The Causes of the Phenomenon of College Students’ Rat Race under the Influence of the New Coronavirus and the Path of Its Resolution

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Abstract

Affected by the COVID-19 epidemic, Rat Race, as a unique perspective and concept of social problem analysis, has once again entered people’s field of vision and become a hot topic under the impetus of the Internet. This paper attributes the phenomenon of rat race to the neglect of the cultivation of college students’ values in domestic universities, the increasing pressure of challenges faced by college students, and the outbreak of the new coronavirus, which has exacerbated the phenomenon in China. The cultivation of most colleges and universities ignores the cultivation of college students’ values, and eventually becomes a resistance to the improvement of educational quality. To excel at the university level, students must face a full range of challenges and cope with high-intensity pressures. Domestic teachers, students and universities must strengthen their motivation for achievement. To get rid of the shackles of rat race, college students should grasp the challenges and opportunities brought by COVID-19 and break through the cognitive limitations.

Keywords

College Students, Rat Race, COVID-19, Post-epidemic Era

1. Question raised

In today’s context, “Rat race” mainly refers to a state in which a certain cultural form or economic model cannot achieve steady state and mode transformation, only making the internal state more complicated. The main performance is: in order to compete for limited resources, the system of individual irrational or passive internal competition, individual “Pay rate of return” decline, resulting in efforts into an inflationary bubble, to be the pay without gain, the effort without success, the growth without happiness.

Engaging in any activity is bound to be accompanied by costs, the involvement of college students in rat race caused by the increase of individual unit resource input, it is bound to increase the unit cost. But when the unit cost exceeds the unit income, it produces the invalid consumption phenomenon, in which time is an important measure. Four years of college is a limited time, and the campus should be a stage for student growth, not a cycle of inefficient production, as Geltz describes the Javanese agricultural model.

The rat race problem of university students studied in this paper refers to the situation in which university students, facing internal competitive pressure with limited cognition and resources, over-expend their intelligence, energy and physical strength, but do not gain any real benefits. Affected by covid-19, the world economy, society, culture and education are shrinking inward. Rat Race is a unique perspective and concept in the analysis of social problems, once again into people’s vision and in the network under the promotion of become a widely discussed hot word (Fang, Zhang, & Kim, 2021).
2. The main causes of “Rat race” among college students

2.1. Domestic universities neglect the cultivation of college students’ values

Colleges and universities undertake the mission of cultivating outstanding talents for the country, but for a long time in the past, there was a misunderstanding of college education, that is, the transmission of knowledge was the first priority, and the cultivation of college students’ values was neglected. It is therefore easy to equate good people with high-scoring students, as if academic performance had become the only measure of the ability of college students, with the consequences of what the educationalist Paul Freire had ironically said: “The more obediently these ‘containers’ are stuffed, the better the students.” (Su, Zhou, Liu, & Kong, 2015). Although college students are downgraded to things, they are still eager to carry out credit competitions under the pressure of involution. In this regard, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: “The foundation of colleges and universities is to build morality and cultivate people. Only colleges that cultivate first-class talents can become world-class universities.” Therefore, the standard of talents should be both ability and political integrity. Establishing ethics and cultivating people as the central link can improve the quality of education and improve the level of school running. But now, as the involution of college students intensifies, a chain reaction is taking place, causing a crisis in the quality of education in colleges and universities.

Although the existing policies and systems have increased the proportion of practice in students’ academic work, most students still lack the correct understanding of the value of practice, and focus on “Relative choice” knowledge and construction knowledge unilaterally, this is contrary to the training mode of most colleges and universities, and eventually becomes the resistance to the improvement of education quality. The relative choice of knowledge, which is acquired and used to construct, internalizes the recessive culture in the educational materials under the influence of the over-intensive development, and forms the employment value which tends to the mainstream of society.

2.2. The challenges faced by university students have increased

With the popularization of higher education, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in my country has increased from 40% in 2015 to 54.4% in 2020, and the total number of students in school has reached 41.83 million. Competitors with the same degree and age at the university level are increasing year by year, but due to the periodic impact of the epidemic, the export of students after graduation is shrinking, while the student base is further increasing, which means that the “winners” who can complete the goals of further studies and ideal employment. The ratio will decrease. More competitors, more single competitive goals, and less success probability make the internal competition of college students more and more fierce.

After entering the university, college students bid farewell to the high school era by the definition of “Excellent”, their academic development and future life planning options than in high school is much richer. The training of university students is not only focused on their professional abilities, but also on general education, liberal education and other comprehensive abilities. In addition to academic performance in the classroom, professional performance points, scientific research ability assessment, as well as computer, foreign language and other general skills required. In addition, student work, social service, practice, interpersonal communication is also the dominant indicators of the quality of college students. To stand out in college, students must face the full range of challenges and deal with high-intensity pressure.

2.3. The outbreak of novel coronavirus has exacerbated the situation in Rat Race

Affected by COVID-19, the risk of college students’ employment uncertainty increases, and their career choice tends to be conservative and stable. In order to avoid the occupational risks caused by COVID-19, some college graduates have lowered their expectations for high-risk, high-return industries, employment is further concentrated in government agencies or public institutions, scientific research institutes or universities, colleges and universities, state-owned enterprises and so on. “The value of employment presents obvious characteristics of rat race toward the system.” The efficiency consciousness of some college students gives way to the steady state of mind, and they would rather reduce the expected income and growth space to adopt a sound employment strategy. For the choice of cities also tend to have strong risk response and governance capabilities of first-and second-tier cities. Of the 1.51 m 2021 who applied for the civil service, Beijing, Guangdong and Zhejiang were among the top three. According to the 2020 national statistical bulletin on the development of education published by the Ministry of Edu-
cation, 7,972,000 students graduated from this college, an increase of 386,700 or 5.10 percent over the previous year. The class of 2021 is expected to have 9.09 m graduates, an increase of 350,000 over the same period last year, and competition for jobs will be fiercer (Wu, 2022).

COVID-19 is still widespread in the international situation, international exchanges are limited, the channels for university students to study and work abroad are not smooth. At the same time, in the epidemic prevention and control at home alone, the situation abroad frequently, the willingness of students to go abroad for further education and employment also significantly reduced. According to the Ministry of Education, in 2020 the number of personnel sent by the government to study abroad dropped significantly. According to the situation of the normalization of the epidemic prevention and control and the situation of European and American countries to curb China’s development, the situation of overseas education and employment will continue. The external channel is not smooth, and the entrance and employment mainly depend on the internal digestion. The “Narrowing” of the university students’ exports will significantly increase the internal “Pressure” of the university stage.

3. The path of elimination for university students in rat race in the post-epidemic era

3.1. Reorientate the value orientation of education and prevent employment from becoming a universal tool

Education should not be a rigid and rigid operation process. Students need to generate new ideas by applying the instilled knowledge or further combining it with other knowledge. The instrumental educational value is precisely because it does not bring students the opportunity to understand, and the students no longer seek help from the school for employment, which makes employment education useless. Peters, the British educational philosopher, especially pointed out that education should pay attention to those valuable things and understand them from the inside of things. Then, the employment education should start from the cognition and understanding of things that are helpful to students, not only should pay attention to the tool of knowledge, but also put the principle into practice, and establish a systematic relationship between knowledge, enable students to recognize and understand the world around them through the acquired content, and then invest in principles, practices, and associations, and then they will understand the new world… Repeatedly, students can better adapt and develop in the moment (Yen & Carrick, 2021).

Nowadays, the educational value orientation of employment in rat race has become a universal tool because of its social function, and reorienting the educational value orientation is the fundamental measure to promote the employment education in colleges and universities. Once the education of college students’ employment loses the control of the original educational value, it means that the educator has his own appearance and the function of employment is single and narrow, which does not suit the significance of education itself. The proper employment education is to pay attention to the intrinsic value of the knowledge and skills learned from the students themselves. Whether it is the educational process or employment, both are fundamentally based on the minimum level of awareness and vision of students, respect for students’ autonomy. In the ideal state of employment education, the decision of students to choose and acquire knowledge and skills is to resort to their own, so as to obtain changes and achievements are self-leading, there is a strong subjective will. In this situation, the selection of educational content should also start from the internal value and pay attention to the connection between the internal benefit and the external value, which can not only prevent the pan-instrumentalization but also promote the realization of the external value from the inside out.

3.2. Seize the challenges and opportunities brought about by COVID-19

On the one hand, the new crown epidemic has pressed the pause button on social life, but on the other hand, it has become an enzyme that accelerates social change. Under the boost of the epidemic, the original social operation mode has quietly changed, and emerging industries and formats have begun to emerge. In the economic field, due to the impact of the epidemic, the growth rate of domestic and foreign consumption has slowed down, and the downward pressure on the global economy has increased. At a time when the economies of all countries in the world are in a downturn, my country’s economy is developing rapidly, achieving medium-to-high-speed development and moving towards high quality. To achieve high-quality economic development, it is necessary to overcome the internal friction caused by economicinvolution and constraints on growth, and make domestic investment and consumption the lasting driving force for economic development. At the same time, in the face of new changes in the international situation, in order to break through the containment of China’s development by Western countries.
led by the United States, the country vigorously implements an innovation-driven development strategy, making technological innovation the first driving force for economic development, artificial intelligence, chips, robotics and other industries ushered in a stage of rapid development. In the field of education, along with the increase in home life and the decrease in social life, online classrooms and online education have developed in depth, and the informationization and intelligence brought about by this have formed a pulling effect on education. Affected by the epidemic, the rate of return of studying abroad has been declining, and the attractiveness of studying abroad has declined significantly. In recent years, nearly one million overseas students return to China every year. The return of overseas talents has greatly improved the scale and quality of domestic talents, and the talent base for domestic technological innovation has become more substantial, bringing vitality to the development of the industry (Harryson, Kliknaite, & von Zedtwitz, 2008).

Facing the epidemic situation, college students should fully realize that opportunities and challenges coexist, and pressure and motivation coexist. The adjustment of Social Operation Mode and the change of development direction caused by the epidemic situation not only troubled college students, but also brought important opportunities and opportunities. College students should actively grasp the new international and domestic situation, new changes and new stages, aim at the national strategic layout, match the development direction of standard industries, and closely combine professional ability with the application of new technologies, in the process of coping with the pressure of challenges to constantly improve their own ability, in professional learning to focus on value-added, in dynamic adjustment to find the target positioning, in the different competition to establish their own advantages.

3.3. Transcend cognitive limitations

The epidemic is also a test of the psychological quality of college students. Under the control of the epidemic, the campus is usually in the closed or semi-closed management mode, the contact between the students and the outside world is greatly reduced, the high goal and the expectation make the pressure become bigger, the lack of the catharsis channel and the transfer way of attention, under the pressure may appear anxiety, depression, anger and other negative emotions, or even the “Stress response”, the occurrence of psychological and physical problems. College students need to set goals reasonably, strengthen their self-confidence and action power through self-recognition, actively participate in community activities, voluntary activities and social activities, and find appropriate channels for psychological relief and emotional release, effectively relieve the internal pressure.

College students should break through the boundaries of majors through employment education, so that they are not limited by the knowledge they have learned, and avoid narrowly considering employment as a process of professional realization. To realize such a vision, it is necessary to stimulate the connection between students’ creativity and practicality, and to promote the cultivation of students’ self-development. At the beginning of the phenomenon of involution in employment, the repeated accumulation of students’ internal consumption and quantitative changes just shows the lack of students’ creativity, showing the practicality of habituation. The status quo that cannot be surpassed and the origin is repeated causes the students’ practical ability to show the phenomenon of low-level prosperity and high-level poverty for a long time. Therefore, it is imperative to stimulate students’ creativity and practical ability. For college students, systematic creative thinking training can be carried out from the following two aspects: On the one hand, through the first class, directly learn the relevant knowledge of creativity, and transform the existing thinking mode. At the same time, the relevant courses are integrated into the creative practice part, and practical training is used to urge students to consciously learn to think about problems at multiple levels, from multiple perspectives and from multiple perspectives, so as to enhance the creative potential of college students; on the other hand, to integrate creative thinking training into traditional education and teaching, advocate Combining the latest social hot issues with professional knowledge, changing the situation of students passively accepting knowledge through flipped classrooms, group discussions, etc., encouraging students to boldly question the knowledge taught in the classroom, and clarifying doubts through group discussions to enhance students' multi-angle and the ability to empathize.

3.4. Motivation to reinforce achievement

According to the Yerkes-Dodson law, the degree of stress and work performance is related to an inverted U curve. Insufficient or excessive stress will reduce work performance. Only by applying moderate pressure can individuals stimulate their maximum work potential and produce the best marginal benefits. The competitive pressure of college students can be divided into challenging pressure and obstructive pressure according to the inherent
properties of “stressors”. Challenging pressure means that efforts and achievements can establish a high correlation. When the difficulty of the task increases and the pressure increases, the individual is willing to complete the task by increasing effort and investment to obtain a sense of achievement, so the individual has a strong motivation for achievement. Obstructive pressure means that the correlation between effort and achievement is unclear or low. With the increase of task difficulty and pressure, there is aversion to risk and failure, and individual achievement motivation is not strong. Different attributes of stress will have different effects on individual achievement motivation, and there will be significant changes in internal driving force. If college students can maintain a high level of achievement motivation, they can effectively cope with stress, enhance their psychological resilience, and avoid inner anxiety.

Besides the pressure of self-regulation, colleges and universities should take a series of effective measures to promote the achievement motivation and enhance self-efficacy of college students. Colleges and universities should regularly pay attention to the stress state and psychological state of college students, and help to form positive cognitive attitude and coping mood through psychological guidance and employment guidance, so that students can fully realize the existence of risks, also enhance the school, discipline, professional self-confidence and self-ability of the recognition. Students should be guided to set development goals in advance, make self-planning, and strive to improve their professional ability and comprehensive quality in line with the needs of the state, society, market and enterprises, so as to be prepared to deal with occupational risks.

References


