

# The Characteristics and Enlightenment of the Specialization and Professionalization of College Counselors since the Founding of the People's Republic of China

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**Abstract:** Since the 1970s, the Chinese government has promulgated relevant policies and launched a series of corresponding measures, mainly to strengthen the professional building of efficient counselors. With the education reform, the role and mission of college counselors are also changing, from dealing with solely political work at the beginning to being a political guide, conceptual mentor, administrative management leader and imparter of mental health knowledge for young college students and so on. This paper mainly analyzes the characteristics of the professionalization and specialization development of the counselor team since the founding of the People's Republic of China, analyzes the current development difficulties, derives inspiration from the law of historical development, and eliminates the difficulties.

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Since the founding of New China, the country has always value the domestic higher education. Under the push of government departments, everlasting achievements in higher education have been made. In the initial building period, the gross enrollment rate was only 0.029%, but after long-term building, it has reached 45.7%. The number of students graduating from colleges and universities has increased from 21,000 to 8.2 million. Up to now, colleges and

universities have cultivated nearly 100 million highly educated talents for the country. At the same time, the counseling talents in colleges and universities have become an indispensable part of the school.

President Xi clearly stated that we must value the ideological and political education of colleges and universities. When conducting education, we must further broaden the scope of talent selection, strengthen education and training, and truly implement them in practice. At the same time, it is necessary to establish a corresponding incentive and guarantee system which can truly promote the building of college teachers and other teams and effectively ensure that the talent team of colleges and universities can continuously find new motivation<sup>[1]</sup>.

By analyzing the development characteristics of college counselors after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the talent building of counselors in colleges and universities will gradually become professionalized, which will play a certain guiding role in the building of talents in practice.

## 1 The Characteristics of the Professionalization and Specialization Development of College Counselors since the Founding of the People's Republic of China

Since the founding of New China, the building of the counselors' team in colleges and universities has been developing, but the journey of development has not been smooth sailing. As there are some differences between the current situation of domestic education and other countries, the building of the counselor team also needs to be developed based on the current

situation of domestic education, and the experience of other countries cannot be copied blindly. Although there was a short period of stagnation, with the advent of the Reform and Opening-up, the team of college counselors never ceased to explore and follow the changes of the times to continue to enrich their knowledge reserves, carry out effective practices, and slowly mitigate their existing shortcomings. By persisting for a long time, a professional development direction can be formed. Analyzing and summarizing this development process, there are three main characteristics as follows:

## **2 Adapt to the Characteristics of the Times and be Braving to Change and Innovate**

From the "political instructor" before the founding of the People's Republic of China to the "double-shouldering" political counselors and "full-time" political counselors proposed after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the original role of being solely instructor has gradually changed to a diverse role of instructors. The requirements for counselors have also been raised accordingly. Not only do they need to have the correct ideological and political requirements, but there are also certain standard requirements for the operations of counselors, so that counselors can bring out good effects in the education of students, enabling students in colleges and universities to establish correct values and at the same time carry out their work with correct ideas and conceptions<sup>[5]</sup>. Especially after the turbulent "Cultural Revolution" had ended, the building of counseling talents slowly recovered, and new responsibility and roles were added, so that they not only have to play the role of cadres, but also serve as teachers, bearing part of the responsibility of educating students, making the building of the counselor team better and better, and gradually moving towards standardization and scientificity.

## **3 Using the System as a Guarantee and Put People First**

Looking back on the development of counselors since the founding of the People's Republic of China, it can be seen that in every era, the Ministry of Education and the Party Central Committee have been keeping up with the pace of the times and following the continuous development in the field of education

to further build the standards and plans for the system, so that the building of counselors can have a theoretical and policy basis.

At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the establishment of the "Political Counseling Office" was proposed, and Order 43 was issued in 2017. Decades of learning experience and innovation can promote the continuous progress of the ideological and political construction of colleges and universities, and also give out more standardized explanations on the job roles of counselors, personnel recruitment and related assessment contents, so that various tasks in the management of counselors can be based on systems.

The promulgation of relevant policies and systems for counselors is not only necessary for the development of counselors, but more importantly, the system has played a guiding role in the scientific work of counselors, and at the same time, it also provides a certain degree of protection for the career development, working environment and welfare of counselors. Guaranteeing counselors with the most basic materials to the greatest extent to ensure that they will not be affected in their daily life due to wages and other issues, not be confused and perplexed at work due to lack of accurate career development planning, not to worry about professional value, do a better job in students' ideological and political work, and perform well in personal inner learning and sublimation.

## **4 Push the Professionalization and Specialization of Counselors in Multiple Directions with Several Hands**

In 1961, the relevant education departments affirmed their "full-time" role, and later the "double-shouldering" role was established, their social status was also recognized to a certain extent, and they gained accurate direction for career development.

In 1984, after the relevant ideological and political education majors were formally established, it provided them with a good opportunity to receive education. They were able to receive systematic education and improve their professional literacy. Since the training of counselors attracted attention in 1990, the Ministry of Education has issued many policies and adopted many measures, so that their functions, responsibilities and related operational

capabilities have been significantly enhanced.

The talent building of counselors cannot only rely on the training of colleges and universities, but also requires the attention of the government and other departments, using different methods to improve their comprehensive literacy, and implementing diversified building schemes such as "Counselor Work Quality Project". Only in this way can the multi-faceted collaborations take full effects and actively promote the professionalization of counselors' talent building.

## 5 Current Difficulties

In the actual process of building counselors, we must ensure the long-term characteristics of their work<sup>[6]</sup>. In the process of guiding and building, it is not only necessary to ensure its professional goals, but also to make education as rich as possible with artistic characteristics, and to give full play to the role of education, so as to achieve the true purpose of ideological and political education, and professionalize the work of counselors to provide services to students genuinely.

Under the societal background of economic globalization and information diversification, the education environment of colleges and universities is facing new challenges, and the path of students' growth into talents is full of various puzzles. The demand for talents in colleges and universities is very pressing. Most colleges and universities lack such comprehensive talents. They need not only be able to carry out ideological and political education, but also have relatively proficient management skills in operation. Such talents possess capabilities not found in other workers in the universities, and there is no way to replace them<sup>[7]</sup>. China highly values the building of talents in this field, and many related supporting policies have been promulgated. A preliminary system has gradually formed at the current stage of counselor talent building, but in the development process, there will still be many problems.

## 6 Insufficient Career Theory Support —— Can't Get Far

Regarding the duties of counselors, it is clearly stated in Order 43 that they are not only responsible for the building of ideological education in the class, but also for the problems that students face in their

daily life and the fluctuations in their psychological and emotional aspects. Their job roles are relatively cumbersome and heavy.

At this stage, counselors cannot be regarded as teachers in the traditional sense, but are recognized by the industry as teachers of political education. However, in the actual development process, their work content has gradually diversified, and many of them are not the responsibility of ideological and political teachers. In the process of teaching, they will not only cover the ideological content that they have clearly mastered, but also cover other aspects. The management of student affairs in Chinese colleges and universities has only been further differentiated in the late 1990s. There have not been mature professional theories on student psychology, employment, financial assistance, work-study and other aspects. Many schools are in the stage of relying on experience to carry out their work, resulting in some of the training of counselors not implemented in practice, but only used as a place for exchanging experience.

Based on the changes in the job scope of college counselors under the current situation mentioned above, it is compelling for counselors to systematically study relevant professional theories in ideological and political education and student affairs management, and to continuously reflect and conclude on actual work to improve the level of personal professionalization to become an expert in this field.

## 7 Assessment and Development are not Progressing Smoothly —— Can't Get it Going

First of all, many colleges and universities at this stage do not pay special attention to the assessment of counselors, and the corresponding sense of hierarchy is in a relatively lacking state.

An excellent and sound assessment mechanism can make the development of counselors better and better. The current assessment system is only in the three aspects of "are student affairs operating normally?", "is there a major student safety incident?", and "is there any personal scientific research results?" .

"Are student affairs operating normally?" Basically, there is no way to show the differences between individuals, causing individual passion and

enthusiasm to gradually fade over time. "Is there a major student safety incident?" is one-size-fits-all. That is to say, if there is an abnormal death of college students that year (regardless of whether the counselor has tried his best in the process), then all counselors of the college will not be graded as excellent in the assessment that year. "Is there any personal scientific research results?" does not take individual circumstances into consideration. Many counselors in colleges and universities have different career expectations depending on their working years, personal experience, and personal expertise. In terms of work content, some expect themselves to focus on student affairs, and some expect to focus on student ideological and political education. In terms of the depth of work, some can only learn and explore temporarily, while some have the ability to research and analyze in-depth. Therefore, when conducting personal scientific research and analysis, the polarization will be obvious.

Secondly, most colleges and universities have not established effective constraints on the work of counselors, and there are still certain shortcomings in related system building.

Through a long time of hard work and struggle, the role of "double-shouldering" has been widely recognized by the public. However, in the actual development process, there are still many problems. The promotion opportunities for counselors in administrative management are very limited, and there are many uncertain factors, which do not entirely depend on their own efforts and abilities<sup>[8]</sup>. There are many department counselors with more than ten years of service in universities. In terms of promotion to professional and technical positions, the disadvantages of counselors are even more obvious — routine work consumes a lot of time and energy, and scientific research results are the Achilles' heel of most counselors.

## **8 Lack of Occupation Emotional Motivation —— Unwilling to Go**

The first is the lack of manpower. Although the education department has clearly proposed the staffing ratio of colleges and universities, that is, deploy according to the standard of higher than 1:200, but at this stage, as many colleges and universities are continuously expanding their enrollment, the

number of counselors is not in place and there is still a relatively large gap. Many universities still have a teacher-student ratio of 1:300 or even 1:400. There are insufficient staffs, too many affairs to deal with, and the students' ideological and political work needs to be handled, which makes the counselors unable to do well, and the promotion opportunities are slim. It is a common situation in private colleges and universities that there is a high staff turnover rate, structural instability and other problems caused by the frequent resignation of counselors. A large number of public colleges and universities have the phenomenon of "transfer to other departments when they have the opportunity to", and the lack of counselors has entered a vicious cycle.

Secondly, the lack of occupational happiness. The function of college counselors is mainly to provide services to the students in colleges and universities. The educational subjects of universities are also university students. Under this reality, there is a certain degree of uncertainty in their job functions. In many schools, counselors are held responsible for all student-related affairs; the counselor is mainly responsible for any problems the students may have regardless of the nature of the problems in any aspect. Many counselors are even labeled as "miscellaneous staff", and concurrently take up other administrative tasks in the department, union services, student status auxiliary management, and financial statements, etc. Counselors have to be everywhere. In such a state where education, management and service are all-in-one, the occupational happiness of the counselors is naturally not strong, and the development motivation is insufficient.

Thirdly, the occupation identity is not strong. Due to the attention of the country, there are more and more opportunities for counselors exchange and training between universities, but there are still many counselors who lack such opportunities. Moreover, at the same time, the comparison can clearly find that the communication and exchanges between the faculties within the school are particularly few. Most colleges and universities are busy and in a state of caring only for their own. In order to strengthen the occupational identity of counselors, it is necessary to continue to improve the working mechanism of counselors' regular training and communication, further expand the communication platform for counselors to help each other grow and nurture

their bonding, and increase efforts to promote and publicize various types of excellent counselors.

## 9 Enlightenment

The professionalization and specialization development of college counselors are the internal requirements for the scientific development of the student management model with Chinese characteristics in Chinese colleges and universities, and it is an inevitable choice for nurturing qualified socialist builders and reliable successors<sup>[7]</sup>. Looking back on the professionalization and specialization development of college counselors since the founding of the People's Republic of China, I hope to stand at a historical height and help resolve current difficulties.

## 10 Establish a Scientific Training System

Professionalization and specialization are the main development directions for the building of counselors. To achieve these two goals, the training work must be strengthened and let the training work be implemented in the counselors' work. Robust training can allow them to establish scientific working concept, so that with long-term development, their working abilities will become stronger and more professional.

There are more and more training opportunities for college counselors at all levels. However, per capita, the quality of training content is uneven, the connection with actual work is not strong, and the overall effect of training is very limited. In particular, there are many college counselors who do not have the opportunity or time to participate in training. All these are eroding the enthusiasm of counselors to pursue professional development.

Combining online platform learning and offline training base practice, actively promote the building of the counselors' learning and training system, and simultaneously promote, universalize, and achieve the normalization of counselors' learning and training.

First of all, closely focus on the relevant theoretical and practical issues involved in the actual ideological and political education and student management of colleges and universities, as well as the career planning and development of counselors, and actively study on these practical issues to the height of theoretical research and learning, gradually establishing training materials and curriculum system

that combines both theory and practice.

Secondly, it is necessary to study the growth patterns of counselors at different stages of career development. Under the premise that the individual development stages of counselors are fully covered, corresponding training shall be carried out in stages and according to needs, and a scientific training system shall be established.

## 11 Design Reasonable Management Mechanism

Mechanism is the foundation and the guarantee for the development of things. To ensure that the counselors in colleges and universities can gradually become professional, there must be a corresponding management mechanism to protect them. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the state has paid more attention to the building of education, advocating top-level based design and improves and selects related management systems from top to bottom.

Strengthen the overall design of the professionalization and specialization development of the counselor team, formulate practical management mechanisms for the assessment, development, training, incentives, and guarantees of counselors, and ensure that the policy systems of various departments can be unified and self-contained.

The first is to put the special team of counselors into the overall planning for the building and development of the school's faculty, and coordinate the relevant school departments to actively cooperate and participate in the professionalization and specialization of counselors, so as to further improve the selection and training system and the incentivizing mechanism.

Secondly, in accordance with the proposal of Document 43, full-time counselors (job title) should pay more attention to the work performance and education effectiveness when appraising and hiring professional counselors, and implement separate plans, separate standards, and separate reviews. According to the specific situation of the school, research and establish the "two-line promotion" method and guarantee mechanism for the position of counselor (job title) that are suitable for the school situation.

The third is to study the implementation of categorical and hierarchical management of

counselors. According to the counselors' work experience and working hours, work ability and career development direction, etc., it can be categorized according to "student affairs-oriented management" and "student ideological and political education oriented", and according to personal capabilities and scientific research results. Hierarchical management of "junior counselors" and "senior counselors" is implemented within each category of counselors.

## 12 The Heart to Firmly Walk the Development Path of Professionalization and Specialization

It is necessary to enhance the counselors' sense of acknowledgement and sense of belonging to their jobs, so that their work attitudes will be positive, and they will be able to continuously promote the stability of the construction, and their functional literacy will be continuously improved.

Firstly, the counselors need to have a sense of belonging and acknowledgement for their positions. Promote outstanding college counselors through multiple channels and in various directions, guide everyone in colleges and society to further understand the work responsibilities and content of college counselors, and recognize and support their work achievements, so that the counselors have a sense of belonging to their work. And they should also be encouraged to participate in some competitions or related counselors group activities, so that their comprehensive professional qualities can be quickly improved. At the same time, colleges and universities should improve humanistic care and actively establish a communication platform for counselors to help each other grow and nurture the bonding between them.

Secondly, it is necessary to strengthen education in professional ethics. Counselors are required to increase their sense of responsibility, keep up with the situation, strengthen their learning, strive to enhance their work quality and ethics, and enhance their own skills in various aspects.

And while there are requirements for counselors, they should also be shown their career development

prospects. Colleges and universities should work hard to introduce outstanding talents into the team of counselors, improve the structure of the student work team based on the actual situation, and give counselors the energy to improve themselves. At the same time, actively universalize the school's reasonable management mechanism, let the counselors realize that they can achieve their professional expectations by continuously improving their professional skills, establish a positive work attitude, continue to dedicate their strength in the workplace, and finally achieve the in-depth development and progress of the entire counselor building system.

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