

Exploration of high-quality employment in micro-individual, macro-whole, and socio-cultural perspectives

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Keywords: quality employment; macro and micro analyses

Abstract: Employment has always been a major issue concerning the national economy and people's livelihood. This paper analyses the problems of high-quality employment from three perspectives: micro-individual, macro-whole, and social and cultural atmosphere, and according to the problems analysed above, this paper gives the corresponding solution strategies, which include (a) increasing incentives and improving health care factors. (b) Special talent training, optimise talent structure. (c) special talent training, optimise talent structure. (d) Attracting employment talents and promoting youth employment.

1. Background and significance of the study

The General Secretary first proposed "new quality productivity" during his visit to Heilongjiang in September 2023. Later, at the Central Economic Work Conference, he again proposed developing new quality productivity by utilizing disruptive and cutting-edge technologies to generate new industries, new modes, and new kinetic energy. New quality productivity means a higher level of science and technology and a higher level of creativity. It is the product of productivity development and scientific and technological progress, representing the enhancement of human ability to transform nature. Inevitably, it relies on new types of workers to bring about more disruptive innovations. Injecting the talent dividend into the process of innovation-driven high-quality development raises the quality of "new" and "quality" with "new". "The new quality will be enhanced by the new, and the new quality will be promoted by the new, so as to create more new momentum and new advantages for development." In the new economy and new technology era, the protagonists of mechanical labour have become robots, artificial intelligence, and other entities. As a result, the ordinary labour force is being strongly replaced. Technological development provides a more convenient living environment and gives rise to more innovative possibilities. However, it also has the characteristic of crowding out employment.^[1] Against this backdrop, improving the quality of employment is more important than increasing the quantity of employment. Only a newer and stronger workforce can adapt to the new quality of productivity. Youth are an important group for future development. Helping young people achieve high-quality employment is conducive to achieving high-quality development of the country and contributing to the development of new quality productivity. In 2021, the State Council issued the "14th Five-Year Plan for Employment Promotion Notice", which mentioned that there are "difficult to find employment" and "difficult to recruit" phenomena in the job market. Talent cultivation and training do not meet market demand, and structural employment contradictions are prominent. These are serious employment issues. Therefore, promoting youth to achieve high-quality employment and cultivating innovative talents are major keys to achieving high-quality development and promoting the better development of new quality productivity. This paper systematically explains the current situation of high-quality employment of young college students and the existing practical problems by combing the connotation and characteristics of high-quality employment. Through surveys, it finds the influencing factors affecting the realization of high-quality employment and then gives

suggestions for improvement. The hope is to provide some ideas and references for the cultivation of talents in colleges and universities and the realization of employment for young people.

2. Literature review

2.1 Proposals on the quality of employment

Foreign research on the quality of employment has an early origin. As early as in the 1970s, the American Council for Vocational Training and Development put forward the concept of "quality of work and life", which is related to the quality of employment. In order to improve the efficiency of the labour force, the management should firstly take into consideration the degree of matching between manpower and jobs, and secondly, it should also pay attention to the working environment and living welfare of the labour force.^[2] In 1999, the International Labour Organization put forward the concept of "quality of work and life". In 1999, the International Labour Organization (ILO) put forward the concept of "decent work", which encompasses the subjective feelings of workers, their working environment, their employment security and labour relations.

2.2 Definition of the quality of employment

The concept of "quality of employment" was first defined by the European Foundation in 2007: Quality of employment refers to the rights and physical and mental well-being of workers from the beginning to the end of the employment process.^[3] Sehnbruch (2004) defines the quality of employment according to the competence approach as the competences and functions resulting from work, i.e. the competences and functions that the individual has reason to value.^[4] VanAerdenK (2016) suggests that employment quality should be a combination of employment conditions and employment relationships^[5] Jessie (2020) argues that employment quality characterises multiple aspects of the employment status of wage earners or self-employed people^[6].

Domestic studies have defined the connotation of employment quality mainly on the basis of the definition of "decent labour", which can be divided into two categories: micro and macro. At the micro level, Liu Suhua's (2005) definition of the quality of employment, which has been published earlier and is also widely referred to by many scholars, is that the quality of employment is the degree to which the labourer combines with the means of production in the process of employment and obtains specific conditions of remuneration or income. And the micro-level employment quality mainly focuses on the individual labour force^[7] Zhou Ping believes that the quality of employment should not only reflect the adequacy of the level of employment in society, but also the role of employment in promoting economic development.^[8] Zhou Ping believes that employment quality should not only reflect the adequacy of employment in society, but also the role of employment in promoting economic development;

2.3 On the dimensions of indicators for evaluating the quality of employment

Based on different understandings of the concept of "employment quality", many scholars have their own unique views on the selection and establishment of relevant indicators in the employment quality evaluation system. From a macro perspective, for example, Lai Desheng et al. (2011) proposed an indicator system for employment quality at the regional level, including six primary indicators, 20 secondary indicators and 50 tertiary indicators, with the primary indicators including the employment environment, employability, employment status, workers' compensation, social protection and labour relations.^[9] From a micro perspective, Xu Changxin and Ling Long (2020) constructed a system of employment quality indicators in five dimensions: income level, employment satisfaction, relative income, leisure time and employment feelings, and analysed the impact of employment type, social capital, human capital and other factors on employment quality.^[10] Domestic scholars combined with the characteristics of China's labour force employment to put forward multiple dimensions of indicators to measure employment quality, mainly around employment income and environment^{[11][17]}, job stability^[12] labour relations^{[13][14]} subjective

satisfaction, social security and other dimensions.^{[15][16]} Social security and other dimensions.

2.4 Employment quality and quality jobs

In 2007, Fredric K. Schroeder, an American scholar, proposed "high-quality employment", defining it as the ability of individuals to earn the wages needed to earn a living in a comprehensive environment of work that they find challenging and satisfying, and pointing out in particular that income is not the only measure of high-quality employment, but also includes an individual's work mindset, subjective feelings, etc.^[18] At present, most scholars in China do not have a clear definition of what constitutes high-quality employment. The Study on Achieving Fuller and Higher-Quality Employment (Summary) suggests that higher-quality employment is based on solving the problems affecting the quality of employment, and is compatible with high-quality economic and social development and scientific and technological progress, so that the quality of workers' employment is constantly improved and enhanced, so that while they are employed, their incomes can grow, their quality is improved, their conditions are improved and their rights and interests are safeguarded.^[18]

3. Current status of the issue of quality employment in China

3.1 Micro-individual level

The popularization of quality education and the increase in the number of university students have made employment a major problem in recent years. Nowadays, people's material living standards have improved. However, society as a whole is in the "VUCA era", which is characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. As a result, most employed people nowadays do not have high material requirements but pay more attention to the stability and longevity of their jobs. Consequently, many "decent jobs" have become the pursuit of a large number of college graduates, and the public service examination has become a hot trend (see Table 1).

Table 1 (see Table 1). Between the limited number of jobs and the large number of job demands, many people can only "run with the company", resulting in a waste of labour.

Table 1 Civil Service Examination Reporting Ratio 2018-2024

vintages	Number of recruits	Number of applicants	entry requirement ratio
2018	28533	1,659,700million	58.2:1
2019	14537	1,379,300million	94.9:1
2020	24128	1.437 million	59.5:1
2021	25726	1.576 million	61.2:1
2022	31242	2.123 million	67.9:1
2023	37100	2.5 million	67.4:1
2024	39600	2.91 million	73.5:1

Source: National Civil Service Agency

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, human needs are roughly divided into low and high levels. Low-level needs include physiological needs, safety needs, and social needs. High-level needs include respect needs and self-actualization needs. Workers' satisfaction with their jobs is a kind of proof of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. There are some workers who can only get the satisfaction of basic low-level needs at work. That is, in the two-factor theory, work gives workers only the basic hygiene factor—limited salary. Even hygiene factors such as working environment, allowances, and bonuses are either missing or do not match the real needs of workers. With no incentives but only hygiene factors, it is not conducive to improving the motivation and satisfaction of workers, as well as the attractiveness and loyalty of "high-tech talents." As the theory of equity suggests, workers not only compare their own pay and reward ratios with those of other workers but also compare their own former pay and reward ratios with the current ones. When workers feel that the comparison is unfair, they will be less satisfied with their work. The result will be slackness in their work, which will not ensure the quality of the work they do.

Some scholars have also found that the innate and postulated social capital of university students has a significant impact on the quality of their employment. The innate social capital has a greater impact. Good social capital can have a positive effect on human capital.^[23]

3.2 Macro-integral level

From an overall perspective, the problems existing with regard to the quality of employment in China today include the following. The existing employment structure does not fully match the country's demand for talent. At present, there is no shortage of high-quality labor. However, there is a mismatch between the abilities of the labor force and the demand for jobs in some highly sophisticated fields.^[19] In addition, with the popularity of quality education, the employment threshold has also increased. The improvement in the quality of the labor force contributes to the quality of social development. However, a higher employment threshold means that it is less likely for more workers to find their preferred jobs. As a result, many workers of a certain age choose "slow employment". Some researchers have shown that one of the most important reasons for graduates to choose "slow employment" is that the job market situation has become more severe.^[20] Some researchers have shown that one of the major reasons for graduates choosing "slow employment" is the more severe job market situation. This also indicates that there is a phenomenon where high employment thresholds are screening the labor force while rejecting many suitable workers. At the same time, the difficulty of employment and recruitment has also become one of the most important employment issues nowadays. In 2020, some scholars argued that one of the reasons for the coexistence of the difficulty of employment and recruitment is that private enterprises are constrained in financing. This affects the investment of private enterprises and leads to the expansion of the demand for low-skilled labor by private enterprises while suppressing the demand for high-skilled labor.^[22]

3.3 Socio-cultural dimensions

In the new economy and new business model, employment choices have become more diversified. With the refinement of consumer demand, occupations and jobs have also been refined and branched out. Along with these branches, the consideration mechanism for individual workers has become more complex. In this environment, the paradox of labour autonomy in labour has emerged.^[21] For example, riders in the takeaway delivery industry have long been a common sight on the streets. The mechanism by which such workers are paid is through constantly "grabbing orders". Thus, the more they work, the more they will be paid. Therefore, even if the workers are unwilling or burned out, they will choose to continue working under the domination of more generous compensation. However, the burnout and dissatisfaction arising from the work will not be eliminated. This type of worker can easily fall into the paradox of labour autonomy. That is, they have a high level of dissatisfaction with the job but are trapped in the mechanism of labour remuneration and work on their own initiative. The paradox of labour autonomy makes it more difficult for workers to ensure the quality of their work. Even long-term work creates a culture where they have to "internalize themselves", which may have a negative impact on their mental health. The distortion of workers' attitudes towards work and even life, and the lack of protection for workers' mental health will fall far short of the goal of high-quality employment pursued at the macro level. In a highly competitive employment environment, the high demands placed on workers for many jobs have resulted in some workers finding jobs that are not to their satisfaction. On the other hand, there is a mismatch between the demand for jobs and the abilities of the labour force. There are vacant jobs but no suitable labour force, creating a situation in which the interests of the individual are not aligned with those of the State in the employment market.

4. Measures to address the problem

4.1 Increasing incentives and improving health factors

The "two-eight principle" existing in the labour market holds that 20 percent of elite employees

create 80 percent of the value of the workplace, while 80 percent of ordinary employees create 20 percent of the company's value. According to the two-factor theory and equity theory, the improvement of hygiene factors will dissolve workers' dissatisfaction and bring them to a state of peace. Eighty percent of ordinary employees need to maintain a peaceful state in their daily work. Good hygiene factors are conducive to the loyalty of this part of workers, thus achieving the purpose of prompting them to work conscientiously. Incentives should correspond to those who have made greater contributions. Giving appropriate incentives to elite workers will enable them to obtain more value in the company. Appropriate incentives will enable them to get corresponding reward feedback after obtaining the satisfaction of self-worth realization, obtaining a sense of identity and increasing loyalty and sense of belonging to the workplace. Appropriate incentives and hygiene factors will help increase job satisfaction and achieve quality employment at the individual level.

4.2 Specialised talent development and optimisation of talent structure

The mismatch between the structure of employment and the demand for jobs is a mismatch between the abilities of workers and the needs of jobs. The popularisation of quality education has raised the level of competence of the general public, while the training of elite talents has become more and more difficult. Therefore, nowadays, when the quality of citizens is generally improved, the training of special talents is more conducive to the optimisation of the employment structure. In the training of talents, more attention is paid to practical application, such as increasing the internship opportunities for college students, organising job fairs and observing job fairs, so as to let non-graduates find their own interest and direction of employment in advance. In the process of talent training, work simulation and practice instead of learning are added to cultivate more professional and technical talents.

4.3 Attracting employable talent and promoting youth employment

The level of the regional economy is a strong gravitational pull for the labour force to choose jobs, but this makes many young people willing to leave their hometowns to seek development in the big cities, which results in a lower level and quality of employment in many less economically developed regions. Employed people should be given some push and pull, so that even in some difficult environments, there are labourers who are willing to go there. This will require the introduction of appropriate national and local employment policies, the optimisation of employment policies, the improvement of employment conditions and the attraction of employment talents.

4.4 Promoting institutional integrity and providing labour security

Most workers in an era of uncertainty prefer to seek stable jobs, the need for stability even exceeds the need for salary, good labour security policy or labour security mechanism can make workers to the workplace to increase a certain sense of belonging, so to promote the soundness of the labour security mechanism, to provide good labour security is the main body of the society need to improve the content.

5. Conclusion

In the previous section, we have analysed the problems related to high-quality employment at the micro, macro and socio-cultural levels through literature analysis and research. Firstly, at the micro level, there is the problem of "slow employment" and low employment satisfaction of workers, while at the macro level, there is the problem of contradiction, on the one hand, there is the problem of mismatch between the ability of workers and the demand of jobs, and on the other hand, the problem of "difficulty in employment" is aggravated by the increase of the threshold of employment year by year; thirdly, the problem of social culture is also related to people's livelihood. "Thirdly, the paradox of labour autonomy at the socio-cultural level has led to a trend of forced "self-involvement" in the workplace, which is not conducive to workers' satisfaction with the quality of their employment. With the advancement of science and technology, high-quality

employment will be closely related to scientific and technological development, and how the labour force can achieve high-quality employment in the context of scientific and technological development is a problem that should be solved by the development of the times.

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