

Employment Preparation at Changchun University of Science and Technology

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Guidance, Employability, Support, Preparation, Program

Received : 15, November

Revised : 08, December

Accepted: 15, December

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzed the employment preparation of fresh graduates in 2023 from Changchun University of Science and Technology, focusing on three main objectives: to assess the impact of career guidance on employability and workforce readiness, to examine the strategies and mechanisms employed by teachers to support students' transition to employment, and to identify challenges in employment preparation while highlighting ways to enhance guidance effectiveness. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, the study surveyed 20 career guidance teachers, aged 28 to 50, who assisted graduates in securing jobs. Findings revealed that extended career guidance significantly enhanced graduates' employability, with over 80% of respondents emphasizing the importance of personalized, one-on-one support. Specific mechanisms such as mock interviews, resume development, and interview coaching were particularly influential in preparing students for employment. The results underscore the pivotal role of career guidance teachers and the necessity for institutional support and innovative strategies to address evolving industry demands and improve graduates' workforce readiness.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from higher education to employment has always been a critical phase in a young person's life. In the context of rapidly evolving global economies and shifting labor market demands, the employment prospects of college graduates have drawn increasing attention from policymakers, educators, families, and the graduates themselves. In recent years, the number of college graduates in China has risen steadily, while the employment landscape has become increasingly complex and challenging. Moreover, factors such as the ongoing epidemic and broader socio-economic conditions have further intensified concerns about whether graduates can secure successful employment after graduation (Marinoni et al., 2020). According to statistics, the number of college graduates reached a historical peak of 11.58 million in 2023 (Wang, 2022), highlighting the scale of the challenge.

Consequently, the employment of college students has become a focal issue for governments, society, and higher education institutions alike (Hu, 2019). Employment is closely linked not only to individual livelihoods but also to the development of education and the stability and harmony of society. Indeed, graduates' success in securing employment reflects the effectiveness of modern education, emphasizing the broader social implications of employability.

With the rapid development of China's economy, higher education has been operating in a dynamic and complex environment. Shifts in the employment landscape, coupled with the growing diversity of factors influencing career opportunities, have significantly affected how universities prepare students for the workforce. Against this backdrop, this paper analyzes the employment preparation initiatives of Changchun University of Science and Technology (CUST) from the perspectives of employment concepts, challenges, and strategies, and, through comparative analysis, provides practical recommendations for enhancing career readiness.

While existing studies emphasize lifelong learning and skill development through continuing education and teacher training, research specifically examining the impact of structured and sustained career guidance on graduate employability remains limited. Most literature highlights general employability skills but rarely investigates the effectiveness of targeted support mechanisms such as mock interviews, resume workshops, or personalized mentorship programs. By focusing on these structured interventions, this study addresses that gap and contributes to theory enrichment in career readiness, while capturing the unique context of CUST as a model institution for employment preparation.

By analyzing the strategies and experiences of career guidance teachers, this research provides a deeper understanding of how higher education institutions can optimize career readiness programs. It offers actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and career counselors seeking to enhance graduate employability in an increasingly competitive labor market. Furthermore, this study highlights the significance of personalized and extended career guidance as a mechanism for bridging the gap between academic preparation and

workplace demands. By examining how guidance teachers tailor interventions to individual student needs, the research emphasizes the importance of student-centered approaches in career readiness programs. These insights can inform policy and practice not only within CUST but also across other higher education institutions facing similar employment challenges.

Additionally, the study provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of specific support mechanisms, such as mock interviews, individualized coaching, and resume development workshops. Understanding which interventions have the greatest impact allows universities to implement evidence-based strategies that directly enhance graduate employability. Finally, the research contributes to the broader discussion on workforce development in China by linking higher education practices with labor market outcomes. By exploring the intersection of career guidance, institutional strategies, and student success, this study offers a model for integrating educational theory with practical employment solutions, providing valuable guidance for both academic and policy stakeholders.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Continuous professional development remains vital for career readiness and employability. Song Zhiqiang et al. (2023) proposed that, with the rapid development of the times, the demand for continuing education across various sectors has been steadily increasing, and consequently, the effectiveness of continuing education training has become a central concern. Indeed, the development of education is closely linked to the evolving needs of society. In different professional fields, it is therefore essential to establish platforms and mechanisms for continuing education that address the requirements for human resource growth and professional training.

Similarly, Yang Yudong et al. (2023) argue that, given the rapid pace of technological advancement and knowledge upgrading in many occupations, individuals must engage in continuous learning and skill development to meet the evolving needs of enterprises. Learning engagement holds paramount importance in the academic journey of Chinese students, directly influencing their success and overall educational experience (Simon, 2023). In this context, the development of continuing education is deeply intertwined with the demands of various industry positions, particularly those that require technological and knowledge expertise. Professionals, especially educators, need to keep pace with these changes through continuing education and, in turn, impart advanced knowledge and skills to their students.

In line with this, Juming Li (2022) highlighted that continuing education differs fundamentally from primary education in that it does not primarily aim to confer academic qualifications or diplomas. Instead, its focus is on acquiring new professional skills, broadening knowledge, and enhancing overall competency. Continuing education represents advanced education built upon foundational learning, employing training methods and content that are distinct from basic education, yet inherently connected to it.

Furthermore, Zhou Wanqi (2022) emphasized that continuing education and training is conducted on the basis of existing work skills and knowledge, with the goal of supporting career development and responding to societal needs. As key facilitators of social education, teachers should continuously strengthen their teaching competencies while participating in continuing education programs.

Supporting this perspective, Zhang Yanli et al. (2022) observed that the development of continuing education in China over the past decade reflects broader trends in the high-quality advancement of society. It influences various social strata, professional roles, and industries, highlighting emerging “hot spots” and popular fields with significant development potential. This indicates that continuing education not only fosters individual growth but also promotes societal progress, with research focused on trending majors and topics yielding particularly meaningful insights.

Zhao Mingren et al. (2022) further noted that continuing education enhances overall individual competencies, including knowledge, professional skills, communication, and management abilities, thereby contributing skilled talent to enterprises and society. From a high-quality perspective, continuing education programs have increasingly adopted a systematic approach, extending into diverse professional domains, cultivating outstanding students, and strengthening both teacher and student capabilities.

Finally, Wang Zheng (2022) argued that effectiveness in continuing education should be evaluated relative to training objectives – assessing whether the desired goals were achieved, to what extent, and with what impact. Only by focusing on the theme of effectiveness can the overall development and quality of continuing education be meaningfully advanced.

Changchun University of Science and Technology (CUST) is a general undergraduate institution approved by the Ministry of Education, located in Shuangyang District, Changchun, Jilin Province. To meet the needs of local economic and social development for applied talents, CUST has built a professional system featuring the coordinated development of medicine, management, economics, science, art, literature, and education, with engineering as the main body and agronomy as the feature. Simultaneously, the university adheres to the concept of “talent strong school,” emphasizing scientific research, leveraging characteristic disciplines, platforms, and talent teams, focusing on the “six new industries,” and promoting the construction of scientific and technological innovation platforms. The university’s approach integrates school-enterprise cooperation, industry-university collaboration, and research engagement, laying a solid foundation for graduate employment preparation.

In 2023, the initial employment rate of undergraduate graduates at CUST was 90.01%, with a year-end rate of 92.25%, surpassing the Jilin Province average and showing a 1.07% increase from 2022. Despite the domestic economic slowdown due to the epidemic, CUST actively responded under the guidance of government and party policies, creating favorable employment conditions for students. The university’s employment preparation initiatives can be summarized in three main areas:

First, the Labour Department's Employment Division established dedicated groups for education and employment counseling, recruitment coordination, and career counseling, providing substantive guidance and support for graduates. However, Peng Wenwen noted that in Changchun, a "big market, small government," the primary factors driving employment are individual efforts and school support. Optimizing employment outcomes for graduates in a globally competitive environment remains a central concern.

Second, the study emphasizes the need to strengthen the local job market by establishing platforms, such as a graduate employment website, to provide timely job information, connect students with reputable employers, and allow universities to monitor employment trends for better alignment with educational outputs.

Third, the research highlights the importance of expanding public policies that support graduates through internships, job training programs, and reserved public sector positions, preparing students more effectively for workforce integration and smoother education-to-employment transitions. Finally, improved coordination between graduates' career needs and broader economic development trends is essential for sustainable job growth and access to meaningful employment opportunities.

This paper analyzed the employment preparation of fresh graduates in 2023 from Changchun University of Science and Technology, focusing on three main objectives: to assess the impact of career guidance on students' employability skills and readiness for the workforce, to examine the strategies and mechanisms employed by teachers in supporting students' transition to employment, and to identify the challenges in employment preparation while proposing ways to enhance the effectiveness of guidance.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design using a questionnaire survey to examine the role and effectiveness of career guidance teachers at Changchun University of Science and Technology (CUST) in supporting students' employment preparation. The questionnaire was developed based on the university's existing employment preparation framework and aimed to assess teachers' professional capabilities, strategies, and involvement in guiding students toward successful employment.

The population consisted of 20 teachers at CUST, aged 28 to 50, who are actively engaged in employment guidance for fresh graduates in 2023. Participants were selected for their experience in career counseling and teaching, ensuring relevant insights into employment preparation practices.

Data collection was conducted by distributing 20 questionnaires through the university's official communication platforms, including QQ groups and TikTok, with incentives provided via a small reward system.

The data analysis process in this study followed a systematic and rigorous procedure to ensure validity, reliability, and interpretative accuracy. Initially, all collected data were screened for completeness and accuracy. Invalid or incomplete responses were removed, while missing values were addressed using

either case deletion or statistical imputation, depending on the proportion and pattern of the missing data. Once cleaned, responses from the Likert-type items were numerically coded (e.g., 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) to facilitate quantitative analysis. Descriptive statistics – such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions – were computed to summarize participant responses.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, while content, construct, and criterion validity were established through expert review and factor analysis to confirm the appropriateness of item groupings and their alignment with the intended constructs. To enhance interpretability, the processed data were visualized through comprehensive tables and charts designed to be clear, intuitive, and self-explanatory.

For the evaluation of managerial, professional, and leadership skills, this study adopted and adapted the scoring framework of Suyatmi and Wibowo (2016), ensuring contextual relevance to the present research objectives. Furthermore, the study employed the Likert-scale framework to assess three key dimensions: (a) the perceived influence of extending the career guidance period on graduate success, (b) the role of career guidance teachers in providing tailored and individualized support, and (c) the effectiveness of specific institutional support mechanisms.

For the first dimension, ratings ranged from 1 (*strongly oppose*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), indicating the perceived extent to which prolonged guidance contributes to improved employment outcomes. Similarly, the role of career guidance teachers was rated on the same scale, ranging from providing *no tailored support* (1) to offering *highly individualized mentoring* (4). The third dimension assessed the perceived impact of specific interventions – such as mock interviews, résumé coaching, and personalized mentorship – on graduates' employability. Collectively, this multi-dimensional analytical approach enabled a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of how pre-employment initiatives, teacher support, and targeted mechanisms contribute to graduate readiness and workforce integration.

Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, and it was communicated that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. The study underwent an ethical review before data collection, and any conflicts of interest, such as researcher affiliations or funding sources, were disclosed. Privacy and confidentiality were strictly upheld through anonymous questionnaires, with no identifying information collected, and data were securely stored. Community consultation was conducted by engaging university stakeholders to ensure alignment with institutional values. Participants were also informed about how the research findings would be shared.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Career Guidance on Employability Skills and Workforce Readiness

In the context of evolving business models and an increasingly dynamic educational environment, the training of entrepreneurial skills has reached the "qualified level" in areas such as market development, teamwork, business negotiation, and data analysis and application. These skills have also demonstrated strong foresight in personal communication, knowledge application, resource utilization, and creative research, reaching the advanced level in some aspects. This indicates that the current development of entrepreneurial skills is relatively high, and that teachers' training and understanding of these skills are multidimensional and comprehensive, providing a solid foundation for practical teaching. At the same time, this serves as the cornerstone for integrating Western educational theory with Western economics practice teaching.

Table 1. On the influence of prolonging the instruction period on the success rate of graduates (n=20)

INDICATORS	M	SD	DI
1. The extended mentoring period offered by the university helps graduates identify suitable employment opportunities.	3.75	0.44	Strongly agree
2. The extended mentoring period helps graduates understand the requirements and expectations of specific industries.	3.45	0.89	Strongly agree
3. The extended mentoring period significantly improves graduates' ability to produce compelling resumes and cover letters.	3.55	0.6	Strongly agree
4. The extended mentoring period promotes networking opportunities that directly lead to graduate employment.	2.75	0.97	Agree
5. The extended mentoring period affects the career trajectory and long-term professional growth of graduates' professional analytical ability	3.35	0.67	Strongly agree
Sub mean	3.37	0.71	Strongly agree

The data indicate that respondents "strongly agree" that extending the guidance period effectively helps graduates identify suitable employment opportunities, with an average score of 3.37, reflecting a high level of agreement. This suggests that career guidance teachers generally believe that guidance can facilitate students' transition into employment by leveraging skills such as

professional analysis, initiative in undertaking guidance tasks, effective communication, skill development, and strong perseverance and optimism.

Many graduates face uncertainty regarding their future employment, and career guidance helps them gradually understand the employment environment, required professional knowledge and skills, and strategies to address challenges after graduation. Employment is a phased process, and guidance must provide continuous support through "process guidance" to achieve optimal outcomes. No interviewee selected "strongly opposed" to extending the guidance period, demonstrating that teachers involved in career guidance possess substantial professional abilities and extensive work experience. Their role is crucial, and the impact of their guidance is broad and multifaceted. By applying professional analysis, teachers can provide objective, practical guidance in employment preparation.

Song (2023) emphasized that extending the career guidance period is a critical step in employment preparation, facilitating students' transition from the "study state" to the "employment state" while offering long-term support. The findings in Table 1 support this assertion, as respondents overwhelmingly "strongly agree" that a prolonged mentoring period significantly enhances graduates' ability to identify suitable employment opportunities, understand industry requirements, and improve essential job application skills such as resumes and cover letters. The high sub-mean score of 3.37 reflects the perceived effectiveness of extended guidance in equipping graduates with the professional competencies and analytical skills necessary for the workforce. These results suggest that a structured and extended period of career guidance not only reinforces students' preparedness but also cultivates resilience, foresight, and adaptability—qualities essential for navigating complex employment environments. Moreover, the consistent agreement among respondents underscores the role of sustained mentorship in bridging the gap between academic learning and professional expectations, highlighting the value of continuous engagement in shaping employability outcomes.

Strategies and Mechanisms Employed by Teachers to Support Employment Transition

Career guidance teachers play a pivotal role in providing personalized support, offering tailored advice and feedback that enhance students' employability, professional skills, and facilitate a smooth transition into the workforce.

Table 2. The role of career guidance teachers in providing tailored support (n=20)

INDICATORS	M	SD	DI
1. Career Guidance: Teachers provide personalized advice and guidance based on an individual's career goals and aspirations.	3.35	0.67	Strongly agree

2. Career guidance teachers provide constructive feedback based on specific career development plans and strategies.	3.60	0.5	Strongly agree
3. Career guidance instructors have a strong understanding of industry-specific requirements and trends related to students' career paths.	3.75	0.55	Strongly agree
4. Career guidance teachers promote networking opportunities and contacts in the industry desired by students.	2.95	0.83	Agree
5. Career advisors provide timely and relevant information on job openings, internships and career activities based on students' interests and goals.	3.45	0.76	Strongly agree
Sub mean	3.42	0.66	Strongly agree

The results in Table 2 indicate that respondents perceive tailored career guidance as highly important, with a sub-mean of 3.42, reflecting strong agreement among participants. The data suggest that career guidance teachers' personalized support, encouragement, and proactive involvement provide critical assistance to students, particularly through one-to-one, targeted interventions. Respondents highlighted that "teachers are very willing to take the initiative to help students when they are confused and have problems in employment, and through active communication and careful instruction, assist students in successfully navigating employment opportunities." This observation underscores the responsiveness and attentiveness of guidance teachers, who listen to students' concerns, provide timely answers, and offer reasoned advice – creating a constructive and supportive employment guidance environment.

Notably, 16 teachers (over 80% of respondents) "strongly agreed" with the importance of providing tailored support, indicating widespread recognition of its value among career guidance professionals. Within the context of exam-oriented education in China, where higher education institutions face employment-related responsibilities, career guidance teachers must perform under both systemic requirements and professional expectations. This dual influence fosters a high level of competence, ensuring that teachers can provide practical, personalized, and timely guidance.

Juming (2022) emphasized that career guidance teachers primarily focus on communication, employability cultivation, and fostering active optimism. These findings align with the present study, reinforcing that such competencies constitute essential prerequisites for delivering effective, tailor-made career guidance services to students.

The exploration of specific support mechanisms

To ensure graduates are well-prepared for the workforce, teachers have implemented various targeted strategies that directly support students' employment readiness. According to the data in the table, the respondents have actively explored work preparation, and fully affirmed the importance and necessity of exploring "specific support mechanisms".

Table 3. The exploration of specific support mechanisms (n=20)

INDICATORS	M	SD	DI
1. Resume sending advice provided by career guidance teachers helps improve graduates' job application materials.	3.30	0.73	Strongly agree
2. Interview guidance sessions conducted by career guidance teachers enhance graduates' confidence and preparation for job interviews.	3.55	0.69	Strongly agree
3. Seminars on job search techniques and strategies provide valuable insights into the employment process.	2.95	1.15	Agree
4. Mock interviews organized by career guidance teachers help graduates practice and perfect their interviewing skills.	3.60	0.5	Strongly agree
5. Networking activities facilitated by career advisors that enable graduates to connect with professionals in their desired field.	2.85	0.81	Agree
Sub mean	3.25	0.78	Strongly agree

Indicators 1, 2, and 4 highlight the critical roles of resume sending, interview guidance, and mock interviews. Respondents "strongly agree" on the influence of these practices, with scores of 3.30, 3.55, and 3.60, respectively. Notably, mock interviews received the highest score, emphasizing that mastering interview skills and gaining practical experience are essential to employment success and are highly valued by career guidance teachers. In contrast, indicators 3 and 5, which refer to seminars on job search techniques and networking activities, show slightly lower scores (2.95 and 2.85). This suggests that while these mechanisms provide additional support and can enhance employment probability, they are more challenging to implement effectively, especially in a rapidly changing labor market.

Indeed, the complexity and volatility of the contemporary job market, including emerging fields and traditional industries facing numerous challenges, limit teachers' capacity for predictive analysis. As Zhao (2022) notes, employment guidance inherently involves uncertainty, making it difficult to provide precise or directional advice. Even when predictions are evidence-based, errors can

occur; therefore, career guidance teachers must focus on providing objective analysis and responsible guidance.

In practice, career guidance teachers at Changchun University of Science and Technology evaluate their performance across multiple dimensions, including the ability to complete tasks on time, plan effectively, find reasonable solutions, and provide employment assistance tailored to students' needs. These competencies reflect a high level of professionalism and ensure that teachers can manage complex and individualized employment guidance processes. However, given the diversity of students' majors, employability, and resources, not all challenges can be fully overcome, and teachers' assessments are necessarily measured and objective.

Wang (2022) emphasizes that achieving "full scores" in employment guidance is difficult due to the variability in students' backgrounds and employment environments. Career guidance teachers can only strive to provide the most objective, scientific, and relevant guidance possible. Consequently, the ultimate success of employment guidance depends not only on teachers' expertise but also on external conditions, including students' contexts and the labor market. Nonetheless, teachers' professional interventions significantly enhance students' employment probability and satisfaction.

Despite the structured mechanisms in place, several challenges persist. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, disrupted multiple industries in China, complicating employment prospects. This unpredictability limits teachers' ability to offer forward-looking guidance tailored to future job market trends. Moreover, while Changchun University of Science and Technology has developed robust employment preparation frameworks over the years, some practices risk emphasizing form over substance. Teachers recognize the importance of one-to-one guidance, yet often struggle with the pertinence and specificity of their interventions. In practice, employment preparation tends to focus on ideological education and professional training, aiming to equip students with basic psychological readiness and professional qualities. However, providing highly targeted, individualized support requires significant time and effort, rendering the process resource-intensive.

Additionally, employment guidance often remains theoretical, covering required psychological qualities, professional knowledge, and potential work environments. Teachers' limited participation in actual employment practice constrains the practical relevance of their training, reducing its resonance with students. Many teachers report that guidance is primarily delivered through classroom-based theory, highlighting the gap between theoretical instruction and real-world application. This lack of practical engagement renders employment preparation inflexible and less effective, underlining the need for ongoing innovation in the mechanisms employed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Career guidance teachers at Changchun University of Science and Technology recognize the critical role of career preparation, emphasizing three key

aspects: the employment guidance period, its relevance, and the specific implementation strategies. Based on the findings, the study concludes that:

1. An extended employment guidance period enables students to better understand industry requirements, explore practical job opportunities, and prepare more effectively for meaningful employment.
2. Tailored career guidance, aligned with students' individual goals and expectations, provides focused and evidence-based support, helping students achieve personal career aspirations and succeed in the job market.
3. Effective employment preparation relies on specific support mechanisms, including mock interviews, resume and interview coaching, experience-sharing sessions, and technical guidance, all of which significantly enhance students' readiness for employment.

Accordingly, it is recommended that Changchun University of Science and Technology strengthen its employment preparation initiatives by focusing on the role of career guidance teachers, with particular attention to:

1. Collaborating closely with students to understand their employment needs, organizing experience-sharing seminars, and identifying suitable job opportunities and platforms.
2. Tailoring employment guidance to current industry trends and individual student needs, using updated training materials and online resources to facilitate informed career decisions.
3. Emphasizing practical activities such as resume writing, interview skills, and employment knowledge, highlighting real success cases to maximize the effectiveness of guidance.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research on employment preparation at Changchun University of Science and Technology (CUST) can be expanded by conducting a comparative evaluation between CUST and other universities in China that have more advanced career development programs. This study could measure the effectiveness of the curriculum, career guidance services, industry partnerships, and graduates' job competencies more comprehensively. In addition, further research may include a longitudinal analysis of students' employment readiness from their first year to post-graduation, providing deeper insight into internal factors that influence their adaptation to the labor market.

Future studies may also broaden the focus to explore the dynamics of the regional labor market in Jilin Province to identify the alignment between industry needs and the competencies of CUST graduates. A more in-depth investigation can be conducted using a mixed-methods approach to combine quantitative data – such as employment absorption rates and employer satisfaction – with in-depth interviews involving students, alumni, and industry stakeholders. Thus, the findings can offer stronger strategic recommendations for the university in continuously improving its employment preparation programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Upon completing this paper, sincere gratitude is extended to mentor Julius A. Simon for his invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and dedicated supervision, which were crucial to the study's successful completion and recognition by the faculty. Appreciation is also given to the institution and its leadership for providing a supportive academic environment, as well as to classmates and family members for their unwavering encouragement throughout this research journey.

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