

The Theories and Paths for College Counselors to Construct a High-Quality Employment Service System

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Abstract

The development of a high-quality employment service system is a crucial focal point for facilitating the virtuous cycle of education, scientific and technological innovation, and talent cultivation. It is also a key channel for colleges and universities to effectively connect the fundamental task of fostering virtue and cultivating people with the practice that employment is the biggest livelihood issue. Serving as a critical nexus linking universities, students, and society, college counselors assume a multifaceted role that directly determines the accuracy and effectiveness of employment services. Based on systematic thinking and the philosophy of employment-oriented education, through methods such as policy analysis and theoretical synthesis, this paper defines five core roles of counselors in building a high-quality employment service system: ideological guide, precise service provider, resource integrator, capacity cultivator, and psychological guardian. In view of current difficulties such as the supply-demand mismatch in employment services and weak professional competence, this paper puts forward targeted and effective practical paths from five dimensions: curriculum integration, resource linkage, targeted assistance, team construction, and digital empowerment. Through practical observation, research and experience enlightenment, it provides an important theoretical basis and practical reference for colleges and universities to accelerate the construction of a high-quality employment service system and promote high-quality and full employment of graduates.

Keywords

College Counselors, High-Quality Employment Service System, Role

1. Introduction

Employment is the most fundamental livelihood, directly impacting the vital interests of the people, healthy socioeconomic development, and the long-term stability of the country (National Documents, 2024a). Furthermore, the Outline of the Plan for Building a Strong Educational Country (2024-2035) mandates accelerating the development of a high-quality employment service system to promote the “high-quality and full employment” of college graduates (National Documents, 2025). The high-quality employment service system for college graduates is a systematic service mechanism and institutional collection constructed with the joint participation of the government, colleges and universities, market entities and social institutions under the background of the implementation of the employment-first strategy. Its core goal is to realize high-quality and full employment of college graduates, covering the entire cycle of talent training, career development, job-hunting connection, employment security and quality feedback. Guided by the precise matching of talent supply and demand, the system integrates key functions such as career guidance, job supply, targeted assistance, rights and interests protection, quality evaluation and training feedback. Through policy coordination, resource integration, process optimization and mechanism innovation, it promotes graduates to achieve stable and decent employment that is consistent with the needs of economic and social development and matches their personal career development, and ultimately builds a systematic support framework that achieves the appropriate matching of people and posts, gives full play to people’s talents, and promotes the coordinated improvement of employment quality and quantity. At present, college employment services are confronted with such difficulties as an imbalance between job supply and demand, difficulty in meeting personalized needs, gaps in counselors’ professional competencies, and lagging information updates, which restrict the construction of a high-quality employment service system. Against this backdrop, redefining the role boundaries and core responsibilities of counselors within this system, and exploring practical paths adapted to the demands of the new era, holds profound practical significance. Doing so facilitates the deep integration of employment-oriented education with ideological and political education in universities, and achieves the organic unity of “stable employment”, “employment security” and “high-quality and full employment” for graduates.

2. Era Requirements for College Counselors to Construct a High-Quality Employment Service System

College graduates are valuable human resources and strategic resources of the

Party and the country. Their employment situation impacts both within and beyond the education sector and concerns countless families. Constructing a high-quality employment service system for college graduates is an important focus for facilitating the virtuous cycle of education, science and technology, and talents. It is also a key channel for colleges and universities to effectively connect the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education with the core principle that employment is the biggest livelihood issue. At present, China's higher education has entered the popularization stage, and the number of college graduates has been growing continuously. It has exceeded 10 million for three consecutive years since 2022, becoming the absolute vast majority of China's new urban employment. To promote the matching between supply and demand of higher education talents and provide stronger talent support for the high-quality socio-economic development, it is urgent to highlight problem-oriented approaches and strive to solve problems in supply-demand matching, service upgrading and mechanism optimization. The Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of a High-Quality Employment Service System for Regular College Graduates clearly states that we will optimize employment guidance, assistance and other services in the whole chain, and establish a comprehensive, well-supported employment service system that covers every student. (National Documents, 2024b).

As trusted friends who have the closest and most in-depth contact with students, college counselors undertake both ideological and political education and daily student administration. They have irreplaceable advantages in addressing structural employment mismatches and bridging the "last mile" of employment services. Their level of involvement and professionalism in employment services directly affects the quality and effectiveness of the construction of college employment service systems. Against the backdrop of increasingly fierce market competition and higher requirements for talent supply-demand matching, effectively re-defining the role positioning of college counselors in constructing a high-quality employment service system and exploring methodical and effective practical paths are not only the inevitable requirement of implementing the employment priority strategy, but also a key manifestation of colleges and universities achieving "all-staff, all-process, all-round and all-domain education", as well as an active response to the era requirements of accelerating the construction of a high-quality employment service system for college graduates.

3. Role Orientation of College Counselors in Constructing a High-Quality Employment Service System

The high-quality employment service system emphasizes "systematization, precision, personalization, normalization and long-term", which requires counselors' employment service to shift from "short-term job search assistance" to "full cycle career guidance", undertake multi-dimensional and complex responsibilities and missions, and form a working pattern of synergy with school employment departments, college and department employment agencies, professional teachers, ex-

cellent alumni, party and government organs, enterprises and institutions.

3.1. Ideological Guide: Navigator for Correcting Employment Values

Employment values are a core ideological cornerstone for advancing high-quality and full employment, as they directly shape graduates' career decision-making and long-term development trajectories. As the primary practitioners of ideological and political education for college students, college counselors are mandated with the core responsibility of guiding students to establish correct employment values consistent with national strategies and social needs. Through thematic class meetings, one-on-one in-depth consultations and other forms, counselors strengthen value-based guidance, lead students to integrate personal career development into national strategies such as rural revitalization, scientific and technological innovation and grassroots governance, reject narrow utilitarian cognition such as "only high salary", "only major cities" and "only public sector", and establish the career pursuit of "serving where the motherland needs it most". In view of "delayed employment", "employment hesitancy" and other phenomena, rational employment cognition education is carried out to accurately assess the broader employment landscape, recognize the long-term and phased nature of career development, and establish healthy and acceptable career expectations while facing up to setbacks.

3.2. Precise Service Provider: Matchmaker for Personalized Needs

The core of high-quality and full employment lies in realizing accurate person-post matching. College counselors hold inherent information advantages with regard to students' personality characteristics, professional foundations and employment intentions. As precise service providers, college counselors need to fulfill the dual roles of "information filter" and "tailored solution designer": First, establish a student employment information ledger to dynamically track students' job-seeking progress, competency gaps and psychological status, and formulate "one-person-one-policy" assistance programs for distinct student groups such as those with weak professional foundations, inadequate career planning and frustrated job hunting. Second, disseminate targeted employment resources, screen and integrate national policies, corporate positions, grassroots projects and other information according to students' academic backgrounds and career intentions, eliminate blanket-style information dissemination, and improve the utilization and matching degree of employment information.

3.3. Resource Integrator: Hub for Gathering Multi-Party Coordination

Employment service is a systematic project that needs to integrate internal and external resources of universities and collaborative efforts from multiple stake-

holders. As a grass-roots coordinator, college counselors are mandated with the core responsibilities of resource linkage and platform construction. Inside the university, relying on college- and department-level employment work bodies, counselors can coordinate with university educational administration departments, employment departments, and discipline-specific teaching and research offices. This collaboration advances the organic alignment of professional teaching with market employment demands, while also enabling professional teachers to participate in employment guidance and fully leverage their deep industry insights and disciplinary expertise. Externally, counselors can take the initiative to “go out” to connect with key enterprises and institutions; “invite in” corporate human resources professionals, outstanding alumni and other guests to deliver lectures, and build a direct “internship-employment” platform; at the same time, leverage resources of alumni associations and industry associations to expand stable employment channels and address the pain point of limited job resources.

3.4. Capacity Cultivator: Empowerer for Improving Employment Competitiveness

Employment competence serves as the core underpinning for achieving high-quality and full employment. College counselors are tasked with delivering full-cycle and scenario-based cultivation centered on professional ability improvement. Aiming at the common competency gaps in students’ job hunting, counselors design targeted training modules on resume making, mock interviews, workplace etiquette and other core job-seeking skills to help students master core recruitment skills. In line with professional characteristics and industry talent demands, counselors promote the integration of the first classroom and the second classroom, guide students to participate in discipline competitions, scientific research innovation projects, social practice and other activities, accumulate practical experience, and bridge the disconnection between theoretical knowledge and real-world market demand. At the same time, counselors guide students to scientifically formulate career plans, awaken career awareness as freshmen, strengthen ability reserve in sophomore and junior years, and focus on job-seeking sprint in senior year, forming a full-chain capacity cultivation system.

3.5. Psychological Guardian: Caregiver for Alleviating Employment Pressure

Negative emotions such as anxiety, inferiority and confusion during job hunting are core barriers affecting graduates’ high-quality and full employment. As life mentors for students’ growth and intimate friends for healthy life, college counselors need to take the initiative to predict psychological risks and deliver tiered and categorized psychological counseling. For students frustrated in job hunting, counselors help them analyze the root causes of failure and rebuild job-seeking confidence through empathetic listening, case encouragement and other person-centered approaches. For students with prominent anxiety, counselors design and

host stress relief workshops, job-seeking mutual aid groups and other activities to alleviate negative emotions through peer support and painting therapy. Meanwhile, they deliver preventive mental health education to teach frustration coping and stress management skills, helping students establish positive psychological adjustment capabilities and face employment competition with a healthy attitude.

4. Practical Paths for College Counselors to Construct a High-Quality Employment Service System

Based on the aforementioned role orientation of college counselors, combined with the pain points, practical difficulties and policy requirements in current employment services, targeted practical implementation paths are proposed from five dimensions: curriculum integration, resource linkage, targeted assistance, team construction and digital empowerment, so as to effectively boost the quality and efficiency of the employment service system.

4.1. Integrating into the Whole Process of Talent Training and Build a Great Ideological and Political Pattern of Employment-Oriented Education

Construct a holistic ideological and political education pattern, take employment education as a core component of all-staff, all-process, all-round and all-domain education, and fully integrate it into the talent training program, so as to realize the deep integration of ideological and political education, professional education and employment guidance. First, build a tiered and categorized employment curriculum system: carry out career enlightenment education for freshmen, career planning and ability improvement courses for sophomores and juniors, and job-seeking sprint and policy interpretation courses for seniors. At the same time, excavate ideological and political elements combined with professional characteristics, integrate exemplary industry figures and professional ethics into curriculum content, and guide students to strengthen value identity while enhancing abilities. Second, advance “all-staff education”, link professional teachers and corporate mentors to form an employment guidance team. Professional teachers connect industry needs in teaching, and corporate mentors provide practical guidance, forming a joint force of employment-oriented education with “school-level employment institutions taking the lead, with multi-party participation from counselors, head teachers, subject-matter teachers, corporate mentors, outstanding alumni and other parties participating”.

4.2. Deepening the Internal and External Linkage Mechanism and Broadening High-Quality Employment Resource Channels

To solve the problems of insufficient job resources and disconnection between supply and demand, it is necessary to build a resource integration mechanism featuring “overall planning inside the university and extension outside the university”. First, establish a long-term cooperation mechanism between universities

and Party and government organs, enterprises and institutions. Relying on school-level employment institutions, counselors proactively take the initiative to connect with important organs, enterprises and institutions, jointly build internship and training bases, promote “order-based training”, and realize the accurate matching between students’ abilities and the needs of organs, enterprises and institutions. Second, build an alumni employment resource platform, systematically sort out information on alumni work units and alumni-founded enterprises, invite outstanding alumni to host job-seeking experience sharing sessions and internal position recommendation activities, and fully leverage alumni’s resource advantages in the industry. Meanwhile, establish a demand feedback mechanism for organs, enterprises and institutions, regularly collect recruitment demands and competency standards, and promote the optimization and adjustment of professional teaching and student ability training.

4.3. Implementing Targeted and Classified Assistance and Consolidating the Employment Bottom Line for Key Groups

To address employment difficulties and personalized needs of key groups, it is necessary to build an assistance system of “ledger management, dynamic tracking and targeted implementation”. First, establish and standardize employment assistance ledgers, implement “one-person-one-policy” dynamic management for students from key groups from financially disadvantaged families and those facing persistent employment difficulties, give priority in job recommendation, targeted skills training, and one-on-one psychological counseling. Meanwhile, we will deliver tailored personalized guidance services: provide one-on-one career assessment and planning consultation for students with vague career planning; carry out small-class and one-on-one resume revision and interview counseling for students with insufficient job-seeking skills. Second, strengthen guidance on grassroots employment, interpret relevant grassroots project policies, carry out activities such as “contributing to the motherland where needed”, and actively guide graduates to take up positions in western regions such as Xinjiang and Xizang and grassroots units below the county level, opening up new prospects for employment with new concepts of career choice.

4.4. Strengthening Professional Capacity Building and Improving Counselors’ Employment Guidance Literacy

Counselors’ professional competency directly determines the quality of employment services, so it is necessary to build a capacity improvement system centered on the three core modules of “training + certification + exchange”. First, carry out regular and ongoing training, invite senior employment guidance experts, corporate human resources executives and certified senior career planners to deliver professional lectures, covering industry dynamics, job-seeking skills, psychological counseling and other content, helping counselors update and optimize their knowledge system. At the same time, encourage counselors to obtain professional

qualifications such as certified career planners and career consultants to further improve professional credentials. Second, build an exchange platform, establish a college counselor employment guidance alliance, share job resources, industry reports and typical cases, tackle complex employment problems through experience exchange, and effectively enhance counselors' employment guidance literacy.

4.5. Relying on Digital Empowerment to Improve the Efficiency of Employment Services

To address the pain points of the ever-changing employment situation and lag in information update, it is necessary to optimize the service mode with digital tools. First, build an employment information sharing platform to integrate employment policies, recruitment positions, skills training and other resources and realize real-time dynamic information update. At the same time, implement targeted and precise information delivery through student demand tags to reduce information redundancy. Second, establish an "employment information calendar" to sort out time nodes such as campus recruitment, off-campus social recruitment, grassroots projects and other key events, and remind students through class groups and mini programs to ensure zero omission in information transmission. Meanwhile, use online tools to deliver flexible services, such as online mock interviews, cloud-based thematic lectures and online heart-to-heart talks, break the constraints of time and space, and improve the coverage and accessibility of employment services.

5. Experience and Implications for College Counselors to Construct a High-Quality Employment Service System

Promoting high-quality and full employment is the new positioning and new mission of employment work in the new era and new journey. College counselors should adhere to taking graduates' employment as the top priority, clarify their role orientation, systematically construct and implement the aforementioned practical paths, and comprehensively promote high-quality and full employment of graduates.

5.1. Party Building Leadership Is the Basic Guarantee for the Construction and Implementation of a High-Quality Employment Service System

The construction and implementation of a high-quality employment service system is by no means a lone battle for college counselors; it requires "leading geese charting the course" and "flock geese providing coordinated support". College counselors should rely on school-level employment institutions to assist in establishing a multi-integrated collaborative employment mechanism led by school leadership teams, Party branch secretaries, head teachers, postgraduate supervisors, counselors and outstanding alumni, clarify division of responsibilities and work in the same direction, comprehensively advance the top-level planning and

organizational guarantee, and lay a solid foundation for achieving high-quality employment results and demonstrating remarkable effects of the employment service system.

5.2. Student Development Is the Key Measure for the Construction and Implementation of a High-Quality Employment Service System

The construction and implementation of a high-quality employment service system must be centered on student development, pay attention to students' individual differences and actual needs, implement individualized teaching and needs-based targeted guidance, and advance high-quality and full employment through students' all-round development. College counselors can innovatively carry out summer collective internships and winter and summer social practice activities, and adopt a multi-pronged approach to improve students' comprehensive competencies and professional literacy. At the same time, college counselors should fully leverage professional advantages, actively hold small-scale special recruitment fairs featuring the principle of "small but refined, specialized and excellent", continuously provide targeted job resources for graduates, enhance the effectiveness of campus recruitment, and verify the quality of talent training.

5.3. Whole-Process Guidance Is the Long-Term Strategy for the Construction and Implementation of a High-Quality Employment Service System

The construction and implementation of a high-quality employment service system should not be limited to the senior year, but run through the full four-year undergraduate cycle. Career enlightenment should be delivered from enrollment, and students should be guided step by step to formulate systematic career development plans, so as to help students to be more competitive and achieve higher-quality employment. College counselors should focus on implementing the "Consolidating Foundation and Cultivating Vitality" and "Freshman Navigation" programs. By inviting department heads to conduct a detailed interpretation of the major's talent training program, students can further understand and love their major, diligently master solid professional knowledge, and consolidate the "hard power" of employment. Carry out employment-themed special lectures on career planning, innovation and entrepreneurship to stimulate students' thinking and exploration of future career development. Invite outstanding alumni to serve as career planning mentors to guide students to make career plans from the beginning of enrollment.

6. Conclusion

Constructing a high-quality employment service system is a systematic project, a livelihood project and a strategic project. As the core force in employment guidance work, college counselors undertake multiple roles of ideological leader, pre-

cise service provider, resource integrator, competency cultivator, and mental health guardian, and are the key hub connecting talent training and the employment market. Faced with multiple pain points and practical difficulties in current employment services, college counselors need to break through the traditional working mode, and continuously improve the accuracy, professionalism and long-term effectiveness of employment services through five core implementation paths: integrating into the full cycle of talent training, deepening internal and external linkage, implementing targeted assistance, strengthening professional capacity and relying on digital empowerment. At the same time, colleges and universities should provide policy support, resource guarantee and platform support for counselors to carry out employment guidance work, promote counselors to cooperate with multiple stakeholders, foster a holistic employment-focused education ecosystem featuring all-staff, all-process, all-round and all-domain, comprehensively help graduates achieve high-quality and full employment, and deliver more outstanding talents for China's economic and social development and the advancement of Chinese-style modernization.

This paper is mainly based on the research and analysis of Chinese colleges and universities. For different types of colleges and universities, the research conclusions may need to be supplemented and improved.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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