

A Review of The Current Situation of Career Planning Courses in Chinese Higher Vocational Colleges

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ABSTRACT

As China pays more and more attention to vocational education, the urgency of high-quality employment for vocational college students is also increasing. Career planning courses, as a key comprehensive education for high-quality employment in vocational colleges, play a crucial role. However, according to the data, the resignation rate of vocational college students within six months has remained high in recent years, which shows that the teaching of career planning courses for vocational college students is still not adequate. This paper aims to study the teaching situation of career planning courses in vocational colleges in China and identify the problems and causes of such courses. Using the method of document research, the paper takes the career planning course teaching situation in Ningxia Vocational and Technical College as a sample for study. Through the research, it was found that vocational colleges generally have problems with outdated teaching methods, weak faculty teams, and insufficient course settings, mainly due to the lack of attention from the government, schools, and students themselves on career planning courses. This paper analyzes the problems and causes of the teaching of career planning courses and proposes relevant reform and innovation strategies to enhance the level of attention to career planning courses.

Contribution: This study contributes to the existing literature on career planning education in Chinese higher vocational colleges and indirectly influences the employment quality of Chinese higher vocational students, the sustainable development of the labor market and the harmony and stability of the society.

1. Introduction

Career planning originated in the United States, with its earliest form being career guidance proposed by Parsons (1909), a professor of Boston University. In his book "Choosing a Vocation" published in May 1909, he put forward the famous theory of trait factors and established the basic framework of career guidance. In the late 19th century, career planning theory was introduced to China. Initially, vocational colleges in China

did not pay much attention to career planning education, but as more and more people paid attention to and conducted research on it, vocational colleges in China realized that career planning is a very important process for the future career development of vocational students (Zhao, 2020).

Although China's career planning development is nearly 100 years behind that of Western developed countries, it has been developing rapidly in China. The importance of career planning for vocational students has become widely known, and the course has been made a required basic course for vocational college students, with all vocational students having received career planning education (Xiao, 2013).

However, the high turnover rate of vocational college students in China in recent years reflects that the employment stability of vocational college students is not optimistic (Li, 2021). Although they have all received career planning education. According to the 2020-2022 College Student Employment Quality Research Data from Beijing Xin Jincheng Research Institute (2022), the half-year turnover rate of vocational college graduates in 2019, 2020, and 2021 was as high as 30.5%, 31.32%, and 30.94%. Meanwhile, the half-year turnover rate of undergraduate graduates was only around 15% during the same period.

The high turnover rate of vocational college students in China is complex and multi-factorial. The educational scholar Huang (2021) believes that the high turnover rate indicates that these departing vocational college students had problems with unclear career goals, insufficient career planning ability, insufficient understanding of their target occupations, and insufficient relevant knowledge reserves when choosing their first job. These are exactly the contents covered in career planning courses.

Therefore, the high turnover rate of vocational college students in China is mainly due to the fact that there are still some problems and shortcomings in the career planning course teaching in vocational schools (Hansen & Woronov, 2013). Students are not fully informed and taught about career planning-related knowledge, their career planning abilities are not effectively trained, and they do not receive enough job-seeking and work experience.

This paper aims to study the teaching situation of career planning courses in vocational colleges in China and identify the problems and causes of such courses. Using the method of document research, the paper takes the career planning course teaching situation in Ningxia Vocational and Technical College as a sample for study.

2.The Role of Career Planning Course in Higher Vocational Colleges

2.1. Career planning courses can help high vocational students understand themselves

Self-awareness is an important component of career planning. Higher vocational students can understand themselves by analyzing their personality, interests, abilities, and strengths and weaknesses. They can also position themselves reasonably for the future by analyzing their own career goals. Master Wang (2016) from Hebei Vocational and Technical Normal University believes that the self-awareness of higher vocational students mainly focuses on personality, temperament, professional ability, career planning ability, interests and hobbies, personal goals, etc. They can demand themselves

and improve themselves by focusing on these aspects, so that their talents can be fully developed. Career planning courses can help higher vocational students understand their personality, interests and abilities comprehensively through teaching, the use of assessment and evaluation systems, and interactive learning. [Lv \(2016\)](#) from Dalian Higher Vocational Technical College also believes that the three years of college life are a crucial stage for establishing one's own identity and a critical period for life transformation for college students. For contemporary college students, their awareness of self-awareness is also increasing, and their dependence on parents and teachers is gradually decreasing. Their desire for self-awareness is stronger, more independent, and their sense of responsibility is also increasing. Therefore, how to correct self-awareness is the first step to opening the door to personal career planning. However, there are some unfavorable planning factors. [Zhang \(2020\)](#) from Northwest Minzu University believes that career planning courses will encourage students to learn more about what they are interested in, while some students may think that they don't have to learn what they are not interested in, which can lead to students' inability to develop their abilities comprehensively.

2.2. Career planning course instruction is beneficial to vocational college students in planning for the future

Higher vocational students will eventually enter the workforce, and before that, the most important thing is to learn the knowledge and skills required for their targeted career so that they can be able to perform their job upon entering the workforce. Master's student [Song \(2017\)](#) from Guangxi Normal University believes that career planning courses are a "prophetic" course, not only educating people on how to plan their careers, but also including career planning in life planning, which is an important guide for college students to achieve the maximum value of their life and realize their personal value. [Lv \(2021\)](#) from Yangtze River Engineering Vocational Technical College believes that when higher vocational students choose their career, it is equivalent to choosing the future planning of their life. If higher vocational students do not have a clear future planning, they cannot also have targeted and purposeful learning of knowledge and skill reserves, and the golden time of learning at school will be wasted.

Career planning courses can help vocational college students determine their target career based on their interests and hobbies, and clearly plan for the knowledge and skills required for future workplaces. In this way, vocational college students can have a clear and specific goal for the future during their studies and consciously prepare and acquire relevant knowledge and skills in advance ([Huang, 2021](#)). However, [Jiang \(2018\)](#) from Shanghai Lixin Accounting and Finance College sees things from a different perspective and believes that career planning should be continuous. College students' career planning is not just a one-time course or lecture that can be completed in a short period of time. College students' career planning is a task that combines short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. It is necessary to provide timely and appropriate guidance to college students in stages, especially for freshmen in their first year and those in the mid-term planning stage of their junior year. And the golden period of college students' job hunting, they should be taught career planning in different forms.

2.3. Career planning course instruction is beneficial to help vocational college students find employment easily

Xie (2021) from Huizhou Economic Vocational Technical College believes that a career is not only a means of livelihood for everyone, but also the place where one's life value can be realized. Therefore, whether one can find a suitable job and successfully enter the job market after fierce competition is very important for vocational college students. (2021) also believes that on an individual level, whether vocational college students can successfully enter the job market affects their own future development, personal income levels, and the realization of their life value; from a social level, it affects the growth of the national economy and social stability; from an educational level, it affects the ultimate realization of educational goals. Career planning courses can continuously simulate and experiment with various job application and interview skills, allowing job-seeking students to prepare in advance for the hard requirements of employers, actively obtain relevant occupational qualification certificates, and participate in relevant competitions to win honors. This will enable vocational college students to have relevant skills at the beginning of the interview, allowing them to stand out in the interview for their target job, and capture the target job. Cao (2023) from Hebei Polytechnic University also believes that career planning is the key content of vocational college students' career development and employment guidance. This can help students better define the direction of career development and plan the path of career development.

Therefore, it is necessary to focus on analyzing career planning courses to guide more students to achieve comprehensive and high-quality employment and obtain sustainable and healthy career development. Liu (2016) believes that in the current stage, vocational education is more focused on theoretical introduction rather than practical operation. As with other vocational college courses, it is particularly important to apply the theory of vocational education to one's own situation in practice. However, in the actual operation of vocational colleges, many vocational schools equate vocational education with theoretical courses, mainly introducing relevant theories of vocational education but lacking character and ability tests, employment market surveys and analysis, and interview training, etc. Therefore, students lack vocational training and professional qualities, and cannot meet the needs of the labor market and social development. They are at a disadvantage in employment.

3. Problems in Career Planning Courses Teaching at Higher Vocational Colleges

3.1. Outdated teaching methods in career planning course

Higher vocational education places a greater emphasis on the practicality and practicality of student learning, which should be closer to the reality of students, the development needs of society and the development needs of the course itself. It should also have certain flexibility, targeted, and scientific, and be able to adapt to the changing social reality and meet the needs of students at different stages. However, the current teaching method of career planning courses in higher vocational schools still adopts traditional theoretical teaching, the course content is relatively outdated, and the latest scientific research achievements and the overall development trend of the discipline cannot be passed on to students in a timely manner. There is a serious lack of practical teaching. As a result, students lack the opportunity to get close contact with enterprises and jobs in society (Li, 2021).

Classroom teaching remains the main teaching method, with most adopting a "one-way" and "indoctrination" teaching method, with little interaction between teachers and students. The lack of classroom appeal and boring teaching methods make it difficult for students to be interested in career planning courses, affecting their post-graduation career choices and planning. Liu (2016) from Shandong Normal University believes that at present, vocational education is more focused on theoretical introduction rather than practical operation. As with other vocational college courses, it is particularly important to combine the practical application of vocational education theory with one's own situation. However, in the actual operation of vocational colleges in China, many vocational schools equate vocational education with theoretical courses, mainly introducing relevant theories of vocational education, but lacking personality and ability tests, employment market surveys and analysis, and interview training, etc. Therefore, students lack vocational training and professional qualities, unable to meet the needs of the labor market and social development, and are at a disadvantage in employment.

3.2. There are not enough professional teachers

Whether it is an analysis of the elements of the course or a process analysis of course implementation, teachers are a very important type of curriculum resource. Yu (2021) from Changchun Vocational and Technical College believes that a sufficient and professional teacher team directly affects the smooth implementation of the career planning course and thus affects the quality and implementation effect of the course. However, at present, most vocational colleges do not have professional and specialized career planning course teachers. They are often taught by other professional teachers on a part-time basis or by class advisers. As Li (2021) from Xiamen University of Technology found in her research, the offline teaching team of the course at Xiamen University of Technology consists of teachers from the Student Affairs Office, the Entrepreneurship Park, and the class advisers, which is a temporary part-time team. Due to the limited number of teachers, the class size is large and the number of students is large, and the teaching content is more focused on information transmission rather than experiential interaction. The teachers cannot pay attention to every student, so the course cannot achieve the ideal effect. Because there are no professional career planning course teachers with professional ability and quality, their teaching enthusiasm is seriously affected, and the quality of classroom teaching is greatly reduced. Students cannot learn useful knowledge.

3.3. Inadequate course offerings

In 2007, the Ministry of Education of China unified and issued the teaching requirements for college student career planning, requiring that students receive continuous and systematic career planning guidance during their college years. This shows that the state has placed college student career planning courses in a very important position. However, with the passage of time, most vocational colleges in China have not yet paid enough attention to these courses. According to Che (2021) of Zhongshan Torch Vocational and Technical College, the current career planning education courses at vocational colleges have short class hours and are not well connected.

Compared to specialized courses, career planning courses are particularly marginalized. Shao (2020) of Suzhou Vocational University also holds the same attitude, after conducting a survey, she found that many vocational colleges do not attach much importance to career planning courses, considering them as public courses with a lower

status than specialized courses. Therefore, students lack the motivation to study this course and have low enthusiasm. [Huang \(2021\)](#) also believes that the current career planning course setting at vocational colleges is far from meeting the characteristic requirements of career planning activities and the objective needs of vocational students, becoming a negative factor affecting the cultivation of vocational students' career planning ability.

4. Attribution Analysis of The Problems in Career Planning Courses

4.1. The school level does not give enough emphasis to the course

Many colleges have not given enough emphasis to the career planning course since its inception, and have only opened it because of the mandatory indicator issued by the General Office of the Ministry of Education in 2007, requiring career planning courses to be offered at universities. They have not paid enough attention to the course from a conscious standpoint, resulting in a significant gap between the course's indicators in the school's teaching plan and those of other courses, inadequate support for the course, and difficulty in meeting the course's expected teaching goals and the essential needs of students. Universities pay more attention to employment rates and have not fully realized the importance of career planning for students, leading to a serious shortage of faculty resources, insufficient course offerings, and limited opportunities for teaching practice and research ([Zhao, 2020](#)).

4.2. Students themselves do not give enough emphasis to the course

In today's fast-developing society, many students are influenced by their surroundings and become impatient for immediate gains, ignoring long-term development. Therefore, they do not give sufficient emphasis to the guidance significance of the career planning course for their entire life and entire career, and cannot understand the importance of the course for their own development. Moreover, the career planning awareness of vocational college students is weak, and they are unclear about their own career positioning and do not know how to make decisions. They cannot plan their own careers based on their own actual situation ([Li, 2021](#)).

4.3. The social level has low participation rate in the course

Career planning education is both school education and social education, and requires the participation of various social forces at different stages of a student's growth. However, at present, the society is almost absent in the process of career planning education for students, assuming that career planning education is a school matter and has little to do with society. According to [Zhao \(2020\)](#) from Jilin Chemical Technology College, the general public's understanding of career planning education is too superficial and simplistic, believing that career planning education is nothing more than employment guidance or job selection methods. This idea has become deeply ingrained. The forms of corporate participation are limited to joint training and course integration. In fact, corporate forces can deeply participate in school education and teaching, and students have relatively clear career goals and stronger planning abilities, with more direct participation in practical activities.

5. Reform and Innovation Strategies for Career Planning Course Teaching

5.1. Innovative teaching methods

If vocational colleges want to improve the employment quality of their graduates, they must reform the traditional career planning course teaching methods and innovate teaching methods, focusing on the improvement of students' comprehensive quality and ability: First of all, institutions should change the traditional "stuffing" teaching mode and fully play the initiative of students in class, enhance the students' initiative and enthusiasm for career planning courses; Secondly, institutions should continuously carry out "second classroom", accelerate the cooperation between schools and enterprises, provide students with more on-site learning opportunities, thereby improving their communication and coordination ability, professional practice and innovation ability, and social adaptability.

career planning courses can be enriched with some hot issues and cases in society for in-depth analysis, which can stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm, create a good classroom teaching and learning atmosphere, and improve students' professional capabilities. In summary, constantly reforming and innovating the teaching methods of career planning courses can effectively stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm, and fully develop students' abilities in all aspects (Han, 2014).

5.2. Setting up a high-quality teaching team

The effectiveness of the course is not only related to the content of the course itself, the learning state of students, but also depends on the teacher's teaching ability and level. Therefore, the improvement of teachers' own ability and teaching level is crucial for the construction of the course. Career planning teachers, as the guides who introduce students to career planning, have higher requirements. They can face problems and solve problems with students together and grow together. Vocational colleges should regard expanding the teacher team as an important matter. A high-quality teacher team is a prerequisite for ensuring the quality of the course. As the soul figure in the classroom, teachers' teaching methods and teaching content have a crucial role in driving the class and achieving the learning effect of students.

The overall quality of the teacher team needs to be further improved, and continuous theoretical knowledge learning and self-training in professional skills are required. Teachers need to systematically study theoretical knowledge in order to better guide students. While constantly improving their In the course setting, continuous and targeted stable courses should replace the current fragmented and temporary courses, and fixed guidance courses should replace lecture-style guidance. Colleges and universities should pay attention to the construction of this course and regard lifelong education as the guiding principle for course implementation. Based on different grade levels, credits should be set up for guidance situations, and a comprehensive career planning course system should be established (Song, 2017).

5.3. Constructing a perfect curriculum system

The issue of employment for vocational college students has become a major problem for every vocational college, not only because of the impact of the domestic and international financial environment, but also because of the lack of awareness of career

planning by vocational colleges and individual vocational college students, which is also the weak link in career planning education in vocational colleges. Therefore, vocational colleges in China should further strengthen the construction of career planning courses and ultimately achieve the predetermined goal of career development and the goal of personnel training in higher vocational colleges. [Lei \(2020\)](#) from Xi'an Foreign Studies University believes that cultivating students' comprehensive qualities is a long-term process and cannot be achieved overnight. Under the overall teaching philosophy of career planning courses, a complete course system is an important factor to ensure the success of the courses.

The course of career planning in higher vocational colleges should make an overall teaching plan, carry out hierarchical teaching, and make different teaching arrangements according to the characteristics of students at different stages from grade one to grade four. Before the implementation of teaching, we should improve the curriculum system, clarify the teaching content and tasks, and formulate a comprehensive teaching plan. In the course setting, the current scattered and temporary courses are replaced by stable courses with continuity and pertinence, and the lecture guidance is replaced by the fixed guidance courses. Colleges and universities should attach importance to the construction of this course, take the whole process of education as the guiding concept of curriculum implementation, set credits according to different grades, and build a perfect career planning curriculum system. [Xu \(2021\)](#) from Hunan Chemical Engineering Vocational and Technical College also believes that the teaching of career planning courses should rely on major groups, combine the characteristics of students' majors in the course teaching, and fully explore the professional career education materials related to the profession in the industry.

In the course of teaching, students are guided to actively carry out career exploration, to clarify the relationship between major and future career, professional skills and corporate competency. In teaching, various abilities and qualities required for career development should be reserved, so as to realize the synchronous cultivation and promotion of students' professional skills, professional ability and professional quality during school.

6. Conclusion

Currently, there is a problem of high turnover rate among vocational college students, because there are still some problems and shortcomings in the career planning course teaching in vocational schools. Students have not been able to fully understand and learn relevant knowledge of career planning, have not been able to effectively train their own career planning ability, and have not received enough job-seeking and work practice. Therefore, vocational colleges should fully integrate various high-quality teaching resources and continuously reform the teaching mode and teaching methods of their own career planning courses. This will help college students firmly establish a correct employment and career choice outlook and improve the employment and entrepreneurial ability of vocational college students. It will also help vocational colleges cultivate comprehensive and high-quality talents with more professional knowledge, strong practical ability, strong adaptability, social responsibility, innovative spirit, and high overall quality and ability.

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