Research on the transformation of management behavior of university counselors under the perspective of contradiction theory

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Abstract: This study examines the transformation of university counselors 'professional philosophies into practical management practices through a dialectical lens. The research demonstrates that counselors' work philosophies are fundamentally tied to the core questions of "what kind of individuals to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom they are cultivated," with the ultimate aim of aligning with national development needs and fostering students 'holistic growth. The implementation process reveals both internal and external challenges: Internally, these include insufficient reform awareness, professional attitude issues, and limitations in personal management capabilities. Externally, conflicts arise between institutional policies and individualized educational philosophies, as well as misalignment between administrative objectives and students' actual needs. To address these issues, the study proposes three key strategies: enhancing counselors 'professional competencies, reconciling institutional policies with individual philosophies, and tailoring work philosophies to meet students' specific needs, thereby advancing the achievement of educational goals.

The guiding philosophy of university counselors is deeply rooted in the fundamental educational question of "what kind of people to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom to cultivate them." At its core, this philosophy aligns with the needs of national and social development, serving as both a necessary choice to fulfill the mission of "cultivating talents for the Party and the nation" and a key approach to meeting students 'diverse demands for all-round development in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education. As a conceptual and value-based understanding of the counselor's work system, it maintains stability and clear directionality. It encompasses the implementation of concepts such as "four-good teachers," "four guides," and "four unifications," permeating all aspects including ideological-political education, daily affairs management, mental health counseling, and academic support. Through the process of "conceptual internalization – plan formulation – action execution – feedback adjustment," these principles are transformed into practical management behaviors. Management behaviors refer to the operational methods counselors employ in student affairs, primarily manifested in ideological-political education, daily management, mental health support, and academic guidance. These practices represent the external application of counselors' work philosophies and serve as crucial means to achieve educational goals. The work philosophy provides direction and justification for management behaviors, ensuring they align with educational objectives and societal needs. Conversely, management behaviors are the concrete implementation of these philosophies. Through effective management practices, abstract concepts can be transformed into tangible educational outcomes. Counselors must continuously train, exchange ideas, and reflect to internalize advanced work philosophies. Through repeated practice, they develop scientific and effective management strategies that drive the achievement of educational goals.

1 Internal and External Contradictions in the Working Philosophy and Management Behavior of College Counselors

1.1 Internal contradictions between working philosophy and management behavior

The internal contradiction (i.e. internal cause) of things is the source and power of the movement of things themselves and the fundamental cause of the development of things.

Transformation Awareness. With the profound changes in education, higher demands are placed on the work of university counselors. As the backbone force in conducting ideological and political education for college students, university counselors serve as organizers, implementers, and guides for daily administrative tasks, as well as disseminators of Marxist theory. Insufficient support for counselors' academic advancement, training exchanges, and research opportunities has constrained the overall development and professional growth of the counseling team. Unclear career positioning affects professional value recognition, with some counselors focusing primarily on daily administrative management and performance evaluations, creating a gap between personal career aspirations and actual circumstances. Confronted with fragmented administrative tasks and the complexity of student groups, counselors lack clear career positioning and focus, resulting in a lack of long-term direction in their professional development.
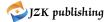
Professional Ethics. Counselors face severe occupational burnout [1], low professional value recognition [2], and insufficient specialization [3], with complex workloads leading to diminished focus. Their unmet needs in professional identity, knowledge structure, and career development paths gradually erode their enthusiasm. Meanwhile, the blurred boundaries between work and personal life caused by generalized job responsibilities make it difficult for counselors to maintain work-life balance. They experience growing anxiety due to job-related stress, particularly from the persistent pressure of student safety and stability issues.

Personal Management Competence. Personal management competence remains a critical challenge for counselors in practice. The implementation of work philosophies is often constrained by personal management capabilities, with this contradiction primarily manifesting in three aspects: First, the mismatch between advanced philosophies and counselors 'actual management skills. While counselors require psychological counseling expertise for mental health support, many lack systematic psychological training, leaving them ill-equipped to handle complex student psychological issues. Second, the disconnect between practical experience and theoretical implementation. Effective philosophy execution relies on counselors' rich work experience and deep understanding of student needs. Young counselors often lack sufficient practical experience, making it difficult for them to adapt flexibly to diverse student demands. Their management skills and professional capabilities may fall short of fully realizing these philosophies. This experience gap directly impacts their ability to translate work philosophies into practical management behaviors. Third, the level of professional competence and vocational skills directly determines work effectiveness and success. To become qualified counselors, individuals must continuously improve their qualities according to the standards of "strong political awareness, professional expertise, strict discipline, and upright conduct."

Due to their limited experience and insufficient theoretical foundation, counselors often exhibit weak management awareness [4] and lack professional knowledge and experience in educational administration [5]. This is primarily reflected in: unclear work strategies for strengthening counselors' core responsibilities and effectively conducting student management tasks; inadequate understanding of national and provincial policies regarding ideological and political education for college students; insufficient systematic research and planning capabilities for key student affairs projects; underdeveloped ability to coordinate branded initiatives with personal career development for mutual reinforcement; shortcomings in educational management techniques and service approaches, including lack of psychological crisis anticipation skills for students.

1.2 External contradictions between working philosophy and management behavior

The conflict between counselors 'work philosophy and institutional policies remains a primary external challenge in student affairs management. While university administration operates under collective norms, counselors emphasize personalized student support, creating inherent tensions[6]. The institutional framework's constraints on individualized approaches often force counselors to balance regulatory requirements with students' unique needs. For instance, dormitory regulations may enforce strict schedules, yet some students require flexible arrangements due to academic commitments or personal circumstances. When enforcing policies, counselors must navigate between institutional mandates and individual

preferences, frequently resulting in workplace conflicts[7]. Another core contradiction involves the clash between institutional objectives and student demands. While universities pursue unified goals like academic achievement and campus discipline, students demonstrate diverse needs including interest development and personalized learning rhythms. This mismatch between institutional priorities and individual aspirations compels counselors to continually mediate, striving to achieve equilibrium between collective goals and individual needs[8].

1.3 Contradiction between philosophy and student expectations

There exists a fundamental tension between counselors 'professional philosophy and students' expectations. This conflict primarily manifests in counselors 'struggle to balance students' individualized needs with institutional management requirements [9]. The tension between personal aspirations and collective governance becomes particularly acute in student affairs. While many students seek greater autonomy—especially in extracurricular activities and personal development—school policies often impose restrictions that limit their freedom. This creates a paradox where counselors find it challenging to fully meet students 'individualized expectations in practice [10]. The mismatch between counselors' aspirations and practical limitations also persists widely. Although counselors strive to accommodate diverse student needs, factors like limited administrative capacity and institutional constraints make comprehensive support difficult. For instance, students requiring in-depth career guidance often face time constraints that prevent personalized services, resulting in a gap between expectations and actual counseling practices.

2 Analysis of internal and external contradictions between college counselors' working concepts and management behaviors

2.1 Analysis of the nature and characteristics of internal contradictions

The internal contradictions of university counselors are mainly reflected in the conflict between their work philosophy and personal management ability. These internal contradictions affect the implementation of educational philosophy and management behavior of counselors in their work.

Challenges in Implementing Educational Philosophy by Counselors. Counselors face multiple challenges when implementing educational philosophies such as "student-centered development" and "moral education priority." First, counselors 'personal capabilities often fail to fully meet the requirements of educational philosophies. Specifically, their abilities in handling students' psychological issues and career planning consultations frequently fall short of the conceptual standards expected. Counselors' roles are multifaceted, requiring them to balance ideological education with daily administrative tasks. The need to switch between multiple roles makes it difficult to specialize in each area, leading to challenges in ensuring quality and effectiveness when implementing these philosophies. Counselors often lack deep professional backgrounds and systematic training in academic guidance and career planning, which directly impacts the practical implementation of these concepts and the effectiveness of their work. The gap between theory and practice manifests in various forms. University counselors frequently encounter disconnection between theoretical principles and practical implementation. Although the work philosophy advocates personalized and comprehensive attention to students, counselors in daily management face constraints like limited working hours, energy, and resources, making it difficult to truly achieve the theoretical "student-centered" approach. This gap in management practices takes typical forms. For instance, in academic support and mental health assistance, counselors should theoretically provide in-depth personalized guidance, but in reality, managing large student populations leaves them with insufficient time and energy for individualized tracking and support. The gap between theory and practice also makes the role of counselors in the eyes of students unclear.

2.2 Analysis of the complexity of external contradictions

External conflict refers to the conflict between the counselor's working concept and the external environment such as school and society, which increases the difficulty of the counselor to implement the concept in the management work.

The complexity of conflicts between institutional management systems and counselors 'philosophies. University administrative frameworks typically prioritize collective discipline and standardized protocols, while counselors emphasize

personalized student support. The tension between rigid institutional policies and counselors' flexible management approaches creates a classic external conflict. For instance, strict dormitory schedules and academic attendance requirements often clash with students 'individualized learning needs and personal lifestyles. Furthermore, institutional evaluation systems significantly impact counselors' work. Their performance is measured through standardized quantitative metrics that overlook efforts in personalized guidance and student development. This evaluation mechanism leads counselors to focus more on meeting assessment targets than providing tailored support to students.

The Impact of Social Environment on College Counselors 'Philosophies. Changes in the social environment significantly influence the working philosophies of university counselors. For instance, as employment trends evolve, society increasingly emphasizes graduates' employability, requiring counselors to devote more effort to career planning and employment guidance. However, these societal demands often conflict with internal institutional policies, forcing counselors to balance student needs with societal expectations. The growing need for psychological counseling demands more time investment from counselors, presenting new challenges to their capabilities and resources while intensifying external contradictions.

2.3 Interaction mechanism of internal and external contradictions

The internal and external contradictions of university counselors do not exist in isolation, but influence and interact with each other, and jointly shape the management behavior pattern of counselors.

The dynamic interplay between internal and external contradictions: The evolving relationship between individuals and organizations. This interplay compels counselors to make continuous adjustments in their management practices. Limited professional competencies make it challenging for counselors to fully implement their work philosophies, while the multifaceted demands from schools and society further intensify work pressure. Constrained by both personal capabilities and external environments, counselors must adapt to various challenges through ongoing practice and refinement. This dynamic interaction is most evident in their dual responsibility to meet institutional management requirements and address students 'individual needs. When conducting ideological education, counselors must not only adhere to the school's unified curriculum but also provide personalized guidance tailored to students' mental states. This dual mandate requires constant self-regulation to maintain a dynamic equilibrium between personal growth and organizational objectives.

Adaptive Behavioral Mechanisms for Counselors in Coexisting Contradictions. When confronting coexisting internal and external contradictions, counselors typically employ multiple behavioral adjustment mechanisms to address challenges. First, counselors need to flexibly balance rigid institutional regulations with individualized student needs, adhering to school policies while striving to meet diverse student demands. Through individual counseling sessions and group activities, counselors can integrate students' personalized needs with institutional requirements to minimize conflicts. Second, counselors can collaborate with other school departments to secure additional resources and support, thereby achieving better alignment between management philosophies and practical implementation. For instance, partnering with the Psychological Counseling Center and Career Guidance Center enables counselors to provide more professional and in-depth support, which helps alleviate limitations in personal capabilities and pressures from external policies.

2.4 Analysis of Internal and External Contradiction Relations Based on Contradiction Theory

The theory of contradiction provides a crucial theoretical perspective for understanding the internal and external contradictions in counselors 'work philosophy and management practices. According to this theory, the development of things is achieved through the unity of opposites. The internal and external contradictions faced by counselors in their work are both problems and driving forces for development. The contradiction between counselors' personal limitations and their high-level concepts drives them to continuously improve their capabilities through training and practice, thereby promoting their professional growth. The conflict between counselors and school management policies also motivates active communication with school administrators to seek innovations and optimizations in management approaches. Counselors can propose more flexible management solutions to provide personalized support for students within policy frameworks. These contradictions drive the continuous optimization and development of counselors 'work practices. The dynamic relationship of unity in opposites and its implications for management behaviors. The theory of contradiction emphasizes the

dynamic relationship of unity in opposites, which offers significant insights for counselors' management practices. In their work, counselors need to learn to find a balance between opposing demands, combining collective management with individualized needs. For instance, when handling student disciplinary issues, counselors must maintain strict standards while considering students' special circumstances and adopting flexible approaches.

Through the analysis of the dynamic relationship between internal and external contradictions, counselors can better understand how to deal with contradictions in their work. Through continuous mediation and adjustment, they can realize the unity of ideas and behaviors, so as to improve the effect of management work and students' satisfaction.

3 Strategies for transforming management behaviors through the work philosophy of university counselors

3.1 Strategies to improve the personal ability of counselors

Enhancing counselors 'professional competencies serves as the foundation for effectively translating educational philosophies into practical management practices. The strategy primarily involves two key components: specialized training programs and reflective practice initiatives. "The development of ideological and political education teams in higher education institutions is becoming increasingly standardized, professionalized, and refined." First, improving professional training. Counselors' expertise directly impacts their management effectiveness. Through systematic training and continuing education, they can enhance skills in psychological counseling and career planning. Universities should collaborate with professional organizations to provide regular training courses like mental health counseling, addressing diverse professional needs. Additionally, encouraging counselors to participate in academic conferences and educational forums helps strengthen their theoretical knowledge and practical skills, facilitating the transformation of educational philosophies into evidence-based management practices. Second, fostering reflective practice. Self-reflection is crucial for improving management performance. Counselors should regularly evaluate their work, assess the effectiveness of their philosophy implementation, identify weaknesses, and make improvements. Activities such as maintaining reflective journals and organizing peer discussions can deepen understanding of core principles, align theory with practice, and strengthen the "student-centered development" philosophy to better meet students' needs.

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