

# Career Planning Guidance Needs Analysis for Postgraduates

—An Empirical Study Based on Shandong University of Finance and Economics

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**Abstract:** Career planning is the basis of a person's employment choice, and it is the best way to establish career goals, choose career roles and seek self-development. However, a perfect guidance mechanism for postgraduates' career planning has not been established yet. Taking Shandong University of Finance and Economics(SDUFE) as an example, this paper analyzes the current situation of postgraduates' career planning by means of questionnaire survey, and finds out the problems and causes of postgraduates' career planning. Thus, this paper puts forward some feasible suggestions for universities to carry out career planning education.

## 1. Purpose and Significance of the Study

Career planning guidance for postgraduates can provide more comprehensive and profound self-understanding to them, make knowledge of the employment environment, establish a scientific outlook on career selection, determine career goals, and achieve the unity of self-worth and social value. It plays an important guiding role for postgraduates in defining their career goals, enhancing their learning motivation, exploring their own potential and improving their mental outlook. And also, it plays an important guiding role in the future employment of postgraduates. As the high-quality employment of postgraduates is an important index to measure universities in the current severe employment situation, it is important for them to promote their healthy development through attaching great importance to the career planning guidance of postgraduates, cultivating postgraduates who can meet the needs of social development, and improving the employment quality of postgraduates. To raise the career planning from the undergraduate stage to the postgraduate stage is the performance of the continuous improvement of the employment work of universities, and is also the embodiment of the universities to improve their students' training quality.

Postgraduates are important human resources and the backbone of China's modernization drive. The essence of career planning guidance is to promote the all-round development of students and tap their inherent potential. Career planning education can enable postgraduates to choose suitable occupation and maximize their potential considering their own situation and social environment. The career planning guidance of postgraduates can realize the optimal utilization of human resources and ultimately promote the development of society.

## 2. Research trends

After more than 40 years of exploration, China's graduate education has made great progress and development, but its career planning education is still in the initial stage of exploration. It is the consensus of universities to carry out career planning education for university students. At present, many universities regard it as one of the focus of employment. Due to the late start of career planning guidance education and the lack of attention to the career planning guidance work for postgraduates, the level of career planning education of postgraduates is still relatively backward. Some universities' career planning for postgraduates can not play a positive guiding role, while it even caused a waste of human resources.

At present, the career planning courses offered by Shandong University of Finance and Economics (SDUFE) are mostly aimed at undergraduate students, while there are almost no related

courses in the postgraduate stage. At the same time, the career planning guidance for postgraduates is basically held by counselors and deputy secretaries of the college, and is limited to the daily work category, and the career planning guidance education is not combined with the professional background and has no strong pertinence. Postgraduate students are more professional than undergraduates, and the possibility of doing this major is greater after graduation, the guidance of postgraduates career planning must be combined with its professional knowledge background.

### 3. Investigation and Analysis on the Career Planning of postgraduates at present



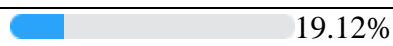
The investigation is conducted in the form of questionnaires and interviews. Through talking with the staff of Employment Guidance Center and the relevant teachers of each college, we collect the current career planning and guidance work of SDUFE. The structure of the career planning questionnaire is divided into five parts: the students' basic situation, the students' academic situation, the students' self-cognition, the students' professional cognition, and the students' career planning needs.

The survey was conducted in the form of anonymous questionnaires, with respondents responding anonymously. A total of 136 questionnaires were collected, including 99 postgraduates in the first grade, 16 postgraduates in the second grade, and 21 postgraduates in the third grade. Among the gender options, 33 boys and 103 girls are in line with the ratio of male and female students in SDUFE, and the sample selection is reasonable. Based on the statistical analysis of the 136 valid questionnaires, this paper analyzes the status of career planning for postgraduates of SDUFE as follows:

#### 3.1 Lack of clear career goals and awareness of planning

Career planning is a prerequisite for career choice, and with reasonable career planning can the postgraduates have a clear way forward on the road of scientific research. In the research direction, the motive force of the struggle comes from the heart, and the exact goal is helpful to stimulate the career choice action. The establishment of career goals is one of the most important factors in career planning.

Table 1 Are you confident about your future employment situation?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Well prepared during postgraduate study	29	 21.32%
Haven't adapted to the transition from school to society	81	 59.56%
Completely unprepared and is worry about employment	26	 19.12%
Number of valid person-times	136	

According to table 1, more than half of postgraduates don't have an exact career goal, are not adaptable to the transition from student to professional, or even 19.12% are completely unplanned who still live in the ivory tower of campus and have no clear understanding of employment. The stage of defining one's own career goal is not only beneficial to exert one's subjective initiative, but also to adapt to the change of learning style in the research life, to adjust one's own mentality in time, and to advance to the state of "people-profession" matching.

At the same time, through Table 2, we can see that the postgraduates who enter the graduate school of this major based on their own character, interests and specialties occupy the first place, accounting for 31.62%. This kind of postgraduates has the clear scientific research goal and the forward direction, but the consideration of employment is unclear. Only 30.15% of them choose to go to graduate school with the first appeal of considering the prospect of employment, and even 28.68% of postgraduates enter the major through major adjustment, which not only reflects the existence of major puzzles for such postgraduates, but also has certain problems for the establishment of career goals.

Table 2 The main reason why you chose to study in this major?


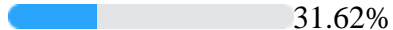
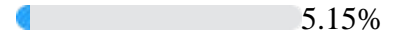

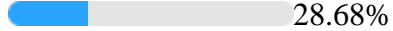

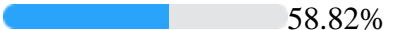


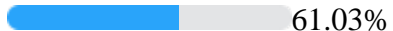

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Better employment prospects	41	 30.15%
In line with my character, interests and specialties	43	 31.62%
Family opinion	7	 5.15%
Low admission line	6	 4.41%
Transferred from other majors	39	 28.68%
Number of valid person-times	136	

Table 3 Some postgraduates say they think they are confused when they have nothing to do but the necessary courses. What kind do you belong to?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Often this is the state, but also very helpless	45	 33.09%
It's very rare, it's very fulfilling every day	80	 58.82%
It's never been like this, it's planned, it's compact	11	 8.09%
Number of valid person-times	136	

As shown in Table 3, only 8.09% of them have never felt confused during their graduate studies, and have been carrying out scientific research and practical activities according to their own plans. As a result, they can give full play to their subjective initiative, clarify their career goals, and do a good job preparation for employment. 58.82% of them said they were occasionally worried about the future, but were full almost every day and were making some effort for the future. However, 33.09% of them don't know what they can do in addition to the necessary courses. I also interviewed them. One postgraduate student surnamed Lin said he was under pressure to study during his graduate studies. For example, unlike the teaching method of undergraduate students who only need to take notes, the postgraduate students also need to practise scientific research methods in the courses which make him tired and he only wants to rest at the end of each week, although he knows that he should participate in more practical activities, but he cannot start. There are plenty of other students like Mr. Lin, who accept the approach of career planning however needs to be pushed by institutions such as the school. It can be seen that it is feasible for the university to carry out the career planning of postgraduates, and it is necessary to mobilize the postgraduate students and help them to establish the consciousness of career planning and clarify the career goals.

Table 4 Would you like to graduate for further study (PhD) or find a job?

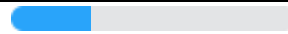
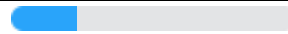
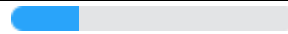
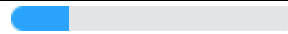
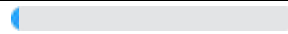
Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Further study (PhD)	27	 19.85%
Find a job	83	 61.03%
It is still being considered	26	 19.12%
Number of valid person-times	136	

As shown in Table 4, 61.03% of them choose to look for work on the crucial choice for postgraduates – “further study (PhD) or find a job”. 19.12% of them have not yet made a decision, they are still hesitating. Especially for the first-year graduate students who are not facing the pressure to graduate, in the mentality they are not prepared to leave the campus on the one hand, on the other hand, they think that they need to enter society, while there is still a lack of clear career goals.

### 3.2 Job expectations do not match competency requirements







To match the work requirements, the postgraduates should firstly understand the external environment and their own abilities. They can find the suitable and ideal positions through deep analysis of themselves and the understanding of the position requirements. The analysis is as follows:

Table 5 What is your ideal city for employment?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Location of the university	39	 28.68%
Hometown city	32	 23.53%
First-tier city	33	 24.26%
Coastal city	28	 20.59%
Others	4	 2.94%
Number of valid person-times	136	






As shown in Table 5, 28.68% of postgraduates choose to work in Jinan, where the university is located, 23.53% of them choose to go home to choose their jobs, and 44.85% want to go to first-tier cities or coastal cities which indicates that most graduate students want to work in places with better environment and higher quality of life after graduation. This is also one of the main reasons leading to the large demand for enterprises and the difficulty for university graduates to find a job.

Table 6 What is the nature of the work unit you expect?

Options	Sutotal	Proportion
Government entities	81	 59.56%
Universities and research institutes	69	 50.74%
State-owned enterprises	90	 66.18%
Foreign enterprises	58	 42.65%
Private enterprise	22	 16.18%
Others	5	 3.68%
Number of valid person-times	136	

As shown in Table 6, state-owned enterprises and government entities are in the forefront of employment units, and as we all know that the civil service examinations and public institution examinations are still popular and the enthusiasm for jobs with stable work or good salary is high. In combination with the current hot topic of 996(a kind of work time mode, which means work from 9am to 9pm within 6 working days), the attitude towards 996 is excluded. The postgraduates' job expectations and the recruitment entities do not meet the requirements of employment, so that the graduates' employment is more and more difficult, while the proportion of small and medium-sized enterprises' posts suitable for graduates' employment is less and less.

Table 7 What is your expected monthly salary?



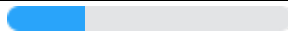
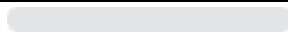
Options (RMB) RMB/USD=0.143	Subtotal	Proportion
2,000-4,000	4	 2.94%
4,000-6,000	23	 16.91%
6,000-8,000	53	 38.97%
8,000-10,000	33	 24.26%
10,000 and above	23	 16.91%
Number of valid person-times	136	

As shown in Table 7, 38.97% of postgraduate students expecting a monthly salary of 6,000-8,000 RMB occupy the first place. There are 4.26% choose 8,000-10,000 RMB, and 16.91% choose more than 10,000 RMB. Some survies found that the monthly salary of financial and economic postgraduate students in Jinan city is about 5,000 RMB, and the most expected post as of public service units in Jinan city is about 4,000 RMB. So it can be concluded that the financial and economic postgraduates' employment expectations is different from the actual salary of jobs.

As shown in Table 8, 61.76% of postgraduate students know more about their personality, hobbies and specialties; 10.29% know exactly what they should choose; 27.94% don't know much about their vocations. By the way, only 16.18% of the 136 postgraduate students care the development trends of the careers they ae interested in while 78.68% of them occasionally concerns

the trends. Employment is still a distant thing in the current mindset of most postgraduate students, or only in the immediate mode they will care about it. They are not well understanding the workplace environment and not caring about the strengths/weaknesses of the sectors they are eager to join which is bad for career planning.

Table 8 Do you know what job is suitable for your character, interests and specialties?

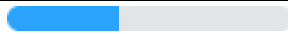

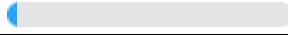
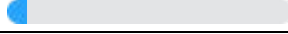
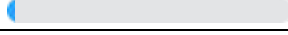
Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Very good understanding	14	 10.29%
Better understanding	84	 61.76%
Less understanding	38	 27.94%
Very poor understanding	0	 0%
Number of valid person-times	136	

To sum up, the cognition of postgraduates' job expectation and their own work ability are not actually matched, and the guidance of career planning is urgently needed, which also shows that the university carries out career planning is based on reality to solve the practical problems faced by postgraduates' employment.

### 3.3 Fewer sources of employment information

Through the questionnaire survey of the postgraduates of SDUFE, it is found that the employment information for the postgraduates is less. The information is basically from the network and the university's Employment Guidance Office, while the independent planning information is less. When facing job choices, more helps are from the parents and relatives, and there is less professional guidance. The results of the analysis are as follows:

Table 9 What are your access to job selection and employment information?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
University's Employment Guidance Office	54	 39.71%
Internet	63	 46.32%
Professors	5	 3.68%
Classmates/ Friends	10	 7.35%
Others	4	 2.94%
Number of valid person-times	136	

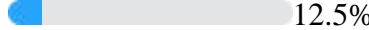

As shown in Table 9, the network is the first way for postgraduate students to choose employment information, and the university's Employment Guidance Office is the second choice. At the same time, the push information of the Employment Guidance Office is mostly through the campus propaganda, which provides the employment information for the whole school students and lacks certain directivity. When facing career choice confusion, parents and relatives are the first way to seek help, followed by classmates and friends. Few people can get analysis through professional career planning agencies. The university should pay full attention to the growth and development of postgraduate students, make rational use of the effective resources among universities and among professors so as to promote the students to make the best use of their talents.

### 3.4 Low recognition of career planning

Career planning will firstly analyzes a student's own characteristics, and then integrates the external environment systematically, so as to specify a person's career goals. Through the questionnaire survey of postgraduates of SDUFE, it is found that postgraduate students' understanding of career planning is not comprehensive enough, some are only in the stage of hearing about. The results are as follows:


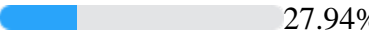

According to the survey analysis, only 13.15% of postgraduate students knew their career plans well; 72.91% said they only had a slight hearing and general understanding; 11.55% said they didn't understand well; even 2.39% of postgraduate students didn't want to know. This shows that postgraduate students have no systematic understanding of career planning.

Table 10 Have you done a complete career plan or planning text during your graduate school?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Yes	17	 12.5%
No	119	 87.5%
Number of valid person-times	136	

As shown in Table 10, 87.5% of postgraduate students did not do a complete career planning book during their postgraduate studies, which shows that most postgraduate students have insufficient execution in career planning, and the university does not have the specific implementation of relevant career planning measures. Of the 12.5% of postgraduate students who have done career planning, 52.94% have been revised and used to guide practice. This shows that only 6.2% of the postgraduate students in the sample selected have carried out the career plan from the beginning to the total. Otherwise, even if the plan is made, without perfect implementation, it means nothing.

Table 11 Do you think it is necessary to carry out career planning education at the postgraduate level?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Necessary	95	 69.85%
Just so so	38	 27.94%
No need	3	 2.21%
Number of valid person-times	136	

As shown in Table 11, 69.85% believe that career planning education is very necessary, which is linked to the conclusion of the career planning book in the above, which shows that the postgraduate students recognize the activity of career planning education in the heart, but only lack specific and systematic theoretical and practical guidance. According to the survey, 61.03% of postgraduate students believe that the university does provide career planning education, but it is not enough. It can be seen that the degree of attention of the university to postgraduates' career planning and the degree of help to postgraduates in employment and career selection need to be strengthened. Postgraduates' career planning should be carried out sustainably, deloping and concretely, so as to create favorable conditions for the employment of postgraduate students.

#### 4. Analysis on the Causes of Problems in Postgraduates' Career Planning

In view of the problems in the career planning of postgraduate students of SDUFE mentioned above, the reasons can be analyzed from two aspects: postgraduate students themselves and the university.

##### 4.1 Lack of scientific career choices for graduate students

1) There is a general lack of scientific autonomy in choosing a major

The lack of clear career goals for postgraduate students is mainly due to the fact that they do not take into account employment factors when choosing majors, while the choice of majors has a great impact on the future employment direction and employment path. If they chose a major suitable for them, it is not only beneficial for conducting their subjective initiative, but also beneficial to their understanding of the career goals so as to help the orderly development of their career. Otherwise, choosing a major that is not suitable for oneself will not only affect its own academic achievements and lead to the waste of educational resources, but also restrict its own employment choice, which is not conducive to the long-term career development of individuals.

2) Career choice considerations are utilitarian

The main reason why postgraduate students' job expectation and ability requirement do not match should be that more utilitarian in career choice. Postgraduate students pay more attention to salary and welfare when choosing work, the desire to realize personal value is very strong, and it is easy to appear the phenomenon of incompetence in the employment. However, interviews show that

most postgraduate students have been able to recognize the current employment situation, but still choose a stable and comfortable working environment under the premise of choice. First-tier cities and coastal cities are the most desirable places for postgraduate students in the survey. Big cities mean more development opportunities, more room for development, and higher levels of salary. In the choice of the nature of work, state-owned enterprises, government entities mean a more comfortable working environment, and more stable work and life.

#### **4.2 The university's career planning education is not standardized**

At present, the problems existing in the career planning of postgraduate students are mainly reflected in the following three aspects:

First, the university lacks a comprehensive understanding of postgraduates' career planning. It is generally believed that the social cognitive ability of postgraduate students is better than that of undergraduate students, and there are few courses related to career planning education for postgraduate students in the formulation of postgraduates training programs. The university has not been able to correctly understand career planning education, as a result the career planning education is simply equated with employment guidance and the object of education is also limited to graduates.

Second, the employment related departments have fewer functions and lack of comprehensive and fixed forms of education and system establishment. The relevant guidance institutions of the university still highlight the administrative management function to the postgraduate students. Their work basically stays on the job procedures and provides the recruitment information or the employment policy guidance, lacking the specialized and individualized career planning guidance service. They did not establish the research, the teaching, the instruction, and the consultation integration work pattern. The main forms of training are classroom teaching and lecture reports, ignoring the one-by-one individualized guidance according to the actual situation of postgraduate students.

Third, it is in lack of a professional team in career planning guidance. Because career planning guidance is a new hot spot, few people have received formal career planning education and have the qualification of career planner in our country. Our university's career planning guidance task is mainly by the school vocational guidance center staff, department party secretary, counselors, professional class teachers and so on, and the full-time staff team is relatively small.

### **5. Suggestions to Carry out the Career Planning Education for Postgraduate Students**

#### **5.1 Enhance students' emphasis on career planning**

Postgraduate students are the main body of career planning education. Only when the postgraduate students themselves make clear the importance of career planning education and take a correct attitude, can the career planning education make sense.

##### **1) Increase career planning awareness**

Postgraduate students should set up the consciousness of career planning as early as possible, set the stage goal in each period, gradually form a complete career plan, and carry out the career plan throughout the study career. For example:

First year stage: through the career evaluation to make clear their career development direction; form their own career development goals.

Second year stage: refine their career development goals; make career decisions.

Third year stage: to participate specific practical activities, and adjust the planning text.

##### **2) Establish Correct Professional Values**

Postgraduate students should establish correct professional values. In today's era of rapid economic development, as a postgraduate student of financial and economic university, we should use our own professional knowledge to contribute to economic development and contribute our own strength. In choosing own career, we should not ignore the cultivation of personal values. On one hand, we should firmly contribute to the benefit of society, adhere to the ideals and beliefs hard

work, on the other hand, be willing to practice at the bottom level, not afraid of hardship, not afraid of tiredness. The high-level talents trained by the university should be distributed in every corner of the great rivers and mountains of the motherland, which is the elite's meaning.

### 3) Establish a reasonable career plan

The formulation of career planning books should make clear the long-term and short-term goals of individuals, lifelong goals and stage goals, and constantly revise and improve in practice, so as to combine their own life, study, work and systematic planning among them. However, the plan is not as fast as change. When making career planning book, they shall improve their own risk response ability, cultivate alert mechanism in the plan to improve their professional judgment ability.

## 5.2 Improving the education system of career planning for postgraduates

Most postgraduate students have recognized the importance and urgency of career planning, and career planning should start first year stage and run through the postgraduate stage. The university can make different guidance courses at each stage to guide postgraduate students to make scientific and reasonable career planning, and have an early understanding of the future career. As shown in Table 12, the majority of postgraduate students believe that career planning education is the most appropriate time at the first stage of the study. Based on this, dynamic tracing and quality tracking can be combined in different stages, and their career rules can be revised in different environments and stages. In the content of career planning education, scientific self-evaluation, determination of ambition is the most interested content of postgraduate students in career planning, and how to choose the way and way to achieve career planning ranks second. It can be seen that postgraduate students are still very interested in career planning.

Table 12 When do you think is better to carry out the career planning education and career evaluation during your graduate studies?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
1 <sup>st</sup> year stage	63	46.32%
2 <sup>nd</sup> year stage	23	16.91%
Before graduation	2	1.47%
Through out the postgraduate study	48	35.29%
Number of valid person-times	136	

## 5.3 Set up a personalized guidance service and practical activities

Build a career planning guidance service center for postgraduate students, and invite full-time career instructors to give special guidance. In addition to offering specific courses, we can conduct targeted lectures on the employment interests of postgraduate students, and receive one-by-one consulting services to truly achieve a harmonious situation of combining universality and individuation, and adapting theory and practice to further improve the graduate career planning education level and graduate career planning consciousness.

Open a career planning teaching and research office, and join the "Professor participation system", so that career planners and professors can establish an effective link. As for such courses focused by postgraduate students as "how to scientifically conduct self-assessment, determine aspirations", "how to determine long-term goals and short-term goals", "how to formulate action plans and content", "how to choose ways and means to achieve career planning" and other detailed and specific courses, we can take them as the support for carrying out the career planning education.

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