

Social Work Graduates' Employment Situation and Strategic Responses

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Abstract: *The difficulty for fresh college graduates in securing employment has become a common issue in China. This year, graduates are facing more intense competition and a challenging job market. As a student majoring in social work, the situation for this year's graduates in this field is particularly severe. Promoting the smooth employment of social work graduates is of significant importance for the sustainable development of the profession. This paper begins by introducing the number and employment status of fresh graduates in recent years, with a focus on analyzing the employment situation of social work students. It then describes the current employment landscape for social work majors, identifying issues such as fierce market competition and difficulties in job seeking for graduates. The paper further provides an in-depth analysis of the underlying reasons for these employment challenges and proposes relevant suggestions and countermeasures to help social work graduates navigate the job market with greater confidence and success.*

Keywords: Employment concept; Employment status; Fresh graduates; Social work.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the downward pressure on the national economy, the severe employment situation for college graduates in China this year has become particularly prominent. The significant reduction in job opportunities and increased employment pressure is not good news for this year's graduates. Some students once joked that "graduation means unemployment", which proves that the competition for employment is extremely fierce. The employment problem of the previous graduates has not been solved yet, and a new batch of fresh graduates has already entered the market. According to the statistics released by the Ministry of Education at the end of 2020, the total number of overseas students returning to China increased by 11.73% compared to the previous year. According to official data from a recruitment software, the number of overseas returnees who submitted resumes to domestic positions in 2020 increased by 33.9% compared to 2019.

With regard to the choice of jobs for college graduates, recent graduates are more inclined to new economic industries such as finance, IT, etc. They have flocked to Internet, high-tech, new retail and other industries. They pay less attention to traditional industries such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and even have prejudice against some jobs that need to go to small cities or remote areas to enter factories. In this year's spring recruitment, the number of front-line counter personnel recruited by major banks and other financial institutions has decreased, but fintech talents are in high demand. Finance, economics, computer science, and engineering majors are still hot and popular majors. In recent years, there has been a problem of high prices and difficulty in finding talent for ordinary small companies, as well as a shortage of personnel in emerging industries. It can be seen that the problem of uneven distribution of human resources is also a major dilemma in China's current employment situation.

2. EMPLOYMENT SITUATION OF STUDENTS MAJORING IN SOCIAL WORK IN PREVIOUS UNIVERSITIES

The social work profession has become very well-established in developed countries and regions in the West. As an important force in maintaining the healthy operation of society, social workers are an indispensable part of society in preventing crime, supporting and helping vulnerable groups such as the elderly. With the rapid development of China's economy and society, many social problems have also increased. The profession of social workers involves a wide range of areas, so the demand for social work professionals from all walks of life is constantly increasing.

In China, the social work major has received more attention from society, and many universities across the country have opened this major. With the development in recent years, the enrollment of social work majors has continued to expand, and the number of graduates from social work majors is showing an upward trend. However, the employment options for students majoring in social work are relatively narrow. Most of them choose

employment directions such as civil affairs, women's federations, charitable organizations, social organizations, community service agencies, and street offices after graduation. However, in reality, only 10% to 30% of fresh graduates choose corresponding positions, and some schools even have zero professional matching rates for graduates in this major, while other fresh graduates choose to work in government agencies, enterprises, and other units that do not match their majors. The employment prospects for students majoring in social work are not optimistic, and some experts believe that the main reason for this pessimism is that our specialization is ahead of professionalization.

According to official data from the National Bureau of Statistics, from 2011 to 2015, the number of social workers in China gradually increased from 2.357 million to 2.821 million, and has been on the rise over the past five years. With the changes of the times and the development of the economy, the demand for professional social workers in society is gradually increasing. Even though major universities have expanded the number of social work majors, the employment rate of graduates from this major continues to decline. Most graduates from social work majors choose jobs that are not social work positions, but rather switch careers. The social work program at my school was founded in 1994 and is one of the earliest science and engineering colleges in China to offer social work programs. The Social Work Master's Education Center was established in 2010 and is one of the first units in Jiangsu Province to grant master's degrees in social work. While cultivating a large number of social work professionals, the school has also developed distinct educational characteristics and received unanimous praise from relevant departments of central and grassroots governments, experts in the field of social work, and social service institutions. However, most graduates of social work majors in our school do not choose positions that are closely related to their majors. Instead, they seek employment in other industries, including but not limited to real estate, finance, healthcare, education, and so on.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE REASONS FOR DIFFICULTY IN EMPLOYMENT FOR FRESH GRADUATES MAJORING IN SOCIAL WORK

3.1 Shortage of corresponding jobs in social work majors

According to official data from the National Bureau of Statistics, there were 370893 social work units in 2014 and 413372 in 2015. Indeed, due to the emergence of various social problems, the demand for social work professionals in society is increasing, and there are also many related positions. However, the growth rate of units is far from enough to withstand the increasing enrollment of social work students year by year. Moreover, there are only a few job opportunities that can truly extend olive branches to graduates majoring in social work. The corresponding job opportunities in social work are extremely scarce, and the supply and demand relationship of social work positions is extremely unbalanced.

3.2 Low salary and low willingness of students to engage in social work

Social work is essentially a professional assistance activity, characterized by providing scientific and effective services to those in need, especially disadvantaged groups. Social work centers around the needs of beneficiaries and uses scientific assistance techniques as a means to achieve effectiveness in helping others. Engaging in social work in developed Western countries and regions is a very noble and respectable job, with considerable remuneration. Social workers in Hong Kong, China, who are close by, also earn a decent income. However, in mainland China, the situation is quite different. Social work institutions are not for-profit institutions, and the salaries of front-line social workers are often very low. Compared with the high paid Internet industry, social work posts are not very attractive to new graduates.

3.3 Reduction in the number of enterprises and jobs

Due to the downward pressure on the national economy, there are very few companies that can provide relevant positions, and the reduction of companies and job opportunities has led to an oversupply of fresh graduates seeking employment.

3.4 Social work students' confusion about employment and job seeking

The courses offered in the Social Work major include Introduction to Sociology, Introduction to Social Work, Social Statistics, Social Survey Research Methods, Case Work, Group Work, Community Work, Social Work

Administration, Social Work Research, Social Work Practice, Human Behavior and Environment, Social Psychology, and more. Students have accumulated rich professional knowledge, but there is a certain lag in the curriculum design. The skills required for relevant job positions are not included in the curriculum, resulting in fresh graduates not meeting the mandatory requirements of the position. They are at a loss on how to find a job after graduation, and many fresh graduates are very confused during the graduation season. They often ask themselves: What kind of job do I want to find after graduation? What kind of job is suitable for me? What kind of work can I do?

3.5 Most overseas students choose to return to their home country for employment and development

According to the International Labour Organization report, 400 million full-time jobs were lost globally in the second quarter of 2020. With major overseas companies announcing the suspension of recruitment for fresh graduates, international students are turning to the domestic job market one after another. The number of overseas fresh graduates seeking career development opportunities in 2020 has surged by 72.9% compared to the same period last year, and it is expected that the number of international students returning to China to participate in job hunting will exceed 700000. According to publicly available data from the Ministry of Education, the number of fresh college graduates in 2020 reached 8.74 million, a historic high. The return of overseas students has added fuel to the already fierce competition in the domestic job market.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR JOB SEEKING STRATEGIES FOR FRESH GRADUATES MAJORING IN SOCIAL WORK

4.1 Adjust mentality and establish a correct employment concept

The severe situation of global employment is an objective fact that cannot be changed. When the environment cannot be improved or even becomes worse, social work graduates should adjust their mentality, face the situation calmly, and actively seek solutions to cope. Every fresh graduate has difficulties in finding a job, and this situation is not isolated. In this context, it is even more important for social work graduates to establish a positive employment outlook, try more, collect more employment information, submit more resumes, interview more, and do more practical work to find a satisfactory job.

4.2 Improving one's own skills to increase "capital" for smooth employment

Fresh graduates in social work should comprehensively improve their overall quality, master the basic work skills of enterprise work proficiently, and develop hard skills that can showcase their uniqueness. Learn to analyze oneself, find one's own interests and hobbies, tap into one's potential, cultivate comprehensive abilities in all aspects, actively adapt to society, and increase one's "capital" for smooth employment in the future.

4.3 Cross industry employment, choosing a job that suits oneself

Although social work majors cultivate practical social work talents, not all fresh graduates are suitable for this job. The requirements of social work may seem easy, but in practical operations, due to facing different affairs and various clients, it is inevitable to encounter some unexpected situations in specific practice, which requires social work practitioners to have high comprehensive qualities. Not only should one master professional knowledge and professional spirit proficiently, but also possess important abilities and qualities such as good organization, expression, listening, coordination, and planning. This job is full of humanistic care and great wisdom in dealing with people. Fresh graduates can choose their careers based on their interests and strengths, cross industry employment, and follow the correct career direction to strengthen their basic skills, participate in extracurricular activities and internships, further understand their target positions, and improve their relevant work practical abilities.

4.4 Give full play to the positive role of university employment guidance centers

Make good use of the employment guidance centers of major universities, offer corresponding employment guidance courses for fresh graduates, and regularly hold a series of lectures on job markets, employment platforms, and employment choices. These courses should keep up with the development of the times and society, so as to enhance the match between students and the job market, and make fresh graduates more confident in their job

search journey. Fresh graduates should also promptly provide suggestions and demands to the employment guidance center, in order to promote the center to provide better and more satisfactory services.

4.5 Support and assistance from government education departments

In order to actively respond to the complex and severe employment situation this year, reasonably plan the flow of graduates, and alleviate talent pressure, China has implemented numerous measures. The Ministry of Education, together with relevant departments, will focus on promoting the employment of college graduates in areas such as enrollment expansion, channel development, employment services, and strengthening guidance.

In terms of expanding enrollment for further education, the scale of enrollment for master's students has been expanded. In recent years, graduates who take the postgraduate entrance examination after completing their undergraduate studies have gradually become the primary group of unemployed people, and the number of people who directly find jobs after graduation is gradually decreasing.

In terms of employment services, the Deputy Minister of Education has stated that the Ministry of Education will maximize employment opportunities and work together with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security to stabilize the basic employment opportunities for college students. In addition, the Ministry will also focus on increasing recruitment in areas such as basic education, primary healthcare, and community services; Intensify policy tilt and encourage more fresh graduates to join the military; Collaborate with relevant departments to implement grassroots employment programs for college students and encourage more college graduates to seek employment at the grassroots level. The Ministry of Education has also collaborated with relevant social recruitment websites to launch corresponding service platforms, aiming to provide corresponding employment positions for graduates who are about to find jobs, and strive to rationalize talent resources. As fresh graduates majoring in social work, they should keep up with the government's footsteps and seek new employment directions and opportunities according to policy guidance.

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