

Research on the Role Reconstruction of Counselors in Higher Vocational Colleges in Practicing the Spirit of Educators

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Abstract

The spirit of educators serves as the spiritual banner for building the teaching workforce in the new era, providing profound value guidance for the role transformation of counselors in higher vocational colleges. Currently, counselors are facing multiple structural difficulties such as role diffusion, overloaded affairs, and constrained development. The spirit of educators drives counselors to achieve role transformation from four dimensions: value, identity, competence, and development. Therefore, the author proposes to promote the collaborative development of the counselor team towards the direction of expert-style through four aspects: conceptual reconstruction, capability reconstruction, institutional reconstruction, and ecological reconstruction, in order to form a systematic practical path.

Keywords

Counselors in Higher Vocational Colleges, The Spirit of Educators, Role Reconstruction, Collaborative Advancement

1. Introduction

In September 2023, in his letter to the representatives of outstanding teachers nationwide, General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly expounded the scientific connotations of the spirit of educators with Chinese characteristics (Xi, 2023). The spirit of educators is the spiritual quality formed by outstanding teachers in the long-term process of engaging in educational work, and it is the spiritual banner of the construction of the teacher team in the new era. As an important force in students' ideological and political education and daily management, counselors in higher vocational colleges have long focused on responding to and executing ad-

ministrative tasks. Under the call of the spirit of educators in this new era, how to achieve a profound reconstruction of the role of counselors from “task-oriented” to “expert-style” has become an urgent theoretical and practical issue demanding a response.

This paper adopts a conceptual analysis approach. The framework is developed through a synthesis of policy documents and scholarly literature. Core policy texts, exemplified by the 2023 letter to outstanding teachers, were selected to define the spirit of educators. Relevant scholarly works were identified via CNKI and educational databases using keywords such as “the spirit of educators” and “counselor role”, then screened for their theoretical contribution to counselor professionalization. By integrating these normative materials, this study constructs a coherent framework bridging policy discourse with counselor role transformation.

2. A Realistic Examination of the Role Reconstruction of Counselors in Higher Vocational Colleges

The counselor team in higher vocational colleges can be divided into two types: “task-oriented” and “expert-style”. Understanding the essential differences between these two roles is an important way to solve the current practical difficulties.

2.1. Typological Differentiation: Role Traits of Task-Oriented Counselors and Expert-Style Counselors

Task-oriented counselors focus on completing routine administrative work as their core orientation, with a focus on procedural tasks such as notification communication, material organization, and crisis response. Their drive for development largely stems from external demands. In contrast, expert-style counselors are characterized by professional judgment, educational leadership, and reflective practice. They play an irreplaceable, central role in specialized domains including student ideological and political education, career development guidance, and psychological crisis intervention.

Task-oriented counselors primarily handle routine administration (e.g., notification communication, crisis response) with limited discretion, relying on procedural compliance. Expert-style counselors exercise professional judgment in ideological education, career guidance, and psychological intervention, autonomously designing educational strategies. Observable criteria include: **primary responsibilities** (administrative execution vs. specialized guidance), **decision-making authority** (supervisory approval vs. autonomous action), **professional competencies** (task completion vs. diagnostic expertise), and **expected outcomes** (procedural compliance vs. student growth and value formation).

2.2. Deconstructing the Dilemmas: Multiple Structural Barriers to Role Enactment

In reality, the enactment of the counselor role in higher vocational colleges is beset by a number of structural dilemmas (Ma & Han, 2024). First, the professional role has become diffuse: counselors’ responsibilities lack clear boundaries, and a vast

array of non-professional tasks have been incorporated into their workload, giving rise to a cognitive inertia that “counselors can and should do everything”. Second, there is a severe imbalance between the volume of administrative tasks and professional practice. Counselors are mired in day-to-day management duties, leaving them unable to devote their limited energy to in-depth student counseling and ideological guidance. Third, narrow professional development pathways, blocked promotion channels, and the lack of tiered design in the training system have undermined counselors’ intrinsic motivation for professional growth. These dilemmas indicate that the reshaping of counselors’ roles is a necessary choice under the guidance of the spirit of educators and an urgent need to address practical issues.

3. The Internal Logic of the Spirit of Educators Driving the Role Transformation of Counselors

As a profound driver of counselors’ role transformation, the spirit of educators systematically constructs the internal logic of this transformation from four dimensions: **value, identity, competence, and development**. These four dimensions are analytically distinct: value anchors purpose, identity defines self-conception, competence enables practice, and development sustains growth. Value and identity operate at the cognitive level, while competence and development manifest in behavioral and institutional domains. Together, they form a complete chain from internal awakening to external transformation, driving counselors from passive task execution to proactive educational leadership.

3.1. Value Logic: The Spirit of Educators Reshaping Counselors’ Sense of Educational Mission

The spirit of educators, with the ideal conviction of “having a grand commitment to the greater good and dedicating oneself to serving the nation” at its core, fundamentally answers the value inquiry of “why we teach”, injecting profound spiritual impetus into the role transformation of counselors. When counselors elevate their work from “completing job tasks” to the value height of “serving students’ growth and contributing to national development”, their role positioning no longer remains at the level of task executors, but advances toward becoming conscious constructors of educational meaning. This spiritual awakening at the value level constitutes the ideological foundation for initiating role transformation.

3.2. Identity Logic: The Spirit of Educators Motivating Counselors to Shift from “Administrator” to “Educator”

This argument of identity logic rests on the claim that students generally perceive counselors as administrators rather than educators. This perception stems from counselors’ long-standing role in routine task execution. While some students may acknowledge occasional educational guidance, the dominant cognitive schema remains administrative. Thus, the transition from “administrator” to “educator” is not merely semantic but reflects a necessary restructuring of professional iden-

tity under the spirit of educators. The moral integrity of “words serving as a role model and conduct setting a standard for society” reshapes counselors’ deep identification with their professional identity. The spirit of educators, however, relocates counselors into the identity sequence of “educators”, requiring them to influence students through moral strength and exemplary conduct (Wang & Xu, 2025). As their identity cognition undergoes a fundamental shift, counselors proactively shake off the role inertia of being “administrative appendages” and instead construct a professional identity centered on educational consciousness.

3.3. Competence Logic: The Spirit of Educators Driving the Systematic Upgrade of Counselors’ Professional Competence

The educational wisdom of “enlightening minds and nourishing hearts, teaching students according to their aptitudes” and the diligent attitude of “studying diligently, acting with commitment, and pursuing truth with innovation” chart the course for the competence upgrade of counselors. To practice the spirit of educators, counselors must go beyond the superficial handling of routine tasks, delve into students’ inner spiritual world, and possess such professional capacities as ideological guidance, psychological counseling, and career planning. The systematic enhancement of these capacities enables counselors to shift from “task-oriented” to “expert-style”, turning “professional guidance” from a conceptual aspiration into actual practice.

3.4. Development Logic: The Spirit of Educators Igniting Sustained Momentum for Counselors’ Professional Growth

The benevolent heart of “finding joy in teaching and loving students, being willing to dedicate oneself” and the pursuit of promoting the Way of cultivating people with a global vision provide counselors with a value coordinate system that transcends short-term performance and points toward long-term development. The spirit of educators takes “lifelong learning” as an inherent requirement and prompts counselors to develop a sustained consciousness of professional growth. This drives counselors from passively responding to post requirements to actively pursuing professional development, and from merely completing prescribed tasks to creatively conducting educational practices, ultimately achieving the sustainable advancement of role transformation.

4. Reconstruction Strategies for the Role Transformation of Counselors in Higher Vocational Colleges

Building on the preceding analysis of role dilemmas and internal logic, the following strategies map directly: conceptual reconstruction addresses identity inertia, capability reconstruction targets competence gaps, institutional reconstruction tackles administrative overload, and ecological reconstruction sustains long-term growth.

4.1. Conceptual Reconstruction: Guiding the Upgrade of Role Cognition with the Spirit of Educators

The primary prerequisite for role reconstruction lies in a fundamental shift at the conceptual level. On the one hand, counselors must break free from the cognitive framework of being mere “task executors”, re-examine the educational nature and professional value of their work, and establish “teaching and educating” and “ideological guidance”—rather than “task completion” and “inspection response”—as the core purposes of their profession. On the other hand, higher vocational colleges should guide counselors to deeply understand the essence of the spirit of educators through thematic workshops, exemplar demonstration, and cultural cultivation, translating it into a value coordinate and a code of conduct in their daily work. Only by achieving an identity shift from “administrator” to “educator” at the deepest conceptual level can role reconstruction possess sustained intrinsic motivation.

4.2. Capability Reconstruction: Building the Core Competency System for Expert-Style Counselors

The key support for shifting from “task-oriented” to “expert-style” lies in the systematic enhancement of capabilities. The core competencies of expert-style counselors should encompass three levels: first, the ability of ideological guidance, that is, the capacity to grasp students’ ideological trends and conduct effective ideological and political education; second, the ability of professional judgment, that is, the capacity to demonstrate professionalism in identifying, diagnosing, and intervening in students’ developmental issues; and third, the ability of practical reflection, that is, the awareness and capacity to continuously engage in self-examination and improvement in daily practice (Zhang & Luo, 2025). Higher vocational colleges should accordingly build a tiered and classified training system, providing differentiated capability enhancement plans for counselors at various developmental stages, and driving their shift from experiential operation to professionalized practice.

4.3. Institutional Reconstruction: Improving the Support and Safeguard Mechanism for Role Transformation

The implementation of concepts and the enhancement of capabilities require effective institutional safeguards. First, clearly define the job responsibility boundaries of counselors, establish a diversion and collaboration mechanism for routine tasks, liberate counselors from non-professional affairs, and free up time and space for professional practice. Non-professional affairs to be reassigned include tuition fee collection (to Financial Office), routine data reporting (to Academic Affairs), and venue booking (to General Administration). These tasks, unrelated to ideological education or psychological guidance, should be transferred to specialized units, freeing counselors for expert-style roles. Second, improve the professional title evaluation and professional development channels for counselors, establish an evaluation criterion centered on educational effectiveness, and ensure

that professional growth receives institutional recognition and incentives. Third, establish an assessment and guidance mechanism for practicing the spirit of educators, integrate the requirements of role transformation into the entire process of counselors' professional development, and form an institutionalized and normalized synergy for advancement. Indicators for assessing institutional reconstruction include: protected time for student guidance (weekly hours freed from administrative tasks), participation in professional development (training sessions attended and certifications earned), and documented counseling outcomes (cases of ideological intervention or career guidance recorded). These metrics evaluate whether role transformation yields tangible educational effectiveness.

4.4. Ecological Reconstruction: Creating an Educational Environment Led by the Spirit of Educators

Role transformation is not merely self-renewal at the individual level; it relies even more on the overall support of the organizational ecology. Higher vocational colleges should build an educational ecology led by the spirit of educators from the perspective of cultural development: in organizational culture, they should champion the value orientation of "student-oriented and professional grounding", and elevate counselors to a principal position in the educational system (Li, 2024); in team building, they should foster teams of expert-style counselors to promote experience sharing and collaborative growth; in atmosphere cultivation, they should identify and publicize advanced exemplars of expert-style counselors, so as to form an organizational culture that respects professionalism and honors education. By nurturing individual growth through the power of ecology, role transformation is shifted from a passive requirement to a conscious pursuit.

5. Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. As a conceptual analysis, the proposed four-dimensional reconstruction pathway is normative rather than empirically tested. Its applicability may vary considerably across higher vocational colleges. Specifically, institutional governance structures, staffing levels, student demographic profiles, and the availability of professional-support services differ widely between institutions, meaning that the pace and depth of counselor role transformation will inevitably diverge in practice. For example, resource-rich colleges may achieve rapid institutional restructuring, while those with constrained staffing may remain task-oriented for an extended period. Future research should empirically examine how these contextual factors shape the translation of educator spirit into concrete role practices across diverse institutional settings.

6. Conclusion

The spirit of educators provides profound value guidance for the role reconstruction of counselors in higher vocational colleges. This paper has systematically ex-

plored the transformation path of counselors in higher vocational colleges from three dimensions: realistic examination, internal logic, and reconstruction strategies. The professional reconstruction of the counselor role is not only an inherent requirement for the high-quality development of higher vocational education, but also a logical imperative for fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, and holds significant theoretical and practical value for promoting the professional development of the counselor team.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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