

# Research on the Practice of College Cultural Construction in Newly-built Colleges

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**Abstract.** The newly-built college is an important organization in higher education of China in recent 30 years. Due to its characteristics, the college pays more attention to the construction of visible teaching conditions such as hardware facilities, teacher resources, teaching environment and space in the early stage. This study takes college culture as the research object and typical colleges as the case to analyze the problems existing in the current cultural construction of such colleges, mainly including college culture influences strategic planning, college culture has not been fully implemented into institution.

**Keywords:** Culture Construction; Newly-built colleges

## 1. Introduction

The establishment of newly-built colleges is one of the reflections of reform and opening up in higher education. Since the reform and opening up, the development of China's higher education has gone through four stages: comprehensive reconstruction (1978-1991), structural optimization (1993-1998), scale expansion (1999-2000), and connotation construction (since 2011).[1] The emergence and development of newly-built colleges began in the third stage. According to the education statistics of the Ministry of Education, the number of ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities in China has increased from 597 in 1999 to 1,270 in 2020, which indicated more than 50% colleges and universities in current are newly-built colleges. [2]There is no doubt that the newly-built colleges, as the main higher education resources in the past 20 years, have made certain contributions to regional talent training and local economic and social services.

What is meant by new newly-built colleges? It refers to the colleges that were established through the merger and upgrading of several Junior College, or upgrading alone of a Junior College, or directly approved for new construction. The main characteristics of these colleges are as follows. First, these colleges have not been established for a long time, between 15-30 years, which means the weak running foundation and insufficient running experience. Second, they intend to simply imitate the running ways of traditional universities, which lead to unclear classification and unknown location of these colleges. Third, most of them are located in different provinces or cities of China, which shows they service for the regional social economy.

Why study college culture of newly-built colleges? First, it is determined by the characteristics of new newly-built colleges. Due to the short running time, these colleges generally pay more attention to the "hardware" construction of disciplines, majors and curriculum, teaching staff, infrastructure, campus environment and so on, which leads to neglect of the "software" construction of conceptual culture, institutional culture, etc. Second, it is determined by the importance of college culture. The relevant research on cultural theory indicates the culture is an important element in the management and development of an organization. The main functions of culture are guiding, cohesive, and promoting. The guiding function of culture is to lead the people in the organization to achieve the expected goals with the correct ideology; the cohesive function of culture is to help enterprises form an internal cultural atmosphere suitable for enterprise development and promote good internal communication; the promotion of culture refers to the promotion of the overall development of people and the level of organizational civilization.[3] And researches of college culture demonstrate that in higher education culture can affect student life, administration, and curriculum. [4]

In summary, as a relatively new higher education institution, newly-built colleges are worthy of discussion and research in all aspects. In the development of such colleges, as pointed out earlier, the role of college culture has been neglected. However, culture, as an important element affecting strategic selection and execution, has been valued and recognized in business management practice. The same for newly-built colleges. They should pay attention to the importance of college culture in order to their better development. Therefore, it is very necessary to conduct research on the college culture of newly-built colleges.

The primary focus of this study is to explore the construction of college culture of newly-built colleges, particularly culture elements. Academic researchers believe the importance of college culture for these colleges; however, few empirical studies exist to support these claims.

## 2. Literature Background

The concept of college culture has different expressions in China, which often expressed as university/college culture, campus culture, quality culture, and organizational culture, etc. In fact, although vary slightly depending on the research purposes and questions, there are still similarities in their essence, which refers to the implicit values, beliefs, and ideologies of those within an organization. In the research, college culture is used to express the meaning.

Undoubtedly, college culture is becoming more widely used and accepted, it is still difficult to find clear and succinct methods of uncovering an institution's culture that is accepted by most scholars. Typical of the means given for discovering organizational culture is this description. The typical connotations of college culture in China are as follows:

"Dichotomy" theory, college culture includes two parts: scientific culture and humanistic culture;

"Three points" theory, divides college culture into three basic aspects: spiritual culture, material culture and institutional culture;

"Four points" theory, college culture includes four aspects: spiritual culture, material culture, institutional culture and environmental culture;

"Five points" theory, university culture includes values and its university spirit, university image, development goals, rules a college culture and regulations, university environment, etc.

The relationship of these elements also was discussed. Take the "three points" theory as an example, they believe material culture is the foundation of college cultural construction, in which teachers and students should be encouraged to work together to create special environmental culture; institution culture is the guiding principle of college cultural construction, in which various management institutions and responsibility institutions should be improved; and spirit culture is the core of the college cultural construction, in which attentions should be paid on the refinement of college spirit, and construction of academic culture. [5]Although these studies suggest measures to be taken for different cultural elements, they have not been practically applied. In addition, in practical work, the relationship between these different cultural elements is not explained, and so is their collaborative work

However, there are different interpretations of college culture between China and the West. In western countries, the study of college culture draws more on the theoretical achievements of enterprise management and enterprise culture, in which researchers and practitioners often view culture as a new management approach. So in higher education they regard college culture as an important means of university management. Compare with the concept of Chinese scholars, their concepts are more practical. In Report on The Three Rounds Of The Quality Culture Project(2002-2006)pointed out, quality culture refers to an organizational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterized by two distinct elements: on the one hand, a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality and, on the other hand, a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts. thus, the cultural/psychological element refers back to individual staff members while the structural/managerial refers back to the institution. [6]William G. Tierney

ever designed a working framework, which included environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy and leadership, to diagnose culture in colleges and universities to overcome distinct problems. [7]

### 3. Research Method

Case study is the main method in this study, taking Xi'an Eurasia College as the research object. The reasons for choosing it as the subject mainly include the following reasons. First, the college typical newly-built college, which has been established for 27 years and was upgraded of a Junior College. Second, it integrates the concepts and management of Chinese and Western colleges in development. Clayton M. Christensen divides the current development of higher education into two development modes: traditional and innovative in "The Innovative University - Changing the DNA of Higher Education from Inside Out" , which is slightly similar to the current development path of new undergraduate colleges in China. One is to transplant the traditional school-running model, and the other is to follow the university reform and innovation model. It's the latter. [8]

Questionnaire, interviews, observation, and document analysis are four basic techniques. Questionnaire and interviews are effective means of gathering data on beliefs, attitudes, and values. The researcher should probe the outer most layer and the middle layer discussed above. Members of various campus constituencies such as faculty, students, administrators, and staff were included in the interview sample. Observation is a valuable means, through which decision makers at work, committee meetings, or faculty members' teaching should be observed. And it is also observing from many sources what is important in daily life on the campus and symbols to which community members have become habituated. Document analysis is not only a means of learning more about the college's curriculum and its relationship to the campus culture, but it is well suited for collecting data on institutional history. Documents lend to cultural analysis include, but are not limited to, institutional mission statements, planning documents, official college publications, minutes of meetings, campus newspapers, and college histories.

### 4. Results and discussion

According organizational culture theory, the researcher divides the concept of college culture into three levels. The top level is the mission and vision of the College, which can be called the strategic level; The next level is values and school running philosophy, which can be called strategy level; The lowest level is the college management philosophy, teaching philosophy and learning atmosphere, which can be called the executive level. College culture must be implemented in the actual work. When corresponding to the actual work, the mission, vision and values generally correspond to the college strategy and running philosophy, and management and teaching philosophy can correspond to management system and mechanism in daily life. Therefore the analysis of college culture started from strategic planning and management mechanism and system of the University.

#### 4.1 College culture influences strategic planning

The premise of conducting research on college culture practice is to clarify its characteristics, in which document analysis is the main research method, with observation as an auxiliary. The characteristics of the college culture are mainly reflected in the following four points.

The core values of the college are responsibility, partnership, innovation and usefulness; Responsibility means that the college is responsible for students, teachers, parents, society and other stakeholders, which requires teaching staff to work hard for it; Partnership means that members of the organization should share and cooperate with each other; Innovation means that the college advocates all staff to carry out reform and innovation activities following the laws of education and market, which is the core ability of the college's survival and development; Useful means that the

college advocates providing useful education for students, and effective teaching and management are the value evaluation criteria. [9]

According to the document in the college, we conclude that college culture influences strategic planning. Based the characteristics, it can be analyzed and summarized one by one. First, the value of responsibility is well reflected in the strategy. For example, "Student centered" is the teaching philosophy of the college, which means when making a planning for teaching and learning, students' learning experience and learning quality must be guaranteed. In reality, cultivating excellent talents is not only a reflection of being responsible to students and parents, but also a positive contribution to the society. Uphold the concept of innovation, various explorations and innovations in teaching, teaching management, administrative management and other aspects are carried out in the college. A typical case is that the college adopts a novel strategic planning model obviously which is obviously different from traditional Chinese colleges. "TEXT MODEL" is adopted by most colleges, which mainly refers to strategic planning is formed by rational analysis of a large amount of information and data, and then implemented. The Eurasian College adopts the "ACTION REFLECTION MODEL", which means that the strategic planning of the college is a dynamic practice process, formed by continuous exploration and reflection in action. There are some other innovative initiatives such as the Baldrige performance management was introduced in performance management, and community-based student management reform was carried out in student management.

As for the core value of partnership, it is not well reflected in the strategy, which is mainly reflected in that the collaboration between different departments of the college, which is superficial and cannot carry out further; and the cooperation of teachers is not well mainly because teachers have not formed good cooperation in teaching and scientific research, and their experience and resources have not been fully shared. Although the college has taken measures to establish teacher team-based curriculum, the actual implementation effect is not good. And the core values of useful goes a little far. The effect of education cannot be measured by useful only. Knowledge is the same. Colleges should pay attention to the study of students' thinking and methodology, rather than limited to practical knowledge. In the college, the course content design is particularly fully reflected in this point, which also leads to poor independent thinking ability and logical thinking ability of students. Besides, as the college practices useful management, it pays more attention to the timely effect of measures or actions, which leads to the frequent replacement of strategic actions, or halfway of action. But as we all know, education is different from other activities, it takes a longer time.

#### **4.2 College culture has not been fully implemented into institution**

The college insists on being responsible for students, and student-centered could be extended to one of the characteristics of the college culture. In order to analyze the implementation of the characteristic in teaching, questionnaire survey and the observation are the main research method.

The key to college culture is the quality of talent training. To study the implementation of college culture, the researcher investigated the perception of college quality in 750 faculties. According to the survey, 72% faculties believe that college quality is "high-quality courses", and 69% consider that is "students' high-quality internships and employment." (As shown in Table 1) Based these, it concludes that most faculties hold the view that college culture is closely related to students, which is embodied in curriculum learning and internship employment.

Table 1 Survey results of teachers' perception of college quality

The perception of college quality	Proportion
high quality courses	72.13%
High-quality internships and employment for students	69.47%
Long-term development process	65.87%
Extremely meticulous work process and fruitful work results	60.93%
Based on continuous improvement of the standard system and compliance with the standard system	55.60%
inner pursuit	49.20%
performance requirements	11.73%
leadership requirements	10.27%

Although most teachers hold the student-centered view, it is not fully reflected in the teaching and curriculum. The teaching method is the most direct manifestation. By observing the classroom situation and analyzing the course syllabus, we found that the typical teaching paradigm of teachers speaking and students listening is the main teaching method. The student-centered teaching design has not been promoted.

As analyzed above, the college culture is not fully reflected in the actual work. A good college culture construction must balance the two elements of college culture and practical work. Leaders must play an important role in this. First of all, the leadership needs to create conditions conducive to the culture of the college. On the one hand, it is necessary to ensure that the faculty and staff in different positions can be consistent with the mission and values of the college. This requires a good publicity and communication mechanism. On the other hand, leaders need to pay attention to the practice of university culture, implement the core concepts of university culture in practical work, and promote the construction of university culture by establishing clear standards and systems and establishing good processes.

The strength of institutional culture depends on several factors. [10]Primary among them is the scale of the organization. Small organizations tend to have stronger cultures than do large organizations. Second is the tightness of the organization. Colleges with highly interdependent parts have stronger cultures than those with autonomous parts. Third is the age of the organization. Culture develops over time and an institution with a long history simply has a larger foundation upon which to build its culture. Finally, the institution's founding influences the strength of its culture. In colleges with stronger cultures there is greater coherence among beliefs, language, ritual, and myth. The case College of this study, Xi'an Eurasian college, is a large-scale College (with more than 20000 teachers and students), which has been established for a short time and has relatively independent organization and operation. This made its institution relatively weak.

Some scholars concluded that there are three main ways for the current college culture construction. First is rational speculation, which means the college form a set of expression system by combining college culture concept from the ideological connotation and written expression; Second is historical narration, which is based on the facts of college activities and reviewed the college development history to refine and construct the culture. Third, take the initiative to create. Through the practice of college education reform, integrate new cultural ideas into educational activities and development of teachers and students, and then organically generate a new school culture.[11]As a new college, Xi'an Eurasian college obviously belongs to the third path, that is, to promote the construction of college culture through the practice of college education reform. Based on the above analysis and drawing on the theory and experience of corporate culture construction, the researcher analyzed the two major problems existing in the current college culture construction, and tried to propose some solutions. In the follow-up study, the researchers will refine key factors in construction of college culture and explore the implementation actions.

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