

Enhancing the Professional Abilities of Chinese College Counselors in the New Era

Ziwen Luo*, Ma Agatha Anne Dizon

Graduate School, Angeles University Foundation, Angeles 2009, Philippine

*Corresponding author: Ziwen Luo, luo.ziwen@auf.edu.ph

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Abstract: In order to meet the needs of China's new era of education reform and development, universities should take effective measures to enhance the professional ability of counselors. At the same time, they should continuously strengthen theoretical learning, innovate teaching methods, update management concepts, and draw on advanced skills, so as to continuously develop towards professionalization and specialization. This article focuses on the in-depth exploration of the ways to enhance the professional ability of counselors, which plays a crucial role in the sustainable development of universities and the self-development of teachers. Firstly, it analyzes the problems in developing counselors' professional ability and then, it proposes specific ways to improve from the perspectives of China and counselors themselves.

Keywords: New era; College counselors; Professional ability; Improvement pathways

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, countries around the world are paying more attention to talent cultivation, with universities occupying an important position in the entire education system. The investment and importance in cultivating college students are also increasing, and as university counselors, they are an important cornerstone for cultivating socialist successors and builders. Based on the work tasks and contents of counselors, it can be seen that counselors play a huge role in ideological and political education in universities. However, with the increasing complexity of counselor work tasks and the continuous extension of work scope, some counselors' existing professional abilities are unable to meet the job requirements. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the current problems and propose specific ways to improve them. How to enhance the professional ability of college counselors in the context of the new era is one of the important issues in promoting education reform and promoting the professional development of teachers. This article will conduct in-depth exploration around this issue to provide reference and practical experience for universities to carry out counselor education management work.

2. Challenges in Development of college counselors' professional abilities

2.1. Insufficient counselor teams

Counselors are an important part of the ideological and political education team in universities, but they do not have a prominent presence. On the one hand, universities tend to neglect the formation of counselor teams, and there is a common problem of emphasizing the use and neglecting the cultivation of counselors ^[1]. They have not guided counselors to plan career development paths, and have not provided them with channels for promotion, such as cadre selection and professional title evaluation. Secondly, the scope of work for counselors is broad and the workload is heavy. College counselors generally need to undertake tasks such as ideological and political education for college students, daily management of students, and handle various tedious and extensive affairs. Therefore, the difficulty of work is high, and the working time is long. Over time, it can easily lead to low enthusiasm, lack of sense of achievement, responsibility and honor, and even professional burnout and lack of professional identity. After accumulating several years of work experience, some counselors may choose to transfer to administrative or teaching positions. Compared with other job types, counselors have a higher turnover rate, leading to a lack of structurally stable counselor teams in universities.

2.2. Counselors' limited professional abilities

The structure of the counselor team constructed by various universities is complex, with too many personnel, and due to the lack of professional settings in counselor recruitment, it is easy for the counselor team to lack professionalism. According to the clear requirements in the Regulations, universities should adhere to the principle of "full-time and part-time jobs cooperation, with majors as the main focus and part-time jobs as auxiliary", and need to equip counselors based on a ratio of no less than 1:200 between teachers and students. However, based on actual survey results, it can be understood that there is a serious shortage in the recruitment and allocation of counselors in most universities. Some teachers are required to take on counseling duties in addition on their primary teaching roles before they can return to their original positions. Consequently, some counselors are transferred from teaching and administrative staff ^[2]. The professional titles of counselors are mostly below that of lecturers, and there is no single option for evaluating the professional titles of counselors. In addition, counselors need to invest a lot of time and energy in handling various daily affairs, making it difficult to conduct in-depth exploration and research in ideological and political education.

2.3. Out-of-data counselor education methods

Some college counselors directly enter universities for employment after graduation, although they have rich theoretical accumulation, they lack practical experience. If counselors do not timely understand the ideological dynamics and psychological changes of students, they will become helpless in organizing and managing college students, especially contemporary college students who have distinct personalities, mature thoughts, and a sense of freedom, ultimately leading to poor student management effectiveness. In the new era, the characteristics of college students that counselors face are constantly changing. Therefore, adhering to a single and unchanging educational philosophy and teaching methods makes it difficult to meet the developmental needs of students and to adapt to the demands of educational reform ^[3]. In practical work, most counselors fail to innovate teaching methods, summarize student patterns in a timely manner, and have insufficient understanding of students. It is difficult to use advanced methods and concepts to penetrate correct ideological concepts, ultimately resulting in low work efficiency and limiting the development of their own professional abilities.

2.4. Lack of training mechanism for counselors

At present, major universities are consciously cultivating the professional level of counselors, but their actual implementation effect is not significant. Based on the actual situation, it can be seen that different universities adopt different methods and approaches in carrying out counselor training work, and no unified standards have been established, resulting in an incomplete training system for counselor positions. There are problems such as short training time, single training forms, poor training effectiveness, and training becoming mere formality. Additionally, most universities have not established assessment mechanisms or reward mechanisms for counselors training ^[4]. Although some counselors have performed outstandingly, they have not expressed their opinions on salary, benefits, and promotion channels. Over time, this can lead to a lack of enthusiasm and motivation among counselors, ultimately directly affecting their overall professional ability.

3. Recommendations for enhancing the professional abilities of college counselors in the new era

3.1. National policy level

The country should be more inclined towards the construction of the counselor team in terms of policies and guidelines, in order to strengthen and standardize the structure of the counselor team. At the same time, it should also learn from and draw on the experience and opinions of other universities to help counselors formulate development plans for different stages, such as short, medium, and long. In addition, it is necessary for the education department to improve the laws, regulations, and requirements related to the construction of counselors, in order to provide legal and institutional guarantees for enhancing the professional ability of counselors. Nowadays, with the promulgation of policy documents such as the “Standards” and “Regulations” in China, clear instructions and expressions have been made on the definition, recruitment requirements, admission requirements, work scope, work tasks, responsibilities and obligations of counselors. This can provide a reference basis for the development of professional direction and ultimately effectively improve their professional level and ability. In addition, local education departments and universities themselves should implement existing policies and regulatory requirements, as well as conduct effective supervision and reasonable evaluation ^[5].

3.2. University management level

3.2.1. Establishing a training mechanism and scientific team management

Universities need to establish and improve the mechanism for cultivating counselors, especially by combining the structure of the counselor team, the development needs of higher education and the cultivation needs of student quality.

- (1) Universities should focus on practical training, guiding counselors to integrate theoretical knowledge and practical skills.
- (2) Universities need to guide counselors in career planning, taking effective measures to reduce their workload, and alleviate their work stress. This will enhance their professional confidence and sense of achievement ^[6].
- (3) Universities should explore feasible measures to enhance the professional competence of counselors with the support of human resource management theory, and develop highly targeted training programs for counselors at various stages. The most important point is to innovate training forms, that is, in addition to organizing counselors to participate in lectures and meetings, they should also organize them to participate in academic salons, study abroad and other activities, in order to help them make up for their shortcomings and strengthen their personal advantages.

- (4) Universities should encourage counselors to actively engage in self-directed learning and enhance their professional abilities through further education, obtaining professional certificates, studying abroad, and pursuing doctoral degrees ^[7].
- (5) Universities should continuously improve the structure of the counselor team to maintain a reasonable balance in terms of education level, age and professional background.

3.2.2. Development platform and improvement of the evaluation system

In order to promote the construction and development of the counselor team, universities should actively establish promotion pathways for them. Additionally, they should set up executive, regulatory, and support institutions ^[8].

- (1) Universities can carry out projects and establish studios to focus on cultivating counselors so that they can achieve long-term development based on the platform provided by the school.
- (2) Universities should ensure that counselors' salaries and social benefits are at the same level as those of full-time teachers, in order to stimulate the core motivation of counselors to learn independently and participate in training.
- (3) Universities need to establish a two-way promotion mechanism to fully leverage the advantages of counselors and help them realize their self-worth.
- (4) Universities should establish a scientific and comprehensive evaluation mechanism, focusing on assessing counselors' ethics, abilities, achievements, and daily work. This mechanism should include detailed assessment criteria with an emphasis on ability indicators ^[9]. Specifically, universities can incorporate the results of innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, academic atmosphere building, party and youth league building, and mental health education into their assessment and evaluation systems, thereby increasing the internal drive for counselors to improve themselves and promoting their professional and professional development.

3.3. Individual counselor level

3.3.1. Enhancement of theoretical knowledge

Counselors occupy an important position in ideological and political education activities in universities. Therefore, they should possess the necessary professional knowledge and practical experience for ideological and political education ^[10]. Based on this requirement, counselors need to comprehensively examine themselves, strengthen the learning of ideological and political theory knowledge, establish ideal beliefs, and firm political positions on the basis of understanding their own problems or shortcomings. Counselors need to clarify their research direction in daily teaching and management so that they can participate in professional research projects and improve their theoretical abilities and research level through theoretical and practical research. In addition, counselors should engage in extensive learning, thoughtful reflection, timely summaries, and regular review in their daily teaching. This approach will enable them to continuously acquire knowledge under the drive of lifelong learning and to update their teaching philosophies and educational methods in a timely manner ^[11]. Counselors should also clarify their future plans based on the strategic goals of universities and government policies, and continuously improve their problem-solving and communication skills, so as to help students solve their life and study problems, improve their management level, and achieve educational goals.

3.3.2. Innovative teaching methods for educating students

With the rapid development of the social economy, the Internet era has ushered in, which has virtually brought more challenges to counselors in student management, ideological and political education and other work. At

the same time, it has also provided counselors with more opportunities to innovate educational methods and expand teaching approaches ^[12].

- (1) Counselors can introduce various information technologies to optimize ideological and political education, establish online ideological and political education models, create online ideological and political propaganda platforms, and provide students with rich content ideological and political learning platforms by mastering advanced skills and organizing network operation teams. For example, blogs, microblogs, WeChat official accounts and video accounts can be used to publicize the latest relevant policies and guidelines issued by the Party and the state , so that students can be armed with socialist core values.
- (2) Counselors need to innovate student management models, adhere to the concept of “combining strength and flexibility” to manage and guide students, and also need to summarize laws and experiences in practical teaching, ultimately achieving good educational results.
- (3) Counselors should select and cultivate outstanding class leaders to take on roles such as class committee members and team members. They should also establish exemplary party members to motivate and guide students to learn from and emulate them, ultimately promoting the overall development of college students ^[13].

3.3.3. Refinement of personal career planning

Counselors need to strengthen their career planning efforts to further enhance their professional qualities and provide guidance for future specialization and professionalization. The career planning schemes developed by counselors should be based on real needs and should scientifically select career development directions after thoroughly considering factors such as their work experience, professional level, research interests, and personal hobbies. They should also establish practical and feasible development goals and plans, striving to align personal goals with the professional objectives of counseling ^[14].

- (1) Counselors can formulate career development goals based on their experience and work stage, ensuring that career planning is primarily focused on improving work efficiency and professional abilities. They can also explore suitable work methods, develop career interests, and ultimately improve the counselor’s full understanding of their position.
- (2) After achieving the above planning goals, counselors need to focus their career planning on improving their work abilities, especially those who are in a period of occupational burnout. They need to adjust their mentality in a timely manner, relieve emotions, and continuously improve their professional qualities. Counselors can also explore personal career development directions, fully utilize their individual strengths, and adjust their career development goals.
- (3) After completing the above planning goals, counselors can focus their career planning on strengthening the quality of education, shouldering the professional responsibility of delivering high-quality talents for social development and national construction and continuously improve their ability to educate people driven by the concept of career development ^[15].
- (4) Counselors can explore personal career development directions, fully utilize their individual strengths, and adjust their career development goals.

4. Conclusion

Overall, in the context of the new era, college counselors need to fully recognize their important position in the entire education and teaching, and be able to continuously improve themselves with the support of the government and schools. At the same time, they also need to start from themselves, continuously enrich

theoretical knowledge, enhance educational abilities, and continue to develop toward professionalization and specialization, ultimately cultivating high-quality talents for socialist construction in the new era.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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