

Study on the Definition of College Students' Employability

Hongjie Li¹, Zhenjia Sun^{2,a}

¹ School of Chemistry, Beihang University, Beijing, China

² School of Aeronautic Science and Engineering, Beihang University, Beijing, China

Abstract. With the further exploration of high-level talent cultivation in universities and the improvement of the demand for talents by employers, researches on college students' employability have been valued by scholars and universities. Cultivation of excellent employability has been a shared concern and objective for both college students and universities. The concept of employability has evolved over time. Scholars at home and abroad have different definitions on college students' employability from different perspectives.

Keywords. Employability, college students, definition

Studies on employability have long focused on the needs of the labor market. The concept of employability has evolved with the progress of the times. Scholars at home and abroad have different definitions on college students' employability from different perspectives. This thesis centers on the development process and trends of both employability and college students' employability research, intending to lay a theoretical foundation for the future development and study of college students' employability.

1 Development process of employability

The concept of employability was first proposed by British Beveridge at the beginning of the 20th century [1]. It was initially proposed from the perspective of the labor capacity of workers and focused on the availability of mature workers, so as to distinguish workers with more labor capacity in the market. The concept of employability has evolved with the development of the times, closely linked to the employment priorities of the time, and assumed different functions.

Gazier et al. summarize the development process of employability and divide them into seven stages according to its connotation. The first is the dichotomic employability at the beginning of the 20th century, focusing on the opposite poles of employability and unemployability. The second is the social-medical employability in the 1950s. The third is the manpower policy employability in the 1960s. The fourth is the flow employability in the 1960s. The fifth is the labor market performance employability in the late 1970s. The sixth is the initiative employability in the 1980s when the employability research, as a human resource management tool, began to be used at the corporate or organization

level. The seventh is the interactive employability in the early 1990s.

2 Definition of employability

Studies on employability have emerged very early, but there has been no uniform definition on relative concepts yet. The Canadian Labor Force Development Board (CLFDB) defines employability as "the ability of individuals to gain valuable employment in the interaction with the labor market". Paying more attention on the employability at work, the International Labor Organization (ILO), defines employability as "the ability to make progress at work and to react to changes in work".

With the trend towards new types of relationships between employers and employees, individuals have assumed more and more subject responsibility in their career development, and the definition of employability based on individual perspective has received extensive attention. For example, definition of employability proposed by Fugate et al. has received much attention in recent years. They clearly state that employability, which reveals itself as a form of individual adaptation at work, is essentially a psycho-social construct, including individual traits that help to form active cognition and action and to promote individual-work interaction. They even propose that employability is (pro)active adaptability specific to work and careers [2]. Hillage and Pollard define employability as having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. Individuals can realize their potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context within which they seek work [3]. Their definition of the

^a Corresponding author: szj@buaa.edu.cn

structure, measurement and intervention ability of the employability of college students who seek employment influenced by psychological capital is one of the most frequently cited definitions in the study of employability.

3 Definition of college students' employability

Foreign scholars in different groups have different perspectives on the definition of college students' employability. From the perspective of supply and demand in the labour market, college students' employability refers to the ability of college students to acquire and maintain their careers in the labour market. It also includes the prediction and perception of individuals' external environment and job changes [4]. From the perspective of the knowledge and skills required by college students to acquire and maintain employment relationships, it can be defined as the sum of a series of abilities college students hold to obtain initial employment opportunity and continuous employment. These abilities are mostly related to talent fostering. However, even from the perspective of college students, differences exist in college students' employability because of various definitions.

The definition of college students' employability in China is mainly concentrated on career exploration. Relative studies focus on college graduates' employability, emphasizing the education, training and ability improvement required by employment. Most notably is the view held by Zheng Xiaoming. He defines college students' employability earlier as a kind of skill acquired by students during their school years from studying basic and professional knowledge, practicing, and developing various comprehensive qualities. This skill can help graduates achieve their employment ideals

and realize their own value in social life, and also meet social needs. It consists of intelligence (IQ) and non-intellectual factors (EQ).

4 Conclusions

From the literature review, we find that in defining employability the concept definition and structure are different under different development stages of society. The definition of college students' employability could be generally divided into two types. One centers on the ability structure of the characteristics owned by college students. The other pays more attention to features presented by college students when they acquire and maintain a job.

References

1. Beveridge, William Henry. *Unemployment A Problem of Industry* [M]. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909.
2. Fugate M., Kinicki A. J. A Dispositional Approach to Employability: Development of a Measure and Test of implications for Employee Reactions to Organizational Change [J]. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 2008, 81(3): 503
3. Hillage, J, Pollard, E. 1998, *Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis*. Research Brief 85, Department for Education and Employment.
4. Andries de Gri P, Jas Per van Loo, Jos Sanders. The Industry Employability Index: Taking account of supply and demand characteristics [J]. *International Labor Review*, 2004, 143(3): 211-230.