Original Paper

Research on the Path Construction of "Work Standardization" for College Counselor Teams in the New Era

Xiaohui He[1*], Hongbin Li[2], Yanguo Han[3], Chunyu Wang[3] & Xianfeng Zhang[3]

[1] School of Business Administration, Hebei Vocational University of Industry and Technology, Shijiazhuang, China

[2] Student Affairs Office, Hebei Vocational University of Industry and Technology, Shijiazhuang, China

[3] School of Business Administration, Hebei Vocational University of Industry and Technology, Shijiazhuang, China

Abstract

In the new era characterized by deepening reform in higher education and the imperative to enhance the quality of ideological and political education, college counselor teams constitute a crucial force in organizing, implementing, and advancing the daily ideological and political education and management of university students. The quality and development of these teams are directly linked to the fulfillment of the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education (Liu & Li, 2025). Guided by the concept of "work standardization", this paper analyzes the improvement of college counselors' comprehensive qualities and capabilities, alongside the construction of team development pathways. It aims to establish a systematic and standardized work framework, clear and defined competency benchmarks, and a scientific, dynamic management mechanism for counselor teams. This approach seeks to comprehensively enhance the core literacy and professional abilities of counselors, propel the sustained development of counselor teams towards specialization and professionalization, and provide significant theoretical value and practical support for the high-quality development of ideological and political education in colleges and universities.

Keywords

New Era, College Counselors, Work Standardization, Qualities and Abilities, Team Construction

1. Introduction

The Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China explicitly proposes to "fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and cultivate socialist builders and

successors who are well-developed in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education" (Zhao, 2024), charting the course for ideological and political work in colleges and universities in the new era. In 2014, the Ministry of Education issued the Interim Professional Competency Standards for College Counselors (hereinafter referred to as the "Standards"), which detailed the competency levels and work standards for college counselors, setting new contemporary requirements for their professional norms and quality benchmarks at the institutional level.Currently, college counselor teams commonly face practical challenges such as high turnover rates, a large proportion of "novice" counselors, and uneven professional capabilities. The traditional "experience-driven" work model is increasingly inadequate to meet the educational demands of the new era. The construction of a "work standardization" pathway emerges as a key measure to address team development bottlenecks and enhance educational effectiveness. It helps counselors quickly master professional skills, clarify work standards, stabilize team structure, and improve overall work efficiency. It represents an effective pathway for enhancing the quality and efficacy of counselor work in the new era. Drawing on the series of research findings and applications from the "College Counselor Work Standardization Studio" established by the authors, this paper offers valuable theoretical insights and practical implications for counselor team development.

2. Professional Requirements for College Counselor Teams in the New Era

In the new era, the construction of university counselors' teams requires the establishment of a systematic and dynamically developing professional standardization system. Faced with new situations and tasks, counselors must not only possess firm political stance and theoretical grounding, noble professional ethics and dedication, a interdisciplinary and expert-oriented knowledge structure, and substantial interdisciplinary knowledge reserves, but also demonstrate the ability for continuous innovative learning; the proficiency in conducting student work and various affairs in strict compliance with national laws and regulations, educational policies, and university rules; the capacity to carry out in-depth ideological and political education for students through hierarchical and classified approaches; and the innovative capability to actively explore new concepts, pathways, and carriers that align with the characteristics of the new era and the laws of student growth. These elements collectively constitute the core components of the competency model for university counselors in the new era.

3. Practical Challenges and Causes in College Counselor Team Construction in the New Era

Although the construction of counselor teams in most colleges and universities has progressed steadily and achieved a series of results, numerous unavoidable practical problems persist in actual practice, requiring in-depth analysis and resolution.

3.1 Ambiguous Responsibility Boundaries and Unclear Role Positioning

While the core responsibilities of counselors primarily focus on nine major areas stipulated in the "Standards", such as ideological guidance and value shaping, in practice, counselors act not only as the

"final executors" of various administrative tasks within universities but also as the "primary contact point" for all student-related issues. Their work encompasses almost all aspects of students' campus life, from ideological education, academic advising, and psychological counseling to dormitory management, scholarship and award evaluations, employment statistics, safety education, and even recruitment publicity, industry outreach for internships, physical fitness tests, medical examinations, and handling emergencies. The adage "a thousand threads from above, all connected to one needle below" aptly describes their situation. Their duties are often trivial and fragmented, lacking clear boundaries, which frequently traps counselors in a "task-driven" work state, juggling multiple demands and struggling to cope. This reality of "prioritizing management over education" makes it difficult for them to dedicate sufficient time and energy to their primary responsibility of "ideological and political education", hindering their professional development.

3.2 Insufficient Team Stability and High Talent Turnover

Severe talent drain is a serious challenge currently faced in the construction of college counselor teams. Analyzing the specific causes, counselors often encounter an "unclear career prospect" regarding salary, benefits, professional title promotion, and development opportunities. On one hand, most universities have not established a clear career ladder system for counselors, lacking independent promotion channels. This leads many counselors to view their positions as "transitional jobs" or "stepping stones", without long-term career plans in student affairs, resulting in reduced motivation and a weakened sense of belonging. On the other hand, the tedious nature of daily work, heavy workloads, and multiple sources of pressure subject counselors to prolonged high-intensity stress, leading to physical and mental exhaustion, strong burnout, and low professional identity, prompting them to actively seek other career paths. Consequently, many young counselors begin looking for transfer opportunities soon after employment, and it is common for counselors to transfer positions within 1-3 years. This not only disrupts the continuity of student work but also undermines the long-term effectiveness of educational outcomes.

3.3 "Novice-Oriented" Team Structure, Urgent Need for Systematic Enhancement of Professional Capabilities

The high mobility of counselor teams directly leads to an imbalanced team structure. Most universities have annual recruitment plans for counselors, and some require new faculty members to serve as counselors in student management for 1-3 years before being eligible for transfer upon satisfactory assessment. This pattern of "constant inflow and outflow" directly contributes to the "youthfulness" of counselor teams, with a high proportion of "novice" counselors. While "novice" counselors exhibit contemporary characteristics such as "high educational attainment", "youth", "strong professional skills", and "keen ability to embrace new things", they often lack significant student work experience and clear career goals. Their understanding of the systematic nature of counselor work and their ability to solve problems in a standardized manner are noticeably insufficient. Furthermore, their unfamiliarity with student affairs policies and procedures makes them prone to operational errors or management

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oversights, potentially leading to significant risks. Additionally, "novice" counselors often have limited educational experience and relatively simplistic methods, struggling to provide effective guidance for students' personalized needs. They may find it difficult to correctly balance their multiple roles as "managers", "service providers", and "educators", leading to instances of "absence" or "misalignment" in their work, which can breed student distrust and trigger conflicts.

3.4 Significant Divergence in Professional Capabilities, Overall Insufficient Level of Specialization

The divergence in professional capabilities is manifested in two aspects. First, there are shortcomings in core competencies. Most young counselors lack a solid foundation in Marxist theory, and their ability to provide political guidance needs strengthening. When faced with students' strong demands for academic and personal development, they often lack the capability to offer necessary academic guidance and career planning support. Their knowledge and skills in areas such as mental health education and crisis intervention are also inadequate. Second, there is an imbalance in capability development. Significant disparities exist in the abilities of counselors with different backgrounds and years of experience. "Novice" counselors grow slowly due to factors like "fragmented" on-the-job training that fails to meet professional requirements, while experienced counselors often fall into "empiricism", leading to work errors... This imbalance in team composition results in fluctuations in educational quality, making it difficult for universities to deliver stable, high-quality educational outcomes.

4. Theoretical Connotation and Value Significance of Counselor Work Standardization Construction

4.1 Theoretical Connotation

The core of "counselor work standardization" lies in systematically, standardizedly, and refinedly designing the responsibilities, processes, methods, and capabilities of counselor work on the premise of adhering to the laws of education and student growth. It aims to construct a scientific, operable, and assessable dynamic work system. By clarifying "what to do, how to do it, and to what standards to achieve" for counselors, it realizes the transformation of counselor work from "experience-driven" to "standard-guided".

4.2 Value Significance

4.2.1 Stabilize Team Structure and Address Development Challenges

A work standardization system can provide clear work guidance and stable career expectations for counselors, effectively alleviating the entry anxiety of novices and helping them adapt quickly. Simultaneously, establishing scientific evaluation and promotion channels can enhance counselors' professional identity, reduce talent turnover, and promote team stability.

4.2.2 Enhance Work Efficiency and Ensure Educational Quality

Standardized work processes and operational criteria can reduce randomness and redundancy in work, ensure the effective implementation of key links, and minimize omissions caused by new counselors'

unfamiliarity with tasks and errors stemming from experienced counselors' "empiricism". It also helps partially free counselors from mundane tasks, allowing them to invest more energy in in-depth ideological and political education and personalized guidance, thereby improving the precision of education.

4.2.3 Strengthen Foresight and Maintain Campus Stability

Standardized thematic education frameworks can outline key priorities chronologically and establish crisis prevention and response procedures. This helps counselors clarify and prepare thematic content in advance, identify risks early, respond to incidents in a standardized manner, and effectively mitigate potential hazards.

4.2.4 Facilitate Professional Development and Enhance Team Quality

Clear competency standards provide a definitive "roadmap" for counselor training and development, fostering the formation of a learning system with clear goals and pathways. Through standardized work practices, counselors can accumulate experience and enhance their capabilities within a normative framework, progressively advancing toward specialization and expertise.

5. Practical Pathways for Counselor Work Standardization Construction in the New Era

To promote the construction of counselor work standardization, it is essential to adhere to the principles of "education-oriented, systematic design, gradual advancement, and dynamic improvement". Collaborative efforts should be made across the dimensions of responsibility systems, capacity development, and enabling support to build an ecological environment for standardized work.

5.1 Top-level Design Dimension, Constructing a Systematic and Clear Standardized Responsibility System

5.1.1 Refine the Core Responsibility List

Adopting a top-down approach, universities should organize the establishment of a research group, inviting personnel from relevant functional departments to collaboratively develop the Standards for Counselor Team Construction, which integrates counselors' "responsibilities, processes, competencies, evaluation, and promotion". This involves modularizing the specific work tasks of counselors.

5.1.2 Optimize Transactional Work Processes

For each core daily work task of counselors such as the identification and revocation of student disciplinary actions, application and management of off-campus accommodation, scholarship and award evaluation, and file management the school can organize experienced counselors and student work managers to sort out and optimize work processes, draw standardized flowcharts, and compile the Guidelines for Standardized Work of Counselors, clarifying the handling procedures, standard nodes, and output materials for transactional work. Unify templates for commonly used work documents and work record standards, compiling them into a handbook to improve counselors' work efficiency and implementation standards, and promote the standardization and informatization of work traceability.

5.2 Precision Cultivation Dimension, Constructing a Tiered and Progressive Standardized Capacity Building System

5.2.1 Establish a Tiered Training System

Clarify the professional competency standards for counselors and establish a four-level training network encompassing "national-provincial-university-departmental" tiers. Implement "targeted drip-irrigation" training methodologies: focus on foundational norms and skill enhancement for novice counselors through sustained activities such as "Counselor Salons"; emphasize the deepening of specialized competencies for counselors in the growth stage by inviting exemplary counselors to conduct intensive development via "Workshops"; prioritize scientific research innovation and demonstrative leadership for counselors in the mature stage, aligning them with projects to form a "succession echelon" collaborative growth model, thereby supporting the counselor team's progression toward becoming expert counselors.

5.2.2 Build Practical Empowerment Platforms

Leverage platforms such as "one-stop" student communities, university-enterprise cooperation bases, and labor education practice bases to enhance counselors' practical skills. Encourage and organize counselors to actively participate in external training and temporary assignment programs. Conduct quality and competency competitions to promote skill development through competition and foster research through studio-based activities. Develop multidimensional "university-department" counselor studios focused on areas such as mental health, online ideological and political education, and career guidance. Identify and cultivate expert core personnel within these studios to serve as exemplars and leaders, playing a demonstrative and guiding role.

5.3 Digital Empowerment Dimension, Building an Intelligent Support Platform

Develop an intelligent ideological and political service system by embedding transaction handling functions into standardized workflows, enabling the online processing of routine student management affairs. Fully leverage the comprehensive analytical capabilities of "Intelligent AI + Big Data" to establish student growth profiles and work early-warning mechanisms, achieving a "one-click" clear view of student development status and direction. Make full use of various resource platforms related to education and teaching, Party building, and ideological and political work to empower the growth of the ideological and political team. Systematize student work according to a timeline, unify curriculum standards, and develop a curriculum-based class meeting system. Centralize the compilation and dissemination of standardized educational resources such as "Online Courses for Thematic Class Meetings", "Thematic Education Lesson Plan Manuals", and "Collections of Ideological and Political Work Cases". This facilitates "one-click" resource extraction for counselors' daily tasks, constructing a closed loop of "standards - practice - improvement" for counselor growth.

5.4 Growth Model Dimension, Constructing a Scientifically-Oriented Standardized Management and Assessment System

5.4.1 Implement a Multidimensional Comprehensive Evaluation System

Refine the dual management mechanism characterized by "Party Committee leadership, Student Affairs Department coordination, and colleges/departments assuming primary responsibility." Establish a three-dimensional evaluation model integrating "process supervision, outcome assessment, and student feedback" to avoid one-sided evaluations that "prioritize research over performance, or emphasize explicit achievements over implicit contributions." Process supervision focuses on monitoring the entire workflow and verifying implementation outcomes. Outcome assessment emphasizes the completion of annual work objectives and substantive performance results. Student feedback is collected through methods such as student questionnaires and forums to evaluate satisfaction with counselors' work.

5.4.2 Smooth Career Development Pathways

Refine the "dual-track" promotion system for professional positions and ranks, establishing clear assessment grading standards and reward-penalty mechanisms—such as the Measures for the Evaluation and Management of Counselors' Professional Competency Levels, the Measures for the Assessment of Counselor Work, and the Measures for Rewarding Counselor Professional Skills Competitions, Outstanding Achievements in Ideological and Political Education Work, and Innovation Achievements. Ensure that assessment results are directly linked to salary and benefits, professional title promotions, and the selection of outstanding individuals. By optimizing pathways related to counselor team development, professional title evaluations, and competency assessments, foster an environment that encourages counselors to advance toward specialization, professionalization, and expertise.

6. Conclusion

The standardization of counselor team development serves as an effective approach to addressing the practical challenges faced by university counselor teams, and represents an essential requirement for enhancing the quality of student affairs work while advancing the professionalization, specialization, and expertise-oriented development of the counselor workforce. Universities should base their efforts on their own educational positioning, accurately grasp the dialectical relationship between standardization and personalization as well as between standardization and innovation, and forge a stable, professional, and dynamic high-quality counselor team through a series of solid and effective standardization initiatives. This will enable them to effectively shoulder the era-specific responsibility of fostering virtue through education and cultivating the builders of the new era.

Acknowledgements

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