

Research on the path of promoting graduates' rural employment and entrepreneurship from the perspective of rural revitalization

Meirong Qian

Chongqing Vocational Institute of Safety & Technology, Chongqing, China

Abstract: The employment situation for university graduates is currently challenging, but the advancement of the rural revitalization strategy has broadened their employment opportunities. University graduates are a key group in employment work. To promote fuller and higher-quality employment, the government has introduced policies to strongly guide and encourage graduates to seek employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in rural and grassroots areas. Rural areas are the main battleground of rural revitalization, while university graduates are the driving force behind it. Rural areas and universities should form partnerships to support rural development, creating new channels and opportunities for graduates to work in rural settings. Rural areas need to establish innovation and entrepreneurship platforms, develop distinctive industries, and improve local talent mechanisms to facilitate graduates' contributions to rural development. Universities should focus on employment guidance and support services, strengthening these systems to align with the rural revitalization strategy, thereby mobilizing university graduates to participate extensively in rural construction and forming a powerful synergy to advance rural revitalization.

Keywords: rural revitalization; graduates; rural areas; employment and entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

The 2022 Central Document No. 1, titled Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Effectively Advancing Key Work in Rural Revitalization in 2022, emphasizes the need to strengthen the talent pool for rural revitalization. This includes initiatives such as the "Youth in Action for Rural Revitalization" and "Women's Contribution to Rural Revitalization" programs, as well as training professionals in rural planning, design, construction, management, and local talents. In February 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Accelerating the Promotion of Rural Talent Revitalization, stating that rural revitalization fundamentally depends on people. Accelerating rural talent revitalization involves cultivating a workforce that understands agriculture, loves rural areas, and supports farmers. As early as 2017, the Opinions on Further Guiding and Encouraging University Graduates to Work at the Grassroots Level laid out comprehensive measures to guide and encourage university graduates to work in rural and western regions, providing clear direction for promoting graduate employment in grassroots areas.

Rural revitalization serves as the cornerstone for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and talent revitalization is the key to fully advancing rural revitalization. University graduates working and starting businesses at the forefront of rural revitalization not only provide a critical platform for their growth in grassroots areas but also play a vital role in solving employment challenges while advancing rural revitalization efforts. The current employment situation for university graduates is complex and multifaceted, and the alignment between graduate employment and rural revitalization has become a pressing issue. Establishing and improving long-term mechanisms that encourage university graduates to participate in rural revitalization is essential. This ensures that graduate employment and entrepreneurship are closely integrated with rural development, laying a solid foundation for following the path of Chinese-style rural revitalization and making a strong start toward building a modern socialist country.

2. The Necessity of University Graduates Working and Starting Businesses in Rural Areas

2.1 Severe Employment Challenges for University Graduates and Timely Talent Diversion to Rural Areas

Since 1998, the number of university graduates in China has increased annually, rising from 829,800 in 1998 to 6.69 million in 2013—a tenfold increase over 21 years. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, as shown in Figure 1, the number of university graduates has continued to grow rapidly over the past decade, from 6.69 million in 2013 to an estimated 10.76 million in 2022—an increase of nearly 54% compared to 2013 and an annual upward trend. This continuous increase, coupled with the global economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020, has exacerbated the already challenging employment situation for graduates. Employment is a top priority for people's livelihoods, and university graduate employment is a critical task that impacts national development and societal well-being, requiring concerted efforts from all sectors. Under the rural revitalization strategy, how can employment opportunities for graduates be effectively addressed? Rural areas should continue to serve as a "talent reservoir."

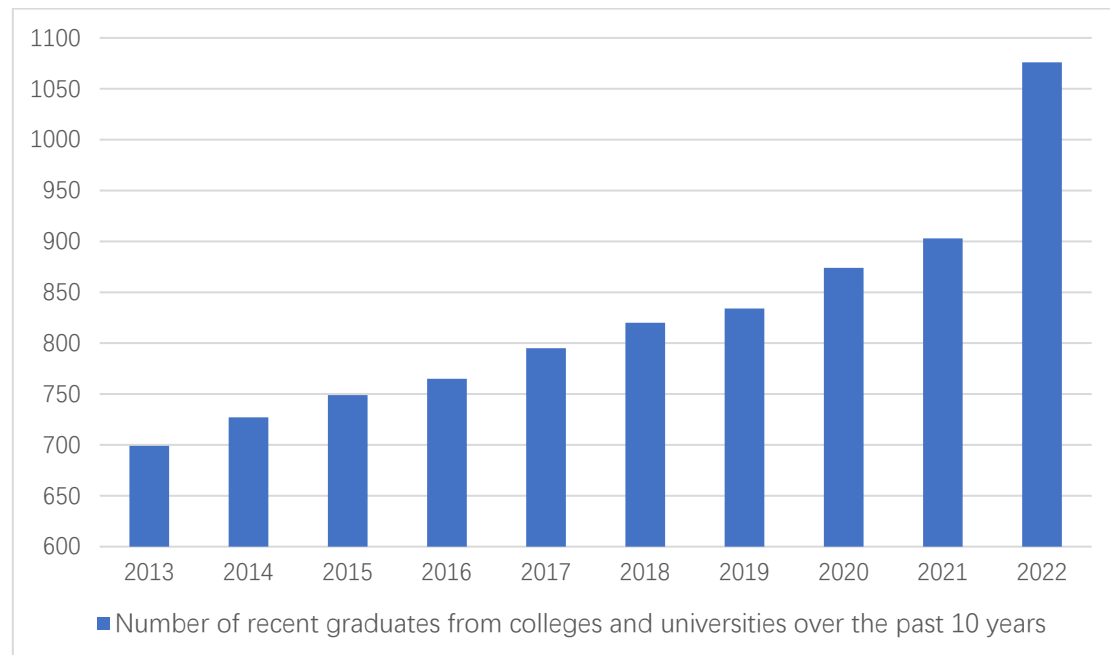


Figure 1: Growth Trend of University Graduates (2013–2022)

Rural revitalization urgently requires a large cohort of university graduates who possess knowledge, skills, and innovative thinking, making the rural talent pipeline particularly timely. Promoting graduate employment in rural areas is an essential measure for advancing rural revitalization, adhering to the principle of prioritizing agriculture and rural development. It is also a key approach to implementing the employment-first strategy, revitalizing rural talent teams, and expanding graduate employment opportunities. Guiding and encouraging university graduates to seek employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in rural areas aligns with national strategies and calls on students to actively serve these initiatives. Rural regions should proactively provide professional platforms for university graduates, establish comprehensive employment and entrepreneurship systems, and enhance employment guidance services[1]. Universities, in turn, should optimize their support services and expand diverse employment channels, employing various measures to help graduates achieve higher-quality and fuller employment. These efforts contribute to modernizing rural governance systems and capabilities while fostering closer ties between graduates and rural development[2].

2.2 Talent Shortage in Rural Revitalization: Strengthening the Talent Foundation through Graduate Employment in Rural Areas

Both traditional agriculture and innovative agriculture face prominent issues such as a lack of vitality in rural resource elements, insufficient attraction of agricultural industries, and a severe shortage of rural talent. Problems such as an irrational talent structure, technical skill shortages,

inability to attract or retain professionals, aging talent, rigid mindsets, and generally lower education, titles, and skills have become bottlenecks restricting rural revitalization. Rural revitalization fundamentally depends on people, and addressing these challenges by building a strong talent foundation is crucial. Actively promoting university students' involvement in the modernization of agriculture and rural areas is a critical step in advancing the rural revitalization strategy. University students represent an indispensable force in the rural revitalization strategy of the new era. They are the mainstay of rural talent revitalization, the vanguard of industrial revitalization, and the inheritors of cultural revitalization in rural areas. Efforts should be increased to encourage graduates to work in rural areas, injecting fresh energy into rural talent teams and guiding the flow of graduate resources toward rural employment and entrepreneurship. By aligning graduate aspirations with rural needs, university students can bring vitality and innovation to rural areas, serving as the source of revitalization for the countryside[3].

2.3 National Policies Supporting Graduate Employment and Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas

National policy documents actively guide and encourage university graduates to participate in specialized programs, such as the "University Village Officials" program, the "Three Supports and One Assistance" plan, and the Western Region Volunteer Service Program. Higher education institutions are also encouraged to guide graduates toward grassroots employment by improving support policies and cultivating a cohort of talent for rural revitalization and governance. Vocational colleges have launched rural revitalization programs tailored to the needs of new rural construction and agricultural development. In response to the national mandate to expand vocational education enrollment, systematic and diversified vocational education models have been developed to support rural cadres, veterans, unemployed individuals, and new professional farmers. These programs offer flexible learning schedules, alternating agricultural and academic training, and prioritize employment-oriented vocational education, thus stabilizing and expanding employment opportunities. The government, serving as a bridge between rural areas and universities, must innovate policy measures to guide graduates toward rural employment. It should also establish robust service and support mechanisms to retain graduates in rural grassroots work. This includes allocating funds for talent development and employment, optimizing local fiscal spending structures, and strengthening support for rural employment programs to ensure graduates can both enter and remain in rural areas[4]. Additionally, efforts should align with the actual needs of rural grassroots, focusing on recruiting urgently needed talent. Local authorities should identify critical roles and types of talent in demand, utilize public employment and talent service systems to disseminate job information, and increase publicity and policy support to encourage graduates to engage in rural construction actively.

3. Challenges Facing University Graduates in Rural Employment and Entrepreneurship

3.1 Inadequate Support Systems for Graduate Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas

1) Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Rural development faces challenges such as economic underdevelopment, resource idleness, and an imbalanced urban-rural structure, leading to significant obstacles in innovation and entrepreneurship. These challenges include capital shortages, limited investment, and difficulties in accessing affordable financing. Land use bottlenecks, lack of land quotas, and insufficient technical training further complicate the situation. There are few financing platforms specifically for graduates, and governments have yet to introduce measures to guarantee loans for students lacking repayment capacity. Additionally, complex procedures and lengthy processes for applying for entrepreneurial subsidies discourage participation. Policies should be more targeted, and steps simplified, with increased support in areas such as entrepreneurial conditions, subsidies, interest-free loans, risk guarantees, and technical training. For graduates with entrepreneurial intentions, a clear understanding of policies remains a challenge. Transparency and clarity in policy implementation mechanisms are essential to provide an equitable and supportive entrepreneurial environment, ensuring that investments in rural agriculture yield tangible outcomes[4].

2) Development of Distinctive Industries: Rural distinctive industries often suffer from a single structure, weak foundations, and lack of vitality. Issues such as misaligned production and sales and insufficient risk guarantees hinder development. Human resource shortages in areas like marketing, management, and e-commerce exacerbate these challenges, alongside a scarcity of local talent aligned with rural development. Governments should prioritize introducing advanced talent while integrating local talent resources more deeply. Furthermore, revitalizing underutilized or inefficiently used land

resources is key to overcoming the environmental pressures on agricultural development[5]. Promoting sustainable and high-quality growth in distinctive industries by adhering to green development principles will be essential for long-term success.

3) Talent Services: Severe shortages, difficulty in attracting talent, and significant talent outflow remain pressing issues in rural areas. Existing platforms for talent recruitment are insufficiently broad and deep, making it challenging to attract high-caliber graduates skilled in technology, management, and agriculture. Talent management systems also lack long-term mechanisms for recruitment, training, and career progression. The return of local university graduates, who possess familiarity with rural contexts, offers significant advantages for rural development[6]. However, systemic barriers such as rigid mobility mechanisms, limited promotion pathways, and inadequate incentives hinder talent retention and growth in rural areas. Addressing these institutional obstacles will be critical to sustaining a thriving rural talent pool[6].

3.2 Incomplete Employment Guidance and Support Systems in Universities

1) Limited Effectiveness in Promoting Rural Employment: Universities' efforts to encourage graduates to pursue rural employment and entrepreneurship have been insufficient. Data analysis of 2019 graduates shows that only 47% of undergraduates and 53% of vocational college graduates chose to work in county-level or township areas, with cities remaining the primary choice. Changing graduates' perceptions of rural employment requires robust employment guidance and support systems, as well as deeper collaboration between universities and governments to use rural areas as practical training grounds for graduates[7].

2) Challenges Faced by Students from Economically Disadvantaged Rural Backgrounds: Graduates from economically disadvantaged rural families often face additional barriers, such as limited social resources, lower overall competencies for employment and entrepreneurship, and emotional struggles under employment pressure. Comprehensive support in terms of financial assistance and psychological counseling is crucial for these students, ensuring their smooth transition into the workforce.

3) Mismatch Between University Programs and Rural Needs: The alignment of university programs with rural revitalization needs is inadequate. Strengthening program design to focus on agricultural production, rural governance, and development is essential[8]. Tailored curricula should be developed through targeted research to cultivate more specialized and technical talent for rural revitalization. Training programs for rural grassroots cadres, veterans, and emerging farmers should also be prioritized to build platforms for both professional talent introduction and local talent return[9].

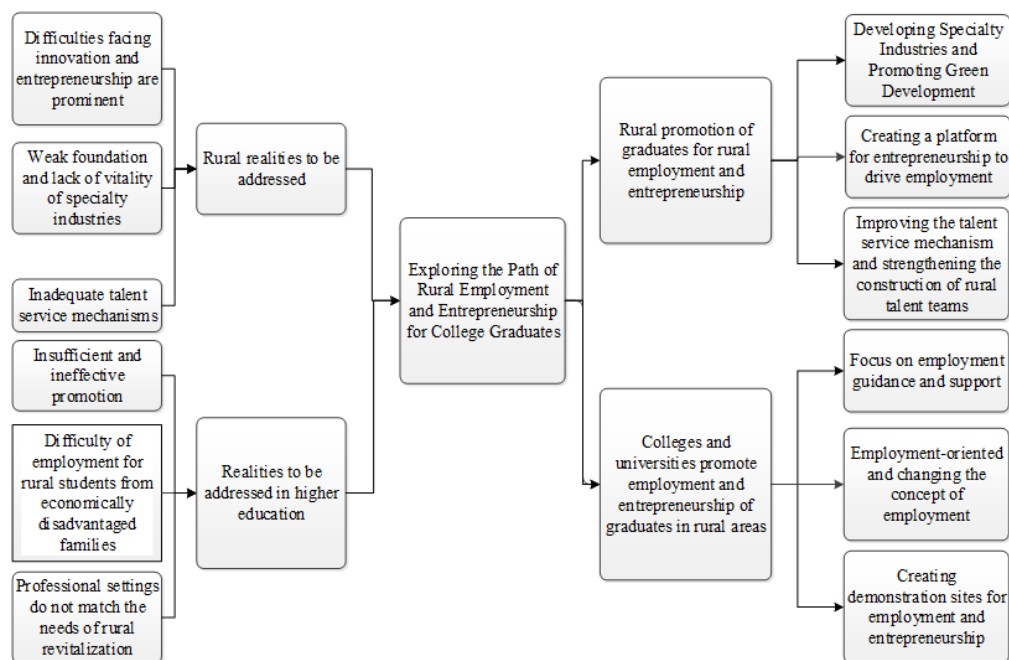


Figure 2 Structural diagram of path exploration of rural employment and entrepreneurship of college graduates

4. Pathways to Promoting Graduate Employment and Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas

As shown in Figure 2, the structural pathway to promoting graduate employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas emphasizes the mutual connection between universities and rural communities. Universities must create sustainable mechanisms to supply talent for rural revitalization and enhance their support systems for graduates contributing to rural development. Simultaneously, rural areas must provide broader platforms and streamlined development pathways for graduates. Only through this collaborative interaction can the dual challenges of graduate employment and rural talent shortages be addressed, achieving a mutually beneficial outcome that aligns graduates with rural revitalization.

4.1 Implementation Approaches and Case Studies of Attracting Graduates to Rural Employment and Entrepreneurship

4.1.1 Adopting the Green Development Philosophy to Develop Distinctive Industries and Pursue High-Quality Development

In recent years, under the guidance of national policies encouraging university graduates to work at the grassroots level in rural areas, graduates have actively participated in rural construction, playing a pivotal role in advancing the rural revitalization strategy. Through the development of distinctive industries, rural areas have become dynamic hubs where university graduates practice their skills, conduct on-site research, and enhance their professional expertise. This has injected vitality into rural industries, empowering them with self-sustaining capabilities and positioning graduates as the driving force of industrial revitalization. Rural industries must innovate by fostering green, circular, and efficient agriculture and establishing standardized, industrialized production bases for distinctive agricultural products. Local governments should increase support for graduates who return to rural areas to engage in agriculture-related ventures, such as planting and farming or rural tourism during the off-season. This effort aims to create a development pattern of "One Village, One Product," "One Town, One Specialty," and "One County, One Industry."

For instance, Zhao Qing, a vocational college graduate, leased 400 acres of land in Gulu Town, Wuxi County, to cultivate high-altitude potatoes. Supported by the Wuxi Potato Breeding and Planting Center, he employed smart agricultural technologies, including a Four-Factor Monitoring System, to dynamically monitor crop growth, soil conditions, pest occurrences, and weather disasters. These technologies not only improved crop immunity and minimized soil damage but also produced potatoes with consistent size and quality. During peak planting and harvesting periods, Zhao hired over a hundred villagers, providing them with a stable income source. In addition to potatoes, Zhao diversified the local agricultural landscape by planting winter peach trees. The village formed an agricultural cooperative, transitioning from single-crop potato farming to multi-crop cultivation, including watermelon, chili peppers, and various vegetables. With technical expertise and market access, the potato industry in Wuxi County has become a pillar of local economic growth.

4.1.2 Promoting Employment through Entrepreneurship and Creating Platforms for Graduate Development

University graduates have increasingly embraced entrepreneurship as a means to drive employment, invigorate regional economies, and support poverty alleviation efforts. This dual approach aligns with the goals of rural revitalization by effectively integrating poverty alleviation and economic development. Fueled by favorable agricultural policies, many young graduates have returned to their hometowns, leveraging their knowledge and skills to initiate ventures that stimulate local economic growth and create employment opportunities. Returnee entrepreneurs, with their broad perspectives and innovative thinking, seize new opportunities in rural entrepreneurship. By utilizing novel approaches, technologies, and marketing channels, they align their entrepreneurial endeavors with long-term rural revitalization goals and local resource advantages. To foster this trend, rural areas must continuously improve their entrepreneurial environment, leverage unique resources, and promote the "Internet + Agriculture" model. Rural governments should actively incubate entrepreneurship projects, increase funding support, and establish entrepreneurial demonstration bases to attract more graduates back to their hometowns.

A notable example is Deng Dingping from Gaofeng Town, Wanzhou District, Chongqing. After military service, he pursued further education and established Chongqing Kuohui Construction Engineering Co., Ltd. in 2019, following a strategy of uniting villagers, reviving industries, and

utilizing local talent. Deng provided jobs for young villagers and managed the company collectively, achieving an annual profit of over 2 million yuan. As the enterprise expanded, it created more job opportunities, employing over 100 rural workers, including 10 from impoverished backgrounds. By subcontracting elevator installation projects through a "Company + Farmers" model, Deng's efforts have supported over 400 jobs, contributing significantly to shared prosperity.

4.1.3 Establishing and Improving Mechanisms for Local Talent and Strengthening Rural Professional Teams

Local talent is a cornerstone for solving rural challenges and achieving rural revitalization. The close connections of local talent with rural communities make them effective at mobilizing participation and ensuring inclusivity in benefit distribution. By fostering ties based on kinship and locality, these talents can lead rural revitalization initiatives in ways that resonate with local farmers.

Through initiatives that encourage and support local university graduates to return for rural employment and entrepreneurship, these individuals can channel their knowledge and skills into building prosperous communities. Rural areas should provide targeted development plans, preferential policies, and entrepreneurial projects for returning graduates, while enhancing welfare benefits and career advancement opportunities to attract and retain talent.

A long-term mechanism should be established to facilitate local graduate employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas. For example, vocational education programs can offer targeted support to economically disadvantaged students, with a "train one, employ one, help one family, and uplift one community" approach. Local governments should maintain talent databases, organize returnee graduate activities, and create policy guarantees to encourage rural graduates to contribute to modernized agriculture. Measures such as land transfers, interest subsidies, and tax exemptions can further support entrepreneurial initiatives.

As a bridge between universities and rural areas, local governments must focus on addressing rural shortcomings with precise policy interventions. By combining talent cultivation with external recruitment, they can expand rural talent channels and establish professional platforms for governance, agriculture, and economic development. Effective retention policies, such as career development opportunities, competitive compensation, and professional platforms, should be prioritized to ensure that university graduates integrate seamlessly and effectively into rural revitalization.

4.2 Recommendations for Universities to Promote Graduate Employment and Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas

4.2.1 Focus on Employment Guidance and Support to Pinpoint the "Core of the Concentric Circle"

Universities should take "students" as the core and "services" as the radius to draw the largest "concentric circle" for graduate employment. Employment initiatives should center on students, with particular focus on graduates from economically disadvantaged rural families as key support targets. Universities should conduct precise assessments of these students' circumstances, implement tailored assistance plans, and establish dynamic management through individual archives for each student. Employment capacity training should be provided with targeted guidance to improve students' skills and abilities. Efforts should also emphasize cultivating resilience and a strong work ethic, encouraging students to dedicate their youth to the noble cause of rural revitalization. Promoting awareness of national policies that encourage grassroots employment among young people is essential to motivating rural-origin graduates to return and pursue employment or entrepreneurship in their hometowns. Optimizing employment services should be a priority under the framework of "practical support for teachers and students." Universities should refine job placement task lists for rural graduates, actively address practical challenges they face during employment processes, and ensure no student is left unsupported. Academic advisors should play a crucial role in providing precise, individualized assistance.

4.2.2 Strengthen Demand-Supply Matching and Broaden Employment Channels to Expand the "Radius of the Concentric Circle"

Universities should actively promote national programs targeted at grassroots employment, such as the "Three Supports and One Assistance" initiative, "University Village Officials" program, "Western Region Volunteer Program," and "Agricultural Technology Special Posts." These initiatives should be disseminated online and offline to graduating students, with a particular emphasis on those from rural backgrounds. Tailored job fairs focusing on rural revitalization and grassroots employment should be

carefully organized to broaden employment opportunities. These fairs should consider regional and industry-specific needs and match them to suitable candidates, increasing alignment between job demands and graduate qualifications.

Additionally, universities should establish online and offline “employment and entrepreneurship consultation rooms” and “rural employment guidance zones” to encourage students’ return to rural areas and enhance their entrepreneurial success rates. These platforms should address real-time questions and concerns regarding rural employment. Leveraging opportunities such as advisors’ visits to student dormitories or participation in one-stop student communities, universities can actively share information on rural revitalization policies and job opportunities, guiding graduates toward diversified employment paths.

4.2.3 Employment-Oriented Strategies with a Focus on Moral Education to Trace the Complete "Concentric Circle Path"

Employment guidance should start early, beginning with career education for incoming freshmen. Career planning education should be incorporated as a mandatory component of freshman orientation to ensure all students receive early exposure. For sophomores and juniors, the focus should shift toward values-based employment education and guidance, emphasizing the importance of aligning personal goals with national and grassroots development needs. Universities should refine the long-term mechanism for guiding graduates toward employment in western regions and grassroots areas through a structured "promotion-selection-training-growth" approach. The principle of "supporting students through every stage of their journey" should guide efforts, encouraging graduates to integrate their personal aspirations with the nation’s development goals. In doing so, students can realize their potential while serving their communities and contributing to the nation’s progress.

4.2.4 Establish Employment and Entrepreneurship Demonstration Points to Create the "Radiating Concentric Circle"

Universities should enhance the ideological foundation of employment initiatives by widely promoting exemplary graduate employment stories. Peer role models can inspire and motivate current students. Regular events such as alumni sharing sessions, growth forums, and rural grassroots employment fairs can provide platforms for experience sharing and mentorship. Programs like the "Youth Red Dream Journey" under the China International College Students' "Internet+" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition offer opportunities to showcase successful graduates’ contributions to western and rural development. Universities should also establish an online “Rural Employment Role Models” section on their job information websites and use platforms like official university websites and social media to promote success stories. These efforts help instill a sense of pride and mission among graduates, creating a positive atmosphere for rural revitalization initiatives. The final stage of ideological education before graduation should emphasize the broader impact of rural employment, encouraging graduates to embrace grassroots opportunities and actively contribute to rural revitalization. These recommendations ensure that universities play an active and effective role in guiding graduates toward rural employment and entrepreneurship, fostering mutual growth between individuals and rural communities while supporting the overarching goals of rural revitalization.

5. Conclusions

To sum up, since the establishment and implementation of the national development strategy of rural revitalization, the rural area has become an important stage for a new generation of young people, especially college graduates, to enter the society and build their career. As an important position to cultivate high-quality professionals for the country and society, colleges and universities should proactively cater to the trend of talent demand for rural revitalization, cultivate and deliver more and better quality high-quality human resources for the cause of rural revitalization, and assist the high-quality development of the countryside. Localities should integrate multiple resources, build a platform for rural employment and entrepreneurship, and provide comprehensive services for college students returning to their hometowns for employment and entrepreneurship. Rural revitalization is a great cause, and the employment of college students returning to their hometowns not only provides a broad space for personal development, but also injects new vitality into the prosperity of the countryside. In the future, we should further study and explore in depth the effective ways of college students returning to their hometowns for employment and popularization of higher education, so as to provide more solid support for the comprehensive realization of the strategy of rural revitalization.

References

- [1] Yang Jie. *Research on Attracting University Graduates to Rural Employment and Entrepreneurship through Two-Way Urban-Rural Convenient Flow* [J]. *Agricultural Economy*, 2021(12):102-104.
- [2] Meng Qingcui, Sun Liya, Liu Fang, Han Bin, Sun Shuzhi. *Analysis of the Significance and Problems of University Graduates' Employment in Rural Areas* [J]. *Modern Business Trade Industry*, 2010, 22(07):77.
- [3] Sun Hongxia. *Research on the Path of Higher Vocational Education Supporting Rural Revitalization in Remote Areas of Northwest China* [J]. *Agricultural Economy*, 2021(12):107-108.
- [4] Cao Lanying. *Discussion on the Path of Improving the Employment Quality of Rural Labor Force Under the Coordinated Development of "Three Transformations"—A Case Study of Henan Province* [J]. *Business Economic Research*, 2017(05):157-159.
- [5] Peng Peng, Hou Jiameng. *Strategies to Promote University Graduates' Employment and Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas Under the Rural Revitalization Background* [J]. *Economic Review*, 2021(12):123-128.
- [6] Wang Le, Chen Zhonghua. *Research on the Current Status of University Graduates' Rural Employment Under the Background of New Era Rural Revitalization* [J]. *Chinese University Students' Employment*, 2021(13):40-43.
- [7] Xu Zhen. *Research on University Graduates' Willingness for Rural Employment Under the Rural Revitalization Strategy* [J]. *Agricultural Economy*, 2022(04):125-126.
- [8] Li Fei, Zhao Jinsong. *Practical Paths and Policy Suggestions for Precisely Training Rural Revitalization Talents in Higher Vocational Education* [J]. *Education and Profession*, 2021(22):58-62.
- [9] Zhang Yang. *Research on the Dilemmas and Countermeasures for High-Quality Employment of Vocational Students* [J]. *Education and Profession*, 2021(18):60-63.
- [10] Zhao Xuemei. *Analysis of Influencing Factors on University Students' Willingness to Return for E-Commerce Entrepreneurship—From the Perspective of Rural Entrepreneurship Environment* [J]. *Business Economic Research*, 2021(07):103-106.
- [11] Wang Yu. *Research on the Current Status and Development Path of University Graduates' Employment and Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas Under the Rural Revitalization Strategy* [J]. *Commercial Culture*, 2022(06):142-144.
- [12] Zhang Xiqin. *Causes and Countermeasures for Employment Difficulties of Economically Disadvantaged University Students* [J]. *Vocational Horizon*, 2015, 11(06):81-82+92.