

Literature Review on the Employability of Normal University Students

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Abstract

This paper explores the employability of normal university students, emphasizing its significance to educational development and teacher team construction. It reviews the evolution of employability models, including factor exploration, structural composition, and elemental relationship models, highlighting their theoretical and practical contributions. The study also examines employability assessment methods, scale dimensions, development methodologies, and measurement approaches. By synthesizing domestic and international research, the paper provides insights into enhancing normal students' employability through educational reforms and career development support.

Keywords

Employability of Normal University Students; Employability Models; Employability Assessment

1.Introduction

The employability of normal university students is crucial to the Party's educational cause and the quality of talent cultivation. It is also closely related to the development of primary and secondary school teaching staff and the healthy and sustainable development of education. In recent years, as China's higher education has entered the stage of massification, normal university students from local institutions are facing difficulties in employment. Therefore, it has become an important task for local normal universities to carry out employment-oriented educational and teaching reforms to enhance the employability of normal university students and meet the demands of job positions.

2. The connotation of Employability of Normal University Students

The employability of normal school students encompasses the comprehensive skills, talents, and personality traits demonstrated by these students in various activities aimed at securing teaching positions. This employability is developed through a

combination of inherent physical and psychological qualities, as well as acquired knowledge and practical experience. It reflects the extent and level of their adaptability and resilience in fulfilling the responsibilities of a teaching role. Furthermore, it represents a dynamic capability exhibited by normal school students in engaging in educational activities and advancing their professional development as educators.

3. The employment ability model

Employability competency models serve as core tools for analyzing individuals' career development potential, with their construction logic and measurement dimensions directly influencing talent cultivation directions and educational reform outcomes. In recent years, as higher education becomes more popular and job market competition intensifies, research on the employability of normal university students has gradually emerged as a hotspot. This paper systematically reviews the theoretical evolution and practical explorations of employability models at home and abroad, aiming to provide a theoretical basis for constructing an employability model for undergraduate normal students in local universities.

3.1. Factor Exploration Models: From Elemental Listing to Contextual Screening

Early studies focused on identifying the constituent elements of employability through empirical research. Chinese scholars such as Wang Ting, Zeng Xiangquan, and Yang Yumei proposed a three-factor model based on case interviews, categorizing employability into knowledge, skills, and attitudes[1]. Wang Yuan further expanded this into a four-factor model, including cognitive ability, individual reliability, communication cooperation, and self-awareness[2]. As research advanced, multi-factor models emerged: Wang Peijun proposed a five-factor model encompassing analytical ability, job-seeking ability, professional competence, adaptability, and ethics[3]; Tao Xiaoxia constructed a seven-dimensional framework integrating social practice ability, intellectual competence, and other elements[4]. These models validated the multidimensionality of employability through quantitative analysis, yet the lack of a unified theoretical foundation left unclear logical relationships between elements.

3.2. Structural Composition Models: From Linear Decomposition to Systematic Integration

To address the fragmentation of factor models, scholars shifted to systematic structural studies. Kang Tinghu et al. proposed a two-dimensional multiple model, using career acquisition and development capabilities as vertical axes and role cognition, interpersonal management, and social adaptation as horizontal axes to form a three-dimensional structure[5]. Based on career development theory, Shi Wei constructed a spherical model dividing employability into core (emotional competence), developmental (self-development ability), and applied (applied competence) layers,

emphasizing dynamic interactions among levels[6]. These models transcended single-dimensional limitations but still lacked sufficient explanations for competency formation mechanisms.

3.3. Elemental Relationship Models: From Static Correlation to Dynamic Mechanism

Relationship models focus on revealing dynamic connections between competency elements. The DOTS model proposed by Bill Law and Anthony Watts emphasized cyclic interactions among decision learning, opportunity awareness, transition learning, and self-perception[7]. The USEM model by Mantz Yorke and Peter Knight integrated subject understanding, professional skills, self-efficacy, and metacognitive abilities, highlighting the mediating role of reflection and evaluation[8]. These models validated causal relationships through path analysis but faced practical challenges due to their complexity.

Domestic studies have adapted Western theories to local contexts. Song Guoxue constructed a five-dimensional evaluation system from an employability perspective, emphasizing alignment between individual and organizational needs[9]. Jia Lijun found through empirical research that employability consists of professional competence, general abilities, and personal traits, with general abilities exerting the most significant impact on employment outcomes[10]. Peng Shuhong further refined this into a nine-dimensional model covering introspection, teamwork, and other elements, providing specific indicators for university career guidance[11]. However, existing models commonly face three issues: conceptual generalization (confusing terms like "employability" and "hireability"), theoretical-practical disconnects, and a lack of vocational specificity—especially for normal students[12]. The construction of employability models requires balancing theoretical depth and practical value. This study will draw on social cognitive theory and competency theory to explore the structural dimensions of employability for undergraduate normal students in local universities through qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis, providing theoretical support for educational reforms and career development.

4. A study on employability assessment

Regarding the assessment of employability, extensive studies have been conducted by international scholars, resulting in diverse indicator systems and measurement scales from various perspectives. However, few scales specifically target university students. Domestic research on employability assessment began relatively late, with limited literature on the topic. Below, we review existing studies from three aspects: scale dimensions, scale development methodologies, and measurement approaches.

4.1. Scale Dimensions

The dimensions of employability scales vary depending on the research objectives. Scales designed for self-assessment of personal employability emphasize individu-

al-level factors, whereas those intended for organizational screening prioritize organizational-level criteria. For instance, Chinese scholar Zheng Tianchi (2011) identified six dimensions of employability for university students to explore key influencing factors: knowledge integration ability, practical skills, social and interpersonal skills, psychological adaptability, job-seeking competencies, and teamwork capabilities. This scale focuses on organizational screening purposes[13]. In contrast, Dutch scholars Claudia M. Van Der Heijde and Beatrice I. J. M. Van der Heijden (2006) developed a five-dimensional scale emphasizing self-assessment, including occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense, and balance[14].

4.2. Scale Development Methodologies

Scale development typically combines literature analysis, empirical surveys, and expert consultation. Sun Liujie (2008) employed interviews, questionnaires, and literature review to identify seven dimensions of university students' employability[15]. Peng Shuhong (2014) derived a nine-dimensional employability structure through individual interviews, expert discussions, and pilot surveys at five universities, subsequently developing a self-assessment scale[16]. Jia Lijun and Guan Jingjuan (2013) utilized literature analysis, questionnaires, interviews, and the Delphi method to create a self-evaluation scale for student employability[17]. Jin Xin (2012) integrated literature review, student interviews, job advertisement analysis, and surveys to propose a four-dimensional employability framework with 13 sub-dimensions, along with a preliminary measurement scale[18].

4.3. Measurement Approaches

Current employability assessments primarily rely on self-report questionnaires, supplemented by external evaluations or behavioral observations. The CareerEDGE model (Pool & Sewell, 2007), based on career development and experiential learning, is widely adopted in higher education for self-assessment[19]. Ma Shaozhuang et al. (2012) developed a self-assessment scale for Chinese graduates, though further validation—particularly of content validity—is required[20]. Van Der Heijde et al. employed a dual approach combining self- and supervisor evaluations across five dimensions. Their study on age-related differences found that older workers self-reported lower flexibility, while supervisors noted differences only in the balance dimension.

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