

A Comparative Analysis of Vocational Education Between China and America

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Abstract: Career development is the critical education which has a great influence on students' career, so they receive a lifelong benefit from favourable career education. This article is an analysis containing the career development education in China and America. It shows the contrastive differences from the aspects of methods, contents, objectives and phenomena of career education between China and America. Then, it analyses the causes for these differences in career education from four aspects: historical backgrounds, social systems, economic patterns, and cultural traditions. Finally, two suggestions for career education in China are put forward. Changing traditional concepts stimulates graduates to entry into the labor market to improve productivity. Combining vocational education in China and the United States also cultivates children from multiple perspectives. These are mainly intended to increase the mention of relevant vocational knowledge in primary and secondary schools, so as to give students the opportunity to contact the job market in advance and make their future career clearer.

Keywords: career education, differences, suggestions

1. Introduction

Experienced the outbreak of Covid 19, the majority of Chinese students who face employment problems had lack plenty of opportunities to internship to learn about their future career life, worried about how to apply the knowledge learnt from the college to the workplace and those career skills through practice. The bigger threat comes from markets that prefers to job seekers with higher education degrees, which promote the academic qualification threshold. This phenomenon led the consequence that students taking the postgraduate entrance exam are not to improve their professional knowledge, but to survive in a competitive environment, which does not bring better talents to the market. One rigorous problem in regard to Chinese career development seems to arise: does career development need to concentrate in universities? According to numerous investigations, there is another way to enable students to conduct career plans in advance. This article aims to compare two methods of career development in these aspects and propound some suggestions. It will describe Chinese and American career development respectively from these. Based on comparisons and contrasts, a fair comment on both approaches will be made with the causes, advantages and limitations. Specific advice in terms of this issue will be raised drawn on that of American with a brief conclusion.

2. A Comparison Between American and Chinese Career Education

2.1. A Comparison Between Career Education Objectives

Career education objectives are crucial to constrain its orientation and determine its overall outcomes. Therefore, these purposes are the foundation of career development, basically originating the differences between the two countries. American career education is intended to cultivate social people who adapt to the changing workplace environment with the sense of independence. Children's growth is believed to rely on their own experiences in the process of growing up [1]. That is because the Americans think that children are gradually raised their independent consciousness and the capacity to live independently from their juvenile, which is a basic and essential requirement from American perspective.

Besides, Trice and McClellan emphasizes that almost a quarter of middle-aged people occupy in a profession they expected as a child [2]. Hence, vocational guidance has been implemented since elementary school in America, where advance planning benefits to define career goals and preparations. In this case, children prefer to express their full range of potential and to achieve their own personal value rather than consider high academic degrees, well-paid jobs and the other utilitarian objectives. Virtually, this herding type of education often contributes to unexpected passive consequences. Children guided by this goal may develop quite randomly, despite its active results of being trained to think more creatively. According to an investigation by Seligman, Weinstock and Heflin, nearly half of the ten-year-olds have already made up their minds about what they want to do in the future [1]. There are many criminal cases to prove the disadvantages of this selective vocational education. Therefore, parents' behaviour and any external factors will subtly influence the decision of future career before the formation of an individual's clear career goal.

Compared with American, Chinese career education with traditional ideology pushes college students to become someone who gain a decent occupation with a reasonable wage and live in comfort. To follow this life guide, students' grade point is an evaluation criterion for entering different industries. In order to break the class barrier, a portion of students are forced to study majors they are not good at or not interested in and enter the workplace they do not like to meet the expectations of their parents or the society. In this case, their talents tend to be ignored. Meanwhile, their creativity seems to be restricted. Goals set by parents or society allow Chinese students to passively consume knowledge, but which is a manifestation of restricted development. Thus, few of them will be successful in their unenthusiastic career. However, it is highly efficient with a high rate of return for a developing country like China to set an objective of focusing on pre-service training on college students. It is purposed to quickly improve the skills and preparatory knowledge students need to enter the workforce with minimal social resources.

2.2. A Comparison Between Career Education Methods and Contents

Methods in training career skills differ from aims of two countries. The main point of the following the difference on approaches to career education in United State and China.

The American education system focuses on providing students with a well-rounded education, with an emphasis on a broad education. From elementary school through high school, students are exposed to math, science, language arts, social sciences, art and other various courses. This broad-based education is designed to develop critical thinking, problem solving, and lay the foundation for future academic pursuits and career development. Educational policies and curricula are primarily determined at the state and local levels, leading to some differences between regions. But in the United States, primary education is widely available to all children, regardless of socioeconomic

background or race. The primary education system strives to provide equal opportunities for all children and ensure that they have access to basic education.

Moreover, the education system offers a wide range of options and flexibility in choosing courses and extracurricular activities in America. Students can often choose electives based on their interests and explore different subjects before deciding on a particular career path. Elementary schools in the United States offer a wide range of extracurricular activities, including sports, arts and clubs, to promote well-rounded development. By focusing on basic skills, primary education helps lay the foundation for future academic success and career development. Extracurricular activities promote social interaction, teamwork, creativity and physical fitness, contributing to the overall development of students [3]. This flexibility allows students to have a more personalized educational experience. Students have the flexibility to choose majors and design curriculum according to their interests and career goals.

In addition to traditional academic courses, the American education system offers vocational courses at the high school level. These programs provide hands-on training in specific industries, technical skills, and career paths such as health care, engineering, computer science, and more. The actual experience in the industry can intuitively feel whether the person like this career and reduce the cost of trial and error for the future. Besides, college admissions in the US definitely involve not only a comprehensive evaluation of students' academic performance but also extracurricular activities, personal essays and standardized test scores [3]. College students are also offered many opportunities to network with professors of specialized course, alumni with abundant social experience, and industry professionals possessing cutting-edge scientific and technological knowledge, effectively cultivating connections that will benefit their future careers.

The American School Counsellors Association National Model (ASCA) also pushes ahead the involvement of school counsellors in the specialty development of the youth. ASCA presents a technical and mature school counselling program to satisfy their demands in the areas of academic and workplace with the interaction among working position, individual and society [4]. The ASCA comprehends students' abilities and interests through dozens of multiple-choice questions in the vocational field. It provides career information that is highly relevant to their characteristics and shows how interests, abilities and achievements can get used to attain their subjective goals and the expectations of parents and society. Hence, elementary school counsellors need to be involved in helping their students worried or confused in their choice-making on their subsequent development track.

Compared with multistage American mode, methods in China seems more onefold. Career development course is one of the primary forms based on school-oriented. The courses are diverse in terms of lectures concerning information aggregation, sharing sessions about the personal experience of predecessors and topic talks from senior leaders of specific companies who invited by the colleges, which benefit students in need from various fields [5]. Lecturers enforce an effective exchange of emerging technology and information aggregation summarized from market, introducing secure recruitment channels and enabling students to participate in various innovation and entrepreneurship activities for accelerated integration with the society. The experience and suggestions from the graduates can allow plentiful students in worry to gain an easier access to what they want and who they expect to be. The first two lectures looked at college students' job hunting from the perspectives of market demand and personal development, and the last one was about the setting of talent requirements for corporate executives. Executives' vision can make it easier for aimless students to set goals and plan for improvement.

It is also vital for the ungraduated students to intelligent service platform for job seeking provided by universities. There is plenty of information on social job boards, but which means that it can interfere with the two-way choice between the right employees and the companies. The universities'

job-hunting system includes enterprises cooperating with the colleges and companies where pre-visit students had internships or jobs [6]. Despite not enough partner firms, there is a multiple growth of different companies entering the platform every year. Efficient students with high capacity can enter the market early to compete, whose internships or companies may become potential job opportunities for subsequent students [6]. Filtered information allows students to reduce the time and cost of trial and error.

As the system of career education is in the stage of exploration and practice, the situation of colleges and universities is uneven. Some colleges and universities offer career education courses and credit them, but most of them only stay at the level of elective courses or even just a few lectures, and there is no systematic curriculum system. What's more, almost most colleges and universities now focus more on graduates and less on guiding and educating their careers from an early age. In fact, the earlier students are guided, the clearer their career plans will be. In addition, there are few professionals among the instructors, most of whom are transferred from full-time student jobs in colleges and universities or hold two jobs [5]. Their understanding of career education and activities basically depends on their experience and personal understanding, and lack of professional learning and training, so it is difficult to provide substantive help to students' career confusion.

There are both college-oriented and market-oriented pattern of career development. School-oriented module, known as top-down mode, is classified as employment guidance and career development training programs arranged by the leading group of employment and entrepreneurship in universities based on national policies [7]. Measures to guide employment and entrepreneurship as well as the implementation norms of college employment work are developed in order to comprehensively examine the most recent research findings in the academic field of career development and the advanced experience of world-class institutions [7]. The policy expects to motivate four main college staff - tutors, lecturers, teachers in charge of a class, and counsellors – to offer the college's top organisation for employment and entrepreneurship its required consideration. On the other hand, another approach called bottom-up mode starts with the demand knew from the recruitment market. Each college fully takes advantage of the benefits of being on the front lines of employment to establish a vital database of cooperated firms [7]. It also routinely provides critical work plans to the school that include specific employment counselling and service goals for each grade. Besides, colleges regularly analyse the college's employment statistics from the previous five years to give the system for cultivating the labour force for vocational growth the most up-to-date and essential fundamental facts.

2.3. A Comparison Between Career Education Status

When it comes to children in the USA, they are often considered to be active, keep calm when encountering difficulties, get along well with others, possess the courage to act and think creatively [8]. The majority of American do not launch from the parental nest actively or passively until their adulthood. Whatever family they were born from, they work part-time jobs substantially during high school to ease into self-sufficiency. This phenomenon is just the average family. There is still elite education in the United States, whose family are mostly rich or expensive with the notion that higher education is the only way to ensure that their children will become the top elite.

As for Chinese students, although their academic records are not inferior to the American children, they often display the negative tendency in their disposition. After experiencing the exam-oriented education, it is difficult for them to change from a passive state of learning knowledge to an active state of learning skills because of rigid thinking. The frenzied pursuit of academic status has become a pressure for young people to spend more time and energy to take various examinations as the recruitment market gradually favours highly educated people and the reality is that college students and even master's degree holders are becoming saturated. A vicious circle is formed that the society

needs people with higher degrees, and most students are forced to bury themselves in their studies with high degrees devaluing.

3. Analysis of the Factors Causing These Differences in Career Education

3.1. Historical Backgrounds

The United States is an immigrant country with a short history. New ideas are easily accepted and developed under the influence of multicultural values. Besides, the research regarding factors influencing career development has accelerated for the recent decades. Helwig found that almost middle school graders are employed as professional and technical jobs [9]. Americans, therefore, realized the importance of the occupation training and early intervention earlier than Chinese. On the other hand, China has a time-honoured history and retains Confucianism and other ancient cultures, especially influenced by feudal peasant ideas in a long term. The Chinese have been required to conform, compete, and nationwide lack the chance to express new ideas, which is triggered by the notion of becoming someone whose words and deeds are cautious, playing for safety. It leads that the education system slowly transformed the original vocational education model to the up-to-date model under scientific basis.

3.2. Social Systems

Chinese emphasize fair distribution of the social resources fairly, as family-oriented or group-oriented ideas are dominant in socialism. It is the same of vocational education. Children are defined as the hope of a family and are educated to carry the expectations of their parents and even the society. America has a very different social structure, known as capitalism. Those who are affected by it attach considerably greater significance to the desires of the individual. They emphasis one's growth personally and support individuality. Their society's guiding principle is individual success.

3.3. Economic Patterns

As a representative of developed countries, the United States has a wide variety of career options to support a complete vocational training system. In addition, strong productivity and a booming economy provide the youth with the opportunity to choose different life paths as social welfare allay their worries about livelihood. As a developing country, China's economy is relatively backward, which leads to a lot of pressure in life. Occupations can easily be divided into several categories, which means that people struggle for more lucrative and decent jobs. The idea appears that the ideal way of living is to study hard and find a suitable job. Therefore, Chinese vocational education cannot escape the curse of receiving higher education and getting better jobs.

3.4. Cultural Traditions

American put an emphasis on personal superiority and self-development to discover their actual value, which is their core culture — individualism. To carry out self-rights and self-value, American parents respect first their children's willingness, interest and hobby, meanwhile attaching importance to their own colourful life. Different from them, Chinese people recognize a conception of a collective spirit. [10]. In a large proportion of Chinese family, parents consider children as their continuation to reach their unfulfilled aims without the essential respect as an individual paradoxically. In the tight job seeking market, Chinese interns ignore their own feelings and blindly devote themselves to the interests of the group, eager to show their usefulness to their superiors. They cannot defend their power similar to Americans because they know hundreds of people are jostling for one position.

Family relationships are quite different from one another in America and China, which is a main factor to influence career education. That is because Americans place a strong emphasis on independence as was already noted. Relationships within families are straightforward, with everyone treated equally. And most parents are unable to reverse their adult children's decisions, while they can only provide another perspective speaking from experiences to influence their choices to some degree [11]. In comparison to America, China has a considerably more complicated system. Due to Confucianism's profound effect on Chinese culture, they make an effort to respect seniors in their daily lives. Sincere to say, most Chinese people do not always treat family members equally.

4. Suggestions for Chinese Career Education

Apparently, American career development is more mature than Chinese one to some degrees. American career instruction system can be used as an example in China to improve the structure of vocational training.

4.1. Revolution in Traditional Notions

Due to Chinese national characteristics, graduates select to study for higher education background rather than entering the workforce to increase productivity, so career education requires to be reformed and restructured. Career education must assist from family, school and society, thus, shifting long-held beliefs.

4.2. Combination of the Two Kinds of Career Education

Both modes of cultivating talents have their advantages and disadvantages. Chinese education system can select the essence and discard the gross from the US model, where career education has already fulfilled in various aspects of life. Only when Chinese education system add some methods like observation and practice to various bases from diverse industries during primary and secondary schools, can Chinese children obtain a multidirectional growth.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, career education is a vital part of the whole education system, as education is extremely complex and closely bound up with everything in life. It is a systematic project that requires the participation of the entire society to promote more sophisticated and superb employment for college graduates. Comparing and contrasting the differences in vocational education systems between the two countries through this article, the characteristic of the traditional system for nourishing the career development ability is that universities are the major point, where other parties are not fully empowered. Although vocational education is the most efficient among college students, children can be provided with firm career goals and a strong willingness to enter the workplace in adulthood through exposure to vocational knowledge and information from their childhood. With dispose of this matter, it has occasion to reform and develop vocational development education and deepen the details of the education system. A comprehensive social support system is supposed to be established for the career development of college students, gradually breaking down business and administrative barriers between all parties and forming a resource system centred on the career development of college students. The establishment of this education system requires multiple surveys and attempts at different new teaching models in the future to adjust the most suitable way for the country. It is the modern society that can present its special education function as the basic power to usher society toward the creation of career happiness.

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