



## Building Counselor Competencies for Supporting Students in a VUCA and BANI World: a Training and Coaching Model

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# Building Counselor Competencies for Supporting Students in a VUCA and BANI World: A Training and Coaching Model

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**Abstract**—After the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is entering a new stage of development. We used to use VUCA to describe the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of the present, and BANI is reminding us of the Brittleness, Anxiety, Non-linear, Incomprehensibility of the world. The complexity, volatility and uncertainty of the social environment have put forward higher requirements on the comprehensive quality and adaptability of college students. As the educators who are closest to students and accompany them for the longest time, it is very important for college counselors to improve their own work ability and help college students better adapt to the changing world. I conducted counselor behavioral event interviews and questionnaires distributed to students at the university where I work. The results showed that there was a gap between the competence of the counselors in my team and the job requirements, resulting in the inability to achieve good performance. This study attempts to combine the learning pyramid theory to construct a competence training model of "KSA" (Knowledge, skills, attitude), improve the current situation, and solve the problem of competence gap among team members. This study took 9 counselors and 268 students from Haiyuan College of Kunming Medical University in Kunming, Southwest China as the research subjects. In the first phase, we used personal interviews and a large number of open-ended questionnaire results to analyze and build a counselor competency model based on student needs; in the second phase, we used this model to help students build the ability to cope with the VUCA and BANI world; in the third phase, we used the result verification method and Bloom's taxonomy evaluation method, proposed that the "KSA" model is helpful for improving counselors' work performance.

**Keywords**—VUCA BANI Knowledge, skills, attitude

## I. INTRODUCTION

Research background: College counselors play a significant role in students' growth and acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as the formation of learning and life attitudes. In the modern educational environment, college counselors are increasingly involved in the cultivation of students' ability to cope with various challenges, including mental health issues, academic pressures, and social dynamics affected by global

uncertainty. Excellent counseling requires practitioners to navigate these complexities through empathy, adaptability, and informed decision-making. However, traditional training methods and models have failed to fully prepare counselors for the competencies required in the process of helping students, especially when dealing with unpredictable and multifaceted problems.

VUCA is an acronym. The concept of VUCA originated from the US military in the 1990s to describe the characteristics of the multilateral world that emerged after the end of the Cold War. In 1985, economist Warren Bennis first mentioned the "VUCA era" in his book "Leaders", using it to describe the unstable, uncertain, complex and ambiguous state of the entire world and business society. Since then, the term has been used in the study of management and leadership. After the global financial crisis in 2008, the concept of VUCA re-emerged as an important term to describe the characteristics of the current world, in the concept of management research. The components it refers to - volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity - are various words used to describe an environment that cannot be confidently diagnosed and confuses employees in various organizations. VUCA now refers to a word with the concept of the times, referring to the world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity that we are in.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, people gradually found that VUCA is no longer enough to describe the more uncertain world we live in today. The term "BANI" (fragile, anxious, nonlinear, incomprehensible), coined by American anthropologist, writer and futurist Jamais Cascio in 2016, began to be known to the public. McKinsey Global Institute used the term BANI for the first time in its report "Building a Talent Foundation - The Way for Enterprises to Break Through in the BANI Era".

From the era of VUCA to BANI, people all over the world generally have the following problems:

A、 Any system and model that seems to be working well has become very fragile. This is fully reflected in the impact of the epidemic in the past few years and the live broadcast era on many companies that were previously working well. No business model is indestructible and may become fragile at any time;

B、 More and more people, whether they are operators, teams, or employees, are becoming anxious. The Internet is also full of public anxiety. Whenever they find an emotional resonance point, they will vent their emotions. People's rational thinking is being swallowed up by anxiety, but this lack of security happens not because they have experienced too little, but because they have experienced too much and too fast;

C、 In the past, we used to use our own experience and habits to explain the phenomena happening around us, and to judge its development trajectory and make decisions according to a line that moves at a constant speed. But today's world is not only complex, but also an explosive generation of emerging things. It is difficult for us to make relevant judgments based on previous experience and trajectory, and it is even more difficult to guess consumers' preferences, just like the outbreak of short video live broadcasts and the outbreak of AI.

D、 Due to the iteration of communication methods, people have entered the era of video broadcasting. Various information and content are transmitted and aggregated in large quantities. We can learn everything that happens in the real world in a short time, but we cannot understand it. Even in the same industry, the development of different companies has shown a discontinuous and nonlinear development trajectory. Technology is accelerating, the pace of life is accelerating, and social changes are accelerating. No one knows what the future will be like or what they will become.

E、 The description of the world today by BANI and VUCA theory also illustrates the chaotic and uncertain environment that today's college students are often experiencing. Although it originated as a business and strategic planning model, its relevance to the work of college counselors is based on the characteristics of the times that people are in. They jointly emphasize that counselors also need to find new ways to better help students cope with and solve problems in unpredictable situations.

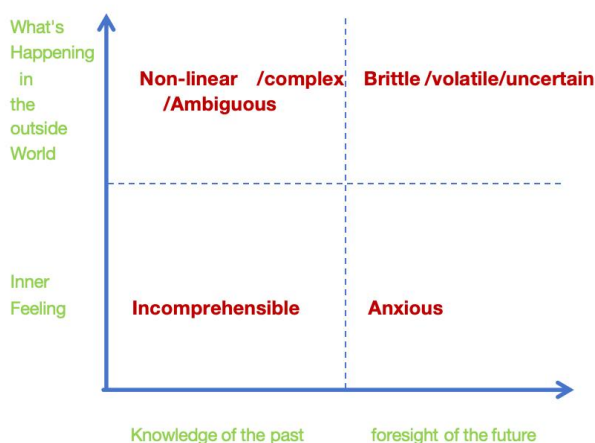


Fig. 1. VUCA and BANI diagram

Since the third-year medical school students I work with generally need to decide whether to continue their studies or find a job after graduation in their third year, whether to continue their studies or find a job, students need to make scientific and objective judgments on their comprehensive qualities, including learning ability and

job competency, in order to decide what kind of school to apply for or what kind of job to find that is most suitable for them and most conducive to the development of their career. At this time, many of them will chat with their counselors and seek their help and guidance. Therefore, this article will focus on the counselors of third-year students at Kunming Medical University Haiyuan College, and conduct research on how to improve their own knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to better help students thrive in the VUCA and BANI era, and finally propose the KSA model.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Coaching Learners to Become Coaches

The Learning Pyramid, originally developed by the National Training Laboratories (NTL) Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, is a well-known model that illustrates the varying rates of retention associated with different learning methods. The pyramid suggests that learners retain information at different levels depending on the method of learning, with the highest retention rates associated with active learning methods such as teaching others and immediate use of learning.

The idea of coaching learners to become coaches aligns closely with the higher levels of the " Learning Pyramid", particularly the "Teaching" and "Immediate Use" categories. By training learners to become coaches, educators and trainers can leverage the principles of the Learning Pyramid to enhance learning outcomes for both the coach and the learner. Several studies have explored the effectiveness of peer teaching and coaching in educational settings. For instance, a study by Robertson and colleagues (2010) found that students who were trained as peer tutors demonstrated improved academic performance and a deeper understanding of the subject matter compared to their peers who did not engage in tutoring. This aligns with the Learning Pyramid's assertion that teaching others is one of the most effective ways to retain information. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Yerushalmi and Yerushalmi (2013) found that peer-led teaching methods, including coaching, were associated with higher levels of student engagement and better academic performance. The authors suggest that peer coaching not only benefits the learner but also enhances the coach's understanding of the material, as they are required to articulate and apply concepts in a way that is accessible to others.

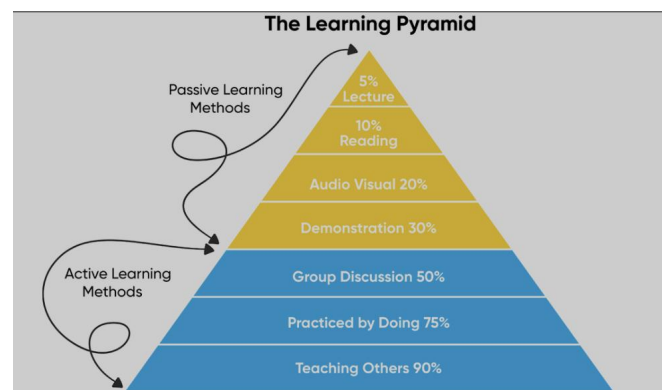


Fig2. learning pyramid (Edgar Dale, 1946)

## *B. Competencies that learners should have in the era of VUCA and BANY*

In the era of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) and BANY (Borderless, Agile, Now, Youthful), the competencies that learners should possess have become increasingly critical. According to literature, these competencies are essential for navigating the rapidly changing global landscape.

### *a. Resilience*

Several studies have highlighted the importance of creating a resilient workforce to succeed in a VUCA environment (Forsythe, Kuhla, & Rice, 2018; Katzenbach & Khan, 2010; Sharma & Sharma, 2016). The definition of resilience is basically the same in various fields. The core essence of resilience is the ability to rebound: the higher the elasticity, the greater the potential to continue to function under deformation pressure. The resilience of the individual spirit is the extension and development of the concept of resilience in the field of engineering. It mainly includes two dimensions. The first dimension is the ability of individuals to rebound and survive faster and more effectively than others after encountering the impact of crisis situations; the second dimension is that after experiencing adversity and difficulties, individuals can surpass rebound and survival faster and more effectively than others, achieve improvement and progress, and even make more outstanding achievements than before because of adversity. This is like "anti-fragility", which becomes stronger every time you encounter a setback. This is exactly the ability that college students in the VUCA and BANY era need most. Counselors need to obtain relevant knowledge through their own studies and educate or cultivate students' qualities from the beginning of entering college.

### *b. agility and adaptability*

Through literature review, we learned that organizations can train employees' agility and adaptability through internal cross-training (Popova & Shynkarenko, 2016; Hopp & Van Oyen, 2003). This shows that specific training forms in agile organizations also use cross-training methods between employees, allowing employees to switch to other professional roles such as instructors or coaches after fully learning a knowledge, or use job rotation programs to allow employees to try to apply the knowledge they have learned in new tasks outside of their normal work (Hopp & Van Oyen, 2003; Sumukadas & Sawhney, 2004). Hopp and Van Oyen (2003) described that the use of job responsibilities and identity rotation methods is very beneficial for employees to deepen their acquisition and understanding of knowledge, because employees can try different types of work tasks, focus on rotating job responsibilities, and learn to teach others to acquire the knowledge related to the competency required for their positions, allowing them to face the diversified aspects of work (Hopp & Van Oyen, 2003; Sumukadas & Sawhney, 2004). Additionally, Horney, Pasmore, and O'Shea (2010) and Popova and Shynkarenko (2016) explain the benefits of using rotation systems to create a more flexible and adaptable workplace for both individual and organizational performance. This combines

agility with the learning pyramid theory on knowledge acquisition.

Another key competency is adaptability. The fast-paced, boundaryless nature of the BANY environment requires learners to be flexible and ready to quickly adapt to new situations (Dias et al., 2019). This includes the ability to learn new skills on the fly and the ability to thrive in a dynamic, ever-changing environment.

Another crucial competency is and adaptability. The fast-paced, borderless nature of BANY environments requires learners to be flexible and ready to adapt to new situations quickly (Dias et al., 2019). This includes the ability to learn new skills on the fly and to thrive in dynamic, ever-changing settings.

### *c. Collaboration and communication*

Additionally, collaboration and communication skills are highlighted as vital for success in a globalized, interconnected world. Learners must be able to work effectively in diverse teams, communicate across cultures, and manage virtual collaborations (Berge, 2005).

## *C. The knowledge, skills and attitudes*

The concepts of knowledge, skills, and attitudes are fundamental to understanding human behavior, learning, and development across various disciplines, including education, psychology, and organizational behavior. This literature review synthesizes key insights from existing research on these three interrelated constructs.

### *a. Knowledge*

Knowledge is often defined as the acquisition of facts, information, and understanding in a particular area (Bloom, 1956). In educational theory, knowledge is typically categorized into different domains, such as declarative knowledge (factual knowledge) and procedural knowledge (know-how) (Anderson, 2000). Research has shown that the acquisition of knowledge is crucial for problem-solving and critical thinking (Bransford et al., 2000). However, knowledge alone is not sufficient for effective performance; it must be combined with skills and attitudes to be fully utilized.

### *b. Skills*

Skills refer to the ability to perform tasks effectively and efficiently. They are often acquired through practice and experience (Eraut, 2000). Skills can be broadly categorized into technical skills, which are specific to a particular job or task, and soft skills, which are more general and relate to interpersonal interactions (Zemke, 1999). The development of skills is a critical component of professional competence, and various models, such as the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition, have been proposed to describe the stages of skill development (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980).

### *c. Attitudes*

Attitudes are predispositions to respond in a particular way to objects, people, or situations (Ajzen, 1991). They are influenced by beliefs, values, and emotions and play a

significant role in shaping behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the context of education and training, positive attitudes toward learning have been shown to enhance motivation and academic performance (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Conversely, negative attitudes can act as barriers to learning and skill development.

#### d. Interrelation of Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

The interplay between knowledge, skills, and attitudes is complex and multifaceted. Research suggests that these three components are mutually reinforcing; for instance, possessing relevant knowledge can influence attitudes toward a task, which in turn can affect the development of skills (Kolb, 1984). Moreover, attitudes can mediate the application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings (Bandura, 1986). For example, a student may possess the knowledge and skills required to solve a mathematical problem, but a negative attitude toward mathematics may hinder their ability to apply these competencies effectively.

#### D. Capacity building & synergistic models

Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of capacity building in various contexts. In the field of health, capacity building has been shown to improve the quality of healthcare services and increase access to care for marginalized populations (WHO, 2023). In education, capacity building initiatives have been linked to improved teacher performance and student outcomes (OECD, 2021).

Synergistic models have been applied in various development contexts to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. For instance, in the field of sustainable development, synergistic approaches have been used to integrate environmental, social, and economic objectives (United Nations, 2022). In this study, the main emphasis is on the self-growth of the instructor in teaching to the students, so as to achieve the collaborative development of both sides.

### III. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

As mentioned earlier, our research addresses the problem that students need better guidance from counsellor in coping with the VUCA and BANY era. Based on a systematic literature review, we propose a solution: a “KSA model”, which we call the "KSA Competency Building framework" for brevity. The research question is: What impact does the "KSA competency Building" framework have on the competency building of my team members in the era of VUCA and BANY. We use this framework in the training of our counsellors. This study investigates the positive effects of the "KSA competency Building" framework on facilitators' ability to help students cope with the era of VUCA and BUNY.

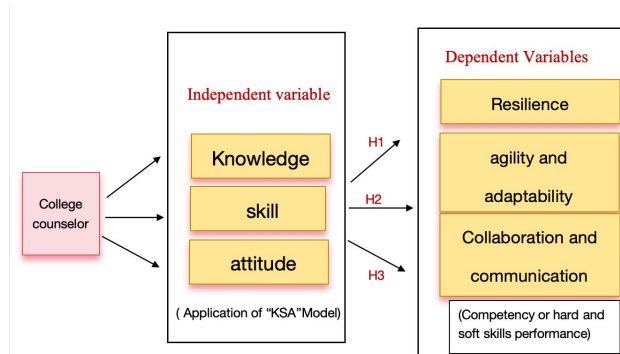


Fig. 3. Conceptual framework

In order to test this idea, we formulated the following hypothesis:

#### • Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis was developed to test the relationship between the Application of “KSA” model framework and Analytical thinking .

H1<sub>0</sub>: Application of “KSA” model framework does not influence College counselors’ Analytical thinking.

H1<sub>1</sub>: Application of “KSA” model framework does influence College counselors’ Analytical thinking.

#### • Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was developed to test the relationship between the Application of “KSA” model framework and Resilience, flexibility and agility .

H2<sub>0</sub>: Application of “KSA” model does not influence College counselors’ Resilience, flexibility and agility .

H2<sub>1</sub>: Application of “KSA” model does influence College counselors’ Resilience, flexibility and agility .

#### • Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis was developed to test the relationship between the Application of “KSA” model framework and Leadership and social influence .

H3<sub>0</sub>: the Application of “KSA” model framework does not influence College counselors’ Leadership and social influence .

H3<sub>1</sub>: the Application of “KSA” model framework does influence College counselors’ Leadership and social influence .

### IV. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Method

This research adopts a quantitative research design in exploring the effectiveness of Application of “KSA” model in improving counselor performance at Haiyuan College. The reasons for the selection of the quantitative approach are rooted in the ability to quantify the connection between training programs and their outcomes to offer an accurate assessment of the programs.

### B. Research Design

This research employs primary data collected from the respondents in an online-based questionnaire conducted through Google Forms. The online questionnaire is justified because it covers a wide population, it is easy for the respondent and the method is effective in data gathering. It makes it possible to provide the participants with a checklist in the same format to ensure that every participant provides answering in a similar and comparable manner to enable comparison.

### C. Data Collection

The data was collected through an online questionnaire conducted through Google Forms. The respondents for this study included 9 counselors at Haiyuan College, and 268 students participated in the questionnaire survey. They were selected to fully understand the impact of the targeted training program on their skill development and job satisfaction. This approach ensured that relevant and specific data were collected from the target population.

### D. Data Analysis

The collected data is analysed using JASP version 0.19.0 (Murad et al., 2024a). The analysis includes correlation to identify the strength and direction of relationships between variables, regression analysis to determine the predictive power of independent variables on the dependent variables. JASP is chosen for its robust statistical analysis capabilities, user-friendly interface, and widespread acceptance in academic research. These analyses provide a detailed understanding of how teach another and practice by doing influence counsellor skills development and job satisfaction, ensuring the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

Counselor number	Knowledge level					
	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Counselor1						✓
Counselor2						✓
Counselor3						✓
Counselor4						✓
Counselor5					✓	
Counselor6						✓
Counselor7						✓
Counselor8						✓
Counselor9						✓

TABLE I. Evaluation of Bloom's Taxonomy

From table 1, Using Bloom's educational goal taxonomy, eight of the nine counselors achieved a "creative" level of knowledge acquisition goals

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the design and application of the "KSA" model in improving the skill development of counselors at Haiyuan College, seeking to improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes through seminars, sharing and communication forums, and counselors effectively helping students better cope with the impact of the VUCA and BANI era, and through the impact of the "KSA"

model on continuous professional development. These goals are to determine the extent to which specific training interventions support the professional development and job satisfaction of college counselors. To achieve the above goals, this study adopted a quantitative research method and used an online Google Form questionnaire survey. This method is considered acceptable because it can obtain feedback information from many students at Haiyuan College in a short period of time after the model is put into use.

The evaluation of the results used Bloom's taxonomy, and the data were analyzed using SPSS, a statistical package for social sciences, which provides sufficient statistical tests such as correlation and regression analysis.

Reliability analysis showed that the internal consistency of all measurement scales was high. This suggests that the survey items reliably capture the effectiveness of knowledge, skills and attitudes in acquiring competencies required to cope with the VUCA and BANI era, including resilience, agility and adaptability, Collaboration and communication. The results of the correlation analysis showed that there were significant positive correlations between all pairs of variables.

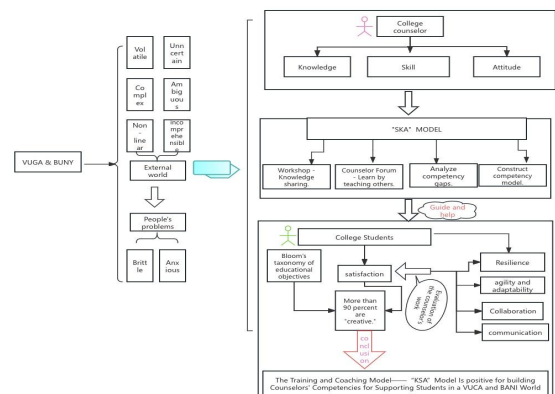


Fig.4. Conceptual framework of research

From figure 4, it can be seen from the research concept map, the coaching model developed in this study, the "KSA" model, through workshops, knowledge acquisition in teaching others, analysis of competency gaps, and establishment of competency models, has enabled 9 counselors at Kunming Medical University Haiyuan College to achieve better work performance than before the model was applied in helping students acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes to match the requirements of the industry, solve students' mental fragility and anxiety, find suitable jobs for themselves, and better adapt to the era of Uka and Bani. We found that students did get better help by collecting students' satisfaction with counselors' work and Bloom's taxonomy of educational goals, and 8 of the 9 counselors also reached the "creative" level in knowledge learning. This also verifies that the "KSA" model is effective.

## VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study, while providing valuable insights, has some limitations. First, it relies on self-reported data from counselors at Sea Source College, which can introduce response bias. Second, the sample size of nine counselors and 268 student respondents, while adequate, limits the generality of the findings to other institutions. Finally, this study is only based on Haiyuan College, and the findings may not be applicable to institutions with different organizational cultures or resources. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies understand these limitations while interpreting the findings into their studies. Similarly, scholars should effectively reduce the impact of these studies.

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