

The Employment Competency Model for Good Management of Dali University Graduates

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Abstract

This study develops an employment competency model for good management of Dali University graduates. In the face of an increasingly competitive job market, graduates encounter significant challenges in aligning their competencies with industry demands. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research evaluates both the current status and the needs of Dali University graduates concerning employment competency. The study identifies critical gaps in general skills, career planning, and environmental competitiveness and proposes targeted guidelines for addressing these deficiencies. These recommendations underscore the importance of integrating practical training, enhancing career development resources, and leveraging external support to boost employment competency. The study's findings contribute to refining the employment competency model, ensuring that educational outcomes meet market expectations and facilitating successful career transitions and sustained professional growth for Dali University graduates.

Keywords: Guidelines, Employment Competency, Graduates

Introduction

Employment remains a cornerstone of societal stability and prosperity, as emphasized by Premier Li Keqiang, who stated that employment is the most fundamental aspect of people's livelihoods. Consequently, the Chinese government has continuously prioritized the employment of university graduates. Higher education plays a pivotal role in not only cultivating high-level talents but also driving national economic, technological, and social progress. By fostering graduates equipped with social responsibility, innovative thinking, and practical skills, China can better navigate the challenges of the global knowledge economy and maintain its competitive edge in international markets.

As a key contributor to regional and national talent pools, Dali University faces increasing pressure to align its graduates' competencies with the rapidly evolving demands of the job market. Although supportive employment policies have been implemented at various governmental levels, challenges persist in cultivating core competencies, particularly in areas such as general skills, career planning, and environmental competitiveness. These gaps not

only hinder the immediate job-seeking process but also restrict the long-term professional growth of graduates.

This study seeks to address these challenges by developing an employment competency model tailored to the needs of Dali University graduates. By systematically analyzing current competency levels and identifying critical needs, the research provides actionable guidelines for enhancing graduates' employability. The findings aim to bridge the gap between educational outcomes and market demands, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for both immediate employment and sustained career advancement.

Research Objectives

1. To study level of current status and desirable condition of the employment competency model for good management of Dali university graduates
2. To study need assessment of the employment competency model for good management of Dali university graduates
3. To provide the guidelines for development of the employment competency model for good management of Dali university graduates
4. To determine the appropriateness and possibility of the guidelines for development of the employment competency model for good management of Dali university graduates.

Literature Review

Concept and Theories of Competency

Competency is a multifaceted concept integrating knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that differentiate high from average performers. McClelland (1973) introduced competencies as psychological traits linked to life success. Over time, scholars like Hayes (1979) and Boyatzis (1982) expanded this to include traits and behaviors that drive superior performance and evolve over one's career. Hammond (1989) defined competencies as actions or behaviors required to perform tasks effectively, suggesting that competencies are distinct from tasks themselves, acting instead as the enablers of performance. Woodruff (1991) further delineated competencies into proven job ability and the necessary behaviors to achieve competent performance. Spencer (1993) took a more behavioral approach, identifying competencies as observable and measurable traits, ranging from motives and values to cognitive skills, which can differentiate superior from average performers.

Management scholars such as Page (1994) and Cockerill, Hunt, & Schroder (1995) connected competencies to managerial success, suggesting that specific skills, abilities, and personal characteristics are key to distinguishing high performers from average ones. Ledford (1995) emphasized the future-oriented nature of competencies, seeing them as measurable personal attributes that influence future performance.

After that, Chinese scholars such as Wang (2005) and Zhong (2003) focused on the role of personal attributes like emotional intelligence and motivation. Klieme & Leutner (2006) and

Draganidis & Mentzas (2006) both stressed that competencies must align with specific tasks and contexts. Cai (2011) further noted that competencies are measurable, trainable, and essential for distinguishing high performers.

In summary, competency encompasses a combination of traits, skills, and behaviors crucial for job performance. It is dynamic, measurable, and adaptable, playing a critical role in both individual effectiveness and organizational success.

Concept and Theories of graduates' employment competency

Employment competency of graduates is a complex and multidimensional construct, encompassing the comprehensive abilities required for successful employment, continuous development, and smooth career transitions.

Zhu (2009) highlights the multifaceted nature of employment competency, advocating for holistic development to achieve effective workforce integration. Shi (2012) further defines it as a vocational-oriented comprehensive ability aimed at achieving life goals and self-realization. Wen Shaobao (2006) believes that employment competency is embedded within individuals' cognitive and psychological frameworks, while Zheng (2002) emphasizes its alignment with societal needs, underscoring the importance of knowledge acquisition. Chen (2012) defines employment competency as the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, emphasizing the connection between personal development and career choices. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that employment competency encompasses not only technical and professional skills but also a broad range of psychological, social, and developmental factors.

In summary, graduates' employment competency emphasizes holistic development, including professional knowledge, basic skills, career attitudes, and work ethics. It not only requires graduates to possess technical skills but also to align with societal needs, while having strong psychological qualities and career planning abilities. Its core aim is to help graduates achieve career goals, foster personal growth, and successfully integrate into the workforce. Based on a thorough analysis of the literature, seven key elements of employment competency for Dali University graduates have been identified: professional competence, general skills, attitude, personal traits, career planning and development, environmental competitiveness, and psychological capital.

Methodology

The mixed-methods approach is designed for the employment competency model for effective management of Dali University graduates. First, a quantitative study will be conducted using surveys to examine the current status and needs of various aspects of employment competency among Dali University graduates. Next, based on the identified needs, semi-structured interviews will be used to develop guidelines for enhancing the employment competency of Dali University graduates. Finally, the applicability of these guidelines will be evaluated.

Population and Sample

The population for this research comprises 5,468 graduates from Dali University in 2024, including 4,436 undergraduates and 1,032 postgraduates. A simple random sampling technique will be used to select the research sample. Using Taro Yamane's (1967) sampling formula, an appropriate sample size of 380 graduates will be drawn for the study.

Research Instruments

This study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The tools used in the research are described in detail below:

In the first phase, the study examined the current status and expectations regarding employment competency among Dali University graduates. The research instrument was a five-point rating scale (Likert, 1932) questionnaire designed to assess the current state and expectations of graduates' employment competency. The content of the questionnaire was reviewed by five experts, and the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index was calculated. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha on a sample of 30 responses, yielding an overall reliability score of 0.99. Data analysis was performed using mean and standard deviation, and the graduates' priority needs were evaluated using the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI modified).

In the second phase, development guidelines for developing the employment competency of Dali University graduates were proposed. A semi-structured interview was used as the research tool, designed based on the top three needs identified in the first phase. Nine experts were selected for targeted interviews. Content analysis of the interview reports was conducted to establish the guidelines for enhancing employment competency among Dali University graduates.

In the third phase, the applicability of the employment competency development guidelines was validated. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with five experts who have extensive experience in managing graduate employment at Dali University. Each expert was asked to rate the guidelines. Data analysis was performed using mean and standard deviation to assess the applicability of the proposed guidelines.

Data Analysis

1. The mean and standard deviation of employment competency of the current status and desired state of Dali university graduates.

Table 1 The current status and desired state of employment competency of Dali university graduates

employment competency	N=380					
	Current state			Desired state		
	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
Professional Competence	3.527	0.655	high	4.174	0.663	high
General Skills	3.517	0.689	high	4.193	0.673	high

employment competency	N=380					
	Current state			Desired state		
	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
Attitude	3.542	0.682	high	4.200	0.667	high
Personal Traits	3.541	0.707	high	4.207	0.684	high
Career Planning and Development	3.520	0.691	high	4.184	0.686	high
Environmental Competitiveness	3.516	0.688	high	4.180	0.687	high
Psychological Capital	3.534	0.690	high	4.180	0.687	high
Total	3.528	0.686	high	4.188	0.678	high

From table 1 it is found that employment competency for Dali University graduates, overall, is at a high level (\bar{X} = 3.528, S.D. = 0.686). The competencies are ranked from highest to lowest based on their mean values as follows: 1) attitude (\bar{X} = 3.542, S.D. = 0.682) 2) personal traits (\bar{X} = 3.541, S.D. = 0.707) 3) psychological capital (\bar{X} = 3.534, S.D. = 0.690) 4) professional competence (\bar{X} = 3.527, S.D. = 0.655) 5) career planning and development (\bar{X} = 3.520, S.D. = 0.691) 6) general skills (\bar{X} = 3.517, S.D. = 0.689) 7) environmental competitiveness (\bar{X} = 3.516, S.D. = 0.688) The standard deviation data shows that the variability across the indicators is relatively low, indicating that the competency levels of the graduates are fairly consistent.

In the desired state, the mean values of the various employment competencies of the graduates significantly increase (\bar{X} = 4.188, S.D. = 0.678) The competencies are ranked from highest to lowest based on their mean as follows: 1) personal traits (\bar{X} = 4.207, S.D. = 0.684) 2) attitude (\bar{X} = 4.200, S.D. = 0.667) 3) general skills (\bar{X} = 4.193, S.D. = 0.673) 4) career planning and development (\bar{X} = 4.184, S.D. = 0.686) 5) environmental competitiveness and 6) psychological capital (both \bar{X} = 4.180, S.D. = 0.687) 7) professional competence (\bar{X} = 4.174, S.D. = 0.663).

2. The PNI modified of employment competency of the gap between current status and desired state of Dali university graduates.

Table 2 The Priority Need Index (PNI_{modified}) for good employment competency management of Dali university graduates

No.	List	I	D	PNI _{modified}	Ranking
1	Professional Competence	3.527	4.174	0.155	5
2	General Skills	3.517	4.193	0.161	1
3	Attitude	3.542	4.200	0.157	4
4	Personal Traits	3.541	4.207	0.158	3
5	Career Planning and Development	3.520	4.184	0.159	2
6	Environmental Competitiveness	3.516	4.180	0.159	2
7	Psychological Capital	3.534	4.180	0.155	5

Table 2 shows that the employment competency need assessment for good-managed graduates from Dali University primarily focuses on the following top three areas, ranked according to the Priority Need Index: 1) general skills 2) career planning and development and 3) environmental competitiveness.

3. The guidelines for development of the employment competency model for good management of Dali university graduates.

Enhancing General Skills

Comprehensive Skill Training: Hands-on practice and flexible assistant positions offer valuable practical experiences.

Government-School-Enterprise Cooperation: Deep collaborations with industries, including long-term partnerships, provide graduates with extensive career development support.

Extracurricular Activities and Competitions: Organizing activities aligned with graduates' interests can improve engagement and help develop communication, teamwork, and organizational skills.

Mentoring and Feedback Mechanisms: Personalized mentoring programs and regular feedback help graduates reflect on their skills and continuously improve.

Optimizing Career Planning and Development

Career Planning Course Design

Aligning career courses with real-world demands, including early career education and practical activities like career competitions, helps graduates define career goals.

Job-Seeking Skills Training

Systematic training in resume writing, interview techniques, and networking, along with mock interviews, enhances graduates' job-seeking abilities.

Accumulating Awards and Internships

Collaborating with businesses to offer internships and awards boosts graduates' practical experience and enhances their resumes.

Career Development Seminars

Regular career development events and alumni networking broaden graduates' career perspectives and help them understand industry demands (4, 9).

Online and Offline Career Guidance

Setting up combined career service stations provides personalized support, improving employment outcomes.

Enhancing Environmental Competitiveness

Industry Research and Career Seminars

Career seminars and real-life case studies help graduates stay informed about industry trends and make well-informed career choices.

Campus Recruitment Activities

A systematic approach to campus recruitment broadens graduates' job search scope and enhances employment prospects.

Local Economic Cooperation

Collaborating with local businesses and organizing site visits help graduates understand local job market demands and improve adaptability.

Educational Support for Family Backgrounds

Scholarships and career counseling for graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds help level the playing field and support their career development.

Alumni Networks and Enterprise Resources

Connecting graduates with alumni and businesses increases internship and employment opportunities.

4. The appropriateness and possibility of the guidelines for development of the employment competency model for good management of Dali university graduates.

Table 3 The appropriateness and possibility of the guidelines for development of the employment competency of Dali university graduates

Guidelines	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	\bar{X}	S.D.
1.Enhancing General Skills	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00
2.Optimizing Career Planning and Development	5	4	5	5	5	4.80	0.40
3.Enhancing Environmental Competitiveness	5	4	5	4	5	4.60	0.49

From Table 3 it is found that the appropriateness and possibility of the guidelines for the development of the employment competency of Dali University graduates are overall at a very high level (\bar{X} = 4.80, S.D. = 0.30). The guidelines are ranked from highest to lowest based on their mean values as follows: 1) Enhancing General Skills (\bar{X} = 5.00, S.D. = 0.00), 2) Optimizing Career Planning and Development (\bar{X} = 4.80, S.D. = 0.40), and 3) Enhancing Environmental Competitiveness (\bar{X} = 4.60, S.D. = 0.49). The standard deviation data shows that the variability across the indicators is relatively low, indicating strong agreement among the experts regarding the feasibility and relevance of these guidelines.

Discussion

General skills are the top priority for Dali University graduates, this suggests a significant recognition among graduates of the necessity to enhance core skills applicable across various industries, including communication, teamwork, and learning abilities. The prioritization of general skills underscores a widespread acknowledgment that these competencies are crucial for adapting to the evolving demands of the job market. Effective communication and collaboration are essential for integrating into diverse professional environments, while robust

learning abilities support ongoing personal and professional development. By focusing on these general skills, graduates can improve their employment competency making them more competitive and better prepared for the challenges of the modern workforce. This emphasis on foundational skills highlights a strategic approach to aligning educational outcomes with industry expectations and career success. The findings of this study align with previous research conducted by Thorndike (1985), Wu (2009) and Tang (2012).

Career planning and development rank second in the priority needs assessment for Dali University graduates, highlighting the vital role of strategic planning in optimizing job search outcomes. Effective career planning enables graduates to clearly identify and articulate their strengths, skills, and career goals, fostering self-awareness that aligns their abilities with job opportunities. Graduates with well-defined career goals are better positioned to target roles that match their skills and interests, enhancing job satisfaction and professional growth. Additionally, career planning enhances job application skills, including crafting targeted resumes, writing compelling cover letters, and preparing for interviews, ensuring that graduates present themselves as competitive candidates. Acquiring relevant experience through awards or internships is also essential, as it strengthens resumes, provides valuable industry insights, helps build professional networks, and develops skills pertinent to the desired field. This emphasis on foundational skills highlights a strategic approach to aligning educational outcomes with industry expectations and career success. The findings of this study align with previous research conducted by Guo (2017), Al-Azzah & Yahya (2010) and Khasawneh, S. (2010).

Environmental competitiveness, ranking second alongside career planning and development in the priority needs assessment for Dali University graduates, highlights the significant role external factors play in shaping employment outcomes. Graduates recognize the importance of strengthening their competitiveness by focusing on key elements such as the labor market environment, socioeconomic development, family background, and university support. Improving environmental competitiveness equips them with the external resources and support needed to navigate the job market more effectively. By understanding labor market trends, leveraging socioeconomic opportunities, and utilizing family and school networks, graduates can better align their skills with job opportunities, thereby enhancing their employment prospects and long-term career growth. The findings of this study align with previous research conducted by Hillage & Pollard (1998)

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed: universities and relevant educational authorities should enhance the systematic development of graduates' employment competency, particularly by improving their cross-industry transferable skills and career planning and development abilities. These non-technical skills are crucial for graduates' long-term competitiveness in the job market. Academic and employment management departments should collaborate more effectively by optimizing

curricula, increasing internship opportunities, and organizing career planning guidance activities to holistically improve graduates' employment competency. Additionally, universities should provide more resources to address deficiencies in environmental competitiveness. For example, establishing graduate exam incentive programs, increasing support for disadvantaged graduate groups, and leveraging alumni networks could expand job prospects and strengthen graduates' overall employment competency.

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