

Research on Employment Assistance Strategies for Impoverished College Students from the Perspective of the CIPP Model

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Abstract: *Employment assistance for impoverished college students is a key link in achieving educational equity and consolidating the achievements of poverty alleviation. This study takes the CIPP evaluation model as the theoretical framework, and systematically examines the current difficulties in assistance work through literature analysis and in-depth interviews. Research has found that the lack of context evaluation leads to the blurring of assistance goals, insufficient input evaluation results in fragmented resource allocation, the absence of process evaluation leads to the formalization of implementation processes, and the single-oriented evaluation of product leads to short-term effectiveness measurement. Based on this, a four-dimensional systematic assistance system has been developed, which includes strengthening context evaluation, establishing a dynamic calibration mechanism for demand, optimizing input evaluation to promote resource integration and precise allocation, improving process evaluation to build a digital monitoring platform, reconstructing product evaluation to introduce multiple indicators such as employment quality and development potential, and providing a practical path for promoting the transformation of subsidized education from “guarantee-oriented” to “development-oriented”.*

Keywords: CIPP Model, Employment, Impoverished college students.

1. Introduction

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China is in line with the 2025 “Outline of the Plan for Building a Leading Country in Education”, which regards employment as the foundation of people’s livelihood and a key lever for educational equity, and clearly proposes to promote the transformation of student financial aid from “guarantee-oriented” to “development-oriented”. As a vulnerable group in higher education, the employment status of impoverished college students not only affects their personal prospects and family well-being but also directly impacts the consolidation of poverty alleviation achievements and the realization of social equity. Although the country and universities have established an integrated economic assistance system of “awards, loans, assistance, diligence, subsidies, and exemptions”, the existing assistance still relies on “providing resources” instead of “managing the process” and “maintaining the bottom line” instead of “promoting development”, facing challenges such as systemic weakness, weak process supervision, and lack of effectiveness evaluation. The root cause lies in the lack of a scientific evaluation mechanism that runs through the entire cycle of “demand identification, resource allocation, process monitoring, and effectiveness feedback”, resulting in assistance being “policy oriented but not precise”, resources being “invested but not effective”, and long-term mechanisms being “slogan oriented but not implemented”.

In recent years, the academic community has conducted extensive discussions on the employment issues of impoverished students in universities, focusing on single dimensions such as psychological intervention, capacity enhancement, and policy optimization [1,2]. However, few studies consider assistance as a systematic engineering of “input-process-output”, lacking diagnostic questioning of whether the assistance process itself is effective. The CIPP

(Context, Input, Process, Product) model, as a process evaluation tool covering the entire project cycle, has been maturely applied in the field of education evaluation. However, empirical research on introducing employment assistance for impoverished students and solving the dilemma of “heavy investment over process, heavy results over improvement” is still relatively scarce. This study is based on the CIPP model and systematically diagnoses the “why is it inefficient”, “where is the chain broken”, and “how to improve” employment assistance for impoverished students in universities from four dimensions: context, input, process, and product. It provides practical reference for supporting education from “ensuring survival” to “promoting development”.

2. Research Ideas on Employment Assistance for Impoverished College Students from the Perspective of the CIPP Model

2.1 CIPP Evaluation Model

The CIPP evaluation model, proposed by Stufflebeam, consists of context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation, and product evaluation. This model breaks through the limitations of traditional evaluation paradigms that solely focus on “whether goals are achieved”. Instead, it emphasizes a whole-process diagnosis of “why, how, how well, and how to improve” for projects. It forms a sharp contrast with the current predicament of employment assistance for impoverished college students characterized by “inputs without process, results without improvement”, thereby providing a theoretical lens for the penetrative analysis in this paper.

2.2 Congruence Between the CIPP Model and Research on Employment Assistance for Impoverished College Students

The systematicity, dynamicism, and improvement-oriented nature of the CIPP model are highly aligned with the educational philosophy of “precision, whole-process, and development-oriented” nurturing [3].

(1) Systematicity directly addresses the “fragmented” shortcomings of current assistance. The predicament faced by impoverished students is a structurally vulnerable situation shaped by the interplay of economic, psychological, capability, information, and social capital deficits [4]. However, current support departments operate in silos, with no one taking responsibility for “why this student cannot find a job”. The four-dimensional linkage of CIPP serves as an institutional correction to this “fragmented governance”.

(2) Dynamicism directly targets the drawback of “one-off assistance”. The needs of impoverished students evolve dynamically with their grade levels: planning for freshmen, accumulation for sophomores, internships for juniors to seniors, and employment matching for final-year students. In reality, assistance often occurs “thought of only before graduation, a notification sent to count as completion”, thus missing critical windows for growth. The CIPP model emphasizes “process”, transforming assistance from “emergency rescue during graduation season” to “whole-cycle immersive nurturing”.

(3) Improvement-oriented nature provides a solution to the perennial challenge of “repeated support with similar outcomes every year”. Policies advocate a shift from “security-oriented” to “development-oriented” assistance. However, there remains a lack of operational benchmarks for defining “development” and evaluating its outcomes. The CIPP model transforms each evaluation into a starting point for improvement, enabling the assistance system to develop “self-iteration” capabilities.

2.3 Subjects and Methods

2.3.1 Subjects

A mixed sampling approach combining purposive sampling and stratified sampling was employed, focusing on students with financial difficulties from Henan^{xx} University as the research subjects. The sampling procedure was as follows: First, the database of students with financial difficulties was obtained from the university’s financial aid center. Stratified quotas were then established based on three dimensions: grade level (freshman to senior), difficulty level (special difficulty, relative difficulty, general difficulty), and major category (medicine, pharmacy, nursing, etc.). Subsequently, within each stratum, respondents capable of providing rich information were purposively selected. Ultimately, 30 students with financial difficulties were included in the study, comprising 6 students from each grade level, 10 with special difficulty, 14 with relative difficulty, and 6 with general difficulty, covering 5 majors including medicine, pharmacy, and nursing.

Inclusion criteria: 1) Students with financial difficulties officially identified by the university; 2) Full-time undergraduate students or recent graduates; 3) Recipients of employment assistance services from the university.

Exclusion criteria: Students who withdrew midway or were unable to effectively cooperate with the interviewer. The sample size was determined based on the principle of information saturation; after interviewing the 26th participant, the thematic categories across dimensions tended to stabilize, and no new themes were provided by the subsequent 4 participants, confirming that saturation had been reached.

2.3.2 Methods

2.3.2.1 Literature Analysis

A systematic search of literature retrieved from CNKI and the official websites of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security was conducted for relevant literature spanning 1995 to 2025. The topics covered employment assistance for impoverished college students, development-oriented financial aid and the application of the CIPP model. The search focused on organizing issues related to national policy guidance, types of assistance measures, implementation dilemmas, and gaps in evaluation mechanisms, which served as the foundation for designing the interview guide.

2.3.2.2 In-depth Interview

A semi-structured interview guide was designed based on the four dimensions of the CIPP model: The context dimension focused on the reasons for poverty identification, employment difficulties, and the situation regarding the survey of school needs; the input dimension paid attention on the types of assistance, the degree of resource allocation matching, and the support of human resource platform; the process dimension assessed the effectiveness of assistance activities, the frequency of teacher-student interactions, and continuous follow-up tracking; the product dimension explored employment situation, the impact of assistance, and the perceived improvement of capability. Open-ended questions were set for each dimension.

2.3.3 Data Collection

Eligible students were contacted through the student affairs department. After explaining the research purpose and confidentiality principles and obtaining informed consent, interviews were conducted combining offline symposium and online interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants’ permission. Then all recordings were transcribed into text for future analysis.

2.3.4 Data Analysis

The thematic analysis method was used to code the interview text. Initially, a preliminary classification was conducted based on the four dimensions of the CIPP model. Second, open coding was performed on the text under each dimension to extract core themes. Finally, cross-validation by researchers was used to ensure coding consistency.

2.3.5 Research Ethics and Limitations

This study received ethical review exemption from Henan^{xx}

University, and all interviewee information was anonymized. To verify the representativeness of the sample, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted comparing the grade distribution and difficulty level proportions of the 24 interviewees with the overall structure of the financial disadvantaged student population at the university. The results showed no significant differences ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the sample is representative in terms of the main stratification dimensions. At the same time, considering the limitations of a single university, subsequent research could be expanded to multiple regions and diverse types of universities to verify the generalizability of the conclusions.

3. Practical Challenges in Implementing Employment Assistance for Impoverished Students in Universities: An Examination Based on the CIPP Model

Based on literature and in-depth interviews with 30 participants (coded A1–A30), this study analyzes challenges through the four dimensions of the CIPP model.

3.1 Absence of Context Evaluation and Ambiguous Assistance Objectives

The dilemma stems from a failure to articulate objectives. Before formulating assistance plans, most universities fail to ask: “What kind of personnel does the regional economy need?” “What do impoverished students lack?” and “How can academic programs align with these realities?” With all three questions unanswered, how can goals remain anything but vague? Assistance plans are developed annually, yet year after year they amount to little more than hollow slogans centered on “enhancing guidance.” Despite the high internal heterogeneity among impoverished students, assistance efforts persist in applying “fixed thinking” to “variable realities”: 60% of impoverished students experience anxiety, and 74.6% face interpersonal communication barriers [5]. Yet these data have never informed program design—those most in need of psychological counseling are offered resume-writing tips, while those most in need of internship opportunities receive policy briefings. Grade-level analysis reveals: Lower-year impoverished students (freshmen and sophomores) prioritize academic adjustment and career planning (62.5%), while upper-year students (juniors to seniors) focus on lack of internship opportunities and inadequate job-seeking skills (79.2%), confirming the dynamic evolution of impoverished students’ needs. Difficulty level disparities indicate: Students facing extreme hardship report significantly higher “financial pressure” than those with general hardship ($p < 0.05$), yet show no significant difference in psychological barriers. This suggests that psychological support should cover all impoverished students. 66.7% of respondents stated that their university failed to adequately understand students’ genuine needs.

A deeper issue lies in the disconnect between financial aid and employment support. Financial aid departments primarily handle subsidies, while employment departments focus on organizing activities, lacking alignment in objectives. Student A1’s predicament of “significant financial pressure and low expectations” stems directly from the failure to integrate

employability skills development into the financial aid phase—students receive four years of grants yet graduate still unsure of “what they want, where they can go, or how to get there.” The “Four years of aid, zero outcomes upon graduation” phenomenon directly reflects this ambiguity of objectives [6], revealing that top-level design has failed to integrate the concept of “developmental financial aid” into the assistance objective system.

3.2 Insufficient Input Evaluation and Fragmented Resource Allocation

Multiple stakeholders—career guidance centers, student affairs departments, academic departments, and alumni enterprises—have failed to effectively coordinate, resulting in scattered resources and redundant efforts [7]. High-quality resources are not reaching those most in need, diluting overall effectiveness. More alarmingly, the inherent “fragmentation” of policy documents themselves sets the stage for “formalization” in grassroots implementation. Among the 15 Ministry of Education documents addressing “employment for impoverished students” issued between 2020 and 2025, “one-on-one” assistance is repeatedly emphasized yet never accompanied by implementation guidelines. Policymakers focus primarily on addressing “whether it should be done,” while paying insufficient attention to “who will do it, how to do it, and what happens if it fails.”

3.3 Absence of Process Evaluation and Formalization of Implementation

Assistance activities often remain superficial—resume polishing, mock interviews, policy briefings [8]—lacking systematic guidance throughout the process and devoid of dynamic monitoring or feedback mechanisms. 83.3% of respondents reported that their university did not proactively assess their employment-related psychological state, and all indicated low interaction frequency with advisors and no ongoing follow-up. Student A13 emphasized, “Most interactions consist of mass notifications, lacking one-on-one assistance.” The feasibility of “one-on-one” assistance is questionable due to the significant student-to-faculty ratio disparity [9]; nationwide, approximately 2.4 million impoverished students (20%) are enrolled in higher education, while the qualified student-to-faculty ratio standard is 18:1.

3.4 Single-Dimensional Product Evaluation and Short-Termism in Effectiveness Measurement

Performance assessments predominantly emphasize quantitative metrics like “initial employment rate” and “contract signing rate” [10], while neglecting employment quality—such as job-fit and career development potential—and overlooking student growth factors, like employment confidence and resilience. The Ministry of Education requires reporting on three employment outcomes: “agreed employment,” “further education,” and “flexible employment.” However, “flexible employment” has become a catch-all category for “unclear” outcomes. Driven by this evaluation orientation, universities naturally prioritize “pushing students into employment first, then career selection”; this short-term oriented evaluation is systematically driving short-termist behaviors.

4. Systematic Support Strategies Based on the CIPP Model

4.1 Strengthening Context Evaluation and Establishing a Dynamic Calibration Mechanism for Needs and Goals

4.1.1 Establishing a “Dual-Dimensional Needs Diagnosis System”

This system aims to overcome the dilemma of decisions being based on experience rather than evidence. For the external dimension, it is necessary to collaborate with the human resources and social security departments to publish an annual list of regional industrial talent needs, serving as a “weather vane” for the allocation of support resources. For the internal dimension, assessments should be conducted upon enrollment to create precise support files. These files should diagnose psychological states, social capital, career interests, and skill gaps, and be dynamically updated throughout the four-year program [11].

4.1.2 Formulating a Tiered and Categorized System of Support Objectives

Hierarchical goals should be set based on the type of difficulty, major characteristics, and psychological traits: The first tier is to guarantee basic employment; the second tier is to enhance job matching; the third tier is to guide potentially promising students towards grassroots involvement, innovation and entrepreneurship, or further education, facilitating a leap from “ensuring employment” to “securing quality employment” and “achieving robust development.”

4.1.3 Improving the Developmental Financial Aid System

Employment capacity cultivation shall be integrated into the financial aid program, and “developmental financial aid credits” shall be established. Partial subsidies will be granted only to those who participate in career planning, internships and practical training. The exemplary role of recipients of the National Endeavor Scholarship shall be given full play [12].

4.2 Optimizing Input Evaluation to Promote Resource Integration and Precise Allocation

4.2.1 Establishing a University-Level Coordination Body

Create a unified coordination platform that integrates the resources of the Career Guidance Center, Student Affairs Department, Psychological Counseling Center, and academic departments to implement integrated services. Establish a dedicated fund pool to coordinate job-seeking subsidies, training funds, and psychological intervention resources, thereby avoiding duplicate applications and redundant processes.

4.2.2 Developing Integrated Policy Documents

Integrated implementation measures for support shall be issued to transform fragmented measures into operable institutional arrangements, with clear service standards and responsibilities.

4.2.3 Innovating “Non-Human-Dependent” Models

Break through the limitations of student-to-staff ratios. Introduce AI-powered employment assistants to provide 24/7 resume diagnostics, mock interviews, and policy interpretation. Peer support will be implemented [13], in which outstanding impoverished students from higher grades will be selected and trained to serve as “career peer mentors”, thus forming a growth community of self-help, mutual aid, and helping others.

4.3 Improving Process Evaluation by Establishing a Digital Monitoring Platform

Establish a digital platform to track the “support trajectory.” The core of process evaluation lies in “early warning and intervention.” The platform should track students’ job search progress, identify types of difficulties, and automatically assign tasks to the appropriate mentors. This makes the support trajectory “visible” and process interventions “actionable.” Simultaneously, strengthen psychological support by forming joint teams of psychological counselors and career mentors to provide integrated assistance encompassing psychological guidance, job matching, and simulation exercises. Establish a four-tiered intervention network for psychological crises at the “university–college–grade–dormitory” level [14].

4.4 Reconstructing product Evaluation by Establishing a Multi-Dimensional Effectiveness Assessment System

Construct an evaluation framework encompassing three dimensions: First, employment outcomes retain indicators such as the initial employment rate and contract signing rate. Second, employment quality incorporates metrics including social insurance contribution rate, job-education match rate, and graduate satisfaction [9]. Third, personal development is assessed through indicators like enhanced career confidence and self-evaluated resilience, evaluating long-term professional competencies.

Establish a graduate follow-up survey mechanism. The current evaluation system, which ends at graduation, is institutionally short-sighted. Systematic follow-up after graduation is necessary: after one year, examine employment stability and social insurance contributions; after three years, assess career progression and salary growth; after five years, gauge career achievements and social mobility. Only by extending the evaluation to the post-graduation period can we answer the question of “what exactly has assistance changed”. This will propel universities from a focus on “pursuing employment rates” to a commitment to “pursuing employment quality,” and from being “responsible for students until graduation” to being “responsible for students throughout their lives.”

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