An Applicable Way for Fresh Undergraduate Graduates to Fight the Employment Dilemma: Examining the Job Predicament Encountered by Students Majoring in Humanities in China

Zhengyang Wang[1,a,*]

[1]*Nankai University, 94 Weijin Rd, Nankai District, Tianjin, 300071, China*
a. 2110483@mail.nankai.edu.cn
*corresponding author

Abstract: The evolution of the market system in China has had a significant impact on the career prospects of graduates, leading to a shift in the composition of the talent pool. To comprehensively elucidate and evaluate the predicament encountered by graduates in the labor market, it is essential for researchers to consider educational background as the fundamental basis for conducting such investigations. The Chinese population has been subject to the impact of many social ideals disseminated via numerous means, such as social media, parental guidance, and interactions with their immediate family members. The presence of certain social ideals and societal issues further intensifies the challenges experienced by a particular subset of individuals, namely humanities graduates. This study centers on the predicament faced by students majoring in the humanities and the educational department. It has been observed that students pursuing humanities disciplines have had challenges in securing employment opportunities. In response, institutions have implemented multidisciplinary approaches to address these issues. However, the outcomes of these efforts have not yielded the anticipated level of effectiveness. When humanities students engage in the process of job application, they often confront challenges such as comparatively lower remuneration, extended work hours, and a heavier workload in comparison to their counterparts. This paper highlights several challenges, including the increasing prevalence of science and engineering fields, the downsizing of technical positions in major corporations, and the emergence of new opportunities in the humanities. It emphasizes the importance for society, parents, and prospective college students to make informed decisions when selecting their desired academic disciplines.

Keywords: job market, humanities majored graduates, Chinese education

1.   Introduction

In recent years, the issue of unemployment in China has been exacerbated by several socioeconomic factors, including the Industrial Revolution, the college development plan, and the increasing aspirations of individuals for improved job opportunities. The confluence of these factors has led to an upward trajectory in China's unemployment rate, posing a particularly challenging predicament for new university graduates specializing in humanities disciplines [1]. The Chinese populace is

familiar with the well-recognized proverbs "mathematics, physics, and chemistry are the key to the world" and "a good university degree is the golden rice bowl." These two terms encapsulate the strong aspiration of Chinese students and their parents to follow a field of study that is applicable and get a higher level of education [2, 3]. The annual increase in the number of students undertaking college entrance examinations may be attributed to the influence of prevailing societal values, as shown by the following expressions. In the province of Hebei, the aggregate count of students taking the gaokao examination in 2023 amounted to 862,000, indicating a notable rise compared to the figure of 404,800 recorded in 2015. The intensification of labor market rivalry and the influx of new college graduates have heightened the significance of selecting a college degree in contemporary times.

The rapid explosion in the number of job seekers has triggered a series of problems related to employment. In order to reduce the opportunity cost of hiring, employers tend to select their employees by simply comparing their first degree and majors studied in their college. Such employing method roughly divides those job-hunters into hierarchical levels, exacerbates the competition between those job-hunters, and deprives those who have the ability but lack academic qualifications or do not have the right major [4].

In choosing the major before getting entrance to the college, students and parents tend to refer to various kinds of suggestions. Many major guidance experts and related universities volunteer to fill out guidance books. With the rapid intensification of employment pressure, those majors with "high professional barriers" have gradually become the choice of students and parents, but the humanities have suffered a serious blow [5-7]. Despite the school's efforts to take an interdisciplinary approach to improving the quality and enrollment of humanities subjects, problems slowly became apparent as the process progressed. The purpose of this paper is to provide a way that is conducive to the development of humanities and help those job-hunters to find a job easily [8].

2. Deliberating the Case

Unemployment is an obsessed problem in China, which has caused increasing pressure on the masses. Among those job hunters, college graduates comprise an enormous part.

The humanities is a general term for all disciplines of literature, philosophy, religion, art, history, anthropology, and linguistics that deal with human emotions, morals, and reason through observation, analysis, and rational criticism.

The proportion of graduates majoring in law, Chinese language and literature, and education is higher. For the class of 2022 graduates majoring in law, Chinese language and literature, and education, 3.7 percent, 3.4 percent, and 3.3 percent are preparing for civil service and public institution admissions exams, respectively [9].

These majors have suffered from the shock given by the rise of artificial intelligence and with the rise of the internet and technology, computer science, as a hot major, has been paid close attention. "DaChang", a symbol of a big company, became the first choice for job hunters due to its high salary and employment subsidies. Compared with other small enterprises, "DaChang" has more employment subsidies like the "Five Social Insurances and Housing Fund" [10].

In order to get access to those big companies, college students are being forced to master at least one of those "practical majors". Professional barriers are vital evaluation standards in judging a major's practicability, it determines whether the knowledge you learn has a high standard, that is, other professionals cannot easily acquire your major's ability. Such "high-threshold" majors can offer candidates a competitive edge when hiring, which is not usually available in the humanities.

According to Zhaopin's "2022 College Student Employability Research Report", the employment signing rate of science and engineering in 2022 is 29.5% and 17.3% respectively, while the employment signing rate of humanities graduates is only 12.4%, less than half of science students, and the salary level is 1,000 to 2,000 yuan lower than that of science students. The "Report on the

Employment Market of College Graduates in the first quarter of 2022" shows that the recruitment demand of the Internet and education and training industries, which have long been favored by college graduates, has decreased, which means that there are fewer jobs for those who major in humanities majors.

The warning list of undergraduate majors in Guizhou Province for the year 2021 was the subject of the announcement that was issued by the Department of Education for the Guizhou Provincial Government. Law, digital media arts, labor, and social security, public utility management, and Chinese language and literature are the five majors on this list that have been cautioned against studying. "Opinions on the Implementation of the Early Warning and Exit Mechanism for Undergraduate Majors in Ordinary Colleges and Universities" were published by the province government in the year 2012. This policy made it mandatory to include certain majors with a poor employment rate for college graduates in Guizhou Province on the list of early warning majors. Specifically, this policy required the inclusion of majors that were among the bottom ten in terms of employment rate. In addition, additional considerations were given to majors that had been placed on the early warning list for three years in a row, with a few exceptions for exceptional majors. It has been decided to carry out the installation of an exit mechanism, which will ultimately lead to the termination of enrollment.

At the Ningbo Cultural and Tourism Enterprise Recruitment and Talent Introduction Event held in April 2023, the reporter found that the salary for science and engineering positions is much higher. For example, Ningbo Banshan Water Resort Co., Ltd. offers a salary of 4500-6000 yuan/month for the position of new media operation, while the salary for the position of electronic engineer recruited by Abbott Electronics (Ningbo) Group Co., Ltd. is as high as 8000 to 10000 yuan/month.

3. Public Common Sense of Major-job Connection

In addition, the reporter also found that companies prefer to hire experienced graduates. "At the beginning, I asked whether I had run an official account, how many articles I read, and how many fans I attracted." Even if I could successfully enter the interview, liberal arts students still had to "go through five hurdles and six generals" to get the final offer. Zheng Lan, a journalism major from Ningbo University, poured some bitterness into the reporter. In February of this year, Zheng Lan interviewed a media company for a position as a financial editor with a monthly salary of 6000 yuan before tax. But this position only recruits one person, but at least dozens of people will come for interviews. In response to the phenomenon of difficult employment for liberal arts students, this HR provided his insights. "From the external point of view, the reason is that there are too many liberal arts students and too few suitable positions." This phenomenon is particularly obvious in Ningbo. As a single champion in the manufacturing industry, Ningbo's enterprises, when recruiting, release more positions corresponding to science and engineering, but fewer positions corresponding to liberal arts, which also results in a situation of "more monks than porridge". Ningbo's liberal arts graduates have to do their best to win the "battle".

Zhang Xuefeng, who was originally a teacher of the China Graduate Entrance Examination, has also begun to work as a professional introduction and guidance on various platforms. Under his influence, more and more parents and students realize that the humanities major is "not practical" and will only bring them difficulties in finding a job compared to those majors that can get hired quickly. Computer science, electrical, and major in mathematics have become the "gold majors" of today. Zhang Xuefeng has had a great impact on current social values and has further intensified the development of humanities in universities.

Nowadays, universities have been thinking of various applicable ways to handle this tough problem in order to maintain their humanities majors' enrollment numbers. One of those ways is adjusting a single discipline into a Cross-listed discipline, that is, a humanities major with a different

minor, which is usually a theoretical or scientific-oriented one. The official website of the Ministry of Education of China proposes to vigorously develop interdisciplinary disciplines to improve the professional system of higher education in the new era.

Many universities and institutions have responded to this call and begun to "save" their humanities majors. For instance, the early establishment of the China Academy of Boundary and Ocean Studies, with international law as the core, integrates the world economy, surveying and remote sensing, and other multidisciplinary fields. Renmin University of China has built a "double first-class" interdisciplinary major innovation planning platform in the fields of national security, digital economy, and rural revitalization. It established an interdisciplinary research institute for overall development. The school is trying to set up a "digital social science" cluster with data algorithms, blockchain, and artificial intelligence as the underlying architecture. Moreover, the Renmin University of China has also tried to carry out a few fine cross-over graduate student training in three major areas: "digital + economy", "digital + governance", and "digital + humanities". It is clear that many relevant institutions or universities are trying to change the awkward phenomenon.

Such innovative changes make the humanities majors in China seem like vigorous than before. With the assistance of other majors, most of the humanities majors gradually become more and more applicable. However, the trend of cross-listed discipline has given rise to the dilemma referred to in the title of this paper. After the intervention of other "applicable" majors, more and more students and their parents come to realize the importance of discipline barriers. Instead of saving the humanities majors, such a cross-listed way enhances the status of science and technology and other majors that can be easy for those job-hunters.

However, the popularity of cross-listed disciplines gradually makes parents and students, especially those who major in such cross-listed humanities, find that the key to their competitiveness exists with the target disciplines being crossed. The existence of interdisciplinary disciplines as a supplement to the lack of competitiveness in the job market or to make up for the lack of strong professional barriers has made many students and parents realize that it is better to choose a practical major directly than to study humanities majors that cross with these "practical" majors.

At the same time, under the influence of Zhang Xuefeng, practical disciplines became more and more like the "golden rice bowl" in the traditional Chinese concept, which completely destroyed the development of the humanities itself from the perspective of social values, and also showed that even cross-listed majors could not really reverse the fact of the gradual decline of the humanities.

Many well-known institutions and universities have also taken notice of the problem, and have come up with an emphasis on the humanities. An article from Harvard Business Review mentions Build STEM Skills but doesn't neglect the humanities, similar articles all mention humanistic care and communication ability in humanities, The critical importance of critical thinking and empathy re-emphasizes the importance of the humanities.

Steve Jobs once said at the iPad 2 press conference, "In Apple's "DNA", technology alone is not enough - it is the combination of technology and humanities that has led us to launch products that make our hearts sing [11].

An article published by Xinhua News Agency has pinpointed the issue that China has declared the significance of ethical concern in AI and other high-tech. One document named "Opinions on strengthening ethical governance of science and technology", China's first national-level science and technology ethical governance guidance document, has attracted much attention.

The opinions issued this time put forward: "Research content involving sensitive areas of science and technology ethics, should set up a science and technology ethics (review) committee", "focus on strengthening the research of science and technology ethics legislation in the fields of life science, medicine, artificial intelligence", "seriously investigate and punish science and technology ethics violations".

Like the sphere of the academic sector, companies with high technology have now been requested for the ethical review process. Such kind of work closely related to humanities is undoubtedly an extremely tough problem for science and engineering students. With the rise of the tertiary industry, high technology has gradually penetrated into enterprises of all sizes, and the topic of science and technology ethics is unavoidable for them.

Meanwhile, the huge expansion of enrollments in science and engineering, especially computer science, is slowly making these fields redundant. Elon Mask has prepared a yardstick for his company's job cutting, that is, those programmers need to write code on the spot, and anyone who can't meet the deadline will be fired immediately. Coincidentally, among software engineers, Amazon laid off 28.8%, and Google laid off up to 35.5%. Evidence from different perspectives has shown crucial information that students of science and engineering, especially those majoring in computer science, are suffering from the threat of job saturation. Policy and profit-oriented major choices have damaged the employee market and the humanities majors. Such a trend of pursuing applicable majors needs public reflection, students and parents who are about to choose a major should think twice before they make their decision. With the rapidly evolving IT industry, the importance of humanities majors gradually caught the public's attention. Society should realize the vitality and significance of humanities majors, those who now major in such disciplines shouldn't be depressed or disappointed. As a core component of human social culture and civilization, the humanities will not be ignored.

4.   Conclusion

This article thoroughly explains the dilemma faced by the humanities majors through the analysis of the employment market, social value, and saturation of the students who major in science and engineering. There is a huge cognitive difference between the humanities and science and engineering, and even if universities adopt a cross-discipline approach, it cannot completely solve the problems of the humanities. The complication is that this situation does not mean that the humanities itself is inadequate in value, but that under the values of the social status quo, the humanities are not fast enough to bring benefits compared to other practical disciplines (such as computer science). With the deepening of this concept, the science and engineering workforce has increased significantly, and redundancy has appeared in some large companies. In the process of major choosing, Students and their parents shouldn't be interfered with by various ideas given out by the public. Moreover, policymakers should notice that advocating may be an unstable way to refine social problems. In recent years, the increasing emphasis on technology and science and engineering policies or initiatives has led some universities or companies to overemphasize these fields and ignore the development of the humanities. Some policymakers need to realize that a change in group consciousness is very dangerous, and in promoting progress in a particular area, it must be compatible with other sectors.

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