

Original Paper

Research on the Construction Path of University Counselor Teams Based on the “Work Standardization” Model

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Abstract

University counselor teams are a crucial force in organizing, implementing, and promoting daily ideological and political education as well as student management in higher education institutions. The level of their construction directly determines the quality of talent cultivation in universities. Aligning with the contemporary requirements of ideological and political education, this study systematically analyzes the structural characteristics and construction dilemmas of current university counselor teams. It innovatively introduces the management concept of "work standardization" and constructs a corresponding path adapted to the construction of university counselor teams. This approach can comprehensively enhance the scientificity, standardization, and effectiveness of counselors' work, providing theoretical support and practical paradigms for universities to build excellent counselor teams characterized by high quality, strong professionalism, and good stability.

Keywords

University counselors, Work standardization, Team construction, Path

1. Introduction

The high-quality development of university counselor team construction is an inevitable requirement for accurately grasping the new development stage of higher education and an effective means to accelerate the construction of a new development pattern in higher education. In 2014, the Ministry of

Education issued the Interim Standards for the Professional Competence of University Counselors (hereinafter referred to as the "Standards"), which divides counselors' professional functions into nine aspects across three professional competence levels. It puts forward new requirements for the professional competence and quality standards of university counselors from the perspective of top-level design, providing a systematic and comprehensive framework for evaluating counselors' professional competence. However, in practice, many university counselors often face dilemmas such as being overwhelmed by routine tasks, unclear job responsibilities, ambiguous standard requirements, and hindered professional development. The state of heavy workload and role ambiguity, coupled with the rapid turnover of counselor teams and unfamiliarity with work tasks, not only increases the rate of job burnout and intensifies team mobility but also seriously restricts the effectiveness of universities' ideological and political education functions.

2. Characteristics and Construction Dilemmas of University Counselor Teams in the New Era

2.1 Analysis of the Characteristics of Counselor Teams

In the new era, university counselor teams exhibit distinct contemporary characteristics in terms of age structure, personnel composition, professional features, and work positioning. Their structural distribution has also been optimized and adjusted with the development of higher education.

2.1.1 "Young and Highly Educated" Composition

An analysis of current recruitment criteria for university counselors shows that the standards have significantly improved in recent years. Most counselors are recent postgraduate graduates, belonging to the "post-95s" and "post-00s" generations, and some key universities even require doctoral degrees. "Young age" and "high education" are distinctive "era labels" of current university counselor teams. Growing up in an era of rapid development and dissemination of internet technology and new media, these counselors possess a high educational background, strong digital operation capabilities, and information acquisition skills. They can quickly adapt to the communication styles of "Gen Z" students, have inherent advantages in carrying out online ideological and political education and internet public opinion guidance, and can effectively promote the transformation of educational methods from "one-way indoctrination" to "interactive communication," thereby gaining students' recognition and acceptance more rapidly.

2.1.2 "Diversified and Echeloned" Structure

In terms of professional background, counselors not only have high academic qualifications and solid disciplinary foundations but are also required to have a certain understanding of related fields such as ideological and political education, psychology, and pedagogy before employment. Their rich knowledge reserves enable them to better apply ideological and political education theories and professional knowledge to practical work, promoting the organic integration of "ideological and political education" and "learning and innovation education." Furthermore, practical issues such as rapid turnover, high mobility, insufficient staffing, and lack of experience in ideological and political

work within university counselor teams have led to a common collaborative work model of "senior counselors + new counselors."

2.2 Construction Dilemmas of Counselor Teams

The construction of university counselor teams in the new era faces many practical problems, which affect and constrain the improvement of the team's core competencies and the optimization of work quality.

2.2.1 Ambiguous Job Boundaries and Diversified Role Positioning

Counselors' daily work covers multiple fields such as students' ideological education, daily management, scholarships and grants, mental health, and career guidance. They also handle many temporary and emergent tasks, such as managing emergencies, safety and stability inspections, and tuition collection. Simultaneously, they are burdened with numerous administrative duties, including data statistics, material submission, and meeting organization. The accumulation of these tasks places counselors in a state of "routine work overload" daily, leaving them little time for theoretical learning, professional improvement, and scientific research. This not only restricts their professional development but also affects the effectiveness of ideological and political education.

2.2.2 Imperfect Training System and Lack of Precision in Training Provision

Although most universities regularly conduct pre-service and on-the-job training, the training content and forms often fail to design hierarchical and classified programs based on the characteristics of counselors' career development stages and individual differences. Most training consists of short-term, intensive sessions during vacations, with content focusing on macro-level explanations such as policy interpretation and work process introduction. There is a tendency towards "one-size-fits-all" or "premature indoctrination," which fails to align closely with counselors' actual work needs. For newly recruited counselors, they often encounter numerous "professional terms" before starting their duties, resulting in insufficient understanding and poor training outcomes. Additionally, the training content lacks clear hierarchical divisions and evaluation standards for counselors' core competencies, and there is an absence of unified work guidelines. Consequently, newly recruited counselors often struggle to perform their duties in a standardized and independent manner and are prone to omissions in key areas, affecting the stability of student affairs.

2.2.3 Unclear Growth Paths and Obstructed Career Development Channels

Some universities exhibit a clear "result-oriented bias" in counselor assessment and evaluation, focusing on workload statistics while neglecting the measurement of educational effectiveness. There is also a lack of independent career development channels. Although some universities have implemented the policy of "separate professional title evaluation for counselors," the evaluation standards and mechanisms are not sufficiently clear, and there is a tendency to "value scientific research over education." This places counselors at a disadvantage in title evaluations, as they often must compete with teaching and research staff. The ambiguity of career development paths leads many counselors to lack confidence in their career prospects. Excellent counselors frequently seek opportunities to transfer

to administrative departments or teaching positions, resulting in low work enthusiasm, weak sense of belonging, serious brain drain, and ultimately affecting the stability of student affairs.

3. The Significance of Implementing Work Standardization for University Counselor Teams

3.1 Core Connotation of Work Standardization for University Counselors

"Work standardization" originates from Taylor's scientific management theory. Its core essence is to decompose complex and irregular work processes into quantifiable, replicable, and optimizable standard units, thereby achieving dual improvements in efficiency and quality. In the context of counselor team construction, the core connotation of "work standardization" is to standardize counselors' job responsibilities, processes, methods, and other elements through the establishment of a systematic, refined, and professional standard system. This aims to achieve "clear authority and responsibility, standardized processes, scientific methods, hierarchical competencies, and objective evaluation" in counselors' work, enabling the efficient conduct of ideological and political education.

3.2 Value and Significance of Implementing Work Standardization for University Counselors

3.2.1 Career Development Dimension

Work standardization can help counselors clarify their work boundaries and competency standards more distinctly, assisting them in identifying their career positioning, resolving the professional dilemma of "being responsible for everything," providing guidance for their professional development and growth, and facilitating the transition from "task executors" to "education researchers."

3.2.2 Education Effectiveness Dimension

Standardized operating procedures systematically cover all areas of work, such as ideological guidance and daily management, forming a closed-loop management cycle from planning and implementation to feedback. They clarify the operational standards and quality requirements for counselors, avoiding "random" and "experience-based" problem-solving, and ensuring that ideological and political work is carried out in an organized and systematic manner.

3.2.3 Management Efficiency Dimension

It provides an objective basis for the management of university counselor teams. Work standardization can more clearly delineate the professional competency levels of counselors, providing a foundation for their training and assessment, and forming a scientific and effective evaluation system for their work quality and professional competence, thereby further promoting the team's professional development.

3.2.4 Policy Implementation Dimension

It translates the requirements for counselors' professional functions and competency levels outlined in the Standards into specific operational guidelines, promoting the shift of policies from "macro guidance" to "micro practice." This provides scientific guidance for the construction of university counselor teams and comprehensively advances the sustainable development of ideological and political work in universities.

4. Exploration of Work Standardization Paths for Counselor Team Construction in the New Era

4.1 Improve the Growth and Promotion Mechanism to Ensure the Stable Development of the Team

Clarifying promotion standards and processes and ensuring smooth career progression are essential for retaining excellent counselor talent. Regarding counselors' professional rank development, an independent professional rank sequence for counselors can be established. Based on the Standards, work standards and performance requirements for counselors at different levels can be formulated. Combined with clear promotion conditions, a "combination of quantitative and qualitative" promotion evaluation mechanism can be established to conduct assessments and promotions based on work experience, professional competence, educational effectiveness, scientific research achievements, and other factors. Counselors' professional ranks should be linked to their compensation and development opportunities. Simultaneously, salary standards, welfare guarantees, and development opportunities for counselors at different ranks should be clarified. Priority should be given to excellent counselors for opportunities such as overseas further study, project applications, and selection for awards. A dynamic adjustment mechanism for "upward and downward mobility" in professional rank promotion should be established, enabling counselors to clearly see their career development prospects and enhance their work confidence.

4.2 Standardize Work Content and Processes to Accelerate the Improvement of the Team's Professional Competence

4.2.1 Systematize Work Content and Compile a Standardized Work Manual for Counselors

Using the Standards as the implementation basis, comprehensively systematize the daily work content of counselors. Decompose work items such as ideological and theoretical education, academic guidance, daily student management, mental health education and counseling, online ideological and political education, crisis event response, and career planning and employment guidance into quantifiable and operable "modular" work units. Each module should break down tasks according to "objectives," "processes," and "requirements." The work manual can simplify procedures, improve efficiency, and provide scientific and convenient operational guidance for newly recruited young counselors to familiarize themselves with and carry out their work.

4.2.2 Optimize Work Processes and Formulate Standardized Work Guidelines

Decompose the implementation requirements of thematic education across different semesters, compile and create flowcharts for daily routine work, and clarify thematic priorities, operational steps, precautions, and responsible entities. Formulate a collection of standardized lesson plans for counselors' thematic education, outlining the key points of thematic class meetings for students at different stages of their university studies, thereby forming standardized class meeting guidelines. These can be supplemented with standardized thematic class meeting lesson plans and teaching courseware to improve the implementation effectiveness of thematic education for young counselors. Compile a "Counselor Work Specification Manual," including official document writing standards and emergency response procedures, to enhance the efficiency and standardization of counselors' work.

4.2.3 Refine Work Standards and Implement a Work Evaluation and Assessment Mechanism

Formulate a "List of Counselors' Work Authority and Responsibilities" and conduct quantitative assessments of their task completion. The assessment results should be linked to counselors' performance-based salaries, professional rank promotions, and selection for awards, encouraging counselors to carry out their work strictly according to procedures and continuously improve their professional competence.

4.3 Conduct Hierarchical and Classified Capacity Building to Smooth the Team's Growth Path

4.3.1 Implement Precise and Hierarchical Classification Training

Construct a three-level training system based on a competency model. Conduct "foundation-building training" for newly recruited counselors, focusing on learning policies and content related to routine work to build basic capabilities. Assign experienced counselors as mentors to implement a "one-on-one" "mentor guidance + assessment-based employment" model to accelerate their understanding of the work. Implement "empowerment training" for counselors in the growth stage, enhancing their professionalism and specialization through projects such as counselor studio construction and training at competency development bases. Promote the growth of backbone and elite counselors through the application of "ideological and political cases" and "excellent counselor projects" for quality improvement. Encourage backbone and elite counselors to undertake "leadership training," forming counselor teams of "elite + excellent" and "backbone + excellent." Systematically improve counselors' core competencies through hierarchically set training objectives, precisely designed curriculum content, and dynamically adjusted growth plans. Gradually form a team of professional, specialized, and expert counselors through training and practical experience.

4.3.2 Enhance Skills through Research and Competitions, Strengthening Work Skill Training

Integrate with the actual work of counselors and enhance their skills through professional competitions such as counselor competency contests, innovation competitions, and employment guidance competitions. Regularly conduct standardized work drills, simulating scenarios such as crisis event handling and psychological crisis intervention to help counselors master response processes. Establish a standardized case database, collecting typical cases from daily work for counselors to reference at any time. Increase learning opportunities through special lectures, experience exchange meetings, and temporary training to promote experience sharing and capacity building among counselors, timely discover outstanding talents, and reserve forces for team construction.

4.3.3 Multi-dimensional Promotion and Optimization of Incentive and Guarantee Systems

Establish a competition incentive mechanism to commend and reward counselors who achieve excellent results in competitions. Implement a "dual-track promotion" mechanism, incorporating professional competence and the performance of standardized work into the counselor assessment and evaluation system as important bases and preferential conditions for professional rank promotion and award selection. Improve the feedback mechanism, regularly assess the effectiveness of standardized work implementation, and form a closed-loop development mechanism of "assessment - feedback -

improvement" to effectively promote the stable development of the counselor team.

4.4 Extensively Cultivate "Famous Brands and Studios" to Foster "Master Teachers and Craftsmen"

4.4.1 Accelerate Team Building

Promote the transformation of counselor teams from an "individual work model" to a "team collaboration model," and build "specialized" high-quality teams characterized by "clear division of labor, complementary advantages, and efficient collaboration." Establish ideological and political work research teams across different research fields within colleges/universities. Universities should provide financial, venue, and policy support to encourage counselors to carry out innovative work practices based on institutional characteristics, student profiles, and their own strengths. Explore distinctive work models and methods, undertake brand project construction and research projects, create "famous brands and studios" in ideological and political work, and promote the evolution of team construction from "scale-oriented" to "brand-oriented."

4.4.2 Consolidate Project Brands

Encourage counselors to summarize and refine their characteristic work practices. Regularly organize counselor salons and academic workshops, hold project exhibitions and experience exchange meetings to promote best practices, establish a normalized learning and exchange mechanism, and form a positive interactive learning and growth ecosystem. Encourage counselors to learn from the successful experiences of exemplary projects and carry out localized innovative practices, creating a favorable situation where "one characteristic project drives the growth of a group of counselors, and a group of characteristic projects promotes the development of the entire team."

4.4.3 Identify Exemplary Figures

Formulate selection criteria for excellent counselors. Conduct comprehensive assessments based on strong political quality, remarkable educational effectiveness, excellent professional ethics, and high student recognition. Select typical exemplary figures such as "Counselor of the Year" and "Most Beautiful Counselor" to stimulate the team's work enthusiasm and innovation motivation. Organize activities such as "counselor work story sessions" and "student affairs paper (case) exhibitions" to publicize and demonstrate the work value and dedication of counselors. Simultaneously, compile a "Collection of Standardized Work Cases" to enhance the dissemination of ideological and political education work.

5. Conclusion

The standardized construction of counselors' work is a long-term project. In the future, with the development of artificial intelligence and big data technology, the standardization of counselors' work can be gradually deepened towards "intelligent empowerment." Relying on smart campuses, standardized service platforms for routine affairs, and precise profiling for teacher capacity development, further exploration can be undertaken to free counselors from cumbersome routine work. Only in this way can they have more time and energy to engage in creative educational work that

touches the soul, truly becoming life mentors for students' growth and success and intimate friends for their healthy lives, thereby providing a solid guarantee for implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

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