
Research on Pathways for Enhancing New-Type Ideological and Political Work Competence of University Counselors

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Abstract: The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China explicitly proposed strategic requirements for developing new-quality productive forces. As the backbone of ideological and political education in higher education institutions, university counselors bear the crucial mission of cultivating students' well-rounded personalities and guiding them to establish correct worldviews, life perspectives, and values. This study focuses on enhancing counselors' capabilities in ideological and political work, conducting an in-depth analysis of contemporary characteristics and practical challenges in their professional development under digital transformation. Key issues identified include political literacy, technological application proficiency, cultural awareness demonstration, and innovative practice implementation. Based on this analysis, the paper proposes a series of improvement pathways aimed at establishing a scientific, systematic, and effective framework for counselors' competency development. These efforts seek to provide theoretical support and practical references for advancing high-quality ideological and political education in modern higher education institutions.

Keywords: New-type ideological and political work; University counselors; Digital literacy; Cultural awareness; Enhancement pathways

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1. Introduction

Amidst the unprecedented global transformations of the century and the strategic landscape of the Chinese nation's great rejuvenation, the ideological and political education environment in higher education institutions has undergone profound changes. The digital technology revolution has reshaped the educational ecosystem, while diverse value systems continue to emerge, giving rise to new era characteristics in college students' ideological behaviors. As the frontline force in ideological and political education, enhancing counselors' professional capabilities is not only an objective requirement for adapting to contemporary educational demands but also a crucial measure to drive innovative development in ideological and political education at universities.

2. Connotation Characteristics and Contemporary Requirements of New Quality Ideological and Political Work Competence

2.1. Conceptual Definition of New Quality Ideological and Political Work Competence

The competency framework for innovative ideological and political education refers to the capability system developed by university counselors in the era of “new-type productive forces.” This framework integrates in-depth study of the Party’s innovative theories with digital technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data to upgrade traditional educational approaches. It requires counselors to demonstrate professional expertise in targeted ideological education and high-quality Party building practices, while emphasizing the use of digital empowerment to achieve “precision irrigation” and “subtle yet impactful influence” in ideological education, thereby advancing educational work through systematic methodologies.

2.2. Competency Characteristics in the New Era Context

Against the backdrop of the new era, the work models of university counselors are undergoing profound transformations. The traditional “teaching and nurturing” approach has been replaced by a “holistic education and psychological development” paradigm, requiring counselors to develop digital literacy. They must proactively identify, adapt to, and drive changes by integrating internet technologies and AI into ideological education. This involves breaking away from conventional “one-way indoctrination” methods, creating intelligent educational spaces featuring holographic imaging and AI interactions to enhance engagement and appeal. In the age of information explosion and diverse online ideologies, counselors should transition from passive information recipients to active digital space builders, necessitating strong public opinion guidance capabilities. To navigate multifaceted online influences, counselors must decode algorithmic recommendation systems, leverage big data to analyze student behavior patterns and psychological dynamics, and develop precise student profiles. This enables effective risk assessment and value orientation in cyberspace while preventing students from falling into cognitive traps. The “all-staff educational ecosystem adaptability” has become an essential requirement of the new era. Ideological education is no longer the exclusive domain of a few professionals. Counselors must serve as “golden keys” in a comprehensive educational framework that spans all personnel, domains, scenarios, and timeframes. By bridging online and offline channels and integrating campus and external resources, they can create synergistic educational efforts that truly deliver student-centered holistic care.

3. A Practical Review of the Development of New Qualities in Ideological and Political Work Competencies for University Counselors

3.1. Coexistence of “High Position” and “Suspended Status” in Political Literacy

The current counselor corps demonstrates strong self-awareness in political stance and theoretical learning, consistently fulfilling study tasks assigned by the Party committee while maintaining clear positions on major political issues. However, in-depth observations reveal that most counselors struggle to effectively translate the Party’s innovative theories into language patterns aligned with Generation Z’s cognitive characteristics. Their political literacy often remains at the level of conceptual memorization and mechanical compliance, lacking effective methods to integrate grand narratives into daily educational practices. When facing campus public opinion crises or students’ ideological dilemmas, some counselors tend to rely on official statements and theoretical frameworks without demonstrating flexibility to adapt explanations or provide in-depth guidance tailored to specific contexts^[1].

3.2. There Exists a Tendency of “Tool Worship” in Technology Application

Amid the digital transformation wave, counselors exhibit starkly polarized attitudes toward emerging technologies. Some counselors have become overly reliant on technical tools, shifting their focus to data collection and quantitative management. They obsess over surface-level metrics like learning attendance rates and app usage frequency, mistakenly believing these numbers accurately reflect the effectiveness of ideological education. Others develop resistance due

to technical illiteracy, treating digital platforms merely as information delivery tools limited to basic functions like notifications and form submissions. The former approach overlooks the intangible nature of emotional engagement and value guidance in ideological work, while the latter misses the tremendous potential of technology to empower educational practices.

3.3. Cultural Self-Awareness Remains Relatively Weak

The current counselor workforce exhibits a pronounced youth-oriented trend. While maintaining relatively close generational proximity to students, they often lack sufficient theoretical depth and practical wisdom when addressing complex cultural issues. When confronting internet subculture phenomena such as “crazy literature” and “lying-flat mentality,” most counselors adopt simplistic interpretive approaches—either conducting superficial observations driven by curiosity or resorting to simplistic moral judgments, lacking the ability to perform structural analyses from a sociocultural perspective. In guiding students to embrace China’s outstanding traditional culture, revolutionary heritage, and advanced socialist culture, their methodologies remain conventional, making it challenging to establish effective emotional connections with contemporary youth.

3.4. Innovation Practices are Constrained by Administrative Burdens

In real-world work environments, counselors shoulder multiple responsibilities including student management, campus safety maintenance, and financial aid administration, with administrative tasks consuming most of their time and energy. While these so-called “hard tasks” are undoubtedly crucial, their repetitive and formulaic nature often fails to provide effective opportunities for skill development. Many counselors harbor deep-seated aspirations to innovate in ideological and political education, proposing imaginative concepts such as using virtual reality technology for immersive Party history learning programs or designing gamified moral education courses. However, constrained by heavy daily workloads, these innovative ideas frequently remain at the conceptual stage. Although a few counselors attempt to implement these concepts, they often struggle to sustain progress due to insufficient institutional support, team collaboration, and experimental environments.

4. Implementation Pathways for Enhancing the Competence of New-Type Ideological and Political Work Among University Counselors

4.1. Reshaping Political Identity and Bridging the Theoretical “Last Mile”

The key to reshaping counselors’ political identity lies in establishing an organic connection between theoretical learning and practical application, ensuring that the Party’s innovative theories become effective ideological tools guiding educational practices. First, we should develop experiential political education models that replace traditional didactic approaches, allowing counselors to deepen their understanding of theoretical principles through hands-on participation^[2]. For instance, organizing field research at poverty alleviation frontlines and rural revitalization demonstration sites enables counselors to witness institutional advantages and theoretical power through tangible development outcomes. Simultaneously, establishing problem-oriented theoretical training mechanisms is crucial—conducting specialized studies addressing real challenges in student affairs to bridge abstract concepts with practical applications. When addressing student employment anxiety, counselors can leverage the concept of common prosperity to analyze opportunities and challenges under the new development paradigm, helping them develop systematic theoretical frameworks and practical solutions. Creating peer support learning communities is essential, utilizing case studies and experience-sharing platforms to disseminate best practices from outstanding counselors. Implementing process-oriented evaluations for political literacy is indispensable, assessing both theoretical knowledge mastery and practical problem-solving capabilities. For example, adopting a “theory + practice” dual-track evaluation system requires counselors to regularly submit theoretical reflections and practical case studies, fostering a virtuous cycle where theory informs practice and practice validates theory.

4.2. Calibrating Technological Rationality and Cultivating Deep “Human-Machine Synergy”

To cultivate innovative capabilities in ideological and political education, we must transcend the current binary opposition of “tool worship” and “technophobia,” establishing a human-machine collaborative framework centered on student development. In enhancing data literacy, counselors should systematically understand algorithmic recommendation mechanisms, learn to identify and filter data noise from massive information streams, and apply learning analytics technologies to scientifically predict student behavior patterns. For instance, big data analysis can be used to detect early warning signs of academic difficulties or identify potential mental health risks through online behavioral data. However, it’s crucial to recognize data analysis as an auxiliary tool for “problem identification” rather than an absolute standard for “student characterization,” preventing cold statistics from obscuring individual uniqueness and growth potential. Simultaneously, counselors must strengthen core “humanistic competencies” that artificial intelligence can never replace. These include empathetic listening during student setbacks, making accurate judgments in value conflicts, providing life purpose for confused youth, and demonstrating wisdom to make swift decisions based on intuition and experience during emergencies. For example, when addressing emotional crises, counselors should keenly interpret emotional signals behind verbal expressions and offer appropriate psychological support and value guidance. Universities should proactively develop an “Intelligent Decision Support System” tailored for counselors, providing technical assistance for daily tasks such as public opinion trend forecasting and personalized counseling script recommendations. This approach will help achieve a dynamic balance between significantly improving work efficiency and maintaining the core values of humanistic education.

4.3. Strengthen Cultural Awareness and Enhance the “Narrative Transformation Power” of Values

To address the reality of weak cultural awareness, it is imperative to establish a systematic training model of “input-internalization-output” to help counselors transition from cultural observers to value leaders. In the input phase, universities should regularly arrange for counselors to delve into theoretical classics and cutting-edge research in interdisciplinary fields such as cultural studies, youth subcultures, and communication studies. This approach aims to guide them beyond simplistic moral judgment frameworks and equip them with sociological and psychological perspectives to analyze the underlying logic of online phenomena. The internalization phase focuses on cultivating counselors’ cultural sensitivity and critical thinking skills through regular “Cultural Phenomena Roundtable Discussions,” inviting cultural studies experts to analyze trending cultural texts alongside counselors. Topics may include popular TV dramas like “The Awakening Age” and “Rivers and Mountains”, the phenomenon of “knowledge-based bloggers” on short-video platforms, and historical character portrayals in mobile games like “Honor of Kings”. Counselors are encouraged to connect these cultural products with their personal growth experiences to uncover embedded value propositions and emotional needs. The output phase emphasizes training counselors’ “storytelling mindset” and narrative transformation skills, teaching them how to skillfully integrate grand values such as institutional confidence, collectivism, and the spirit of perseverance into students’ relatable life stories and campus scenarios^[3]. For instance, abstract concepts like the “Four Confidences” can be contextualized through concrete examples: alumni entrepreneurial success stories, scientific research teams overcoming challenges, and volunteer services warming hearts. This approach transforms abstract theories into vivid real-world applications. The entire cultivation process is dedicated to transforming counselors into authentic “cultural interpreters,” enabling them not only to deeply comprehend the essence of mainstream value systems but also to skillfully grasp the linguistic habits and cognitive patterns of young demographics. This approach ultimately achieves dual enhancements in both the effectiveness and appeal of value transmission.

4.4. Restructuring Institutional Ecosystem to Unleash Grassroots ‘Innovation Experimentation Capacity’

To address the constraints of transactional burdens on innovation capabilities, the fundamental solution lies in systemic institutional reforms that create a supportive environment for counselors’ innovative practices. There is an urgent need to

implement a dynamic management mechanism for “Counselor Work Checklists,” incorporating “innovative ideological and political education initiatives” into mandatory evaluation criteria, thereby replacing the outdated performance assessment system based solely on task completion metrics. Efforts should focus on eliminating non-core administrative tasks—such as establishing dedicated student affairs assistant positions to handle repetitive tasks like data compilation and form processing, or implementing intelligent management systems to automate workflows, thereby freeing counselors from trivial administrative duties. Financial support should include a “New-Type Ideological and Political Education Micro-Innovation Fund” to fund targeted experimental projects with practical applications. Examples include funding grade-level “podcast-style themed class meetings” that encourage students to document their thought processes through audio recordings, or piloting “anonymous feedback mechanisms” in dormitories to provide emotional support channels for socially reticent students. These low-cost initiatives often yield unexpected outcomes. Crucially, institutional frameworks must provide ample room for trial-and-error, establish agile review mechanisms to quickly learn from failures and refine solutions. Cross-institutional innovation communities should be created to share best practices through case-sharing platforms, while mentorship programs can help novice counselors navigate challenges effectively. Ultimately, this approach transforms fragmented individual efforts into standardized organizational wisdom.

4.5. Forging Emotional Resilience to Safeguard the ‘Sustainable Mental Resilience’ in Educational Practice

The advanced form of innovative ideological and political work capabilities extends beyond cognitive skills and technical operations, placing greater emphasis on counselors’ psychological capital reserves when facing challenges such as prolonged emotional labor, occupational burnout, and value exhaustion. On an individual level, counselors should cultivate a professional habit of “meaningful self-reflection,” proactively reviewing educational moments that genuinely resonate with students and drive positive change, transforming scattered emotional experiences into sustained internal motivation. For instance, establishing personalized “educational achievement portfolios” to document students’ growth trajectories from confusion to clarity and from negativity to positivity can serve as vital mental support against burnout. Counselors must also master scientific stress management techniques and boundary-setting skills to alleviate psychological burdens caused by “infinite responsibility” mentality^[4]. This includes learning to distinguish between controllable and uncontrollable factors in work scenarios, and appropriately balancing the depth and scope of emotional engagement. Organizational support is equally crucial—universities should integrate mental health maintenance into daily welfare systems, providing professional psychological counseling services and peer support groups. A key reform involves adjusting evaluation frameworks by prioritizing human-centered outcomes over quantitative performance metrics. For example, implementing long-term student development tracking systems that focus on enhancing the quality of in-depth counseling cases rather than simply accumulating workload metrics, ensuring counselors’ professional contributions and emotional investments receive adequate institutional recognition and protection.

5. Conclusion

Enhancing the innovative ideological and political capabilities of university counselors fundamentally represents a return to the core mission of “educational cultivation.” By reconstructing political identity, aligning technical rationality, fostering cultural awareness, restructuring institutional ecosystems, and cultivating emotional resilience, counselors can break free from the constraints of bureaucratic pragmatism and instrumentalism. Only through integrating value guidance with humanistic care through innovation while upholding core principles can they truly become precise “drip-irrigation mentors” and soul “guardians” for students’ growth.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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