Reflections on Academic Guidance for University Students in the Internet Age

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Abstract: *With the rapid development of social economy and information technology, the production and dissemination of knowledge have grown exponentially, posing tremendous challenges to traditional educational systems, educational content, and students' learning concepts and methods. Conducting effective research on academic advising for college students is of great significance for enhancing national core competitiveness and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation; it is also closely related to students' individual development and represents a necessity for students to grow and succeed. Although current academic advising for college students is receiving increasing attention, its specific implementation still remains at a universally applicable model. Under the concept of "Classification for Excellence, Diversified Paths to Success," a complete and stable working model has yet to be formed. The author, based on practical work, proposes the following reflections on academic advising for college students in higher education institutions: In the work of academic advising for college students, efforts should be made to update and transform students' learning concepts, popularize learning methods, emphasize innovative learning education, guide students to develop reading habits, carry out career planning education, continuously consolidate the student growth-centered educational concept, and actively guide students to use AI tools to support their academic studies.*

Keywords: *academic advising; higher education institutions; academic advisors; educational philosophy*

1. Research Background

Conducting research on academic advising for college students is of great significance for enhancing national core competitiveness and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. During the critical period of students' growth and development, academic advising in higher education institutions can guide students to better understand what to learn, how to learn, and how well they have learned, thereby helping them further grow into the pillars of the motherland. To cultivate first-class talents and fulfill the "Four Services," higher education institutions must start from the source of talent cultivation, establish a comprehensive academic advising system, and serve students to better grow and succeed. China's higher education has now entered the stage of massification, with enrollment numbers continuously expanding. College students exhibit varying degrees of diversity in all aspects, and their academic status, learning abilities, and learning strategies differ greatly, as do the difficulties and problems they face. Some students cannot complete their studies smoothly, while others pay excessive attention to academic performance. Although these are different situations, both equally hinder their normal growth and development. Many studies have pointed out that academic advising abroad is already very well-established, and there is no lack of suggestions to draw on such practices. However, China has different national conditions, different missions for higher education institutions, and different educational contexts. Therefore, it is necessary to root academic advising in the realities of Chinese higher education institutions, based on the concept of "Classification for Excellence, Diversified Paths to Success," to conduct effective research on academic advising and to guide our practical work.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Current Research Status in China

Regarding the connotation of academic advising, some scholars have elaborated from the perspective of teachers, some from the perspective of students as the recipients and subjects, and some have defined academic advising by focusing on students with academic difficulties (Pang Haishao et al., 2009). However, most studies reflect from different angles that the service recipients of academic advising are the vast student body, the organizing unit is the university, and the work goal is to solve students' academic problems and facilitate their all-round development. As for the scope of academic problems, different scholars have different definitions. Some scholars define it broadly, considering that any psychological counseling or career counseling that can serve student development may be included in the scope of academic advising. Other scholars define it more narrowly, arguing that the core of academic advising should focus on serving learning. In this study, the author tends to adopt the latter view, but does not strictly confine it to the act of learning itself. This study believes that learning-related concepts, psychology, and career planning can be defined within the scope of academic advising.

Regarding the evolution of the concept of academic advising: The theoretical foundation and evolution of academic advising in Chinese higher education institutions reflect the transformation process of higher education from a management-oriented approach to a service-oriented approach, and from a unified model to a personalized development model. Sun Sun (2017) explores how the student-centered educational concept provides solid theoretical support for the construction of academic advising systems in higher education institutions. The introduction of this concept marks a shift in academic advising from mere academic management to a service model that pays more attention to students' needs and promotes their all-round development. The student affairs work model in higher education institutions has also undergone a transformation from a management-oriented model to a service-oriented and development-oriented model, which no longer limits academic advising to academic issues alone but closely integrates it with students' mental health, career development, and other aspects.

Regarding the construction and practice of the academic advising system. Cai Hefei and Yu Xiulan (2022) reflect on academic advising from three dimensions: theoretical implications, practical dilemmas, and breakthrough paths, and they call for the construction of an indigenous theoretical system. In terms of specific practical models, Wang Ying and Wang Xiaoyu (2016) find that mentor guidance has a significant positive impact on academic improvement, school adaptation, and future orientation. The data from our university's academic analysis report also show that our students still need to further strengthen their pre-class preview, after-class review, and in-class note-taking. From the literature on academic advising, it can be found that the specific countermeasures proposed by scholars mainly include offering academic advising courses, establishing academic advising centers, and setting up an undergraduate tutorial system, which are limited to certain systems or organizational structures (Zhou Jinghui, 2014). In recent years, many higher education institutions have begun to attach importance to academic advising and have set up relevant departments to promote academic advising work. Although there are minor differences in the names of these organizations, their core functions and goals are consistent. The book Introduction to the Work of Academic Advisors in the New Era (2022), compiled by the Education Working Committee of the Beijing Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China and other institutions, indicates that academic advisors are important implementers of academic advising work, and their professional competence and work ability directly affect the quality of advising.

Regarding the background and connotation of talent allocation and cultivation. At the macro level, China's higher education has been continuously exploring the model of talent classification and cultivation. Shi Qiuheng and Kang Min (2017) point out that classification management helps to stimulate the initiative of higher education institutions in running schools autonomously. Jin Xin (2012) suggests establishing a national framework, constructing a dynamic monitoring system, and emphasizing classified cultivation. These studies together constitute the theoretical and practical foundation of the concept of "Classification for Excellence, Diversified Paths to Success" at the macro level of talent cultivation.

2.2 Current Research Status Abroad

Tao Min (2012) points out that academic advising in American higher education has gone through three stages and has formed two main models: the diagnostic model and the developmental model. Xia Fengqin and Liu Qing (2020) indicate that since the establishment of Harvard College in 1636, the academic advising model has evolved from a single model to a diversified one. These studies show that the evolution trend of international academic advising models is shifting from passively solving problems to actively promoting development, and from universal advising to personalized and differentiated advising. This suggests that academic advising does not exist in isolation but is an integral part of the student affairs service system, and it needs to work in coordination with other services.

2.3 Summary of Domestic and International Research and Research Gaps

The focus and concepts of domestic and international research are converging. Both regard "student-centeredness" as the fundamental starting point of academic advising. Sun Sun (2017) emphasizes that "student-centeredness" provides theoretical support for the construction of academic advising systems in higher education institutions, and Yang et al. (2024) demonstrate the positive impact of a student-development-centered advising model on students' academic and non-academic indicators. Secondly, personalized and precision advising is a common goal pursued by both domestic and international academic advising. Rao Meijuan and Wang Fazhou (2025) propose the implementation of classified and tiered advising, while Khader et al. (2025) achieve personalized and customized student support through an AI-driven system. Furthermore, the integration of academic advising and career planning is another common trend in domestic and international research. Zhu Zhongmin (2017) emphasizes academic advising and career guidance within career education content, and Verma et al. (2025) use data mining and machine learning techniques to construct predictive models for career guidance. This integration not only helps students clarify their learning goals but also guides them to plan their careers rationally at an early stage.

In summary:

a. The "student-centered" and developmental academic advising concepts have become a consensus both domestically and internationally, emphasizing student subjectivity and all-round development.

b. Domestic academic advising has established a certain practical foundation in system construction, the tutorial system, and the role of academic advisors, and has begun exploring the use of big data and AI technology to enable precision advising.

c. International academic advising is more mature in the application of AI technology, particularly demonstrating significant advantages in personalized support, intelligent recommendations, and career planning predictive models.

d. The concept of "Classification for Excellence, Diversified Paths to Success" provides macro guidance for academic advising, but how to achieve classified and tiered implementation and precise policy application in specific practices remains a challenge.

e. Academic involution, as an emerging phenomenon, has attracted international attention, and academic advising needs to focus on students' mental health and healthy development paths.

Despite the many commonalities in academic advising research between domestic and international contexts, there remain some gaps in practical depth and theoretical system construction that are worth reflecting on and learning from.

a. There is insufficient research on the mechanism for transforming theoretical systems into practical applications. Currently, there are many macro-level elaborations on the concept of "Classification for Excellence," but there is a lack of in-depth research on how to systematically integrate this concept into specific practices to form operable models, evaluation systems, and differentiated guidance schemes for different classified groups of students.

b. There is insufficient research on the ethics and practice of deep integration between AI technology and academic advising. Although AI has broad applications, there remains a lack of theoretical exploration and practical verification on deep-seated issues such as data privacy protection, algorithmic bias, and how to balance the relationship between AI assistance and human advising.

c. The refined implementation methods of classified and tiered advising remain unclear. While there

have been many explorations at the macro level of classified talent cultivation in China, how to refine these macro classification concepts into the specific content, methods, and evaluation systems of academic advising to form differentiated guidance schemes for different types of students remains an important direction for future research.

d. The enrichment of an academic advising theoretical system with Chinese characteristics. While drawing on international experience, how to integrate the advantages of domestic ideological and political education and the academic advisor system into the construction of an indigenous academic advising theoretical system to form a theoretical framework with Chinese characteristics that meets the development requirements of the times still requires continuous effort.

3. Current Situation of Academic Advising for College Students

Academic advising in China's higher education system officially began in 2009, with Tsinghua University taking the lead in establishing an academic advising institution within the country: the Student Learning and Development Guidance Center. In April 2014, the Ministry of Education issued the "Vocational Ability Standards for Academic Advisors in Higher Education Institutions (Provisional)." Among the nine aspects of academic advisors' vocational abilities, academic advising was proposed as a separate module, which marked the formal requirement of professionalization and vocationalization for academic advising by national education policies.

Domestic research on academic advising has achieved phased results, but it still faces problems such as low applicability, single guidance methods, and a lack of a tiered and classified system. On the basis of using the "point-line-plane" analysis method, this study conducts a specific analysis of students' learning conditions and explores a tiered guidance system for academic development in higher education institutions based on departments. From a comprehensive perspective of the literature and practical work, academic advising for college students has not yet formed a complete working system, and different higher education institutions have not developed unique styles in their academic advising concepts, methods, and principles. Therefore, based on practical work, the author proposes several personal reflections on academic advising for college students in higher education institutions.

4. Reflections and Suggestions under the Concept of "Classification for Excellence, Diversified Paths to Success"

4.1 Updating and Transforming College Students' Learning Concepts and Popularizing Learning Methods

Students' conception of learning refers to the intuitive understanding that individual students hold regarding knowledge, learning phenomena, and experiences; this conception is gradually formed in daily learning activities, classroom instruction, and the sociocultural environment. Some students hold the view that they learn simply because students are supposed to learn, without any deeper understanding. Therefore, on the issue of why they learn, academic advising in higher education institutions can play a certain educational role.

A survey shows that 38% of students believe that "learning is aimed at the college entrance examination, and we will think about what to do later when the time comes," while 44.7% of students think that "we can endure some hardship now, and once we are admitted to college, we will be liberated." These findings indicate that students regard the college entrance examination as the purpose of studying, learning for the sake of the exam. The question of why students learn determines their learning attitudes, motivation, and methods; therefore, the primary task of academic advising in higher education institutions is to help students clarify this issue. On this matter, each student is different, and we must not provide a uniform answer. The general direction is certainly consistent, but we need to help students find their own personalized goals within that general direction and gradually focus their efforts.

We should guide students to clarify their own directions and strive toward them, help them recognize that they are responsible for their own development, and provide services and support for their subsequent continuous growth. Consequently, students are the subjects of learning, as well as the implementers and beneficiaries of learning. On the basis of helping students understand this point, assisting them in developing good self-directed learning habits will achieve twice the result with half the effort. Before entering college, most students do not have a profound understanding of the

long-term impact of learning on their life development; some even wonder about the actual role that the specific knowledge they are learning now will play in their future careers. It is an urgent task for academic advising to help students realize that learning ability itself is one's core competitiveness and that whatever specific knowledge they are learning now will certainly contribute to their future career development.

4.2 Emphasizing Innovative Learning Education

Innovative education is receiving increasing attention in university education, and many higher education institutions have established schools of innovation education. In academic advising work, we must also promote innovative learning, as the spirit of innovation directly affects students' learning quality. From a practical perspective, university education is more open, students have greater learning autonomy, and institutions have more platforms and resources; therefore, it is also highly appropriate to deliver innovative learning education during the university period. Higher education institutions need to invest more time and resources, such as building platforms and introducing incentive policies, to guide both teachers and students to value innovative learning. Teachers need to invest more time in course preparation and in learning teaching content beyond conventional education. For students, compared to knowledge-based learning within defined boundaries, innovative learning requires them to think, explore, integrate, and experiment on the basis of a substantial foundation of knowledge learning.

4.3 Guiding the Majority of Students to Develop Reading Habits

The results of the 19th National Reading Survey of China show that in 2021, the average number of printed books read per adult in China was 4.76. If we survey the current amount of extracurricular book reading among college students, the figure is unlikely to be more impressive than this. On the one hand, students have not developed reading habits; on the other hand, reading has become an interest of only a small minority, and there is a serious lack of platforms to support reading exchange and guidance. Reading is the most cost-effective way to achieve lifelong learning and continuous learning. In order to further improve the quality of talent cultivation, high-quality, continuous, lifelong learning will become increasingly important, and reading is one of the most significant pathways to achieve it. All roles, whether administrators, teachers, or academic advisors, should advocate for a reading culture. On this basis, we should comprehensively promote a student reading culture, making reading a trend among young students in higher education institutions, and cultivate a good habit that benefits students throughout their lives and also brings long-term benefits to the nation and society.

4.4 Implementing Career Planning Education

Career planning education, as a well-established model, serves as an important pathway that academic advising in higher education institutions can rely on. During the university period, it can stimulate students' academic motivation and help them set short-term and long-term goals. After graduation, it can continue to help students maintain good learning motivation and provide support for career development. Career planning education itself embodies the concept of "Classification for Excellence, Diversified Paths to Success." Different individuals have different plans and different focal points, and individual planning that aligns with one's own characteristics is encouraged. Career planning places great emphasis on individual uniqueness, allowing students to first recognize the "self" and realize that each "self" is different. Clear and scientific career planning is of great significance to the future development of college students. Currently, the extent of career planning education varies among higher education institutions, and college students' career planning abilities are relatively weak. However, further popularization of career planning education is an inevitable trend. In the practice of academic advising, it remains essential to apply the concepts of career planning education, deepen students' understanding of academic and individual development, and integrate career planning education into academic advising.

4.5 Continuously Consolidating the Student Growth-Centered Educational Concept

Under the pattern of three-wide education, we must continuously consolidate the student growth-centered educational concept. In addition to academic advisors and course teachers, any employee engaged in teaching and management work in higher education institutions should possess this educational concept, because "cultivating talents" and "fostering virtue through education" are the

fundamental tasks of higher education institutions. If institutions neglect talent cultivation and ignore students as the main subjects in terms of systems and policies, then their direction must be adjusted. Students' tasks in higher education institutions are to learn and to grow; therefore, serving students' learning and growth is a very important educational task for us. Being "student growth-centered" should be a unified consensus that different departments in higher education institutions must reach when working in coordination. Consequently, we must not only emphasize the student growth-centered concept from top to bottom within higher education institutions, but also integrate this concept into the assessment of different departments through system design and policy orientation. The student growth-centered concept does not mean spoiling students or losing the core task of "fostering virtue through education." Instead, it requires us to be responsible for students' moral character and personality development, responsible for students' long-term development, and responsible for students' personalized growth.

4.6 Guiding Students to Actively Use AI Tools to Support Their Academic Studies

Academic advising in higher education institutions is facing a paradigm shift from standardized provision to personalized and precise services. The iteration of artificial intelligence provides the technological possibility for this transformation. For lower-grade students, academic advising should focus on guiding them to use AI tools as "cognitive scaffolds" and "learning partners." For upper-grade and research-oriented students, academic advising should position AI tools as "scientific research productivity tools." For application-oriented and career-oriented students, the cultivation of practical abilities and professional competencies is a key dimension of their path to success. Higher education institutions should break through the functional boundaries of traditional academic advising and systematically incorporate the cultivation of AI literacy into the core content framework of academic advising. Institutions should reshape the triadic interactive relationship among "teachers, machines, and students" to ensure that technology serves educational goals rather than dissolving the essence of education. Institutions should establish institutional regulations to prevent academic misconduct and educational deviations that may arise from technology misuse. Academic advising should guide students to truly transform technological tools into aids for cognitive development rather than substitutes for it.

Fund Projects

The 2023 Humanities and Social Sciences Research Project of the Ministry of Education, Department of Social Science of the Ministry of Education: "Research on Countermeasures for Shaping Youth Faith from the Perspective of Network Circles" (Project No.: 23YJA710049).

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