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Policy Analysis of University Graduate Employment and Retention in Changsha-Based on a Textual Analysis of Local Employment and Talent Policies

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Abstract: University graduates are both a key group in employment work and young talent important to local development. Taking Changsha as an example, this paper uses literature research and policy text analysis to review national, Hunan provincial and Changsha municipal policies on university graduate employment and talent development. It examines their main roles in four areas: employment opportunities, talent incentives, connections between universities and the local labour market, and urban integration and career development. The policy analysis shows that Changsha has developed policy arrangements covering recruitment and employment, talent support, entrepreneurship, housing and public services. However, there is still room for improvement in long-term retention, services for different groups, connections between universities and local employers, coordination among departments, and the assessment of employment quality. While continuing to attract young talent, local policies for university graduates should pay greater attention to stable employment, career development and long-term retention, and strengthen ongoing contact among government, universities and employers.

Keywords: university graduates; university student employment; talent retention; employment policy; Changsha

1. Introduction

Graduate employment concerns both young people's personal development and a locality's ability to attract talent. As the number of university graduates has increased rapidly, local governments have paid growing attention to attracting and retaining graduates while promoting employment. For cities with a large concentration of universities, whether the advantages of local talent training can be turned into a local talent resource depends not only on whether graduates can find jobs, but also on factors such as career development, urban living conditions and job quality.

Changsha, in Hunan Province, is a city with a large concentration of universities within the province. Our research project takes Changsha's economic development, demand for talent, employment market and policy support as important background factors for university graduates' employment in Changsha, and proposes research on connecting talent needs with talent training and on talent-retention strategies. Changsha previously introduced policy measures concerning graduate employment and entrepreneurship, talent recruitment and housing support, reflecting a policy direction of attracting graduates to Changsha and encouraging them to stay. It is important to note that attracting graduates to a city is not quite the same as retaining them over the long term. Housing subsidies and job-search services can lower the initial barriers for graduates entering a city, but whether they stay after starting work still depends on income growth, career development, public services and other factors. Relevant domestic studies have discussed graduates' employment destinations from the perspectives of

Received: 15 August 2026

Revised: 26 September 2026

Accepted: 06 October 2026

Published: 12 October 2026



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willingness to work locally, choice of employment city, interregional employment mobility and the spatial distribution of employment opportunities [1-6].

In light of this, this paper uses literature research and policy text analysis to review national, Hunan provincial and Changsha municipal policies concerning university graduate employment and talent development. It focuses on three questions: how the Changsha policies examined support graduates in finding employment and staying in the city; what improvements are needed in existing policies from the perspective of long-term talent policy; and how the government, universities and employers can further improve the environment for graduates to work and develop in Changsha. The paper does not use statistical models. It mainly analyses policy texts and the relationships among the matters addressed in them.

2. Policy Background and Research Methods

2.1. Changes in National Policies on University Graduate Employment

At the national level, policies concerning university graduate employment place increasing emphasis on high-quality employment and are gradually linking employment work with talent training, industrial demand and adjustments to academic programmes.

The Notice on Employment and Entrepreneurship for the 2025 Cohort of Graduates from Regular Higher Education Institutions, issued by the Ministry of Education in 2024, calls for stronger analysis of employment-market demand, dynamic adjustments to academic disciplines and programmes, and stronger links between employment, admissions and training [7].

The national meeting on employment and entrepreneurship for the 2026 cohort of university graduates called for improving the supply of trained talent, establishing a talent-supply mechanism that responds effectively to demand through industry-education integration and university-enterprise cooperation, advancing reforms to improve the match between supply and demand, and accelerating improvements to the mechanism for adjusting university disciplines and academic programmes [8]. The Opinions on Accelerating the Establishment of a High-Quality Employment Service System for Graduates of Regular Higher Education Institutions, issued by the General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, called for industrial demand for talent and feedback from employment assessments to guide improvements in training supply, employment guidance, job seeking and recruitment, assistance, and monitoring and evaluation. The document also called for stronger links between admissions plans, talent training and employment [9]. A Ministry of Education document further specified that graduates' employment outcomes should be used as an important basis for assessing teaching quality and related work [7].

These documents indicate that university graduate employment work should not consist simply of recruitment activities and employment assistance. It should be more closely linked to industrial needs, strengthen the connection between university training and employment, and use employment data analysis to guide adjustments to academic programmes and talent training so that they continue to meet the needs of economic and social development in the new era.

2.2. Relevant Policies in Hunan and Changsha

Among the talent policies introduced by Hunan Province in recent years, a notable direction has been to encourage young people to stay in or move to Hunan for employment and entrepreneurship. The province's 2025 policy on young talent calls for expanding the supply of jobs, strengthening internships and practical experience, improving benefits and talent services, and paying greater attention to the environment for young talent development [10]. These measures are closely related to the different stages of graduates' employment. Changsha's policy introduced in 2022 reflected an approach combining attracting graduates to the city with encouraging them to stay. The 2022 policy on graduate employment and entrepreneurship proposed a plan for graduates to come to Changsha and stay there, covering recruitment, household registration, rental

housing and subsidies, youth talent hostels, and employment and entrepreneurship services [11]. Overall, the policy texts reviewed address jobs, incentives, entrepreneurship, housing and public services (As shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Representative Policy Documents Related to University Graduate Employment and Retention in Changsha

Level	Representative policy	Main areas addressed
National	Notice of the Ministry of Education on Employment and Entrepreneurship for the 2025 Cohort of Graduates from Regular Higher Education Institutions (2024) [7]	Employment-market demand analysis, supply–demand matching, campus recruitment, employment and entrepreneurship services
National	Opinions on Accelerating the Establishment of a High-Quality Employment Service System for Graduates of Regular Higher Education Institutions (2025) [9]	Training supply, employment guidance, job seeking and recruitment, assistance, monitoring and evaluation, employment quality and stability
Hunan	Several Measures on Accelerating the Attraction and Concentration of Young Talent to Stay in or Come to Hunan and Promoting the Development of a Province Friendly to Young People (2025) [10]	Staying in and moving to Hunan, job supply, internships and practical experience, benefits and support, talent services
Changsha	Notice on Further Strengthening Employment and Entrepreneurship Work for University Graduates in the City (2022) [11]	Coming to and staying in Changsha, recruitment and talent attraction, household registration, housing and living support, employment and entrepreneurship services

2.3. Research Methods and Analytical Approach

We use literature research and policy text analysis. The policy materials mainly comprise national, provincial and Changsha municipal documents relating to university graduates' employment and entrepreneurship, talent policies, housing and public services. The academic literature mainly covers local employment, the choice of employment region, talent mobility and local employment policies [1-6, 12-14].

This project is a local applied study. Rather than conducting complex coding or weighting, this paper follows the process of graduate employment and groups the policy content into four areas: employment opportunities, talent incentives, connections between universities and the local labour market, and urban integration and career development. On this basis, it analyses aspects of existing policies that could be further improved.

3. Main Policy Mechanisms for Promoting University Graduate Employment and Retention in Changsha

3.1. Support for Employment Opportunities: Suitable Jobs Come First

For university graduates, whether suitable jobs are available is a prerequisite for choosing to work in a region or city. Financial subsidies can make a city more attractive, but if graduates' professional abilities do not match available jobs and industrial needs, stable employment will also be difficult to achieve. Relevant domestic studies have discussed graduates' regional employment from the perspectives of willingness to work locally, choice of employment city, interregional employment mobility and the spatial distribution of employment opportunities [2-6]. Changsha's 2022 policy included job

development, recruitment cooperation and cooperation between universities and local authorities among its areas of work [11].

For Changsha, the next step is to connect job recruitment more closely with the local industrial structure. This would allow universities and graduates to learn about employers' needs earlier and make it easier for local employers to reach and communicate with university graduates, thereby improving the match between talent and job requirements.

3.2. Talent Incentives: Reducing Graduates' Initial Costs of Moving to a City

University graduates generally have limited income when they first start working, while facing commuting costs, rent and other necessary living expenses. Changsha's 2022 policy proposed rental subsidies, youth talent hostels and more convenient household registration, with the aim of reducing graduates' initial costs of coming to Changsha for work [11]. These measures are intended to provide support to graduates in the early stages of employment, but they cannot replace employment opportunities themselves. Such living subsidies have a limited duration. Whether graduates ultimately choose to register as residents and remain in the city still depends on job income and future career development. Therefore, talent incentives should mainly serve as initial support, while settling in and long-term development also require the joint support of urban and industrial development.

3.3. Connections between Universities and the Local Labour Market: Linking Talent Training with Employers' Needs

Changsha has a relatively high concentration of universities and therefore certain advantages in talent, but it also faces the issue of aligning talent training with local demand. The national document proposing a high-quality employment service system explicitly calls for improving the supply of trained talent according to industrial demand and employment feedback [9]. The original project proposal also identified the alignment of enterprise needs and talent training as an important area of research.

In practice, universities and employers need relatively stable channels of communication. Enterprises can provide early feedback on job requirements and required abilities. Through campus recruitment, internships and practical training, and employment assistance, universities can help students understand the needs of local industries. Feedback collected after graduates start work can also be used to improve training programmes. Existing studies have discussed government–university–enterprise collaboration, local employment, and cross-regional employment mobility [1, 4, 13-14].

3.4. Support for Urban Integration and Career Development: From Staying for Work to Long-Term Development

After taking up employment in Changsha, graduates continue to compare job quality, career development and living conditions. In the early stages of employment, housing, commuting and income are important factors. As their careers progress, career growth, opportunities for promotion, healthcare and education gradually become more important. Talent retention is therefore not a one-time employment choice but an ongoing process of comparison.

Hunan Province's 2025 policy on young talent has begun to place importance on the environment for talent development and on public services [10]. For Changsha, the housing subsidies, living subsidies, and employment and entrepreneurship services proposed in its 2022 policy offered an approach to initial support for graduates coming to work in the city. Subsequent policies could give more attention to graduates' career development, urban services and integration into city life after graduation, so that employment and retention in Changsha are not merely short-term matters but part of a longer-term process.

4. Issues in Current Policy Arrangements That Deserve Further Attention

The policy texts examined show that Changsha and Hunan successively proposed measures to support youth employment and talent in several areas. The following discussion does not judge these policies as good or bad. Instead, from the perspectives of graduates' employment process and long-term retention, it identifies several areas where there is still room for improvement.

4.1. The Policy Chain Can Be Further Extended from "Attracting Talent" to "Long-Term Retention"

The text of Changsha's 2022 policy shows that it made specific provisions concerning graduates' job seeking, household registration, renting, subsidies, recruitment and entrepreneurship [11]. It is necessary to strengthen continued follow-up on graduates' career development and whether they remain in Changsha in the years after graduation. Retaining graduates in Changsha does not mean that subsidies must continue. More important forms of support that the government can provide are stable jobs, career growth and public services. Policy assessment could also gradually extend beyond short-term indicators, such as the number of people attracted and subsidy applications, to include career development, contributions to the city and career satisfaction.

4.2. Providing More Detailed Support for Different Groups of Graduates

Changsha's 2022 talent subsidy policy made distinctions according to educational level [11]. However, differences among graduates are not limited to their qualifications. Graduates from different disciplines and at different stages of career development face different employment and career-growth issues. Relevant studies have examined willingness to work locally among graduates in small and medium-sized cities, choice of employment city, and regional differences and employment mobility from different perspectives [1-3, 5]. Employment services could therefore take greater account of the actual circumstances of different industries and career stages to become more targeted.

4.3. Establishing More Stable Feedback Channels between Universities and Employers

Campus recruitment, internships and practical training, and university–enterprise cooperation have become common parts of the employment process. What needs to be strengthened next is ongoing attention to graduates' employment situations and follow-up research. Information on enterprises' job and skill requirements, university talent training and graduates' satisfaction after starting work should be brought into relatively stable feedback channels. National policy has already called for talent supply to be guided by industrial demand and employment feedback [9]. Building on its existing arrangements, Changsha could better connect recruitment and internships with feedback after graduates enter employment.

4.4. Many Policies Already Exist Across Departments, but Graduates Still Need a More Continuous Experience

University graduate employment involves several departments, including education, human resources and social security, housing, and entrepreneurship services. The relevant policy texts involve several departments and provide an institutional basis for cross-departmental coordination [10-11]. For graduates, however, entering employment is a continuous and changing process that includes recruitment, signing contracts, social insurance, starting work, renting housing and later career development. Future talent policies could offer a more unified point of access and improve the links between information searches and administrative procedures. This could reduce graduates' need to search repeatedly across different departments and information channels and lessen information gaps.

4.5. Giving More Attention to Employment Quality and Career Development in Policy Assessment

National policy now places greater importance on employment quality and stability [9]. Local policy assessments could also move beyond a simple count of "how many graduates have been attracted" to consider whether jobs are suitable, whether career

development can be sustained, and what graduates contribute to the locality. Long-term follow-up does not necessarily require large-scale surveys. A certain number of graduates could be selected for continued observation through the existing talent service system.

5. Possible Improvements Based on Existing Policy Objectives

In light of existing policy objectives and the issues discussed above, Changsha could further improve its policies for university graduate employment and retention in the following areas.

5.1. Bringing "Coming to Changsha" and "Staying in Changsha" into the Same Employment Service Process

Changsha's 2022 policy proposed using measures such as recruitment, household registration, youth talent hostels, rental housing and living subsidies to lower the initial barriers for graduates coming to work in the city [11].

The next step could be to extend employment services into the stages of career development after graduates start work. Public employment services and guidance could provide job information, guidance on long-term development in different industries, and relevant job training. The focus should not be on increasing cash subsidies but on providing more stable job opportunities and longer-term career development and guidance for people who want to work or start businesses locally.

5.2. Providing More Targeted Employment Services Beyond Classification by Educational Level

The above-mentioned 2022 policy set subsidy levels according to educational qualifications, which offered some practical convenience. Employment services, however, could be more flexible. Changsha could publish information on graduate demand in key industries and priority sectors, strengthen recruitment links and offer internships for disciplines facing shortages, and provide more comprehensive information and services for graduates entering small and medium-sized enterprises, private enterprises and flexible employment. The purpose of differentiated services is not to increase the number of policies but to make policies better reflect the needs of industries and enterprises.

5.3. Establishing Regular Information Exchange among Government, Universities and Employers

Government, universities and employers already have many cooperative relationships. Future improvements could focus on moving from one-off recruitment events to continuous information exchange and follow-up surveys. Human resources and social security departments have information about changes in industrial job demand. Universities can understand graduates' disciplinary backgrounds and job-search situations. Employers have the clearest understanding of the abilities their jobs require. Regular information exchange among these three parties could create an ongoing mechanism, improve internship arrangements, campus recruitment and employment feedback, and better enable the government to adjust public employment services in a timely manner.

5.4. Making Housing and Public Service Policies Better Support Stable Employment

Changsha's 2022 policy proposed rental and living subsidies, among other support measures [11]. Hunan Province's 2025 policy on young talent also made provisions concerning talent housing and related services [10]. For graduates, housing support is not only a policy tool for attracting talent but is also relevant to their living arrangements in the early stages of employment. The next step could be to improve housing support further while making public services such as commuting, healthcare, education and training more convenient, so that urban living conditions can better support stable employment among graduates.

5.5. Gradually Including Employment Stability and Long-Term Retention in Monitoring Policy Effects

Policy evaluation could pay closer attention to long-term goals. In addition to data on recruitment numbers, policy coverage and subsidy payments, it could consider graduates' employment stability, job changes and career development after a period of time. It is not necessary to build a large indicator system from the outset. Existing employment and talent service databases and information networks could be used to select a manageable number of indicators that are easy to understand and can be observed continuously, providing a basis for subsequent policy adjustment and improvement.

6. Conclusion

Taking Changsha as an example, this paper discusses university graduate employment and local retention through an analysis of policy texts. The policy texts reviewed cover recruitment, talent attraction, household registration, housing and living support, and employment and entrepreneurship services. They also reflect a policy direction that extends from attracting talent to employment quality and career development. Employment opportunities provide the basis for whether graduates can remain in a city. Talent incentives can reduce the initial costs of entering a city. Cooperation between universities and employers affects how well talent training matches job requirements, while career development and public services affect whether people can remain and develop over the long term.

In the long term, Changsha's graduate employment policies could better connect local employment with long-term development, make employment services more targeted within the existing categories, strengthen cooperation among government, universities and employers, and gradually include employment stability and long-term development in policy-effect assessment. This paper does not use questionnaires or statistical models and therefore does not make judgments about the effects of specific policies. Its suggestions are based mainly on policy texts and existing research. For a city with a relatively high concentration of universities, treating graduates not only as people seeking immediate employment but also as a long-term talent resource for the future would help connect employment policy more closely with local talent and industrial development.

Funding: This research was conducted as part of the 2024 Changsha Municipal Philosophy and Social Sciences Planning Project (Project No. 2024CSSKKT137).

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