A Comparative Study on Higher Education Graduates’ Employment Policies between China and the United States

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Abstract: The popularization of tertiary attainment has led to the increasing number of university graduates in various countries. However, the limited social demand poses a huge threat to the employment of college graduates. In addition, the international financial crisis caused by the US subprime mortgage crisis has swept over most countries and regions in the world, and the employment of Chinese and American college graduates has also been seriously affected. Chinese and American governments have implemented active policies and measures to facilitate the employment of graduates. Using the policy analysis method, this thesis attempts to compare the employment policies of university graduates issued by China and the United States, expounds the existing employment circumstances of graduates in China and the United States under the severe employment situation, and analyzes the impact of the employment policies of China and the United States on graduates’ employment.

Keywords: Higher education, Employment policy, Graduates, China and United States.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, the employment difficulty of college graduates has become a concern for all walks of life. With the popularization of tertiary attainment in most countries and regions such as the United States, China, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Russia, the numbers of college graduates are shooting up year by year. According to the statistics of China’s Ministry of Education (CMOE), the quantity of tertiary attainment graduates in 2020 is expected to achieve eight point seven four million as a new high, with a year-on-year growth of 400,000 (CMOE, 2019). In addition, since the reform and opening up from 1978, the average annual growth rate of China’s GDP has been close to 10%, but after 2008, China’s economic growth rate has gradually slowed down. In 2019, the economic growth rate dropped to 6.1%, and the economy has altered from high-speed growth to medium-high-speed growth (International Monetary Fund, 2020). According to the statistics of the United Nations (UN, 2020), global economic growth rate may achieve two points five percent in 2020.

The continued downturn in global economic activity could cause to serious setbacks in the sustainable moving process, including the objectives of inventing decent occupations for all (UN, 2020). Thus, affected by the continuous downturn of the market economy and the reduction of employment demands of most enterprises, the employment status of college graduates is becoming not pessimistic. Solving the employment dilemmas of HEIs graduates becomes a significant challenge for the development of tertiary attainment.

The United States is the earliest developed country in the world to enter the popularization of tertiary attainment. For accelerating the full employment of college graduates, the federal and states governments of the United States have made corresponding employment policies according to their different situations. With the rapid advancement of tertiary attainment, China’s the expansion of college enrollment and the impact of the financial crisis, the Chinese government has also issued many employment policies to solve the problem of graduates’ employment difficulties. However, China’s employment policy for HEIs’ graduates has not yet developed and improved, which has affected the effective play of the role of actively accelerating the employment of college students. In contrast, the United States has formed a comprehensive and perfect employment system for college students. In this context, this research chooses the comparative study of the employment policies of Chinese and the United States college graduates, aiming to explore the differences between the two through the comparison of the impact of the employment policies of China and the United States on the employment of college graduates, so as to learn from the successful experience of the United States to ameliorate the employment system of Chinese graduates.

1.2 Employment Situation of Graduates in China and the United States Higher Education

1.2.1 Employment Situation of Chinese University Graduates

In May 1995, China put forward the strategic decision of “Rejuvenating the Country through Science and Education,” which directly led to the continuous expansion of the scale of college graduates. The tactics of invigorating the country through science and education has improved the national education system and gradually improved the education level of the population. Since the integration of tertiary attainment and the expansion of enrollment in HEIs in China, the number of people receiving tertiary attainment has risen rapidly in a short period of time, and tertiary attainment has gradually altered from elitism to popularization. According to the education statistics of CMOE, the total number of graduates of Chinese tertiary attainment institutions in the past 20 years (2000-2019), including postgraduates and undergraduates in regular HEIs, has been sorted as shown in Figure 1.
From 2000 to 2019, the number of tertiary education graduates in China increased from approximately 1.07 million to above 8.34 million. The college graduates in 2019 is nearly eight times higher than that in 2000 and outstripped 2 million than that in 2010. In the past 20 years, the group of tertiary education graduates in China has increased rapidly at a rate of nearly 400 thousand to 500 thousand per year, and according to the statistical column chart (Figure1), the figure presents that there is no the totality of graduates in any year shows a downward trend. According to the latest information released by CMOE (2020), the headcount of Chinese graduates in 2020 is expected to gain 8.74 million, a new high in 20 years. In addition, the sudden impact of the novel coronavirus epidemic leads the employment and entrepreneurship of graduates in tertiary education to face a complex situation.

Regarding the employment situation, in the light of the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), the distribution of the unemployment rate of university graduates in the United States between 2000 and 2019 is shown in the Figure 4. This figure shows that the consequences of the Great Depression since 2008 have caused considerable detriment to the employment prospects of young individuals who have just entered the labor market after graduating from university. However, with the progress of economic conditions in recent years, the employment and wage growth prospects of American college graduates have been slowly improving. Although the economy strengthened in 2019 compared with those who have just graduated after the recent economic downturn, the outlook for the labor market in 2019 is still not as stable as in 2000, and the unemployment rate of university graduates (2.1%) is superior than 2000 (1.7%) level.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Employment Situation of College Graduates’ in China and the United States

2.1.1 Employment Situation of College Graduates’ in China

Employment is a sensitive social issue and the basis of people’s livelihood. The employment status of graduates has always been an intense topic in the world, since their employment problem is not only related to the vital interests of graduates, but also related to the overall status of national development and stability (e.g., Chen & Ma, 2019; Hu, 2015; Ma, Tian & Xiang, 2019; Meng, 2018; Sun & Hou, 2019; Guo, 2019). The analysis of the employment status of graduates in China is generally from the perspective of employment supply and demand, employment distribution, and employment psychology of graduates.

In terms of research on employment supply and demand, the trend of the popularization of tertiary attainment has led to the growing number of applicants year by year, while China is in the middle and low-end position in the world industrial chain, and the social demand of high-end occupation in China is limited, which has led to the limited use of some higher education professionals (Sun and Hou, 2019). China is now in the period of strategic opportunity of economic transformation and upgrading. Although the development of new economy, new business form and new industry provides multiple employment opportunities for graduates, the contradiction of employment structure appears. The contradiction of the mismatching of the economic and industrial development of talent training in colleges and universities is more prominent (Meng, 2018).

From the perspective of employment distribution, on account of the background of the post economic crisis, Hu (2015) argued the overall employment situation of the society is severely hit by the economic crisis. College students flock to civil servants and public institutions to obtain stable income and choose enterprises with talent shortage to first accumulate experience and then choose the opportunity to change jobs (Meng, 2018). The differences in regional economic development affect the employment direction of college students. Most of the graduates are reluctant to go to small and medium-sized enterprises, private enterprises or remote and underdeveloped areas in the West for development (Ma, Tian, & Xiang, 2019).

From the perspective of graduates’ employment psychology, Guo (2019) studied the analysis model of the dilemma of employment difficulties of students from HEIs caused by the lag of ideas, points out that there are deviations in the employment expectation of graduates, and the graduates’ employment outlook shows strong utilitarian, elite color as well as traditional concept overestimates the current situation of higher education output. Through the investigation and research on the existing circumstances and causes of college Students’ employment psychology under the novel normal of economy, Chen and Ma (2019) expounded that the severe employment situation brings huge psychological pressure to graduates, and at the same time causes a series of bad psychological problems.
2.1.2 Employment Situation of College Graduates’ in the United States

The aftermath of the Great Recession in the United States has dramatically damaged the employment prospects of young people who entered the labor market right after graduating from universities, and this detriment has continued until recovery. In 2011, the unemployment rate of tertiary education institutions graduates in the United States entered a peak period, and the unemployment rate of recent tertiary education institutions graduates reached 12.1% (Yu, 2012). However, as economic conditions continue to improve in recent years, employment and wage growth prospects for young graduates have been slowly improving.

Due to the influence of the highly developed American economy, the youth labor market in the United States is basically in a relatively balanced state in terms of the number of jobs it needs and the supply of higher education. However, when the 2008 economic crisis came, due to the low level of government intervention, the number of jobs in terms of labor demand was reduced, resulting in an unprecedented flat employment rate. Especially for fresh college graduates, one way to adapt to the harsh labor market conditions is to choose to be mal-employment rather than unemployed. Younger university graduates are increasingly choosing to work that do not use the knowledge, skills, and abilities usually developed by obtaining a university degree, rather than accepting alternative methods of unemployment (Neeta & Paul, 2012). Jaison and colleagues (2014) concluded that although ensuring that the job after college is still a challenge for many people, a better understanding of the state of the labor market can help more college graduates find a good job after graduation.

In addition, tertiary education in the United States is employment-oriented. Faced with the pressure of employment competition, universities in the United States attach great importance to attracting students through various measures and take the employment rate and employment quality of college graduates as essential indicators (Zhao & Chen, 2007). Tertiary education institutions in the United States also pay attention to employment service guidance and take improving college students’ employability as a vital concept of curriculum (Li & Fang, 2011).

2.2 Employment Policy in China and the United States

2.2.1 Research on Employment Policy in China

Employment policy is the fundamental means to make the unemployed and new labor force obtain employment. It refers to a series of programs and measures that the government and social groups make and promote in order to solve the dilemma of labor employment in the real society. Zhu and Guo (2019) combed the change process of China’s public employment policy. They put forward that in the future employment policy adjustment and innovation, the government should integrate various employment influencing factors, and focus on the strategic layout at the central level and the people. Xie and Chen (2019) based on the relevant employment policies issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, through a comprehensive review and analysis of the process of China’s employment policy change, summed up the structure and shortcomings of the employment system, and put forward corresponding countermeasures and suggestions.

However, the number of research literature on the employment policy of graduates in China has been relatively small so far. From the perspective of research results, the relevant research on the employment system of graduates in China is mainly divided into several aspects. First is based on the perspective of policy evolution. Zhou and Chen’s (2005) made a comprehensive review of the evolution of China’s employment policy for students and summarizes the phased changes in the employment policy. In addition, similar research has been done by Wei (2015) and Wang (2014). The second is the study of the problems and countermeasures of employment policy and the enlightenment of foreign graduate employment policy to China. Yao (2004) illustrated the relationship between the employment supply and demand of Chinese university graduates and the environment of market employment, pointed out the difficulties of the employment policy, and put forward the importance of education system reform. Liu (2008) explicated the existing circumstances of labor demand, supply and the matching of labor supply and demand, and elaborated the positive measures to improve the existing circumstances of employment and advance the employment of college students in foreign countries.

2.2.2 Researches on Employment Policy in the United States

With the popularization of tertiary attainment, the market-led model of college student employment has begun to face the employment crisis caused by the increase in employment groups. In the context of the 2008 financial crisis, the employment rate of tertiary education institutions graduates in the United States has been strongly impacted. For this reason, the United States government has adopted a set of employment policies to facilitate employment. Ferner and colleagues (2005) mentioned the current status and characteristics of employment in the United States during the period of economic globalization, and analyzed that United States government adopted a more diversified employment policy to solve the problem of underemployment.

Another study noted that the United States’ labor market has been under great pressure because of the popularity of tertiary education. To ease the deadlock, the U.S. government has made great efforts in the employment system, regulation, policies and implementation measure (Elias & Purcell, 2004). In addition, McGuinness and Bennett (2007) believe that the United States has been already facing the employment dilemma caused by over education. Although the employment guidance system for graduates has been nearly perfect. The federal government should play a part in facilitating the employment of graduates. The authors also propose that the government are able to encourage establishment of a win-win cooperation model between university and enterprises, so that students could better adapt to social work after graduation.

In recent years, the United States has begun to implement “return-based employment” reforms, and making employment a return is an up-and-coming trend in the improvement of the United States tertiary education
employment policies. The United States’ emphasis on employment and making employment a return to tertiary education is undoubtedly a step closer to improving the relevance and professionalism of talent training (Luo & Sun, 2018). Luo and Sun (2018) also proposed that “employment as return” should be written into the law, which is a reflection of the continuous extension of the protection of college students’ employment rights to the education process.

2.3 A Comparative Study of Employment Policies between China and the United States

With the popularization of tertiary attainment, the research results of the employment policies of college students in various countries are becoming abundant, but the number of Chinese scholars’ comparative studies on the employment policies of tertiary attainment students in China and the United States is relatively small. Based on the analysis of the existing research results in China, the dissertation summarizes the research on the employment policies of Chinese and American tertiary attainment students into two aspects: one is the comparative study on the employment policies of Chinese and American college students under the economic background; the other is the comparative study on the employment service system. Authors stated the existing circumstances of the employment of Chinese and American tertiary attainment students under the financial crisis, compares and analyzes the employment policies issued by China and the United States for financial institutions, and gives enlightenment suggestions for the employment policies of Chinese tertiary attainment students (Yue & Wang, 2011). The author analyzed the employment service system of China and the United States, and points out that although the political, economic and cultural aspects of China and the United States are different, but there are still many similarities in the objectives and contents of the construction of the employment service system for tertiary attainment students (He, 2012).

Besides, Ni (2016) compared the employment guidance institutions at the school level and employment psychology at the individual level in China and the United States. The United States tertiary education institutions have productive employment guidance, which can help graduates comprehensively find employment. The content of employment guidance and institution setting in China’s colleges and universities is relatively single, and there is no targeted guidance for the career progress of graduates. On the other hand, the United States college graduates have a better sense of independence and have definite plans. Chinese college students rely too much on the system, schools, and parents and pay more attention to material benefits in career selection.

With the development of the Sino-US trade war in recent years, it has greatly affected the employment situation in China and the United States. In the past 25 years, China’s shock has had a significant passive influence on the United States manufacturing industry, leading to manufacturing Employment in the industry declined. So, the United States government began to provide employment services on a wider scale. Since then, the Trump administration has waged a trade war with China to revitalize American manufacturing and create more jobs for lower-level workers (Bloom, 2019). Li combed the impact of Sino-US trade frictions on employment in the two countries and pointed out that the Sino-US trade war had a more obvious employment impact on China’s employment, reducing China’s employment (Li, 2018). Therefore, China should establish an employment emergency mechanism to deal with trade conflicts as soon as possible to prevent large-scale unemployment due to trade conflicts in the short term.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Methods

The subject of this study is the employment policy of graduates from China and U.S. The article would compare the employment policies of China and America from the theoretical and practical aspects, and compare the impact of the employment policies issued by China and US on college graduates. On this basis, suggestions and Countermeasures to alleviate the existing circumstances of the employment difficulties of college students would be expected to put forward.

This study belongs to qualitative research, which uses the method of policy analysis. First of all, we would collect relevant employment policies issued by the PR China and the United States federal government for college graduates. Then, through the comparative analysis of research methods, the research would expound the employment policies of Chinese and American university graduates.

To make the connotation and extension of the research more abundant, clear and scientific, we would collect the vital literature related to college students’ employment to obtain comprehensive information. With the help of literature research and data analysis methods, the dissertation would study the current situation of the employment of Chinese and American university students, the historical evolution and development of the employment policies of China and the United States.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

From the perspective of policy, this study compares the employment policies of college graduates from China and the United States. The original data in this article are all from official statistics, mainly the official data gained by the Chinese and the United States government departments. Data on China side come from the CMOE and the MyCos Research Institute. Data of US mainly come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the United States Department of Education.

This study will integrate these relevant data into a database, which will help to answer three research questions of this study. In specific, this study will summarize all the collected documents. The employment policies of college graduates from China and the U.S. will be recorded and organized in chronological order using an Excel table to make a database of documents. This method can clearly show the employment policies of China and the U.S. in different periods. Besides, the literature collection helps to understand the development
and research status of employment policies in China and the U.S.

Since most of the qualitative data is literature, researchers will familiarize with the data during the research process and then start exploring the answers to research questions. Moreover, the researchers will link research findings to hypotheses or research objectives. Then, the researchers will re-examine the research objectives of this study and determine that the collected data and literature can answer the research questions.

4. Findings

In the process of historical progress, China and the United States, according to their different national conditions and the employment status of graduates, have issued relevant policies that are in line with the development of HEIs students’ employment and alleviate the difficult situation of graduates’ employment. In this section, the development of employment policies of Chinese and American college students over the years would be specifically introduced and the latest positive employment policies issued by China and USA in response to the novel COVID-19 pandemic would be analyze.

4.1 Graduates’ Employment Policies in China

Since the founding of the PR China 70 years ago, the Chinese government has taken solving the employment problem of tertiary attainment students as an essential work throughout, and has carried out continuous practice and exploration, accumulating rich and valuable experience. In China, the evolution of employment policy has proceeded three stages: 1949-1984, 1985-1999 and 2000-present (see Table 1).

In the first stage (1949-1984), the employment system was under the unified management of the state government and put fairness first. The employment practice of graduates in China has undergone “Sub-national Turnkey” which is a government-planning assignment employment mechanism. The main goal of this period was to stabilize employment by means of unified management and employment, and to promote the transfer of young knowledge workers to rural areas to contribute to the local construction and political and economic development.

Table 1: Higher education graduates’ employment policies in China (1949-2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949-1984 (Fairness First)</td>
<td>Instructions for Dealing with Old Staff</td>
<td>1949</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary Instructions on Unemployment Relief</td>
<td>1950</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Residence Registration</td>
<td>1958</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985-1999 (Fairness First and Efficiency Second)</td>
<td>Regulations on the Implementation of Some Issues Concerning the Educated Youth Going up the Mountain and Down to the Countryside</td>
<td>1973</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision of the CPC Central Committee on the Reform of Education System</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reform of Graduate Distribution System in Colleges and Universities (Medium-Term Reform Plan)</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Program for the Reform and Development of Education in China</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Outline of China’s Education Reform and Development</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On the Reform of the System of Enrollment and Employment of Graduates in Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>1995</td>
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In the second period (1985-1999), the employment policy of college students gave consideration to both fairness and efficiency, but still put fairness first. In 1985, the “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on the Reform of Education System” adopted by the Third Plenary Session of the 12th Central Committee of the CPC broke the employment policy of “Uniform Distribution,” and marked that China’s employment policy entered the stage of fairness first and efficiency second (CMOE, 1985).

In the third stage (2000-Present), the employment policy of graduates put fairness and efficiency in the same critical position, and the employment permit, which is the certificate for the graduates of the colleges and universities and the secondary professional schools (Full-time, i.e. Unified Enrollment) to report to the employment unit, of college students has changed from “Dispatch Permit” to “Registration Permit.” The system of employment promotion, employment support, social security and employment service has been formed.

In different historical periods, China has constantly adjusted its employment policies according to the socioeconomic development and social contradictions, and actively explored and optimized the employment channels and security mechanisms for college students. Nowadays, the new coronavirus pandemic has seriously affected the employment of graduates. In April 2020, CMOE issued the latest employment policy for graduates, “Notice on Coping with COVID-19 Pandemic and the 2020 National College Graduates’ Employment and Entrepreneurship” (CMOE, 2020). The policy mainly includes the following parts.

First, this policy aims to strengthen online employment services. The government vigorously promotes campus recruitment activities, provides 24-hour online recruitment services for graduates, and opens online contract signing and online employment procedures. At the same time, the employer and recruitment information on the Internet shall be strictly reviewed.

Second, universities and colleges will appropriately extend the time of job selection. HEIs should keep the registered permanent residence and files in the school for two years according to the regulations for the graduates who leave the school without working units, and guide the employers to delay the time limit for the new graduates to register and settle down.

Third, the government will vigorously develop employment channels, promote graduates’ employment, and increase opportunities for further study. The government encourages to...
increase the recruitment of teachers and expand the enrollment of master’s degree students and the scale of college upgrading. Besides, the government will recruit more fresh graduates to join the army.

Finally, the government will strengthen employment support for key groups. The government will continue to strengthen employment subsidies for college graduates with family difficulties, and hold a special online recruitment activity for graduates from the severely affected area of Hubei Province.

4.2 Graduates’ Employment Policies in the United States

The employment of the US college graduates manipulates in full accordance with market laws, and a benign operating mechanism has been formed. The US federal government does not directly interfere with the employment of college students, and it plays a part of legal protection and information guidance in hiring. The US Department of Labor and the Department of Education are mainly liable for developing employment channels, formulating macro policies, and information statistics. With the popularization of tertiary attainments, the US began to face an employment crisis brought about by the grow in quantity of university students. The Higher Education Act (HEA) promulgated by the US Federal Government in 1965 stated that the government could facilitate the employment of university graduates through a series of adjustment and intervention policies. Since the 1970s, the federal and state governments of the United States had issued a set of adjustment and intervention policies to facilitate the employment of tertiary education institutions students by enacting laws, providing employment information, and increasing financial assistance. After the financial crisis broke out, the government took a series of measures to ensure jobs for college students.

In August 2008, the US Congress passed a new “Higher Education Opportunity Act.” The promulgation of the act provided young people with further education opportunities so that more young people have the chance to enter colleges and universities to receive a higher level of education and reduce employment pressure. In December 2014, “gainful employment” was written into the “Higher Education Act,” which not only emphasized that all sectors of the society should jointly bear responsibility for tertiary education issues but also ensured that students would protect their employment rights through laws. The act emphasizes employment, making employment a return to higher education is undoubtedly a step closer to improving the training and professionalism of talents.

At present, the outbreak of the coronavirus has become a significant disruption to the employment of college graduates, and freshest graduates face the risk of not finding a job. Facing the rising unemployment rate caused by the epidemic, the US Congress passed the Coronavirus Assistance, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) in March 2020. The act expands access to unemployment benefits for workers affected by COVID-19, including those who do not usually meet unemployment insurance. At the same time, Congress created the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Program based on the existing Catastrophic Unemployment Assistance Program. The PUA will provide $600 a week for workers who are unemployed or unable to work because of COVID-19. The beneficiaries of the act also include fresh graduates of universities. College students who graduated in May or June this year, regardless of whether they have a separate job opportunity after the semester, will be eligible based on unemployment. Graduates who are not working during the semester or are working but have other employment opportunities in the Summer due to the epidemic situation have not fulfilled the job opportunities, and they are eligible for PUA. Unfortunately, students who are currently looking for job opportunities but do not have a job are not available.

5. Discussion

This chapter will make a comparative analysis of the employment policies of graduates of Chinese and American universities that are also in a difficult employment situation. At the same time, it will also analyze the content and implementation effects of the systems and policies that promote employment at different levels. Finally, this chapter will systematically summarize the impact of the employment policies of Chinese and American college graduates.

5.1 A Comparison of Employment Policies between Chinese and the United States University Students

Chinese and US university graduates are also facing enormous employment pressure, but the specific circumstances are different. Graduates of both countries are facing great employment pressure, and university graduates’ majors do not match employment. First of all, the factors that make it severe for US university students to search a job are the adverse effects of the financial crisis, changes in the structure of talent demand, and the surge in the number of international students. The difficulties for Chinese college students in securing employment are as follows: the contradiction arising from the labor force has increased the regional development gap and the macro-control of university majors cannot keep up with market changes. In addition, the similarity of the employment difficulties of Chinese and US university graduates is that graduates’ majors do not match employment (Chen, 2013). In the US, more and more graduates are experiencing their first job unrelated to the major they are studying at the university. University graduates need to find new posts that are more suitable for them by constantly changing positions. In China, most of the fresh graduates are engaged in non-specialized work, especially the liberal arts graduates have a relatively low professional counterparty rate.

In the light of the employment policies of tertiary education institutions graduates in China and the US, the differences between the systems of the two countries are analyzed from three aspects: government, universities, and entrepreneurship.

First, the employment of US graduates is implemented in a market-oriented economy system, and the government does not directly intervene or restrict it. The US Department of Labor is primarily responsible for essential work such as formulating macro policies and doing job surveys (Wu & Zhang, 2011). Compared with China, since the household registration system and various establishments have always
been the bottlenecks of the employment system for university graduates, the macro-control measures adopted for the employment of university graduates have both the characteristics of a market economy and the characteristics of a planned economy.

Second, the employment guidance centers of US colleges and universities work as both career guidance and employment services. Meanwhile, the employment guidance of US colleges and universities runs through the entire college career, which can effectively help students determine the future employment direction and develop career potential. Employment guidance in Chinese universities is mainly based on courses, with more theoretical teaching and less practical training (Liu & Li, 2010). Therefore, it is difficult for students to meet the job requirements after graduation, nor can they meet the employment needs of students.

Third, the US is a representative of encouraging entrepreneurship. There are few restrictions on the establishment of companies in the US, of which the registered capital of a limited company in the US is zero. However, Chinese college graduates have to face relatively many restrictions on starting a business. Among them, the approval procedures are not simple, and the registered capital and required fees are still much higher than those in the US. Therefore, Chinese entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial preferential policies need to be further improved.

At present, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19, college graduates in China and the US are facing the same severe employment situation. Both governments have successively formulated and promulgated a set of policies to facilitate university graduates as full employment as possible. According to the comparison of the employment policies of graduates between China and the US, China can refer to the successful practices of the US. Meanwhile, China needs to strengthen the construction and improvement of the labor market and legal system, and strengthen the country’s macro-control and guidance for the employment of university graduates.

5.2 The Impact of Policies on Higher Education Graduates’ Employment in the US

In the process of continuous improvement of the employment policies and laws of tertiary education institutions graduates in the US, the employment situation of university graduates has continued to improve. According to the “Class of 2019” released by the Economic Policy Institute (Gould, Mokhiber, & Wolfe, 2019), the employment rate of US college graduates has increased. The consequences of the financial crisis have caused significant detriment to the employment prospects of graduates entering the labor market, and this damage has continued until recovery. Therefore, the US government continuously adjusts the employment policy of tertiary education institutions graduates according to economic and market conditions. From 2010 to 2019, the unemployment rate of American college graduates has been declining year by year. Overall, the employment situation faced by college graduates gradually improved after the financial crisis recovered. Although in many ways, the labor market for graduates has almost returned to the level of economic recession, there are still problems with the slower increase in graduate salaries and the more massive salary gap. The importance that the entire American society attaches to career planning education has made college graduates more pragmatic in their employment concepts. American college graduates will not miss any opportunity to increase work experience. And they are not limited to the work in front of them but set their eyes on the long-term. Most graduates have a long-term plan for their jobs and even life.

In the light of the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), the quantity of university graduates in the US continues to rise. In 2019, the amount of university graduates in the US had reached approximately 2.76 million. At present, due to the outbreak of new coronavirus in 2020, most graduates are unable to enter the labor market to find work. In March 2020, the CARES Act promulgated by the US Congress was an imperfect measure. At present, the act cannot cover every college graduate, and benefits for unemployed graduates are relatively small. The epidemic has a high impact on the US economy, and the unemployment rate continues to rise, which will cause more factors for social instability. Therefore, the US government needs to continuously improve the act according to the economic and labor market situation to ease the employment predicament of college graduates.

5.3 The Impact of Policies on Higher Education Graduates’ Employment in China

From the perspective of graduates’ employment and society, the equity and efficiency of employment have been gradually realized in the historical evolution of the employment policy of HIEs’ students and employment concept of college students has changed. In the early days of the PR China, under the context of planned economic system, the employment was arranged by the nation. College students formed the traditional concept of employment, that is, they had ideological constraints on the regional choice and employment attitude of employment, which had certain negative effects on improving the employment creativity and initiative of college graduates.

Nowadays, under the socialist market economy system, the state arranged employment system has been cancelled, and the employment policy in the new period is more guiding. The employment concept of college students in this period has changed from the traditional concept to the concept of self-employment and entrepreneurship. According to the latest employment report of Chinese college students (MyCos Research Institute, 2019), driven by the concept of self-employment and entrepreneurship, the flow of graduates is mainly private enterprises, small and medium-sized, micro-enterprises, prefecture level cities, and the proportion of the population continues to rise. After the release of “Notice on Strengthening the Employment of College Graduates,” the proportion of college graduates’ self-employment reached 3.0 percent by 2016 (MyCos Research Institute, 2019).

The employment policy of graduates has been continuously absorbed, improved and developed since the founding of the
PR China. The employment rate of graduates has risen year by year. From 2014 to 2018, the employment rate has been more than 90 percent, fluctuating from 91 percent to 92 percent (MyCos Research Institute, 2019).

According to the statistics of the CMOE (2019), graduate members would achieve 8.34 million in 2019, with a net growth of 400,000 expected in 2020. But in 2020, graduates would encounter a more challenging employment situation due to the surge of graduates under the popularization of higher education and the negative influence of the novel COVID-19 pandemic on the national economy. In the latest policy, CMOE (2020) authorizes colleges and universities to expand the proportion of postgraduate enrollment to 15 percent, and the expanding HEIs are mainly concentrated in the northeast and central western regions, which relatively eases the pressure of labor market supply, and also introduces talents into underdeveloped regions to drive local economic development. The policy also encourages independent entrepreneurship and reduces the barriers for graduates to start an undertaking, so as to provide maximum support and help to meet the diversified employment needs of graduates.

6. Conclusion

The popularization trend of tertiary attainments, the threat of global financial crisis and the recent novel COVID-19 pandemic situation have brought a lot of adverse effects on the graduates’ employment in China and the United States. At various historical stages, China and the United States have introduced policies conducive to improving employment according to their respective national conditions. The historical evolution of China’s graduate employment policy is characterized by the transition from fairness first to fairness primary and efficiency secondary, and then to the current employment policy that takes both fairness and efficiency into account. The policies issued in these years have alleviated the dilemmas of college students’ employment to a certain extent, for example, in the last five years (2014-2018), employment rates of graduates has remained stable in excess of 90%. While the employment policy of the United States college graduates has been constantly improved according to the US economy and the labor market. The US government predicts changes in the employment environment and employment trends and provides sufficient information guidance and assistance for HEIs’ students ‘employment. From the financial crisis to the recovery stage, the employment situation of college graduates has improved, and the unemployment rate dropped to 2.1% in 2019, but it still cannot reach the employment boom of around 2000.

Although the policies issued by China and the United States have a positive influence on the employment of graduates, there are still some deficiencies.

The US government’s employment policy for college graduates continues to improve, as of 2019, but American college graduates will still be able to benefit from the labor market entirely, and the underemployment rate is relatively high. Therefore, there is still no practical solution to the employment pressure of college graduates and the problem of “non-study”. With the recent outbreak of COVID-19, the relevant employment relief policies promulgated by the US Congress have not benefited the majority of graduates.

In China, there are several imperfections in the employment laws and regulations. First, unemployment insurance for graduates and anti-discrimination policies and regulations are still relatively deficient and lagging behind. Although relevant employment laws and regulations have been issued in China, unemployment insurance is not applicable to the university group, and there is no relevant legal guarantee to provide unemployment training and vocational guidance for unemployed graduates. In addition, there is a lack of legal protection for gender discrimination, work experience discrimination, tripartite agreement and other issues. Second, some of the employment policies are lack of refinement, which is difficult to be implemented at the grass-roots level. For example, in the “Notice on Doing Well in the Employment and Entrepreneurship of 2019 National College Graduates” (CMOE, 2018), it was mentioned to provide employment preferences for laid-off college students. However, in the tax, industry and commerce departments in the implementation of the reemployment tax relief policy enthusiasm is not high, which leads to laid-off college students did not get the actual preferential.

Unemployment has become a problem that governments in the world are discussing. Since the 1990s, the U.S. government has formulated a series of employment policies and measures for tertiary attainment students, actively promoting the employment of graduates, and providing reference for other countries to formulate policies. With the popularization of tertiary attainments, financial crisis and Novel COVID-19 pandemic, the graduates of tertiary attainments in China and the United States are also encountering severe employment dilemmas. For China, which is rich in labor resources, the employment problem is particularly prominent. For the increasingly serious employment in China, it is not feasible to simply copy employment policies of USA which is inconsistent with China’s national conditions. However, China could learn from the formulation and implementation of employment laws and regulations in the United States to effectively ensure the enforcement of related policies, more effectively promote the fairness and efficiency of employment, and ease the difficulties of graduates’ employment.

References


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