

A Study on the Employment of English Majors under “Double Reduction” Policy —Taking Panzhihua University as an Example

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Abstract: This paper mainly takes English majors in Panzhihua University as the research object, adopting methods of questionnaire and literature research. By studying the impact of the “double reduction” policy on the development and the current employment situation of English majors in Panzhihua University, the authors try to explore the problems existing under the “double reduction” policy, analyze the reasons and propose strategies.

Key words: “Double Reduction” policy, English major, Employment

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I. Introduction

The rapid expansion of educational institutions in recent years has greatly influenced on educational equity and the burden of learning in China, which means the ecological environment of education is seriously damaged, and the healthy growth and overall development of students are affected, and “Reducing the burden” has become an issue of close concern for the whole society. On 24 July 2021, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Students’ Homework and Off-campus Training in Compulsory Education, in which the government cracked down heavily on off-campus training institutions. The policy states: reduce the total amount and length of homework comprehensively to alleviate the excessive homework burden on students; improve the level of after-school services in schools to meet the diversified needs of students. In this context, English majors’ employment has become increasingly difficult. In order to deeply analyze the impact of the “double reduction” policy on English majors and solve the employment problem effectively, this paper investigates and analyzes the current employment situation of English majors and puts forward some suggestions.

II. Current Employment Situation

The Employment Intention of English Majors. In this paper, a questionnaire survey of undergraduate English majors in Panzhihua University was done among the first, second, third, and fourth grades. The current job situation of English majors in Panzhihua University before and after the “double reduction” policy was studied and assessed using 248 valid questionnaires. According to the results of the questionnaire survey (multiple choice), 76.61% of the employment intention was to be teachers, followed by translator II (32.2%), and only 25% were foreign trade staff. This shows that teaching position is the first choice for many students majoring in English. For positions such as foreign trade staff and translation, most students would not take them as options. We learned from the students’ interviews that their reasons for choosing teaching positions are that translation and foreign trade positions have high competitive pressure. After the promulgation of the “double reduction” policy, 48.39% of English majors thought that the “double reduction” policy had a greater impact on the employment of English majors, and 61.29% thought that the “double reduction” policy had affected the choice of employment intention. The largest proportion of students (66.53%) continued to have employment intention to be a teacher, a decrease of approximately 10% after “double reduction” policy. The promulgation of the “double reduction” policy has cooled down teaching positions somewhat, but they are still very hot. The percentage of students who regard translation position as intention has not changed much, which shows that the “double reduction” policy had little impact on translation position. The number of foreign trade staff increased slightly, to 27.02 percent. As a result of the “double reduction” policy, 2.2% of students shift direction and develop in the direction of foreign trade.

Changes in Educational and Training Positions for Job-seeking. China Employment Market Optimism Index shows that the education/training/college industry is still at the top of the list of industries with high indices, but the number of both supply and demand has tightened significantly. Due to the ‘double reduction’ policy, the number of recruitment demand and job applications in the education/training/college industry dropped from July to September 2021, and the CIER index also dropped in response, to 13.38, 10.07 and 8.19 respectively. **Error! Reference source not found.** According to the questionnaire, the largest percentage of students chose teaching as their career choice before and after the “double reduction” policy, at 76.61% and 66.53% respectively. This employment intention has been tightened under the impact of the policy, but it is still the largest share. And the English teaching career is deeply popular among English majors in education.

Public School Positions. Public school teachers have always been the best choice for English majors, but public schools have fewer positions compared with other positions, which means it cannot satisfy all English Majors, and competitive pressure is very large every year at the same time. The government may add positions in certain departments, but it is more likely that positions without establishment will be added in public schools. However, students should establish the concept of choosing a job before picking it up slowly in the severe environment of employment as well as under the influence of the “double reduction” policy.

Job Reserve. The spokesman for the Beijing Human Resources Bureau, Lu Xiaobao, made a speech at a press conference on “Measures to Further Reduce the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training on Students in Compulsory Education”. He introduced through sorting and analyzing the relevant jobs, four major job reserve directions were clarified: teaching support, technical support, operational functions and marketing and sales. The reserve of typical jobs was strengthened in a targeted manner. It can be observed that the job reserve is sufficient to meet the needs of teachers and trainers who need to change jobs. 48.39% of students believe that the policy has a significant impact on English employment, and 33.87% of students think its impact is a bit large. However, the group that has been forced to transition as a result of the “double reduction” policy should not be overly anxious. This group is generally young, highly educated and has greater potential for advancement. Moreover, China is now encouraging students to be self-employed and start their own business and has issued a series of employment support policies and measures. Analyzed from this perspective, although the employment problems of English majors will be affected to a certain extent, conflicts of employment of students will be alleviated at a certain degree with the support of relevant national policies.

III. Conflicts Between Students' Employment Intentions and Educational Positions

Conflicts of Regional Selection. It was found that 85.08% of English majors in Panzhihua University came from Sichuan Province, and their favorite places for employment are their hometowns or nearby areas. Furthermore, 196 out of 248 students want to stay in the inland, accounting for 81% of the total, while only 52 want to go to the coast, accounting for only 19%. From the data, we can see that the English majors in this university have not broken through the inherent concept of employment in choosing the employment area at present. Under the epidemic, the cross-border e-commerce positions on the coast have better development prospects and are in greater demand. But only very few people are willing to leave their hometowns to work in coastal cities, and other students prefer to continue to compete fiercely for teaching positions, simply because 91.94% of English majors are female. Girls are influenced by their parents and traditional concepts, so they are unwilling to go out, and they prefer to pursue a stable job such as teaching positions near their hometowns.

Conflicts of Professional Quality Enhancement. English is now a “red card” major due to a large number of schools offering English major and the “English fever”. It is very difficult for English majors to be employed, while the unemployment rate is still high. English majors are facing increasing employment pressure, and many are choosing to go on to graduate schools to circumvent the employment pressure. Many English majors hope they can have good English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills after four years of study in college and be able to use English proficiently at work. However, in the survey, only 3% or 27% of the students were able to communicate and use English proficiently, which is the main crux of the problem that English majors have no obvious advantage in employment.

Conflicts of the Demand for Composite Talents. Nowadays, many employers reflect that many students graduating from English major know very little about anything other than English. According to the questionnaire survey, 91.53% of students think that their knowledge of major is not solid enough. Graduates of English major have a single structure of knowledge and do not adapt well to the market demand. At present, most English majors do not have a good understanding that in today's era of English popularity, they focus only on English vocabulary accumulation and grammar learning, without extensive knowledge of other disciplines, so they fail to meet the market demand for English talents, and 88.31% of students said they do not understand knowledge and skills other than English.

Conflicts of Innovative and Entrepreneurial Ability Enhancement. The state has put forward the strategy of “mass innovation and ten thousand kinds of entrepreneurship”. With the development of the times, the ability of entrepreneurship has become more important. However, according to the questionnaire survey, only 26.21% of English majors have participated in innovative and entrepreneurial activities. In contemporary society, talents with greater ability to innovative and creative ability will be more popular with employers. Such talents have a wider range of jobs to seek, and have a greater potential for development in their positions.

Gender Conflicts.The proportion of female students among English majors inPanzhijiaUniversity is as high as 91.94%, and there is a serious imbalance in the ratio of male to female. According to the survey published by the Ministry of Education in 2019, female teachers account for 68.75%, 55.82%, and 50.32% in general primary, general secondary, and higher education respectively, and this is especially obvious for English teachers. On the other hand, there is still a serious problem of employment discrimination in our country.Female in the workplace will face multiple factors such as marriage and children when they reach a certain age, so it is more difficult for women to be promoted in the workplace. Moreover, female employees need to spend more energy on taking care of their families, which is also the reason why companies refuse to promote women.

IV. Analysis of the Causes

Insufficient Understanding of the English Major.According to the questionnaire survey, only 3.23% students know a lot about English major, 74.6% do not know English major very well, and even 22.18% of them do not know at all when they fill in the college application. The lack of understanding of English major leads to the conflicts of industry choice. English major is often ranked first in our college application. And English major has become a “red card” major due to the excessive number of applicants, almost all schools offer English majors and the saturation of the market. With the popularity of English and the increase of channels to learn English, non-English majors' English proficiency is growing by leaps and bounds, so English majors have no advantage to some extent.

Insufficient Integration with Local Economic Development.In the century, companies need an increasing number of inventive and practical skills. However, English majors lack the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. According to the questionnaire study, the percentage of female students majoring in English is as high as 91.94%. Female students favor stable employment and have a low demand for creativity and entrepreneurship, according to their personality features. Only 26.21% of our English majors have participated in innovation and entrepreneurship activities, according to the report. This shows that many students only focus on knowledge learning and neglect practice. Students do not link theory and knowledge with the demands of local economic growth. The author believes that the lack of close integration between English major and local economic development is one of the reasons for the conflicts of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Problems in the Cultivation of Necessary English Skills.In internationalized world, English majors have more advantages by having TEM 4 and 8 certificates. All English majors want to pass the TEM4and 8 exams during their college years, but the results are not ideal due to the difficulty of the exam. The analysis of data shows that only 53.21% and 40.55% of our students will have passed the TEM4 and 8 exams respectively in 2021. TEM4 and 8 certificates are proof of English majors' professional knowledge in their four years of university study, and a threshold for English majors to find jobs. Therefore, students who have not earned TEM4 and 8 certificates are even less competitive in the marketplace. The problem of passing English tests leads to the conflicts of professional quality improvement.

Inadequate Employment Guidance.With the spread of higher education, the number of college students has increased. It has become more difficult for college students to find jobs after graduation. Many graduates are facing the problem of unemployment upon graduation. Colleges are the bases for cultivating high-quality talents and must carry out employment guidance according to the needs of society for talents.However, employment guidance sometimes is lack of comprehensiveness. In addition, the proportion of lectures is high, and students have fewer opportunities for practice. Due to the influence of traditional concepts, most of the career guidance teachers regard career guidance as an ideological and theoretical course, and most of the school's career guidance courses borrow the teaching methods of ideology and politics. Therefore, career guidance teachers often adopt the method of verbal encouragement and mobilization. Students often do not combine theory and practice.

V. Countermeasures

Improving Professionalism.English is one of the most widely used languages in the world, so it is critical for English majors to develop their professional quality and establish a strong foundation of major. The Certificates of TEM4 and 8 are significant for English majors, while the focus of the English examination content for TEM4 and 8 has shifted away from theory and grammar and toward the flexible application of listening, reading, writing, and translation. To boost the pass percentage of TEM4 and 8, English majors should

conduct extensive preparations from all perspectives. Listening is the weakest of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, English majors should pay more attention to listening skills, especially the ability to write down what they understand, and continue to improve in listening skills in the senior stage. In addition, English majors should strive to improve their cultural literacy in English and break through the barriers of English communication. Under the “double reduction” policy, people with higher professional quality are more likely to get the ideal job in the job search process.

Turning Towards Composite Talents. English major is almost unchanged and lacking of characteristics. The author believes that English majors should take into account their own characteristics and their development direction accordingly. Panzhihua is the capital of vanadium and titanium in China, with abundant vanadium and titanium resources. In addition, the annual average temperature of Panzhihua is high, with warm winters and cool summers. There is a rich variety of fruits and vegetables with high sugar content. Panzhihua is very suitable for recreation and health care, and Panzhihua was selected as one of the first pilot cities of medical and health care combination in China. The author believes English majors can combine these unique features of vanadium and titanium and medical and health, participating in interdisciplinary study. These features can serve the local economic development and achieve a win-win situation. The main goal of traditional teaching in the English major does not meet the requirements of society. And “foreign language talents from single background of discipline can no longer satisfy the national development strategy.” Therefore, English majors should transform into compound talents. English majors can learn other areas of knowledge and skills through various channels, not just limited to the learning of English. Comprehensive talents have more job options and are more competitive in the marketplace.

Participating in Innovative and Entrepreneurial Activities and Competitions. It is important to cultivate the concept of innovation and entrepreneurship among college students. Those who do not have innovative and entrepreneurial skills are likely to be eliminated from society. The improvement of innovative and entrepreneurial ability is helpful to the development of students' employability. College graduates should change the traditional concept of employment and establish diversified concepts of employment, participate in innovative and entrepreneurial activities and competitions actively, and cultivate innovative and entrepreneurial ideas.

Enhancing the Competitiveness of Degree. The state attaches great importance to graduate school applications and provides a series of welfare policies. In addition, with the expansion of undergraduate education, there are many job-seekers every year, resulting in little advantage for undergraduates to find jobs. However, postgraduate students will have better competitive advantages and more job prospects when looking for work. Compared to undergraduates, master's degrees are higher, and the recognition and professionalism are higher. Some competitive and professional job requirements will generally be written “master and above”. So English majors should follow the employment trend of the times and actively apply for a graduate degree to become higher quality talents and enhance their core competitiveness.

Changing the Concept of Employment. After the promulgation of the “double reduction” policy, almost all educational and training institutions have fired workers, and the employment form of English major graduates in education is very severe. English majors need to change the traditional concepts of employment and expand the scope of employment instead of giving up. In line with the development of the times, English majors should try to expand our knowledge and learn new skills. According to the demand for society and market for talents, English majors should improve ourselves continuously so that we will not be eliminated by the society. The survey shows that 66.13% of English majors only attach attention to jobs of their own field of major, so they always ignore the employment opportunities close to or extending from their major.

VI. Conclusion

To sum up, we studied the current employment situation of English majors in education in Panzhihua University, and the conflicts between students' employment intention and education positions. Then we analyzed the reasons for the conflicts and put forward the coping strategies. The employment intention of English majors in education in Panzhihua University is usually the teaching position. However, due to the promulgation of the “double reduction” policy, the employment situation of English majors in education has become very serious. We analyzed the changes of domestic education jobs before and after the “double reduction” policy, pointed out the conflicts between students' employment intention and education jobs, and analyzed the causes for these conflicts. Finally, the coping strategies are proposed. English majors in education should improve their professionalism, turn towards composite talents, cultivate the concept of innovation and entrepreneurship, enhance the competitiveness, and change the concept of employment.

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