

Research on Role Imbalance, Symbiosis Dilemma and Empowerment Reconstruction Strategies of University Counselors in the Scenario of Digital and Intelligent Education

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Abstract

The digital and intelligent transformation has profoundly reshaped the structural and operational logic of ideological and political education in Chinese universities. The new educational paradigm characterized by human-machine collaboration, virtual-real integration, and precise empowerment has deconstructed the closed ecosystem and one-way transmission pattern of traditional ideological and political education, leaving university counselors trapped in a structural dilemma of role ambiguity, functional alienation, and declining discursive authority. From the perspective of symbiosis theory (symbiotic units, symbiotic modes, and symbiotic environments), the four core actors—technology, counselors, students, and institutional environment—within the digital-intelligent education system present multiple contradictions such as asymmetric symbiosis, partial-benefit symbiosis, discrete symbiosis, and insufficient environmental support, which directly lead to the adaptive failure of counselors' traditional roles and the lagging construction of new roles. Based on the three-dimensional model of symbiosis theory, this paper systematically explains the internal mechanism and practical imbalance of counselors' role evolution in the digital-intelligent scenario. Facing the new normal of digital education, it reconstructs four core new roles for counselors: the value leader of digital ideological and political education, the precise supplier of intelligent education services, the cyber-ecosystem governor, and the hub of teacher-student symbiotic relations. Furthermore, it constructs a trinity collaborative empowerment system of technological empowerment, institutional empowerment, and ecological empowerment, aiming to resolve symbiotic conflicts in the digital education field, promote the professional and digital-intelligent transformation of the counselor team, and serve the high-quality development

of university IPE and the implementation of the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education in the new era.

Keywords

Digital and Intelligent Education, University Counselors, Symbiosis Theory, Role Imbalance, Role Reconstruction, Empowerment Paths

1. Introduction

With the in-depth integration of artificial intelligence, big data, new media technologies and higher education, digital and intelligent education (operationally defined as the new educational paradigm that integrates digital technology, intelligent algorithms and educational practice to realize online-offline integrated education, precise student services and human-machine collaborative governance) has become an important transformation direction for higher education to implement the fundamental task of “strengthening morality and cultivating people” in the new era. In 2021, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in the New Era, pointing out that “we should promote the in-depth integration of the traditional advantages of ideological and political work with information technology, turning the Internet from the biggest variable into the biggest increment for the development of the cause”. As frontline implementers of ideological and political education and direct guides for students’ growth, university counselors’ role positioning and performance capabilities directly determine the effectiveness of digital and intelligent education implementation.

Under the traditional educational model, university counselors have formed a classic role system as ideological and political educators, student managers, and growth service providers, which is suitable for the offline fixed and one-way output educational scenario. However, in the digital and intelligent educational scenario, the transformative characteristics of decentralized information dissemination, diversified students’ growth needs, diversified educational subjects, and intelligent educational methods have completely broken the ecological balance of traditional education. Symbiosis theory, which focuses on the interdependence, interaction and balanced evolution of multiple units within a complex system, including three core dimensions: symbiotic units, symbiotic modes and symbiotic environments, provides a new analytical framework for interpreting the complex ecology of digital and intelligent education [1]. Compared with single role theory or social technical theory that only focuses on individual roles or technical applications, symbiosis theory takes a holistic perspective to examine the interactive relations among technology, people and environment, making it the most suitable theoretical framework for analyzing the multi-subject complex system of digital and intelligent education. The digital and intelligent education system is a com-

plex symbiotic system composed of counselors, students, digital technologies, and educational institutional environments. The adaptability of each unit, the coordination of interaction modes, and the inclusiveness of the environment directly affect educational effectiveness and counselors' role positioning [2].

This paper adopts a qualitative conceptual analysis method combining literature research and practical observation to carry out the research. It extracts the core analytical elements of symbiotic units, symbiotic modes, and symbiotic environments, constructs a three-dimensional analytical framework, and systematically dissects the internal mechanism and symbiosis dilemma of counselors' role imbalance, so as to ensure that the research conclusions have solid theoretical basis and practical support. Based on the above background, supported by the underlying logic of symbiosis theory, this paper analyzes the deep-seated mechanism of counselors' role imbalance in the digital-intelligent scenario, accurately identifies multiple symbiotic contradictions and dilemmas, reconstructs a new role system suitable for digital-intelligent education, and constructs a systematic empowerment path, so as to provide theoretical reference and practical plans for the digital transformation of counselors and the high-quality development of ideological and political education in universities.

2. The Practical Evolution Logic of University Counselors' Roles in the Digital and Intelligent Educational Scenario

The reconstruction of the university educational field by digital and intelligent technologies is not a simple technological superposition, but an all-round transformation of educational concepts, interaction modes, functional boundaries, and ecological patterns, promoting the iteration of counselors' roles from traditional fixed forms to new dynamic forms. The evolution logic is mainly reflected in three dimensions.

Firstly, the educational interaction mode has transformed from "one-way indoctrination" to "two-way symbiosis". In the traditional ideological and political education scenario, counselors were the absolute subjects of information output, value guidance, and management constraints, while students were in the passive object position, forming a one-way and fixed interactive relationship with clear roles, powers, and responsibilities, and a fixed performance mode for counselors. In the digital and intelligent scenario, new media platforms have broken the barriers of information dissemination. Students can obtain diverse information, express personal views, and participate in public issues through the Internet. The teacher-student interaction has transformed from a one-way mode dominated by counselors to a symbiotic mode of two-way communication, equal interaction, and collaborative growth between teachers and students. This interactive transformation requires counselors to abandon the traditional indoctrination role and turn to companion, empowering, and guiding roles.

Secondly, the educational field has expanded from "offline single" to "all-domain integration". The traditional performance scenarios of counselors were con-

centrated in the offline campus space, and their work focused on daily management, offline ideological and political education, academic assistance, and other fields. Digital and intelligent transformation has broken the boundaries between online and offline education. The cyberspace has become the core field for students' ideological activities, social communication, and value formation. New work contents such as online public opinion, online ideological trends, digital mental health, and online behavior norms have been incorporated into the core responsibilities of counselors. The all-domain expansion of the educational field has extended counselors' roles from offline affairs managers and offline educators to online network governors and ideological leaders, greatly broadening the role dimensions.

Thirdly, educational tools have upgraded from "artificial-dominated" to "human-machine collaboration". Digital and intelligent tools under big data and artificial intelligence have realized the accurate capture and intelligent analysis of students' ideological trends, behavioral data, and academic status, breaking the traditional performance mode of counselors relying on empirical judgment and manual investigation. They can dynamically and timely intervene to resolve potential campus network public opinion risks, guide students to establish a correct view of the Internet, regulate online behaviors, create a clear, healthy, and positive campus network educational ecology, and consolidate the ideological security line of higher education institutions.

3. The Symbiosis Dilemma of University Counselors in the Digital and Intelligent Educational Scenario

From the perspective of symbiosis theory, the digital and intelligent educational system is composed of four symbiotic units: counselors, students, digital technologies, and educational institutional environments [3]. The imbalance of the symbiotic relationship among these units directly leads to the role imbalance of counselors.

3.1 Asymmetric Symbiosis among Symbiotic Units

The asymmetric symbiosis mainly manifests in the unbalanced power and interest distribution among the four symbiotic units. On the one hand, digital technologies have shown a tendency of "technological dominance". A large number of intelligent management systems and data analysis tools have been introduced into the educational field, and the technical logic has gradually replaced the educational logic, making counselors reduced to operators and implementers of technical tools, and their professional autonomy and educational initiative have been weakened. On the other hand, the power of information discourse has shifted from counselors to students. Students can obtain diverse information through multiple channels, and their ability to independently think and judge has been enhanced, while counselors' traditional advantage of information monopoly has been lost, resulting in the weakening of their discourse power in value guidance.

In addition, the educational institutional environment has not kept pace with the development of digital and intelligent education, and the existing systems and mechanisms are difficult to provide effective support for counselors' role transformation, leading to the imbalance of the symbiotic relationship between counselors and the institutional environment.

3.2. Loose Symbiosis Mode

The symbiosis mode refers to the interaction way and cooperation mechanism among symbiotic units. At present, the symbiosis mode among the four symbiotic units in the digital and intelligent educational field is relatively loose, lacking effective interaction and deep cooperation. Firstly, the interaction between counselors and digital technologies is superficial. Most counselors only use digital tools for simple information release and daily management, and fail to deeply integrate digital technologies into the whole process of ideological and political education, resulting in the separation of technology and education. Secondly, the symbiotic relationship between counselors and students is not close enough. Although online communication channels have been established, the interaction is often one-way and formalistic, lacking in-depth emotional communication and value resonance, and failing to form a real two-way symbiotic relationship. Thirdly, the cooperation among multiple educational subjects is insufficient. Professional course teachers, administrative departments, and social educational subjects lack effective coordination and cooperation in digital and intelligent education, resulting in fragmented educational resources and repeated work, which affects the overall effect of education [4].

3.3. Unbalanced Symbiosis Environment

The symbiosis environment refers to the external conditions and institutional guarantees for the survival and development of symbiotic units. The current symbiosis environment of digital and intelligent education is unbalanced, which restricts the role transformation of counselors. Firstly, the digital infrastructure and technical support are insufficient. Some universities have not established a sound digital educational platform and technical service system, and the technical level and application ability of counselors are uneven, which affects the effect of digital and intelligent education. Secondly, the institutional guarantee system is not perfect. The existing post responsibilities, assessment and evaluation, and incentive mechanisms of counselors are still based on the traditional educational model, which cannot adapt to the new requirements of digital and intelligent education, and fail to provide effective institutional support for counselors' role transformation. Thirdly, the digital literacy and educational concept of counselors need to be improved. Some counselors have insufficient understanding of digital and intelligent education, backward educational concepts, and low digital literacy, which makes them unable to effectively adapt to the new educational scenario and carry out their work smoothly.

4. The Reconstruction of University Counselors' New Roles in the Digital and Intelligent Educational Scenario

Combined with the symbiosis dilemmas identified above, the four roles reconstructed in this chapter form a corresponding relationship: the problem of asymmetric symbiosis of symbiotic units requires counselors to reshape their value-leading identity and regain the right to speak in ideological and political education, corresponding to the Value Leader of Digital Ideological and Political Education; the loose and fragmented symbiosis mode requires counselors to provide precise education services relying on intelligent tools and build a multi-subject coordination bridge, corresponding to the Practitioner of Digital-Intelligent Education Services and the Hub of Teacher-Student Symbiotic Connection respectively; the overall imbalance of the symbiotic environment and the disorder of the network education order require counselors to undertake the responsibility of cyberspace governance, namely the Guardian of Network Ecological Governance. The logical mapping between dilemmas and roles is clear, the core functional boundaries of each role are clear, and the symbiosis contradictions mentioned above are targeted to be resolved.

4.1. Value Leader of Digital Ideological and Political Education

Core function: Top-level value guidance and ideological direction control, focusing on “ideological value shaping”. In the digital and intelligent educational scenario, counselors should take the lead in adhering to the educational logic, give full play to their professional advantages in ideological and political education, and become the value leader of digital ideological and political education. Firstly, they should strengthen the research on the characteristics of students' ideological and political education in the digital age, grasp the law of students' ideological changes, and carry out targeted value guidance. Secondly, they should make full use of digital technologies to create a three-dimensional and interactive ideological and political education situation, integrate ideological and political elements into various digital educational resources, and enhance the attractiveness and influence of ideological and political education. Thirdly, they should guide students to correctly view the impact of digital technologies on values, help them establish a correct view of the Internet, information, and values, and cultivate their ability to distinguish right from wrong and resist bad information in the digital environment.

4.2. Practitioner of Digital and Intelligent Educational Services

Core function: Precise personalized service and daily growth support, focusing on “student development service”. Counselors should transform from traditional managers to practitioners of digital and intelligent educational services, and provide students with personalized and precise educational services through digital technologies. Firstly, they should use big data analysis tools to accurately grasp students' growth needs, learning status, and ideological dynamics, and establish a student portrait system to provide a basis for personalized education services. Secondly, they should build an online-offline integrated educational service platform,

provide students with one-stop services such as academic guidance, psychological counseling, employment guidance, and life assistance, and improve the efficiency and quality of educational services. Thirdly, they should actively promote the innovation of educational service models, such as using artificial intelligence chatbots to provide 24-hour online consulting services, and using virtual reality technologies to carry out situational education activities, so as to meet students' diverse and personalized needs.

4.3. Guardian of Network Ecological Governance

Core function: Cyberspace governance and public opinion risk prevention, focusing on "network environment governance". In the digital and intelligent educational scenario, the cyberspace has become an important field for students' growth and development, and network ecological governance has become an important responsibility of counselors. Firstly, they should strengthen the monitoring and early warning of campus network public opinion, establish a rapid response mechanism for network public opinion, and timely intervene to resolve network public opinion risks. Secondly, they should guide students to abide by network ethics and norms, advocate civilized network behaviors, and resist network rumors, cyberbullying, and other bad phenomena. Thirdly, they should actively participate in the construction of campus network culture, create a positive and healthy network cultural atmosphere, and make the cyberspace a new position for ideological and political education.

4.4. Hub of Teacher-Student Symbiotic Connection

Core function: Multi-subject coordination and resource integration, focusing on "symbiotic relationship construction". Based on the logic of multi-symbiotic and coordinated development, counselors should be reconstructed as the hub of teacher-student symbiotic connection to break the symbiotic barriers among technology, students, and the university educational system. On the one hand, they should build an online two-way interactive platform between teachers and students, break the one-way educational barrier, actively adapt to students' digital communication habits, and build an equal, interactive, and two-way empowering teacher-student symbiotic relationship. On the other hand, they should connect the university's digital and intelligent educational system, technical resources, and students' growth needs, integrate online and offline educational resources, coordinate the digital and intelligent educational work of professional course teachers, administrative departments, and social educational subjects, resolve the symbiotic conflicts among multiple subjects, and promote the coordinated development of all-domain digital and intelligent education [5].

5. Multi-Dimensional Empowerment Strategies for the Role Transformation of University Counselors in the Digital and Intelligent Scenario

To resolve the dilemma of counselors' role imbalance and ensure the effective im-

plementation of new roles, based on the three-dimensional framework of symbiosis theory, this paper constructs a systematic empowerment system from three dimensions of technical empowerment, mechanism empowerment, and ecological empowerment, so as to promote the benign interaction among various symbiotic units of digital and intelligent education and the optimization and upgrading of the symbiosis mode.

5.1. Technical Empowerment: Improving Counselors' Core Competence in Digital and Intelligent Performance

Focusing on the short board of counselors' digital literacy, a systematic and normalized digital capability training system should be constructed. Firstly, a hierarchical and classified training system should be built. Differentiated training courses should be offered for new counselors and senior counselors, covering core modules such as big data learning situation analysis, digital ideological and political content creation, network public opinion response, and the application of artificial intelligence educational tools, so as to make up for the short board of digital and intelligent capabilities. Secondly, a practical training platform should be built. Relying on the university's digital ideological and political studio and network educational position, counselors should be promoted to carry out digital and intelligent educational practice regularly, so as to improve their technical application, online education, and network guidance capabilities in practical operation. Thirdly, an elite team of digital and intelligent education should be established. The leading and exemplary role of excellent counselors should be brought into play, and experience exchange and case sharing should be carried out to improve the overall digital and intelligent performance level of the team and realize the deep integration of technical tools and educational work.

5.2. Mechanism Empowerment: Improving the Institutional Guarantee System for Digital and Intelligent Education

Focusing on the lagging problem of the symbiotic institutional environment, a long-term mechanism should be improved to provide institutional support for role transformation. Firstly, a post responsibility mechanism should be clarified. The core power and responsibility boundaries of counselors in the digital and intelligent scenario should be refined, unnecessary digital and intelligent transactional work should be stripped, the division of labor between human and machine educational functions should be clarified, the role generalization and functional dislocation should be eliminated, and the orderly development of core educational work should be ensured. Secondly, a dynamic assessment and evaluation mechanism should be established. The counselor assessment system should be optimized, the assessment weight of transactional work should be weakened, and core assessment indicators such as digital ideological and political education effectiveness, network ecological governance, students' precise empowerment, and teacher-student symbiotic construction should be added, so as to establish an assessment orientation of "valuing education over affairs" and stimulate the internal

motivation for role transformation. Thirdly, an incentive and guarantee mechanism should be established. Special awards for digital ideological and political education should be set up to commend excellent digital and intelligent educational achievements and high-quality network educational projects, so as to encourage counselors to actively innovate the digital and intelligent educational model.

5.3. Ecological Empowerment: Building a Benign and Mutually Beneficial Digital and Intelligent Educational Ecology

Based on the optimization of the overall symbiotic system, a multi-subject coordinated and two-way mutually beneficial digital and intelligent educational ecology should be built. Firstly, the human-machine symbiotic relationship should be optimized. Universities should promote the iterative upgrading of digital and intelligent educational tools in a coordinated manner, simplify the transactional operation process, focus on the core function of educational empowerment, let digital technologies return to the essence of education, and realize a benign symbiotic mode in which technologies serve education and empower teachers and students. Secondly, the teacher-student symbiotic relationship should be reshaped. Counselors should be guided to change their educational concepts, abandon the traditional control thinking, build a normalized online communication channel relying on new media platforms, listen to students' demands, respond to students' needs, and build an equal, interactive, and collaborative teacher-student symbiotic community. Thirdly, a multi-dimensional collaborative symbiotic platform should be built. The digital and intelligent educational resources of universities, families, and society should be integrated, the multi-subject online collaborative education should be promoted, the educational barriers should be broken, and an all-domain linked and benign circulating digital and intelligent educational ecology should be constructed to provide a high-quality environmental support for counselors to perform their new roles.

6. Conclusion

Digital and intelligent transformation is an inevitable trend for the high-quality development of ideological and political education in higher education in the new era, and it also promotes the systematic reconstruction and iterative upgrading of university counselors' roles. At present, in the digital and intelligent educational field, the problems of role imbalance, functional dislocation, and symbiotic conflicts faced by counselors are essentially the adaptability contradictions between the traditional educational ecology and the new digital and intelligent educational ecology. Examining the dilemma of counselors' role transformation based on symbiosis theory, by reconstructing the new role system of value leader of digital ideological and political education, practitioner of intelligent educational services, guardian of network ecological governance, and hub of teacher-student symbiotic connection, combined with the multi-dimensional coordinated empowerment strategies of technology, mechanism, and ecology, we can effectively resolve the

symbiotic contradictions in digital and intelligent education and promote the professional and digital-intelligent transformation of university counselor teams. In the future, universities need to continuously optimize the digital and intelligent educational ecology, improve the counselor role empowerment system, promote multiple educational subjects to achieve symmetrical and mutually beneficial symbiosis, let digital and intelligent technologies truly empower the fundamental task of strengthening morality and cultivating people, and help improve the quality and efficiency of ideological and political education in higher education in the new era.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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