



A Study on the Employment Support Service System for Visually Impaired College Students in China

Zhou Bo¹ & Kway Eng Hock²

^{1,2}Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

Corresponding Author: Zhou Bo, Email:380304978@qq.com

Received: 19th May 2024

Accepted: 16th July 2024

Published: 5th August 2024

ABSTRACT

At present, the problem of difficult employment for disabled college students in China is becoming more and more prominent, and the construction of an employment support service system for colleges and universities is one of the most important means of alleviating the employment pressure on disabled college students and promoting the healthy development of society. Based on the perspectives of visually impaired college students and colleges and universities, this study adopts qualitative research methods such as interview method and observation method, selects 10 visually impaired students from a college in China as the research object, and statistically analyses the raw data of the interviews with NVivo data analysis tools, and builds a college employment support service system with the core of education and training and support, employment guidance and consulting, social resources integration and enhancing social and enterprise inclusiveness. The service system is of great practical significance for promoting high-quality employment and better integration of visually impaired students into society, as well as creating a harmonious and inclusive employment support environment.

Keywords: Visually Impaired College Students, Employment Support Service System, Colleges and Universities

INTRODUCTION

According to data from China's sixth population census and the second sample survey of persons with disabilities, the total number of persons with disabilities in China is 85.02 million, with about 32 million employed, an employment rate of only 37.5 per cent, far lower than that of normal persons. As the main force in the employment of disabled people, the employment problem of college students with disabilities has also attracted more and more attention. According to data released by the China Persons' Federation with disabilities, there will be 31,843 disabled graduates from Chinese universities in 2023, but compared with able-bodied university students (with an employment rate of 89.9 per cent), they are still facing difficulties such as fewer employment opportunities in general, underexploited employability and potential, difficulty in integrating into the workplace, and low levels of social acceptance (Zhao, 2023).

Visually impaired students are in a dark and closed environment for a long time due to their visual impairment, which creates greater obstacles in their daily life and academic life, and they generally have a serious inferiority complex and a low level of self-esteem. They have different degrees of interpersonal barriers and poor social adaptability, which seriously affect the level and quality of employment (Wang, 2020). According to a statistical survey, 66 per cent of visually impaired students considered it necessary to provide career guidance and employment assistance in universities and colleges (Zhang, 2012). As an important link in the process of arranging employment for college students with disabilities, tertiary education support shoulders the arduous task of fostering professional skills, expanding employment channels, improving the quality of employment, and ameliorating the difficult situation of employment (Liu et al., 2023). Therefore, it is urgent to build a standardised, scientific and information-based employment support service system for colleges and universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ai et al. (2015) argued that there are only a few specialities for visually impaired students in higher education, such as acupuncture and massage, music performance and special

education, and after graduation they are mainly employed as massage therapists in private massage parlours and massage hospitals, and very few of them go on to postgraduate studies or take up high-quality careers as teachers or employees of government agencies; in addition, recruitment for public institutions and some enterprises does not provide special jobs for visually impaired graduates. The overall quality of jobs offered by enterprises at special job fairs for college graduates with disabilities is not high. Therefore, colleges and universities should build a scientific and standardised employment support service system to cope with the employment difficulties of visually impaired students.

According to Huang (2024), owing to the difficulty in acquiring knowledge, visually impaired university students are less competitive than able-bodied university students in terms of professional skills, work experience, ability to maintain a job, adaptability to social life, information processing, understanding and learning, etc., and thus find it difficult to find suitable jobs in the job market. On the other hand, a larger proportion of visually impaired university students choose flexible employment, making it more difficult for them to obtain more career advancement opportunities, and their employment stability is poorer overall. Employment support in tertiary institutions can provide professional skills training for visually impaired students to enhance their competitiveness in employment.

At present, the society and enterprises are still not very friendly to the recruitment of visually impaired students, Zou (2016) argued that visually impaired students often face discrimination and prejudice from society and employers in their job searches. Some employers are concerned about the risks and difficulties of employment and believe that they are unable to perform their tasks, or that the provision of adapted facilities will increase the cost of employment, so they prefer non-disabled employees, which makes it extra difficult for visually impaired students to find jobs. Colleges and universities should build a comprehensive employment support service system and make targeted appeals and interventions against social and business prejudice and discrimination.

Xu (2020) argued that owing to their physical handicaps, visually impaired university students often develop an inferiority complex, and when they are frustrated in job-seeking or

work, they often choose to avoid competition and lack the ability to alleviate various kinds of pressure through self-regulation. They are uncomfortable in the face of other people's eyes, afraid of being ridiculed and discriminated against, unwilling to step out of their own psychological defences, and in the face of the problem of employment difficulties they have the mentality of avoidance, self-enclosure and passive employment, and are not highly motivated to take the initiative to integrate into society. Colleges and universities should intervene appropriately with visually impaired students during their school years, offer courses related to mental health education, and build a scientific and standardised employment support service system.

METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

This study adopts the qualitative research method, i.e., the thematic analysis method in the interview method, to compile its own interview outline (see Table 1) and conduct one-on-one in-depth interviews with visually impaired students in a university in China. Since visually impaired students account for a very small proportion of all university students, and are a relatively special group in nature, one-on-one interviews allow for in-depth exchanges with the interviewees, in-depth understanding of visually impaired students' deep-seated thoughts, behaviours, and the meanings behind their behaviours, thus obtaining more accurate and valuable data, which can serve as a reference for the experience of similar groups and colleges and universities.

Table 1: *Outline of Interviews with Visually Impaired Students*

No.	Question
1	What are your plans for after graduation? What kind of work do you want to do?
2	What kind of difficulties and challenges do you think you will encounter during your job search?

-
- 3 What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses in your job search?
- 4 What specific measures do you think the school has in place for employment support services for visually impaired students?
- 5 What would you like colleges and universities to do to help with employment support services for visually impaired students?
-

Research Objects

In this study, visually impaired students majoring in Chinese medicine (acupuncture and massage) in the first to fifth years of a university in China were selected as the research subjects, and two visually impaired students were randomly selected in each year, for a total of 10 visually impaired students as the interview subjects, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. The following is a detailed description of the basic information about the interviewees (see Table 2). The interviewees were coded for ease of administration and each interviewee was coded in the following format: serial number and gender. Where males were labelled as a and females were labelled as b. For example, student 1 was coded as 1-a and student 2 was coded as 2-b.

Table 2: *Basic Information about the Interviewees*

No.	Gender	Grade	Length of Interviews (minutes)	Coding Format
1	Male	Second-year	30	1-a
2	Male	First-year	32	2-a
3	Female	Third-year	35	3-b
4	Male	Third-year	35	4-a
5	Male	First-year	32	5-a
6	Male	Fourth-year	40	6-a
7	Male	Fifth-year	28	7-a
8	Female	Fifth-year	34	8-b
9	Female	Fourth-year	36	9-b

10	Female	Second-year	35	10-b
----	--------	-------------	----	------

Data Collection

During the research in a university in China, the researcher randomly selected two visually impaired students in each grade as the interview subjects, for a total of 10 visually impaired students. After understanding the basic situation of the students, combining the research questions and obtaining the consent of the visually impaired students themselves, the researcher conducted one-to-one semi-structured interviews with each interviewee for about 30 minutes, supplemented by the observation method, in order to re-examine the data and fully ensure the accuracy of the collected data.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the interview data into text, broke it up, integrated it, and coded it using a three-tier coding approach for qualitative data (Miles et al., 1998). First of all, the local concepts of employment support in colleges and universities, such as "professional learning", "entrepreneurial guidance", "expanding employment positions", "social and business accommodation", etc., are extracted from the primary data around the research questions. "social and business accommodation" and so on. Next, the initial codes in the first step are classified, and the relationship between the codes is repeatedly compared and deepened to form conceptual categories, such as "education and support", "career guidance and counselling", "social resources integration", etc. Finally, the related concepts are classified. "Finally, the conceptual attributes of the rows in the associative coding were further summarised to determine the core attribute, i.e. "university employment support service system for visually impaired students". (See Table 3 for the information coding table.)

Table 3: *Information Coding Form*

Categorisation	Theme	Labelling	Source Material (Excerpts)	Coding Format
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------------------------	----------------------

Collegiate Employment Support Service System for Visually Impaired Students	Professional Theory and Skills Learning	We study longer in school and are better equipped in terms of expertise after graduation.	5-a
	Career Planning Courses	The school has offered a course on Career Guidance for University Students, in which outstanding alumni are invited to share their job-seeking experience, which is very helpful to our future planning.	4-a
	Mental Health Education	It is hoped that the school will do some psychological counselling to address the anxiety of students during the job-seeking period.	8-b
	Job Search Skills Training	I learnt PS skills online while I was at school, which I feel is also one of the advantages in job hunting.	7-a
	Vocational Competence Assessment	I think it is crucial to develop better job-seeking skills during school. Schools can assess students' job-seeking skills and provide appropriate guidance to address shortcomings.	2-a
	Social Integration Training	I think it is appropriate to include some courses during school to train the ability to integrate into society, such as grooming, and communication skills.	6-a
	Interview and Job Search Simulation	As a visually impaired group, our poor eyesight does not give us an advantage in the interview process. The school can provide us with targeted interview training to improve our chances of success in the interview.	3-b
	Examination Guidance	I will prepare for the exam while I am still in school and then continue my studies. I hope that the school can provide counselling and guidance on the exam.	1-a
	Educationa l Training and Support		

	Individualised Employment Programmes	It is hoped that the school can give more targeted career guidance to each student according to their individual characteristics and areas of expertise.	4-a
	Entrepreneurial guidance	After graduation, I would like to start my own business and open a clinic that favours therapy or a normal massage shop.	3-b
	Promotion of Schools and Programmes	I hope that the school can widely publicise the features and advantages of our profession, so that more people will know that although we are a visually impaired group, we have the strength to do our job well.	3-b
Integration of Social Resources	Expanding Employment Opportunities	The school offers too few employment options and specialisations, and it is still difficult to find a job. I hope that the school can expand the choice of internship sites and provide us with more choices of employment directions.	9-b
	Matching High-quality Internships Guiding and Appealing to Society and	It is hoped that the college will be able to collaborate with more hospitals for internship sites.	2-a
Enhancing Social and Business Inclusion	Enterprises to Improve the Inclusiveness of Employment for Students with Disabilities	Because of our vision limitations, many companies are less willing to recruit us.	4-a

FINDING AND DISSCUSS

Educational Training And Support

According to the statistics of the interview data, eight interviewees mentioned the need to make efforts to learn professional knowledge, and that only with solid professional skills could they have an advantage in the competition, for example:

“Our study time in school is five years, three years of theoretical study and two years of practice. Due to the defective eyesight, our teachers will teach us every movement hand in hand, and we will practice harder after class to seek positions with excellent professional skills (2-a).”

Six interviewees mentioned the importance of learning job search skills, three of the interviewees mentioned how helpful the career planning course had been in their job search and one interviewee made a curriculum claim for mental health education, for example:

“I would learn some job search skills such as PS from the internet, and it just so happens that there are companies that need this skill, which I feel is a great advantage in job searching (7-a).”

“The school will give us courses related to career planning and career guidance for college students, and sometimes the teacher will talk to us about the current employment situation, which can help to find the direction of our future job search, and in fact has a guiding role (1-a)”

“It is hoped that the school will do some psychological counselling for students' anxiety during their job search (8-b).”

To sum up, solid professional skills, healthy psychology, proficient job-seeking skills and scientific career planning can support and help visually impaired students in the process of job-seeking. The researcher summarised the above four initial codes and coded the conceptual categories according to their meanings and the relationship between the initial codes, i.e., "Education Training and Support". Figure 1 shows the Word cloud for Theme 1.



Figure 1: Word cloud for Theme 1

Career Guidance and Counselling

The interview data showed that six respondents hoped to start their own business after graduation, on the other hand, four respondents felt that there were some barriers to social integration after graduation. In addition, and some interviewees believe that they should accurately assess their job-seeking abilities and provide targeted training during their school years, as well as guidance on interviews and graduate school exams, for example:

“The career plan is that I would like to start my own business. If I can get a licence to practise medicine in the future, I will open a clinic that is biased towards treatment; if I don't get one or if all aspects of my life don't allow me to do so, I will open a normal massage parlour (7-a).”

“I think it's during the school year, and then you can incorporate some courses to train for integration into society as appropriate. For example, grooming, and communication skills (6-a).”

In summary, visually impaired students attached great importance to the career guidance and counselling provided by universities during their study period, and considered that employment support measures such as "entrepreneurship guidance", "social integration training", "vocational ability assessment", "guidance for graduate school", "job interview simulation" and "personalised employment programme" had a positive impact on their employment. "guidance for graduate school", "interview and job search simulation", "personalised employment programme" and other employment support measures have a positive impact on employment. The researcher summarised the above six initial codes to form the conceptual category of "career guidance and counselling". Figure 2 shows the Word cloud for Theme 2.



Figure 2: Word cloud for Theme 2

Integration of Social Resources

According to the interview data, 15 interviewees talked about the desire to have a greater number and quality of options for internships and jobs, which covers 10.59 per cent of all interview data and for example:

“Hopefully there will be more internships and trainee hospitals, there are so few to choose from. It's because there used to be more points, and then it feels like in the last couple of years there's been less and less and less, and it's still shrinking (2-a).”

“The school organised a school fair, but the school fair was for the whole school and there were very few positions suitable for our majors. Many companies have positions suitable for us, but are reluctant to accept students with poor eyesight (8-b).”

Two interviewees, on the other hand, considered it important to publicise the profession and abilities of visually impaired students in the hope that the community and companies would know that they are very skilled in their profession, for example:

“Our university can expand the publicity, can publicise how we learn acupuncture and massage professional knowledge in school, so that the society, enterprises and the general patients know that we are trained professionally, then their trust in us will rise, we will be able to serve them better, and they trust us more, so that we can build a better doctor-patient relationship (2-a).”

To sum up, almost all the interviewees hoped that the school could match or provide diversified, high-quality and targeted employment internships, which would provide an additional choice for them, who are already a disadvantaged group. In addition, due to the prejudice and lack of understanding of society and enterprises, visually impaired students are considered to be less qualified than able-bodied students in all aspects, which requires schools to widely publicise the personal and professional aspects of visually impaired students, so that society and enterprises can know more about this special group. Based on the above primary data, the researcher carried out initial coding and extracted three local concepts, such as "expanding employment opportunities", "connecting with high-quality internship bases" and "school and professional publicity", and carried out secondary coding to form the concept of "expanding employment opportunities", "connecting with high-quality internship bases" and "school and professional publicity". Secondary coding was carried out to form the conceptual category of "social resource integration". Figure 3 shows the Word

cloud for Theme 3.



Figure 3: Word cloud for Theme 3

Social and Corporate Inclusiveness

According to the statistics of the interview data, 14 interviewees talked about the problem of rejection or low acceptance of visually impaired students in today's society and enterprises, with a coverage rate of 10.20 per cent, for example:

“The society and the working environment are still very prejudiced against us visually impaired students. It is difficult for us to find the job of our choice because of our vision problem, and there are fewer jobs suitable for us, and the pressure of competition is a bit high.”

It can be seen that the current society and enterprises are still prejudiced and unfriendly to

this special group of visually impaired students, and the inclusiveness is relatively low, which is also the biggest obstacle to the employment difficulties of visually impaired students (Sha,2006). The researcher organised and counted the above interview data, and carried out initial and secondary coding to refine the conceptual category of "social and business acceptance". Figure 4 shows the Word cloud for Theme 4.



Figure 4: Word cloud for Theme 4

The Construction of a College Employment Support Service System for Visually Impaired College Students

By coding and thematically analysing the original data of the interviewees, and analysing and discussing the current situation of employment support in colleges and universities, the researcher finally constructed a college employment support service system for visually impaired college students in China, i.e., a system that contains four aspects, namely, education and training and support, employment guidance and counselling, and the integration of social resources to enhance the inclusiveness of the society and the enterprises

(see Fig. 5). The construction of the university employment support service system provides scientific, standardised and targeted employment assistance to visually impaired students for high-quality employment, and is one of the important means for visually impaired students to integrate into the society and realise the value of their lives.



Figure 5: Employment Support System for Visually Impaired Students in Higher Education

Of course, employment support in colleges and universities is only an extremely crucial part of employment support for visually impaired students, and it is more necessary to have social support, policy support, family support, and other linkages and synergies, as Sha Zhaohua mentions in Hunan Daily, "The implementation of technical assistance and social assistance for college students with disabilities, and the use of services to promote employment, need to be accompanied by the establishment of a system of governmental responsibility, with colleges and universities taking the lead, and governments at all levels to be pay attention to the employment of disabled people. It is necessary to mobilise the whole society to care about and help disabled college students' employment, and to give administrative assistance, legal

aid, economic assistance, moral assistance and public opinion assistance to disabled college students' employment. (Sha, 2006) "

REFERENCES

- Ai, M., & Sun, H. J. (2015). *An Exploration of the Factors Affecting the Employment of Visually Impaired College Students in China*. *Journal of Changchun University*, 25(05), 130–133.
- Aya, F., Dai, noguchi, Miho, O., & Kazunori takeda, T. (2022). *Support Systems for a University Student with Severe Disabilities: A Case Study*. *Practical Research*, 11(1), 31–39.
- Berggren, U. J., Rowan, D., Bergbäck, E., & Blomberg, B. (2016) *Disabled students' experiences of higher education in Sweden, the Czech Republic, and the United States: A comparative institutional analysis*. *Disability & Society*, 31, 339–356.
- Brandt, S. S. (2011) *From policy to practice in higher education: The experiences of disabled students in Norway*. *International Journal of Disability Development and Education*, 58, 107–120.
- Bucholz, W. A. (2017) *The experiences of a student with cerebral palsy at a higher education institution: a case study*. Stellenbosch University.
- Chung, C. (2007). *A Study on Improvement Plans for Educational Support Systems for College Students with Disabilities*. *Journal of Special Education: Theory and Practice.*, 8(1), 109–132.
- Goode, J. (2007) 'Managing' disability: Early experiences of university students with disabilities. *Disability & Society*, 22, 35–48. Hedrick
- Huang, M. G. (2024). *An Analysis of High-Quality Employment Paths for Higher Vocational College Students with Visual Impairment--Taking Zhejiang Special Education Vocational College as an Example*. *China Employment*, 1, 72–74.
- Jae-hwan , L., & Hyeok-je , S. (2015). *Subjectivity Study on the Employment Supporting for Students with Disabilities in College*. *JOURNAL OF THE KOREA CONTENTS ASSOCIATION*, 15(1), 197–210.
- Liu, N., Zhang, C. C., Fu, R. M., & Zhang, L. X. (2019). *Analysis of the Employment Situation of College Students with Disabilities and Research on Countermeasures*. *Health Professions Education*, 37(20), 33–36.
- Magnus, E. (2009) *Student, som alle andre: En studie av hverdagslivet til studenter med nedsatt funksjonsevne [Student, like Everyone Else: A Study of the Everyday Lives of Students with Impairments]*. PhD dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
- Miles, M. R., & Huberman, A. M. (1998). *Analysis of Qualitative Information: Methodology and Practice*.

- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2012) *Act on the Comprehensive Support for the Daily and Social Life of Persons with Disabilities*.
- Sha, H. Z. (2006). *The Difficult Path to Finding a Job: A Perspective on the Difficulty of Employment for College Students with Disabilities*. Hunan Daily, 02.
- Tanno, T. & Ando, T. (2011) *A study on curriculum development of special class in school for the physically handicapped*. Japanese Journal of Disability Sciences, 35, 135–146. (in Japanese)
- Wang, L. L. (2020. June 16). *Study on the Employment Quality and Factors Influencing the Employment of Visually Impaired Students*. Shanghai Normal University.
- Xu, J. H. (2021). *Employment Problems and Countermeasures for College Students with Visual Impairment in Colleges and Universities--Taking a College in Nanjing as an Example*. Business and Management, 232–233.
- Zhang, J. H. (2012). *Career Guidance for Visually Impaired University Students in the Context of Inclusive Education*. Journal of Northeast Normal University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition), (2), 231–233.
- Zhao, Y. Y. (2023, July 11). *Help Them Embark on a New Starting Point to Run into the Sunshine*. CPPCC. <https://www.rmzxb.com.cn/c/2023-07-11/3375746.shtml>
- Zou, D. S. (2016). *An Analysis of the Problem of Employment Discrimination against College Students with Disabilities*. Higher Education Forum, 63.