

# Teacher Development of Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

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## Abstract

This research aimed to 1) examine the current state, problems, and needs regarding vocational college students' life skills, 2) develop a teacher training curriculum, 3) implement the curriculum, and 4) evaluate the curriculum for improving counseling on life skills for vocational college students in Guangxi Province, China. The study involved four phases:

Phase 1 focused on assessing life skills among 800 students from four vocational colleges, selected using quota sampling. A questionnaire measured students' cognitive ability, self-awareness, communication and interpersonal skills, empathy, and emotional regulation under stress. Results showed life skills at a moderate level overall, with high scores in cognitive ability and empathy, while self-awareness and communication were moderate.

Phase 2 involved developing a training curriculum through semi-structured interviews with seven stakeholders. The resulting curriculum included three modules: self-awareness, emotional regulation under stress, and communication and interpersonal skills, each trained over five days.

Phase 3 implemented the curriculum with 30 volunteer teachers from four vocational colleges. Pre- and post-test analysis showed significant improvement in teachers' counseling abilities in the areas of self-awareness, emotional regulation, and communication skills.

Phase 4 evaluated the curriculum using feedback from 30 teachers and five experts. Satisfaction and quality assessments indicated high levels of approval. Experts rated the curriculum highly across utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy, with propriety receiving the highest score.

In summary, the study found that vocational students' life skills were moderate overall, with areas for improvement in self-awareness and communication. The developed training curriculum effectively enhanced teachers' abilities to counsel students in these areas, and both teachers and experts rated the curriculum highly in terms of effectiveness and feasibility.

**Keywords:** Teacher development, Life skills, Counseling, Vocational college students

## Introduction

With the convergence of global IT and production technologies, China is evolving from a manufacturing giant to a leader in intelligent manufacturing, necessitating a higher caliber of technical and skilled workers. Vocational education is pivotal in nurturing these talents, aligning with the industrial intelligence and structural upgrade in China. The "Core Literacy for Chinese Students" (2015) and the "National Vocational Education Reform

Implementation Plan" (2019) underscore the importance of cultivating well-rounded individuals equipped with lifelong learning, health, responsibility, and innovation skills.

A 2021 Global Times study, corroborated by China Women's News, revealed a 17.5% prevalence of mental disorders among Chinese children and adolescents, with a marked increase in emotional issues. In response to that, the Ministry of Education's "Guiding Opinions on Promoting Mental Health Education" (2022) aims to bolster teachers' life skills counseling capabilities in vocational colleges to enhance adolescents' social and psychological adaptability.

"Life skills" are essential for individuals to lead healthy, fulfilling lives, encompassing self-treatment, interpersonal interaction, and decision-making abilities. These skills are crucial for personal development and navigating social challenges, with a significant impact on mental health, resilience, and life management. Integrating life skills education into vocational curriculum is instrumental in fostering healthy behaviors, self-management, positive career outlooks, and interpersonal skills, thereby elevating the quality of vocational education and human resource development.

The life skills and exemplary conduct of vocational college teachers are critical for effective student guidance. Despite their teaching and professional expertise, these teachers may lack life skills and counseling training, impeding their ability to provide targeted support.

Therefore, Research into life skills counseling for vocational college teachers in Guangxi Province is essential for enhancing their own skills and guidance capabilities, ensuring the quality of life skills education and promoting the psychological well-being of the educational community.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To study the current states of the life skills for vocational college students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China
2. To develop the teacher training curriculum for enhancing counseling on life skills for vocational college students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China.
3. To implement the teacher training curriculum for enhancing counseling on life skills for vocational college students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China.
4. To evaluate the teacher training curriculum for enhancing counseling on life skills for vocational college students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China.

## **Research Methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

The research procedures were divided into 4 phases. The details are as follows:

Phase 1: Studying the Current States of the Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

The population included 690,000 vocational college students from 274 colleges in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China. The samples this research were 800 vocational college students from 4 vocational colleges. They were selected by quota sampling technique: 200 students from each college; 100 males and 100 females from each college; 100 first year students and 100 second year students.

The research questionnaire was adopted from Huang (2017) with 5 dimensions, including cognitive ability, self-awareness, effective communication - interpersonal relationships, adjusting emotions dealing with stress, and empathy ability. The reliability values of each dimension from Huang (2017) were 0.74, 0.74, 0.71, 0.69, 0.77, respectively. The obtained data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Phase 2: Developing the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing the Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

In this phase, the first step involved a literature review of curriculum and counseling theories. The second step entailed in-depth interviews with key 7 stakeholders in vocational colleges in Guangxi Province to assess life skills counseling practices, including department heads, life skills teachers, educational administration experts. Data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed using content analysis, guiding the draft of a life skills counseling curriculum. The curriculum's alignment with objectives was validated by the five experts.

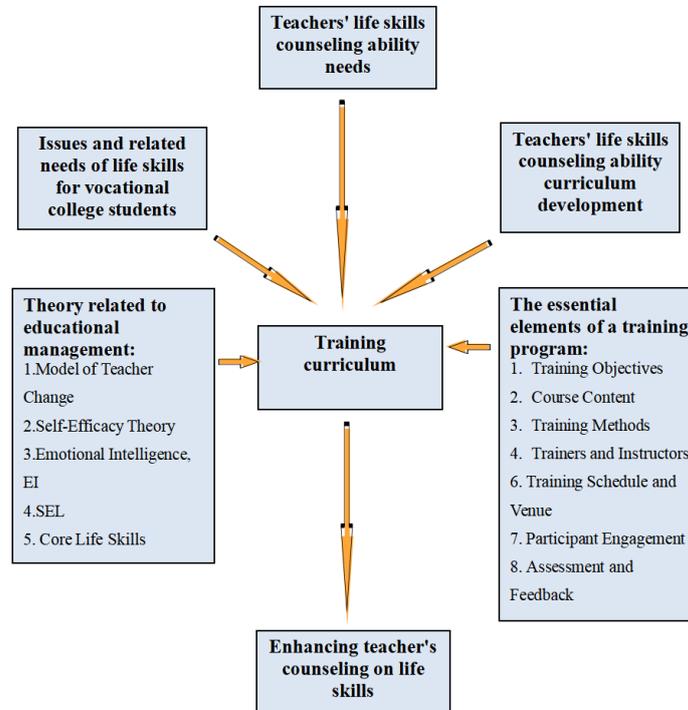
Phase 3: Implementing the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing the Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

The researcher implemented a life skills counseling curriculum for vocational college students in Guangxi Province. The study targeted 30 teachers from four local vocational colleges. Pre- and post-training counseling effectiveness was assessed using mean and standard deviation, with dependent samples t-test to detect statistically significant differences at the .05 level. Following a 10-day training period, two teachers received direct coaching and mentoring from the researcher on the curriculum's application.

Phase 4: Evaluating the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing the Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

In this phase, the researcher refined the teacher training curriculum for life skills counseling in Guangxi Province, based on evaluations from 30 vocational college teachers. Also, the five experts were asked to assess the quality of the developed teacher training curriculum in terms of utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. Data analysis utilized mean and standard deviation to determine satisfaction and quality.

## Research Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework. (Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2024)

## Research Results

The researcher makes the discussion of the study results based on the following topics:

1. The Current States, Issues and Related Needs of Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

To analyze the current states, issues and needs of life skills for vocational college students, the mean, standard deviation, meaning and ranking of each aspect of life skills of vocational college students are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Mean, Standard Deviation, Meaning and Ranking of Each Aspect of Life Skills of Vocational College Students

Aspects of Life Skills	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Opinion Level	
			Meaning	Ranking
1. Cognitive Ability	3.66	0.69	High	1
2. Self-awareness	2.78	0.83	Moderate	5
3. Effective Communication-Interpersonal Relationships	3.30	0.76	Moderate	4
4. Adjusting Emotions Dealing with Stress	3.46	0.79	Moderate	3
5. Empathy Ability	3.64	0.79	High	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	

As shown in Table 1, it was found that the overall life skills of vocational colleges students were at a moderate level ( $\bar{X} = 3.33$ , S.D.= 0.52). When considering each dimension, the highest mean score was “Cognitive Ability” ( $\bar{X} = 3.66$ , S.D.= 0.69) with a high level, followed by “Empathy Ability” ( $\bar{X} = 3.64$ , S.D.= 0.79) with a high level, “Adjusting Emotions Dealing with Stress” ( $\bar{X} = 3.46$ , S.D.= 0.79) with a moderate level, “Effective Communication-Interpersonal Relationship” ( $\bar{X} = 3.30$ , S.D.=0.76) with a moderate level, and “Self-awareness” ( $\bar{X} = 2.78$ , S.D.=0.83) with a moderate level, respectively.

The results showed that the main problems of life skills of students in vocational colleges in Guangxi Province were Self-awareness, Adjusting emotions - dealing with stress, and Effective communication - interpersonal relationships. For these improvements, the vocational college students made suggestions, including transferring and applying theoretical knowledge into operational practical skills and giving them more opportunities to practice.

## 2. Developing the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People’s Republic of China

According to the current states of vocational college students in life skills, existing problems and needs of vocational colleges, and the results of in-depth interviews with the stakeholders relevant to the counseling on life skills, the training curriculum for vocational college teachers in Guangxi Province was developed. The teacher training curriculum consisted of three modules: Self-awareness, Adjusting emotions - dealing with stress, and Effective communication - interpersonal relationships. Each module included one day of intensive training and four days of on-job training, with a total of 3 weeks. The curriculum contents are shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2** The Curriculum Contents

<b>Module1: Self-awareness</b>			
<b>Class Time</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<b>Curriculum Contents</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Day 1- Day 5</b>	1. To understand the ways to improve your self-awareness	1. Rediscover yourself 1.1 Connect the subconscious mind and rediscover yourself	1. Help students to improve their self-awareness 2. Help students to explore the direction of life and establish life goals 3. Help students to reshape the imprint of experience
	2. To master psychological skills to improve self-awareness.	1.2 Internal reconciliation and unity of the self 2.Ego-defense	
	3. To master the way to find the direction of life with the six-level model of thinking.	Establish self-boundaries 3. Self-positioning Find the direction of life with the help of the six-level model of thinking	
	4. To master the method of using the internal senses to	4. Self-empowerment 4.1 Internal sensory remodeling experience	

reshape the imprint of 4.2 Self-empowering skills  
experience

<b>Module 2: Adjusting Emotions - Dealing with Stress</b>			
<b>Class Time</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<b>Curriculum Contents</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Day 1- Day 5</b>	1. To understand the psychological mechanism of emotions and the positive meaning of emotions 2. To master ways to improve adjusting emotions	EI (Emotional Intelligence) 1. Understand emotions - Knowledge point: the effect of emotion on people 2. Management of emotions and stress	1. See the role of negative emotions 2. Understand the positive meaning behind negative emotions and embrace them 3. Learn how to deal with emotions and stress scientifically
<b>Module 3 : Effective communication and interpersonal relationships</b>			
<b>Class Time</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<b>Curriculum Contents</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Day 1- Day 5</b>	1. To master the skills to overcome communicative psychological barriers 2. To master the methods to improve the communication effect 3. To master how to deal with common problems in interpersonal relationship	1. Strategies for overcoming social psychological barriers 2. Methods of communication 3. Dealing with common interpersonal relationship problems	1. Use skills to help students overcome the psychological barriers of interpersonal communication 2. Help students to improve their communication effect 3. Improve interpersonal coping skills

As shown in Table 2, these three teacher training modules covered the supports that students most needs in life skills counseling. This is also the most needed counseling ability of vocational college teachers engaged in life skills counseling for their students in Guangxi Province, People’s Republic of China.

3. Implementing the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing the Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People’s Republic of China

This section reports the outcomes of the teacher training curriculum aimed at enhancing life skills counseling for vocational college students. The 30 teachers from four vocational colleges underwent training process.

Step 1 involved comparing participants' pre- and post-training knowledge in life skills counseling, as detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3** The Results of Mean Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test About the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students

Tests	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	Sig.
1. Pre-Test	17.17	3.57	15.43*	0.00
2. Post-Test	26.40	1.31		

\*\* statistically significant difference at .05 level

As depicted in Table 3, the pre-test mean score was 17.17, rising to 26.40 post-training, reflecting a statistically significant improvement ( $p < .05$ ). Additionally, post-training knowledge test scores for Module 1: Self-awareness; Module 2: Emotional Adjustment and Stress Management; and Module 3: Effective Communication - Interpersonal Relationships) were significantly higher than pre-training scores at the 0.05 level.

Step 2 involved a six-week post-training classroom evaluation and survey. The findings indicated that teachers significantly enhanced their life skills counseling abilities, with students demonstrating substantial gains and effectively applying classroom skills in daily life, yielding tangible outcomes. Concurrently, teachers experienced marked improvements in self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication.

In addition, post-training, students' knowledge test scores in the areas of self-awareness, emotional adjustment, and effective communication significantly surpassed pre-training levels ( $p < .05$ ), indicating the training's positive impact on both educators and students.

#### Step 3: Issues and Countermeasures

By reviewing the curriculum trial's process and outcomes, the teacher training curriculum was deemed feasible, yet challenges were identified: a brief training duration, inadequate practice opportunities, limited training space, and a restricted number of teaching cases. To mitigate these issues, the researcher suggested extending the training period, relocating the training venue, and enriching the curriculum with additional practical cases.

#### 4. Evaluating the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing the Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

There were two methods, satisfaction survey and expert evaluation, to evaluate the designed and developed teacher life skills counseling ability training curriculum for vocational college students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China.

Firstly, evaluating the satisfaction towards the teacher training curriculum for enhancing the counseling on life skills for vocational college students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China was shown in Table 4.

**Table 4** Results of Satisfaction Assessment the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students

No.	Statements	Satisfaction Level			
		$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Meaning	Ranking
1	What is your overall satisfaction with this life skills counseling ability development Curriculum?	4.53	0.67	Highest	5
2	How much do you think this life skills counseling ability development Curriculum will help you to improve your life skills counseling ability?	4.87	0.34	Highest	2
3	Do you think the content of this life skills counseling ability development Curriculum is practical?	4.13	0.88	High	7
4	What is your comment on the teaching method of this life skills counseling ability Development Curriculum?	4.83	0.37	Highest	3
5	Do you think the timing of this life skills counseling ability development Curriculum is reasonable?	4.27	0.85	High	6
6	How do you think this life skills Counseling ability development Curriculum is related to your actual work needs?	4.83	0.37	Highest	3
7	What is your comment of the lecturer of this life skills counseling ability development Curriculum?	4.83	0.37	Highest	3
8	How do you think the practice process helped your life skills counseling ability in this Curriculum?	4.80	0.40	Highest	4
9	What is your comment on the organization and arrangement of this life skills Counseling ability development Curriculum?	4.80	0.54	Highest	4
10	Would you like to recommend similar life skills counseling and ability development Curriculum to your colleagues?	4.90	0.30	Highest	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.68</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>Highest</b>	

Table 4 indicates the high overall satisfaction ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.68, SD = .51) with the teacher life skills counseling ability training for vocational college students in Guangxi Province. The highest favorably rated item was recommending the curriculum to colleagues ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.90, SD= .30), followed by perceived benefits to personal counseling ability ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.87, SD = .34), and comments on teaching methods, curriculum relevance, and lecturer quality ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.83, SD = .37). The lowest favored was the practicality of the curriculum content ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.13, SD = .88).

In addition, the quality of teacher training curriculum for enhancing counseling on life skills for vocational college students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China, verified by the experts in four aspects, namely feasibility, propriety, utility and accuracy both in overall and each aspect was at a high level. The highest mean score was the quality of the propriety ( $\bar{X} = 4.06$ , S.D. = 0.25), followed by the accuracy ( $\bar{X} = 4.05$ , S.D. = 0.10), the feasibility ( $\bar{X} = 4.03$ , S.D. = 0.11) and the utility ( $\bar{X} = 4.00$ , S.D. = 0.23), respectively.

## Discussion

The researcher makes the discussion of the study results based on the following topics:

### 1. The Current States of the Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

Through the interview, the researcher learned that students need to acquire practical and operable specific skills to improve self-awareness, adjusting emotions - dealing with stress, and effective communicate-interpersonal relationships. This establishes the guidelines for the design and development of the teacher training curriculum.

The survey revealed that vocational students in Guangxi Province exhibit moderate life skills levels, with high cognitive and empathy abilities but moderate self-awareness, emotional adjustment, and communication skills. Students show signs of self-doubt, lack of confidence, and inferiority, aligning with previous studies by Yin (2019), Cui (2015), and Hao (2020). Additionally, they struggle with emotional management and stress regulation, as noted by Yu and He (2023) and Yin (2019), facing greater social pressures and setbacks compared to their peers. Interpersonal communication difficulties, including closed-off attitudes and sensitivity, were also observed, echoing the findings of Hao and Cui (2015) and Yin (2019).

Shen and Ouyang (2018) emphasize the importance of life skills counseling for youth socialization and adaptation to social challenges, deeming it an essential "growth lesson." The identified deficiencies in self-awareness, emotional regulation, and communication among vocational students could impede their holistic development and career prospects. Consequently, the training curriculum for enhancing teachers' life skills counseling abilities in vocational colleges in Guangxi Province should focus on improving these areas.

Interviews with vocational college students highlighted the needs for practical, actionable skills to bolster self-awareness, emotional management, and interpersonal communication, providing clear guidance for the curriculum design and development.

### 2. Developing the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing the Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

Based on in-depth interviews with Guangxi vocational college educators and experts, a training curriculum for life skills counseling was developed to address the life skills states, issues, and needs of students. The training curriculum is structured into three modules: self-awareness, emotional adjustment and stress management, and effective communication - interpersonal relationships. The curriculum design adheres to the "Taylor principle," proposed by Tyler (1949: 112-130), focusing on goal-oriented development within a closed loop framework. Content selection is informed by constructivism and embodied cognitive theories, emphasizing practical application alongside theoretical knowledge to enhance the curriculum's applicability and relevance to student counseling. The arrangement of course content is tailored to the developmental patterns of life skills and the psychological characteristics of learners. Through a scientifically grounded and thoughtful approach to curriculum design, content

selection, and organization, the effectiveness of the curriculum and the counseling abilities of vocational college teachers are significantly enhanced.

### 3. Implementing the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing the Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

In the development of life skills counseling training curriculum at vocational colleges in Guangxi Province, the researcher emphasized two key aspects. Firstly, the curriculum implementation is grounded in a pragmatic, people-oriented approach, prioritizing the practical application of counseling techniques and tailoring psychological exercises to the needs of vocational students, echoing Dewey's (1938) principle that "Education should take the needs of learners as the basic basis of curriculum and teaching design." Secondly, the evaluation process places a premium on detailed feedback to foster cognitive development, aligning with Smith's (1999) approach. Initial pre- and post-training assessments were conducted to measure the impact of the training. Subsequently, classroom evaluations and post-training follow-ups were utilized to identify issues and inform curriculum refinement.

### 4. Evaluating the Teacher Training Curriculum for Enhancing the Counseling on Life Skills for Vocational College Students in Guangxi Province, People's Republic of China

The evaluation strategy for the teacher competency development curriculum at vocational colleges in Guangxi Province, integrated multiple components: overall satisfaction combined with local observation, expert and student evaluations, and pre- and post-training assessments. The processes included ongoing training evaluation and subsequent follow-up observations. Data collection aimed to encompass feedback at all levels to comprehensively understand the curriculum's reception, echoing Wheeler's (1988) emphasis on feedback's role in educational purpose and objectives. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of detailed learning outcome feedback to advance cognitive development, a concept shared by Smith (1999). The findings indicated that enhanced life skills counseling abilities among vocational college teachers positively influence student learning and, to an extent, bolster teachers' sense of teaching efficacy. This is in line with Guskey's (2002) Teacher Professional Development Theory and Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory.

## Suggestions

1. Future research should focus on refining curriculum design and enhancing practical assessment components. Regular updates and optimizations of the curriculum content, informed by feedback from vocational college teachers, are essential to maintain the curriculum's relevance and effectiveness.

2. Subsequent studies should establish ongoing support mechanisms to provide continuous services, guidance, and resource support for the development of life skills counseling abilities among vocational college teachers, thereby improving their capacity to conduct life skills consultations for students.

3. Further research should delve into the influencing factors of various life skills dimensions, analyze the underlying causes affecting skill levels, and conduct targeted interventions based on these factors. This research should lead to the refinement of training content, implementation strategies, and evaluation systems.

4. Long-term evaluation mechanisms should be established to periodically assess and summarize the effects of life skills consultation and development curricula, facilitating timely improvements. Additionally, establishing a tracking feedback mechanism for teachers' on-the-job applications will inform future curriculum optimizations..

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