

# AlmaLaurea Conference 2017

## Session II

### “Graduate employment: From the employment rate to the quality of employment”

by

Ye Jingyi (Vice-president, University Council of Beijing University)

Discussant: Gilberto Antonelli (University of Bologna, AlmaLaurea)  
([gilberto.antonelli@unibo.it](mailto:gilberto.antonelli@unibo.it))

Parma University  
Aula Magna - Parma, 16 May 2017

## What have we learned about Cina perspective

- The very interesting presentation by Ye Jingyi allowed us to learn many features of the Chinas' perspective in dealing with the transition from a phase in which the emphasis was on graduates employment to the actual phase in which emphasis is on the quality of employment, of jobs.
- This perspective is particularly relevant, given the fact that, as it has been emphasized also in the introduction, China is a leading actor in the geo-political international scenario of the second phase of globalization.
- I appreciated the presentation especially for the answers it try to give to the challenges envisaged on the supply side.
- I will limit myself in stressing only some of them.

# What have we learned about Cina HE development

1. China higher education system has been characterized by a rapid development leading the gross enrolment rate to grow from 10.5% in 1999 to 40% in 2016.

This is particularly interesting if we remember that the prescriptions of the World Bank at the time were based on the conjecture that higher education in developing countries was bringing about a lower rate of return relative to basic education and therefore should be postponed.

We could note that China and India were trespassing that tenet and this brought about instead benefits for them in becoming emerging powers.

# What have we learned about Cina promotion of university graduates' employment

2. This rapid development has been accompanied by a strong effort of government and universities to promote the employment of university graduates.

In this respect we could say that the case of China could be considered a benchmark of the perspective fostered by AlmaLaurea since its birth.

In an national environment characterized by undervaluation of the economic impact of education, this has been a cumbersome challenge.

Professor Andrea Cammelli (co-founder with Professor Fabio Roversi Monaco of AlmaLaurea) can be really satisfied together with all of us about this robust evidence.

# What have we learned about jobs quality evaluation

3. It is difficult to evaluate and compare jobs quality also because it implies the consideration of objective and subjective components. If payment levels can assist in the measurement of objective components, on the subjective side we need to focus on satisfaction, matching, capability and development prospects.

This is a method pursued by AlmaLaurea since its beginning and it is becoming one of the crucial ingredients in the method of assessment of the university system in Italy in the next years.

However, a lot of issues are still at stake because, as also Professor Ye Jingyi has shown, several disparities, including varieties in regional environments, persist and limit our assessment capability abiding by the rule of *ceteris paribus*.

# What have we learned about jobs quality evaluation

4. Expectations of employers about the graduates' skills (the demand for graduates labour) are changing and non-cognitive skills becomes more important side by side the cognitive ones.

My questions to Professor Ye Jingyi starts from here :

(a) in recent works on non-cognitive skills (Heckman et al., 2014) “character” is emphasized. Did you find similar evidence?

(b) to what specific aspects of the technological and organizational change are these changes connected?

(c) to what extent these changes could be connected to the emergence of the need for a sort of new business capacities?

(d) do these changes affect in the same way urban employment in the China's eastern region and employment in China's central and western region?

## Further questions and comments

(i) In terms of the job polarization process described in his presentation by Professor Frances Green where do you think China could best fit? Is it more similar to the Continental or to the Anglo-Nordic European countries?

(ii) Are there general or sectoral scenarios anticipated in the international economic literature you consider relevant for Cinas' future in relation to structural, technical and institutional change?

In some of the Western economies, two main general long-term scenarios seems to play a crucial role for explaining observed trends: these are the “robotization” and the “überization” scenarios.

## Further questions and comments

Both scenarios stress the prospect of the “death of the traditional job” performed by a designated agent (an employee).

In the first scenario the traditional job is replaced by the robot, while in the second it is replaced by means of crowdsourcing (outsourcing to an undefined, generally large group of people in the form of a sort of open call).

In both scenarios the paradox of a knowledge-based economy with abundant human capital and low pay combined with unstable jobs seems to persist.

This does not seem true for two other scenarios we could call “sectoral”: the “green job” scenario and the “industry 4.0” scenario (the latter will be discussed in the next round table).



## Further questions and comments

(iii) The quality of skills and their objective and subjective components are the outcome of the interaction between what we could call the skills pipeline evolving on the demand side for labour and the skills pipeline evolving on the supply of labour.

In order to improve the strategies of universities and government, do you consider relevant to assess and forecast both sides of the evolution?

And if your answer is yes, what methods can be employed in order to better monitor the sectoral composition of the demand side and the educational needs implied by the new organization of labour?

## Further questions and comments

(iv) Official data show that industrial manufacturing has played an important role as an employment absorber until around 2014 in China.

According to authors like Dieter Ernst (2016), new data on unemployment, labour force participation and income inequality rise the question whether China may now moving towards an “employment de-industrialization” pattern.

Are enough knowledge-intensive service jobs being created in China’s growing information economy which is the necessary foundation for efforts to forge ahead in advanced manufacturing?

## Further questions and comments

The State Council of China on May 19, 2015 issued a 10-year plan entitled Made in Cina 2025?

The plan seeks to boost labour productivity through an increase of robots and through network-based upgrading of the entire industrial value chain and related services.

How supportive could be to this plan in sustaining quantity and quality of graduates employment?

Are there particular features relevant for universities in planning their educational assortment on offer?



**Thanks for your attention!**