universities have to set up in a scientific way curriculum teaching content. The stage of studying in the university is not an implementation stage in the occupational development, but a preparation stage in the occupational development. Hence, curriculum for occupational and career education of university students is not simply to copy a variety of books about occupational planning and occupational counseling that are published in the contemporary society. Instead, curriculum teaching content should be set up according to the target of systematicalness, periodicity and continuity. In addition to covering the basic theory and method of occupational and career planning that students should grasp, the teaching content should also take into consideration of the specific condition of the current higher education in China, carry out a systematic curriculum teaching content and practically help students to plan their university career and occupational career in a scientific way. In addition, the rapid development of the scientific technology and the optimization and updating of the national industrial structure have proposed new demands on quality of talents. All the above requires us to have to adjust the curriculum system and the teaching content in due course and realize seamless connection with demands of the enterprises. We are supposed to carry out the management system of continuously changing the implementation project of occupational and career education among university students in the specific practice. In the specific implementation process, institutions of higher learning should also make full use of all kinds of resources, especially resources in the first line production enterprises, set up a platform of practice and exercise for students, let students know more about the actual need of the social production, and, at the time of exercising their own capacity, examine whether their occupational and career design is rational, so as to make corresponding adjustment and promote their occupational and career development in the future. They should invite professional personnel in enterprises to take part in planning of university students' occupational and career curriculum teaching and in revision of the teaching syllabus and in compilation of the teaching material, invite experts in enterprises to come to the university to have a lecture and assume part of the teaching task of the curriculum. This sort of teaching content is more close to the production reality of the enterprises, helps to shorten students' distance between the university and the enterprises, promote students' learning content to more suit with the need of the enterprises and enable the teaching activities of teachers to have the effect of half the work with double results.

3.4 Scientific Setting and Management of Students' Organization

The Ministry of Education and the Central Committee of the Communist Young League pointed out in "Opinions on Strengthening and Improving University Students' Social Work" that was promulgated in 2005, "Social work of university students is an important approach and effective means to implement quality-oriented education and plays an extremely important role in enhancing students' comprehensive quality, directing students to suit themselves with the society, and to promote students to select a job". Thus, it has become an important measure in expanding university students' employment channels and promoting their employment to make full use of the

peculiar advantages of social organizations of students in institutions of higher learning, facilitate university students' individualized development, stimulate their innovative thinking potential and foster their employment capacity. The social associations of students can develop students' personal interest, favor and speciality, consolidate the friendship of the students, enhance their overall quality and realize the effective means of self management, self service, self education and self development as a student group organization that is constituted with a volunteer method by students. Students may attempt and explore their thought in a bold way in the ordinary social association activities and continue to strengthen their occupational accomplishment and planning direction in continuous success and failure. As a beautiful landscape in the university campus culture, the social association of university students is playing a more and more important role in terms of cultivation of the occupational planning capacity of university students and their employment capacity, innovative and venturing capacity, etc. Scientific setting and management of students' social association will necessarily become an experimental site and incubator for students' employment and venturing.

4. Concluding Remarks

Occupational planning education among university students is a long term and systematic project, which plays an irreplaceable role in improving the employment competitive strength of university students and leading university students in rational thinking and planning of their life track and development path, etc. Although the occupational and career planning education at the stage of studying in the university is just a starting one in the occupation of university students, it is of critical importance to sustainable development of students in the future. Hence, institutions of higher learning should regard the occupational planning capacity education of university students as a central content in the contemporary cultivation of students' occupational skills and run it through all the stages of the university education, set up a complete occupational planning capacity education system and offer scientific guidance for occupational planning of university students at multiple levels and from multiple perspectives. Institutions of higher learning should require the students to obtain the employment capacity in the realistic society, grasp the opportunities of innovation and venturing and lay a foundation for their occupational development in the future. Institutions of higher learning should do their best to cultivate the direct university students' consciousness of occupational and career planning, which will not only become a major feature of education in institutions of higher learning at a new period, but will also become a social responsibility of the educational department.

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