

# Investigation on Career Orientation of Undergraduates in Western China

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**Abstract:** *In this study, the author used questionnaires and interviews to investigate the current situation and influencing factors of students' career orientation in three universities in Western China. The results show that the career orientation of college students in the western region is relatively simple, concentrated in relatively stable fields, and they do not have creativity and daring. Social factors, family factors, and school factors all affect their career perception and choice. Therefore, the author gives corresponding suggestions from the government level, the university level, the family level, and the individual level, so as to help the western region form a healthy and scientific career structure, and benefit the development of society and individuals.*

**Keywords:** College Students; Career Orientation; Career Perception; Career Structure.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

China is a nation with 56 ethnic minorities. Education is put high emphasis by the whole nation. The education of Western China is a vital part of Chinese education. China has a large land with rich natural resources. Meanwhile, there exists discrepancy in economy and technology among different areas. Therefore, the educational equality is always the hot topic for scholars and decision-makers. To achieve the educational equality of different areas, policy makers put forward a series of policies to acquire the educational equality on the origins and process. For example, the re-education of teachers, the building of school campus, educational loan and college admission with lower standard [1]. From the perspective of the society, education in Western China closely related to the economical and social development of Western China. From perspective of individuals, education is the key tool of upward social mobility for students in Western China. Being the result of education, employment of students is a sign of educational equality. The employment of undergraduates shows the rational allocation of talents, which also has a great influence on the activity of teaching and learning. Although they get the college admission, undergraduates from different classes have different choices on career choices. Career orientation connects to personal interest, and it is also a choice of future social position [2]. Thus, the career orientation of undergraduates can predict occupational structure in Western China, which also has a influence on the social and economical development in Western China, and meanwhile it stands for the equality on education. Hence, the research on career orientation of undergraduates is urgent.

Zhang Sufang claimed that career orientation was a judgment on be useful, important and beneficial or not about a certain job [3]. Zhang lanyue thought that career orientation showed the ideology on career, which helped people to choose their job on the guidance of certain concept [4]. The author studied papers both in China and overseas, and she found that scholars centered their researches on Pedagogy, Psychology and Economics. However, they paid little attention on the potential factors of undergraduates' career orientation [5] [6]. Some papers used the method of questionnaire to acquire data to analyze the status of career orientation of undergraduates ignoring of social factors, especially, the influence of social stratification on personal choice of career. Furthermore, there is a great difference on development of different areas in China, so there are few researches on career orientation of students from West part. Those related researches are centered on developed areas, such as Shanghai [7] There exists a small number of researches who study on career orientation of students who are from West part of China, which means those advanced theory and conclusions cannot apply on those underdeveloped places. Thus, this paper explores the current status of career orientation of undergraduates and its factors by using qualitative and quantities methods from the perspective of social stratification. At the same time, find the flaws and problem on policies and institutions to put forward the strategies to overcome the challenges, which benefits optimal allocation and development of human resources.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Ideas

This study uses descriptive research to systematically understand the current situation of students' career preferences in the western region, so as to understand the direction of social change in the western region in the future. An explanatory study is used to explore the social reasons behind the current situation of college students' career orientation in western China, especially the factor of family capital in the context of social stratification. In addition, this study uses theoretical research to explain the current situation of career orientation and the interrelationship of family capital in the western region, as well as the changing trend of social and occupational structure in the western region in the future. Applied research is to solve social problems that may arise, i.e. to propose a reasonable set of action plans for real sectors and individuals. Finally, the quantitative research method and literature research method are used to analyze the data to gain an in-depth understanding of the current situation of students' career choice in the western region. Qualitative research is to further explore the reasons for the current situation of students' career choice in the western region, and explain the "why".

## **2.2 Research Methods**

### **2.2.1 Questionnaire**

In this study, 150 students from different schools, different grades, different majors and different genders in three universities in the western region were selected as the research objects, and the correlation analysis and regression analysis of the questionnaire data were carried out to understand the current situation and influencing factors of students' career choice in the western region. Mainly from the following aspects:

- 1) What is the direction of students in the western region after graduation? Including: employment, graduate school, going abroad, starting a business, and others.
- 2) What is the ideal choice of a student in the western region? Including: municipalities directly under the Central Government, sub-provincial cities, prefecture-level cities, and others.
- 3) What types of employers do students in the western region expect to enter when choosing a career? Including: state-owned enterprises, private enterprises/individuals, Sino-foreign joint ventures/sole proprietorships, government agencies/institutions, self-employment/freelancing, and others.

### **2.2.2 Interviews**

In this paper, the author systematically collected the current situation and existing problems of the research subjects' career orientation and how family capital affects their career choice in the context of social stratification, and conducted in-depth interviews with students, parents, school counselors and career guidance teachers from different family backgrounds from the following aspects:

- 1) Parents from different family backgrounds: What do they expect from their children's career choices? (Direction after graduation, ideal area for career selection, what types of employers for career selection, professional matching or not, and purpose of career selection)
- 2) Students from different family backgrounds: What are their career preferences? (After graduation, the direction of graduation, the ideal area for employment, the types of the employer, the professional match, the purpose and underlying reasons for the career choice, and the extent to which family factors affect the employment choice)
- 3) School Counselors: What factors do they think influence students' career preferences? Is a student's career preference influenced by family capital? What are the recommendations for the current state of students' career preferences?

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 The Direction of Graduation**

According to the questionnaire survey, 75% of college graduates in the western region tend to be employed, and 13% are admitted to graduate school. This is followed by 9.2% of students who chose to start their own business. A very small number of students choose to study abroad. Another 1.8 percent of students have never thought about employment. The above data says that in the face of severe forms of employment, students choose to improve their

academic qualifications as a way to increase their personal competitiveness. In addition, some students are adventurous and creative, and strive to realize value through personal entrepreneurship. However, the majority of students have a strong desire to seek employment.

### **3.2 Ideal Area for Career Selection**

In the questionnaire survey, it found that most of the students considered returning to their hometowns when choosing their ideal career areas, of which 45% were at the prefectural and municipal levels, followed by 43.35% at the county and state levels. In addition, 7.2% of students chose sub-provincial cities. In the end, only a small percentage of students considered leaving their hometowns and going to a larger municipality to work, accounting for 4.45%. The above data shows: Students have a strong sense of hometown, and when they are employed, they are more inclined to return to their familiar environment.

### **3.3 The Ideal Types of Employers**

When surveying the ideal types of the employer, the authors found that the majority of students still choose government agencies and public institutions in the traditional view, accounting for 76%. In second place are also relatively "stable" companies, accounting for 13.2%. In third place are freelancers or entrepreneurs, accounting for 7.7%. In the end, only a very small number of students choose private enterprises, Sino-foreign joint ventures, accounting for 1% and 0.5%. It is worth noting that 1.6% have never thought about their ideal future employment. The above data shows that in the western region, due to the differences in the level of economic development between regions, students' employment concept is still relatively conservative, and their creativity and adventurous spirit are weak. In addition, the influence of the market economy in the western region is not obvious, which has led to the inability of private enterprises in the western region to flourish. Due to the remoteness of the location, the distance from developed cities and coastal cities, and the lack of characteristic industries to attract investment from foreign-funded enterprises, the blind choice of employment by students is obvious. They do not consider their personal interests and self-realization to choose to continue their studies and study abroad, but choose a stable and low-creative industry from the perspective of making a living. At the same time, they do not consider whether the major is appropriate. Let alone personal interests, ideals and ambitions, they are eager to return to the family and change the fate of the family.

### **3.4 The Influence of Family Background on Students' Career Orientation**

Based on the interviews with students with different family backgrounds (parents' education, occupation, income), it was found that family factors had no obvious impact on students' career choice, accounting for 89.3% of the parents who believed that students should choose a more stable industry after graduation, and their parents thought that starting their own business was too risky and shameless. This shows that due to the remoteness of the geographical location, the influence of the market mechanism is very weak, and it is impossible to eradicate the traditional and conservative view of career choice of parents. In addition, it is worth noting that a small number of parents with higher academic qualifications and higher family economic level encourage students to upgrade their academic qualifications or go abroad for further study, which shows that the rich family capital helps students to improve themselves ideologically and economically. In addition, students with underdeveloped family capital, they are eager to find employment and return to their original families.

### **3.5 The Influence of School Factors on Students' Career Orientation**

In the course of interviews with school counselors, it found that school factors also influenced students' career preferences. The number of college students has been increasing since 2002, and the expansion has brought about a decline in the quality of teaching, and the school's publicity on career guidance and related policies are not thorough enough, resulting in the employment of college graduates is particularly difficult. The expansion of colleges and universities means that the competitive pressure of students is very high, but there are few jobs in the market, so more and more students choose to take the public examination and graduate school entrance examination to cope with the employment chill. In addition, at present, there is no employment guidance system throughout the whole process of education in China, which leads students to form a correct career concept, and they have a tendency to blindly follow when choosing a major or a career. They did not start from the matching of their abilities, interests, personalities and work in primary and secondary schools to plan their future and give better play to their talents, knowledge and passion. When they graduate from college, they also think less about whether or not to be a professional fit. Therefore, in the process of learning, there is also a tendency to burn out.

This is not only detrimental to the healthy growth of young people, but ultimately to the healthy development of the country and society.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As an important part of China's education, education in the western region is related to the positive development of the country, the western region and individual students. Employment is an important embodiment of the fairness of educational outcomes, and it is an important indicator of the success of students' upward social mobility. Therefore, a healthy and scientific orientation in choosing a job will determine the future occupational structure of the western region, and still more will determine the level of economic and social development in the western region. Based on this study, it found that the career orientation in the western region is relatively stable and blindly followed, which means that some graduates will be unemployed in the future, a large number of students will be concentrated in the same field, and some industries will face a shortage of talents. At present, the formation of students' career orientation in western China is inseparable from the influence of the government, universities, families, and individuals. Therefore, in view of the current situation of students' career choice in western China, the author puts forward the following suggestion. At the government level, it attaches importance to the economic development of the western region, attracts investment from private enterprises and foreign capital through policies and the economy, develops projects based on the geographical characteristics of the western region, vigorously develops the economy, introduces market mechanisms, and forms diversified jobs. Encourage college graduates to start their own businesses, give policy and financial support, and develop their entrepreneurial spirit, creative spirit, and adventurous spirit. At the level of colleges and universities, we should vigorously give full play to the promotion of higher education in secondary and primary education. Moreover, establishing an employment guidance system throughout the whole process of student education, and helping students develop their personal interests, abilities, majors and personalities, and attaching importance to the humanistic development of students, and cultivating them into high-quality talents, technical professionals and innovative talents. According to the supply and demand of the talent market, colleges and universities should also strengthen their understanding of the information on the market demand for job selection, further adapt to the needs of the market economy, gradually attach importance to the talent training system of "schools—enterprises—governments", and make teaching adjustments in response to the actual talent requirements. Make use of information resources and social networks to strengthen school-enterprise cooperation. At the family level, university parents should break away from the single concept of stable career choice, and encourage students to choose multiple career options under the current situation of the popularization of higher education and the severe form of employment, and parents should form a lifelong self-education perspective to support students' individualized development economically and ideologically. At the individual level, we should break the blind obedience to the concept of career choice, understand the dynamic development of the country and policy changes at a macro level, and establish a scientific career orientation, career cognition and self-awareness based on personal interests, abilities, personalities and aspirations. At the stage of higher education, efforts should be made to improve the comprehensive ability of individuals and form good employment competitiveness, so as to achieve personal self-realization. College students have a multi-channel understanding of the employment situation, according to the employment situation and policies, combined with their own advantages, to produce a personal employment system, shape personal professional quality and comprehensive strength, and choose fields that are beneficial to the development of people and society with absolute employment competitiveness. The optimal allocation and development of human resources in the western region is related to the development of society and individuals, so it is necessary to establish a talent system in which the government, enterprises, schools, and individuals work together. This is not only conducive to the healthy growth of young people, but also to the healthy development of the country and society.

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