

A Study on the Value-Guiding Role of University Counselors in Students' Development Process

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Abstract: University counselors play a crucial role in students' growth, particularly in shaping their values, psychological development, and social adaptation. As the demands of modern education diversify, the role of counselors has gradually expanded beyond traditional academic guidance to include value leadership, emotional support, and comprehensive ability development. This study analyzes the functions and responsibilities of counselors, exploring their core role in students' growth, especially in addressing students' value needs and psychological development. The research finds that counselors, through personalized educational interventions, can effectively guide students in forming healthy values and enhancing their social adaptability. Future research could further explore the evolving role of counselors in the digital age and how modern technology can enhance value leadership, providing more precise and personalized support for students' holistic development.

Keywords: University Counselors; Student Growth; Value Leadership; Psychological Development; Social Adaptation

Introduction

As key supporters in students' growth, university counselors have important responsibilities in helping students develop academically, psychologically, and socially. With the increasing emphasis on students' overall development in education, the role of counselors is constantly evolving, transitioning from academic advisors to leaders in value formation and providers of psychological support. However, the role of counselors in value leadership has not been fully explored, especially in the context of personalized student needs and social changes. Effectively achieving value leadership and fostering students' self-identity and social responsibility has become an urgent issue. This study aims to explore how counselors can play a value-leading role in students' growth, providing theoretical and practical guidance for future counselor work. The research not only helps clarify counselors' functions and responsibilities but also provides theoretical support for education managers to optimize the counselor's role and enhance education quality.

1. The Role and Functional Positioning of University Counselors

1.1 Analysis of the Responsibilities and Functions of University Counselors

In contemporary higher education, the responsibilities of university counselors have surpassed traditional management functions and shifted toward a comprehensive role of educational guidance and developmental support. Counselors are not only responsible for organizing and coordinating students' daily affairs but also play an important role in psychological counseling, personality development, value cultivation, and academic development. Their core task is to guide students through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral transformations, helping them develop a sound personality and stable value system. Specifically, counselors' work includes academic planning, career counseling, life adaptation, and crisis intervention, aiming to build supportive relationships that promote students' physical and mental health and sustained growth during their university years ^[1].

Given the diverse developmental needs of students, counselors should pay close attention to individual differences and the complexity of developmental stages, relying on systematic evaluation and dynamic feedback mechanisms to achieve personalized and differentiated educational support. In today's rapidly evolving social and informational environments, the boundaries of counselors' functions continue to expand, particularly in the areas of online behavior guidance and media literacy

in digital cognition. Additionally, counselors must possess cross-cultural communication skills and psychological adjustment capabilities to respond to students' adaptation challenges and identity anxiety in the context of multiple cultural impacts. Therefore, the role of university counselors should shift from a "managerial" type to a "growth-leading" type, with the core task of empowering students to establish stable value anchors between self-construction and social integration through continuous companionship and in-depth communication.

1.2 The Core Role of University Counselors in Students' Personal Growth

University counselors play a critical role as facilitators of individual student growth, with their value reflected in their deep and continuous involvement in students' cognitive development, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and behavior norms. At this key stage of students' transition to independent development, counselors, through accurate educational interventions and psychological support mechanisms, assist students in making the transition from dependence to autonomy, helping them develop time management skills, self-regulation abilities, and psychological resilience to cope with complex environments. This support for growth is not limited to the management of specific matters but is based on the trust relationship built between counselors and students, forming continuous feedback and interactive guidance, thereby enhancing students' sense of belonging, security, and motivation for growth.

Counselors' role in guiding values is especially prominent, as they continuously communicate, set examples, and motivate students through reflection, guiding them to make rational judgments when faced with ethical choices, social conflicts, and identity issues. In the context of higher education, students gradually shift from being passive receivers of experience to active builders of values. This process requires counselors to assist them, in their dual roles as educators and conversational partners, in clarifying behavioral boundaries, strengthening a sense of responsibility, and establishing a social identity. Counselors not only need to have professional educational guidance abilities but also must possess keen insight and a spirit of humanistic care to provide stable value references and directional guidance during times of psychological turmoil and cognitive confusion. Therefore, counselors play an integral role in the student growth process, not only guiding externally but also acting as the internal activators and cognitive reshapers of students' development ^[2].

1.3 The Unique Position of University Counselors in Value Leadership

University counselors hold a unique position in value leadership, primarily through providing students with moral and ideological guidance from a long-term perspective. In the traditional education system, value transmission often relies on classroom teaching and academic guidance, while counselors, through close contact and interaction with students, take on a more detailed and comprehensive guiding role. Counselors are not only responsible for transmitting and reinforcing the university's core values in daily life but also help students engage in self-exploration, enabling them to understand the connection between personal choices and social responsibility, ultimately achieving a transition from external norms to internal identification.

Counselors' unique position is further demonstrated in their interdisciplinary and multi-field comprehensive guiding role. Throughout students' growth, counselors are not only academic and career planning guides but also spiritual supporters and emotional guides in the socialization process. Due to the long-term close relationship they maintain with students, counselors are better able to understand individual students' characteristics and needs, thus playing an irreplaceable role in value formation. Through personalized, long-term guidance, counselors help students establish value systems driven by internal motivation, which enables them to maintain self-awareness and social adaptability in the face of social changes and multicultural conflicts.

2. Value Needs in Students' Growth Process and Counselor Intervention

2.1 The Stage Characteristics of Value Development in Students' Growth

In students' growth, especially during the university stage, the formation and development of their values exhibit distinct stages. The value system of university students is not developed overnight but is influenced by multiple factors, including social environment, educational background, and personal experiences. During this process, students gradually transition from the initial values obtained from

family and basic education to a more mature and diversified value system. The university stage, as a critical turning point in life, is when students begin to face the diversity and complexity of society. Particularly in collective life, academic exploration, and interpersonal interactions, students' value cognition and thinking patterns undergo profound changes.

At this stage, the development of students' values shows a trend from dependence on external norms to the internalization of self-cognition. Initially, students' values are strongly influenced by their family, school, and society. However, as self-awareness increases, students gradually begin to reflect on and evaluate the applicability of external influences, thus developing independent thinking abilities. In this process, students face challenges in self-identity and often engage in deep reflections on the meaning of life, career planning, and social responsibility. Therefore, counselors should guide students during this developmental stage through interaction, helping them untangle complex value conflicts and gradually establish more independent, mature, and diversified values ^[3].

2.2 The Intrinsic Connection Between Students' Value Identity and Psychological Development

There is a profound intrinsic connection between students' value identity and psychological development. Value identity is a core component of students' psychological growth, influencing not only their thoughts and beliefs but also significantly determining their emotional responses, behavior choices, and social adaptability. The process of value identity formation is accompanied by the awakening of self-awareness and the internalization of social norms, and it has a significant impact on students' mental health. When students form a stable value identity during their growth, their inner world tends toward harmony and balance, providing a solid foundation for subsequent psychological development.

The formation of value identity is a dynamic process. When facing different social roles and environments, students need to continuously adjust and optimize their values and behaviors. In this process, psychological development, as an important aspect of students' overall development, plays an indispensable role. Psychological development includes the cultivation of basic psychological skills such as emotional management and stress coping and involves how students maintain clear and stable self-awareness in complex social and cultural environments. Therefore, counselors must assist students in identifying and integrating different value systems, offering psychological support and guidance, and promoting the formation of a healthy sense of self-identity as students navigate changing social environments.

2.3 The Guidance Path of University Counselors for Students' Value Needs

University counselors guide students' value needs in the growth process primarily through personalized counseling and educational interventions. Students' value needs during their university years often manifest as multiple demands for self-identity, social responsibility, academic pursuit, and emotional support. Counselors need to flexibly apply different guidance methods and strategies based on students' individual differences and developmental stages. Counselors should not only focus on students' academic development but also provide comprehensive guidance on their thoughts and psychological well-being. Especially during the critical period of value formation, counselors should help students face challenges in the external environment through in-depth dialogue, psychological counseling, and behavioral guidance, fostering their ability to think independently and analyze critically.

The guidance path of counselors for students' value needs should focus on building students' self-identity and enhancing their social adaptability. In this process, counselors need to guide students in discerning and choosing values, helping them develop more rational and adaptive values under the pressures of multiculturalism and societal expectations. Furthermore, counselors should actively guide students to strengthen their emotional management and psychological adjustment, helping them navigate interpersonal relationships and social interactions while addressing value conflicts. This guidance not only shapes students' values but also comprehensively cultivates their psychological resilience and social adaptability, laying a solid foundation for their long-term development.

3. Counselor Value Leadership Strategies and Implementation Mechanisms

3.1 Theoretical Foundation of Counselor Value Leadership Strategies

The value leadership strategies of counselors should be built on a multidisciplinary theoretical foundation, integrating core concepts from fields such as education, psychology, and sociology. The "educational guidance" theory in pedagogy emphasizes that the core of education is to help individuals establish the correct values through purposeful guidance. As a key role in the higher education system, one of the counselor's primary responsibilities is to help students form a healthy value system through detailed communication and guidance, thereby promoting their comprehensive development ^[4].

The "developmental psychology" theory in psychology provides significant support for counselors' value leadership. This theory posits that individuals have different needs and psychological characteristics at different developmental stages, so counselors must provide targeted guidance based on students' growth stages and psychological development levels. For example, during the university student phase, students' self-identity and independence gradually form, and therefore, counselors should respect individual differences during the value leadership process and encourage students to internalize positive social values through guidance and motivation.

Additionally, the "social role theory" in sociology also supports the theoretical foundation for counselors' value leadership strategies. According to this theory, an individual's social behavior and values are often influenced by the social roles they occupy. In universities, counselors, as guides in students' growth, play a vital role. By deeply understanding students' social backgrounds, cultural contexts, and developmental needs, counselors can better provide personalized value leadership strategies, helping students adapt to the social environment and form positive social values.

3.2 Effective Counselor Value Leadership Methods and Implementation Framework

Counselors' value leadership methods should reflect diversity and flexibility, combining students' individual differences, academic backgrounds, and developmental stages, employing suitable strategies and methods to guide values effectively. On a practical level, effective counselor value leadership methods can be realized through emotional support, cognitive guidance, and behavioral motivation.

Emotional support is a foundational method in counselors' value leadership. By establishing a trusting relationship with students, counselors can better understand their inner needs and concerns, providing emotional support and comfort. This support not only helps students alleviate psychological stress when facing academic pressures or life troubles but also provides an emotional basis for guiding their values ^[5].

Cognitive guidance is the core means of counselors' value leadership. Counselors help students form critical thinking and cultivate their ability to make value judgments and decisions by offering targeted thinking training. In this process, counselors can guide students through one-on-one counseling, group discussions, and academic guidance, leading them to deeply analyze and reflect on social issues, helping them form independent thinking patterns and encouraging the development of core values aligned with societal expectations.

Behavioral motivation is another essential tool in the value leadership process. By setting positive behavioral goals and providing incentives, counselors can effectively encourage students to internalize the learned values into concrete actions. For example, counselors can organize volunteer activities, team cooperation projects, and other initiatives to guide students in transforming their identified social values into specific behaviors, thereby enhancing their sense of social responsibility and collective spirit.

The implementation framework for counselors' value leadership should emphasize systematic and dynamic approaches. First, counselors should develop personalized leadership plans based on students' individual characteristics and adjust them dynamically according to students' feedback. Second, counselors should integrate their efforts with the school's academic system, cultural activities, and social practices, providing value cultivation and guidance in various environments through multi-dimensional and multi-channel interactions.

3.3 Evaluation and Improvement Path of Counselor Value Leadership Effectiveness

Evaluating the effectiveness of counselors' value leadership in students' growth is a key step in

improving the quality and effectiveness of their work. Effectiveness evaluation not only provides feedback for counselors' work but also offers theoretical and practical guidance for their future value leadership strategies. In this process, counselors' value leadership effectiveness should be comprehensively evaluated from multiple aspects, including students' value changes, psychological development, and social adaptability.

First, changes in students' values are an important dimension in evaluating counselors' leadership effectiveness. By conducting regular surveys, individual interviews, and other methods, counselors can understand students' value transformations and growth, thus assessing the practical effects on value shaping. Additionally, counselors can observe students' performance in class discussions and social activities to determine whether their values have been internalized and transformed into concrete behaviors.

Psychological development is also a key reference point in evaluating counselors' value leadership effectiveness. Counselors, by guiding students in emotional management, stress coping, and other psychological skills development, help enhance students' psychological resilience, improving their ability to adapt when facing setbacks and challenges. By assessing students' mental health, counselors can further understand the effectiveness of their value leadership strategies ^[6].

Improvement in social adaptability is another critical dimension in measuring counselors' leadership effectiveness. Students' social adaptability is reflected in their ability to effectively handle interpersonal relationships, integrate into group life, and assume social responsibilities. By organizing diverse extracurricular activities and social practices, counselors help students link the values they have learned with societal needs, thus enhancing their social adaptability.

The path to improving counselors' value leadership effectiveness lies in continuously optimizing leadership strategies and methods. Counselors should enhance their educational philosophy and psychological counseling skills through professional training, academic research, and peer exchanges. Furthermore, schools should provide counselors with more practical opportunities and support to help them better understand students' needs and implement effective value leadership. Through continuous evaluation and reflection, counselors can refine their leadership strategies, ultimately achieving the comprehensive development of students' overall qualities.

Conclusion

University counselors play a crucial role in guiding students' values throughout their growth process. Their role extends beyond academic guidance to include comprehensive support in shaping students' values, mental health, and social adaptability. Through methods such as emotional support, cognitive guidance, and behavioral motivation, counselors help students establish the correct values, enhancing their sense of social responsibility and collectivism. Future research should focus on how counselors can utilize information technology and data analysis to further improve their work efficiency, and explore the transformation and innovative approaches of counselors' roles in the digital age. Additionally, as students' needs diversify, counselors' personalized guidance strategies must continue to be optimized to meet the growing needs and societal challenges of students in the new era.

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