

# Study on the Employment Dilemmas and Countermeasures of Graduates of Construction Colleges and Universities in the Post-Epidemic Era

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**Abstract:** Due to the global economic recession, the COVID-19 epidemic, the State policy regulation of the construction industry, the new round of enrollment expansion of vocational colleges and other influencing factors, there is an imbalanced labor supply and demand in the job market, fiercer employment competition and more challenges for the graduates. All of these make the task of “stabilizing employment” and “maintaining employment” for construction colleges and universities more difficult. The construction colleges and universities are required to hold the root of improving the quality of talents cultivation, rebuild up the employment working mechanism and develop the ideas of employment, so as to help the graduates to have more than adequate and high-quality employment in the post-epidemic era.

**Keywords:** Post-Epidemic Era; Construction Colleges and Universities; Employment

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## 1. Introduction

The so-called “post-epidemic era” refers to the era after the novel coronavirus epidemic has passed<sup>1</sup>. It means that “the epidemic situation rises and falls from time to time, and may break out on a small scale at any time, which would last for a long time with a profound impact on all aspects. The COVID-19 epidemic has caused a serious impact on the global economy. Along with the implementation of such National deployment, including “the millions of enrollment expansion in higher vocational education” and “increasing opportunities for graduates to further their studies”, there comes a new round of enrollment expansion of colleges and universities in the new period. Due to the above factors, the graduates have difficulty, such as imbalanced labor supply and demand in the job market and fiercer employment competition.

However, employment is the biggest livelihood project. Implementing the problems of graduates employment, is the core target for the employment of graduates of colleges and universities in the new period.

Hence, construction colleges and universities should tightly seize the fundamental mission of improving the quality of talent cultivation to rebuild up the employment working mechanism for graduates and facilitate them to have more than adequate and higher-quality employment in the post-epidemic era.

## 2. The dilemmas and countermeasures of graduates of construction colleges and universities in the post-epidemic era

### 2.1 Dilemmas of the graduates in the post-epidemic era

#### 2.1.1 Shrinking of labor demand due to the insufficient developing momentum in the construction industry

During the period of 2016—2020, there was a significant effect on domestic construction reform and development. The annual average growth of the added value of the national construction industry was 5.1%, and the proportion of GDP was maintained to be more than 6.9%. However, along with the increasing and enhancing the industrial scale and construction

capacity of the construction industry, there gradually came the problems with worse quality and lower effects:

(1) The total profit growth was slowing and the profit rate had been reduced. In 2021, the enterprises of the construction industry around the whole country achieved a profit of 855.4 billion yuan with a growth rate of 1.26%, and a decrease of 0.77 percentage points over the previous year. The growth had been slowing for five consecutive years. The profit ratio of production in the construction industry was 2.92, which was the minimum in the past ten years.

(2) The contribution rate to GDP was decreasing. The contribution rate of the real estate industry and construction industry to GDP had been downward since the peak in the first season of 2020, 21%; and it had decreased to be a negative one in the first season of 2022, the -2%.

(3) The number of workers engaging in the construction industry was shrinking. In 2021, the number of employees in the construction industry was 52.8294 million, and 839800 people were reduced compared with the end of last year, with a reduce of 1.56%.

## **2.1.2 Fiercer employment competition of graduates due to the enrollment expansion of colleges and universities in the new period**

On May 8, 2019, the *Implementation Plan for the Special Work of Higher Vocational Enrollment Expansion* was released by the Ministry of Education. On March 4, 2020, to cope with the influence of the COVID-19 on the employment of the graduates, the government made a decision about “increase opportunities for graduates to further their studies” to expand the scale of the entrance examination of universities for the students from ordinary vocational colleges. The enrollment ratio had increased from 12% to 30% approximately. Therefore, the number of graduates of vocational colleges around the country reached 10.76 million in June 2022. In addition to the stress of the downward economy and the influence of COVID-19, the employment situation was harder than in any other period in history.

In the only public-owned construction vocational college in Guangxi Province where the author worked, the major setting covered the whole process of the construction industry. There was a high satisfaction from society and parents for the employment quality of graduates. However, due to the COVID-19 and the State policy regulation in the construction industry and other influencing factors, the construction rate of local real estate and construction projects has been in a sharp decline, and there was a substantial reduction in the posts recruited by enterprises, so it was in excess of demand. From January – May of 2022 for example, there was a year-on-year decrease of 26.4% in the real estate development investment, a decrease of 27.8% in the projects under construction in the industry and the number of posts recruited by enterprises in the vocational college decreased by more than 10000 over the same period last year. Consequently, as of August 22, 2022, there were only 5583 graduates who had found the employment workplace, so the employment rate was 78.01% with a year-on-year decrease of 12.37% of 2021.

## **2.1.3 Co-existence of “negative slow employment” and “employment anxiety”**

“Negative slow employment” means a phenomenon that partial graduates of colleges and universities who should be employed slowly found a job or directly gave up finding a job. There were mainly two reasons for the phenomenon. Firstly, the unreasonable employment opinion. Partial graduates only chased after high salaries, a comfortable environment and a stable post. Obviously, such a need could not be satisfied in the labor market of the construction industry in the new period. Secondly, the vague career orientation. Partial graduates had no idea of their interest, ability and value orientation and no knowledge of the macro and micro environment of the career world. Hence, they knew nothing about professional preference and did not want to explore it.

“Employment anxiety” means that partial graduates with weaker employment ability would have anxiety, even depression, when being hard to find a workplace due to the fiercer employment competition and other influencing factors.

Being rejected by employers again and again, would make them feel frustrated and generate a worry about the “uncertainty in the future”. Obviously, it did make the employment of construction vocational colleges harder.

## **2.2 Countermeasures thinking for the employment of construction colleges and universities in the post-epidemic era**

### **2.2.1 Tightly seize the fundamental mission of “improving the quality of talent cultivation”**

The construction colleges and universities shoulder the glorious mission to cultivate and support outstanding professional talents for local and national construction. It should tightly seize the fundamental mission of “improving the quality of talent cultivation”. With the target orientation of cultivating high-quality technical talents who master the core skills of the post, innovatively explore a talent cultivation reform with a fusion of “post+course+ competition + certificate” to enhance the vocational education adaptability; positively build up the school-enterprise cooperative platform to closely dock with the talent need of construction industry; carry out modern pilot reform of apprenticeship system with Chinese characteristics and keep innovating the reform of training mode for building technical talents; improve the comprehensive quality of students with abundant “second classroom”.

### **2.2.2 Build an employment system with full-participation**

At present, there is a problem of weak employment guidance in colleges and universities. It should shape the concept of all-member-cultivation for employment and build up an organizational structure with full-participation for employment. Construction colleges and universities should formulate the regulation and mechanism of full-participation for employment to enhance the sense of mission of all the staff. And, it is necessary to formulate an incentive plan of full-participation for employment to provide a guarantee with conditions.

An employment job leading the team with the team leader of secretary and principal of colleges and universities should be established to strictly implement the “first-hand” engineering and form an employment pattern of “leaders having an overall planning, employment management department working as a head, relevant functional departments having full cooperation, academic departments having a gradual implementation” with level-level promotion and full members participation for the co-management in the entire vocational colleges.

### **2.2.3 Deepen the school-enterprise cooperation and mine up alumni**

#### **resources**

To push the linkage of employment and cultivation and the effective docking of talent supply and demand, the Ministry of Education implemented a supply and demand docking project for the first time in August 2021. There are 291 employers and 1271 vocational colleges applied for the establishment of 6381 projects. The measure provides new thinking for colleges and universities to deepen the integration of teaching and working and the school-enterprise cooperation in the new period.

Construction colleges and universities should take this as opportunity, combined with the requirement of the Ministry of Education on carrying out the special action of “visiting enterprises and expanding posts to promote employment”, strengthen the direct supply and demand docking with enterprises from the following aspects: cultivation and training for oriented talents, construction of employment practice base, teachers sharing and other aspects. Consequently, it would improve the matching degree between supply and demand, and improve employment quality for graduates.

Alumni resource is important to expand the employment channel of graduates. Construction colleges and universities should make full use of alumni resources to push employment by organizing alumni symposiums from all places, so as to

gather the power of alumni to provide a guarantee to comprehensively push smooth employment for graduates.

## **2.2.4 Strengthen employment guidance services for graduates**

Firstly, we should introduce employment education to the ideological and political education system for college students. A series of activities with the themed education of employment through the themed class meetings, employment salon and so on, so as to guide the graduates to establish the correct occupational values.

Secondly, we should carry out employment guidance training according to the characteristics of different types of students. In accordance with the market need, we should carry out relevant vocational skills training and project training.

Finally, we should make the employment guidance of students go through the whole process of colleges. The students in lower grades should focus on the enlightenment of career and academic planning. The students in higher grades could focus on the improvement of employability and adjustment of employment psychology.

## **3. Conclusion**

In the post-epidemic era of multiple factors, graduates face greater difficulties in finding jobs than ever before. Therefore, construction colleges and universities should take active action and develop ideas to seize the fundamental mission of improving the quality of talent cultivation and rebuilding employment working mechanisms in the new period. Do well in the employment for graduates with all members, all directions and the entire process to help the graduates to have sufficient employment with higher quality in the post-epidemic era.

## **References**

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