

*Original Paper*

Research on the Endogenous Path and Characteristic Carriers of  
Quality Culture Construction in Higher Vocational Colleges  
—Taking Polus International College as an Example

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**Abstract**

*The quality culture construction in higher vocational colleges needs to achieve an endogenous transformation from "external discipline" to "self-discipline" and from "concept" to "action". Taking Sichuan International College of Cosmetology as an example, this paper, through the progressive practice of four stages: "internalization of concepts", "institutional guarantee", "behavioral cultivation" and "cultural awareness", innovatively integrates characteristic carriers such as "3A-level scenic campus" and "living museum cluster", and constructs an effective endogenous path. The research shows that deeply integrating quality culture into the entire process of education and physical space can significantly enhance the quality recognition and self-aware behavior of teachers and students, providing a reference model for the connotative construction of higher vocational colleges.*

**Keywords**

*Quality culture, Higher vocational colleges, Endogenous path, Characteristic Carrier*

**1. Introduction**

As China's vocational education shifts from scale expansion to internal-oriented development, quality culture, as the core support for the internal construction of higher vocational colleges, has become a key indicator for evaluating the level of education. However, many higher vocational colleges generally exhibit phenomena such as "emphasizing hardware but neglecting software" and "having forms but lacking substance" in the construction of quality culture. The quality norms mainly rely on external coercion rather than the voluntary compliance of teachers and students, and there is a problem of disconnection between the surface form and the substantive content of quality activities and the educational and teaching process (Chen Shougen & Liu Tao, 2018). The root cause of these problems

lies in the fact that the construction of a quality culture has not truly achieved the transformation from "external-discipline" to "self-discipline", and from "concept" to "action".

Polus International College (hereinafter referred to as "Polus College") not only successfully transformed its campus into a national 3A-level tourist attraction in 2011, but also established five "living museums", creating a unique educational environment where "the campus is an attraction, and the museums are classrooms". Guided by the educational philosophy of "enhancing human life quality through beauty and health", Polus College has constructed a systematic humanistic quality education system. This study takes this college as a case to deeply analyze its internalized path and distinctive carriers of quality culture construction, with the aim of providing theoretical references and practical inspirations for quality culture construction in vocational colleges.

## **2. The Connotation and Structural Framework of Quality Culture in Higher Vocational Colleges**

Quality culture refers to the set of values, moral norms, behavioral guidelines, and thinking patterns that have been formed by higher vocational colleges through long-term educational and teaching practices and are recognized and internalized by all teachers, students, and staff (Schein, E. H., 2010). Structurally, quality culture can be divided into four interrelated levels.

### **(1) Spiritual Culture**

The core layer of quality culture includes the school's quality policy, quality objectives, quality values, and quality beliefs. Polus College proclaims that "enhancing the quality of human life through beauty and health" as its core educational philosophy, making it the spiritual core of the quality culture.

### **(2) Institutional Culture**

The middle layer of quality culture is manifested through quality organizations, quality standards, quality regulations, and quality systems. Polus College has established a complete quality system guarantee by implementing a teaching strategy of "three verticals, four horizontals, and five integrations".

### **(3) Behavioral Culture**

It is manifested as the behavioral patterns of teachers and students in activities such as quality management, education and teaching, and learning practice. Polus College, through its "five-element integration" training program, guides teachers and students to develop good quality behavior habits.

### **(4) Material Culture**

The material carriers of quality culture include the campus environment, teaching facilities, training bases, etc. The 3A scenic campus of Polus College and the five museums are the direct manifestations of the material aspect of quality culture.

These four aspects interact and promote each other, jointly forming an organic whole of the quality culture in higher vocational colleges. Among them, the spiritual culture serves as the guidance, the institutional culture provides the guarantee, the behavioral culture is the key, and the material culture forms the foundation.

### **3. The Internalization Path of Quality Culture Construction: The Practical Exploration of the Institution's Promotion**

Polus College has constructed an endogenous path for quality culture building through four consecutive stages: internalization of concepts, institutional guarantee, behavioral cultivation, and cultural self-consciousness.

#### **(1) Internalization Of Concepts**

The starting point of the internalized path is the internalization of ideas. The institution that claims to be an academy first builds a complete quality value system, making the concepts of "quality is dignity" and "quality is life" understood and accepted by teachers and students. The "humanistic quality education system" constructed by Polus College, consisting of "one heart, two paths, three stages, four entries, five virtues, and six abilities", makes the quality concept deeply rooted in people's minds. "One heart" means centering on cultivating the humanistic and professional qualities of vocational college students simultaneously; "two paths" refer to relying on traditional culture and corporate culture as two paths; "three stages" mean building and implementing three stages of courses: humanistic foundation, humanistic expansion, and integration of knowledge and action; "four entries" mean integrating traditional culture, inputting corporate culture, implanting revolutionary culture, and entering campus culture; "five virtues" are benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness; "six abilities" focus on cultivating students' six abilities: autonomous learning, information processing, digital application, expression and communication, teamwork, and innovation and entrepreneurship. This system turns the quality concept from an abstract slogan into a specific guide for teachers and students' daily teaching activities.

#### **(2) Institutional Guarantee**

The system serves as the bridge that transforms ideas into actions. Polus College has established a system that aligns with the concept of quality culture, including teaching management systems, quality evaluation systems, and incentive and restraint systems. Among them, the most distinctive feature is the "three verticals, four horizontals, and five integrations" teaching strategy. The "Three verticals" cover the entire process of before class, during class, and after class; the "Four horizontals" include the teaching content line, the teacher activity line, the teaching method line, and the student activity line; the "Five integrations" integrate teaching concepts, teaching models, teaching resources, teaching evaluations, and ideological education in courses.

At the same time, Polus College innovatively implemented the "three guides and one self" (academic mentors + health life mentors + personality development mentors, student self-management) and the "two-dimensional and three-part" (based on two dimensions of social needs and individual differences, to differentiate and cultivate students three times) educational mechanism to ensure that the quality requirements are implemented.

### (3) Behavioral Cultivation

Behaviors are the external manifestations of ideas and systems. Polus College promotes the implementation of quality concepts by creating scenarios, establishing platforms, and conducting activities. Through the "five education integration" training model, the institution integrates moral education, intellectual education, physical education, aesthetic education, and labor education throughout the entire process of talent cultivation. At the curriculum level, Polus College implements a "three-stage" curriculum system: the first stage curriculum (the first classroom) includes professional compulsory courses and public basic courses; the second stage curriculum is online classroom courses, such as mental health education, etiquette and cultivation, etc.; The third stage curriculum belongs to the second classroom, including labor education, quality cultivation activities, etc. This curriculum system ensures the implementation of quality concepts throughout the entire process of education and teaching.

At the student level, Polus College cultivates students' quality awareness and practical abilities through club activities, skill competitions, and social practices. For example, the dance "The Fluttering Rhythm of Ink" created by students majoring in early childhood education perfectly combines classical dance with the culture of books. It not only won the awards of the college students' art exhibition in Sichuan Province, but also became a vivid manifestation of the cultivation of quality behaviors.

### (4) Cultural Self-consciousness

Cultural self-awareness is the highest level of quality culture construction. In an institution like Polus College that emphasizes quality, quality is no longer an external mandatory requirement but has been internalized as the conscious value pursuit and behavioral habit of teachers and students. This cultural self-awareness is mainly reflected in three aspects:

1. **Mission-driven.** Teachers and students firmly believe that their educational work is of great significance, which has stimulated their internal pursuit of quality. For example, the director of the preschool education department led the team to propose a reform plan of "reconstructing the professional ecology of preschool education through aesthetic education", which was based on the lofty sense of mission for educational quality.
2. **Physical and Mental Integrity.** Teachers and students do not violate their values in their work and regard it as nourishment rather than exhaustion. For instance, the "Shiyong Film Studio" established by Polus College is not only a teaching platform but also a spiritual home for teachers and students to pursue quality together.
3. **Autonomous Management.** Teachers and students can understand their own interests and strengths and independently carry out high-quality teaching activities. The "Student Self-Management" model implemented by Polus College enables students to actively plan and grow autonomously.

#### **4. Characteristic Carrier: The Educational Functions of 3A Scenic Area Campuses and Living Museum Clusters**

Polus College emphasizes that the campus physical environment serves as an important carrier and direct manifestation of quality culture. Through innovative practices such as the 3A scenic campus and the living museum complex, it provides distinctive material carriers for the construction of quality culture.

##### **(1) 3A Campus Scenic Area: The Spatial Penetration of Environmentally-Friendly Education and Quality Culture**

Polus College is the only university in China that has built its entire campus into a 3A-level national tourist attraction. The core value of this innovative practice lies in integrating the quality concept into the campus space planning, so that every landscape and every building on the campus carries educational significance and quality connotations.

Inside the college's scenic area, there are buildings with the ancient architectural style of Sichuan West, rainwater recycling systems, energy-saving podiums, and other low-carbon facilities, as well as five living museums. These facilities not only have practical functions but are also the material carriers of quality culture. For example, the energy-saving and environmental protection facilities in Polus College reflect the college's pursuit of quality for sustainable development, while the ancient architectural style buildings inherit the craftsmanship spirit of traditional culture.

##### **(2) Living Museums: Materialization of Quality Culture and Experience Platform**

The five living museums (Western Sichuan Classical Furniture Museum, Women's Embroidery Craft Museum, Ancient and Modern Hairdressing Techniques Museum, Folk Traditional Health Preservation Skills Museum, and Contemporary Pottery Museum) that are part of the college's construction are innovative carriers for quality culture building. Unlike traditional museums, these museums emphasize "dynamic" inheritance, meaning that the exhibits are not only for viewing but also interact with teachers and students in practical use, providing immersive experiences. The "dynamic" characteristics are mainly reflected in three aspects:

1. Integrated teaching, doing and learning. The museum is both a display space and a teaching venue. For example, the Ancient and Modern Hairdressing Techniques Museum not only showcases the history of hairdressing but also serves as a training base for the professional design of characters; students can directly participate in activities such as the restoration of ancient furniture and the production of traditional crafts in the museum, integrating theoretical teaching with practical operations.
2. Close integration of research, production, and education. The museum becomes a platform for creative incubation and product development. Polus College, relying on museum resources, has developed a series of cultural and creative products under the trademark "Spring Peach", and has applied for over a hundred design patents. These products not only enrich the quality teaching content but also achieve a win-win situation of cultural inheritance and economic benefits.

3. Deep integration of culture, education, museums and tourism. The museum becomes a link connecting culture, education, museums and tourism. Polus College, through activities such as the "Non-Heritage Academic Research" lecture series, opens museum resources to society, achieving the radiation and dissemination of quality culture.

### (3) Realization of the Educational Functions of Characteristic Carriers

The 3A scenic campus and the dynamic museum complex of Polus College are not only showcases of quality culture but also important educational platforms. Polus College organizes students to participate in the museum's explanations, exhibit collection, and exhibition planning practices in a planned manner, converting the distinctive carrier resources into project-based learning materials. For instance, in courses such as "Introduction to Quality" or "Introduction to Specialization", students are assigned to search for quality-related cases in the museum and share them; in the orientation for new students and the induction training for new teachers, visiting the museum and understanding the school's quality culture tradition are made compulsory parts. Through such in-depth participation and experiences, the material carriers and the cognition, emotions, and behaviors of the teachers and students form a profound connection, enabling the effective transmission of quality culture.

## **5. The Interaction Mechanism between the Endogenous Path and Characteristic Carrier**

In the practice of claiming to be Polus College, the internal path and distinctive carriers of quality culture development are not isolated from each other; instead, they have a dialectical relationship of mutual dependence and mutual promotion. This interactive mechanism is mainly manifested in the following three aspects:

### (1) Conceptual Leading and Carrier Construction

The core concept of quality culture lies in the soul of the construction of characteristic carriers. The quality philosophy of Polus College, which claims to "enhance the quality of human life through beauty and health", needs to be presented and conveyed through specific carriers. And the distinctive carriers such as the 3A scenic area and the dynamic museum clusters in Polus College are the materialized forms and spatial presentations of the quality philosophy. These carriers, with their intuitiveness, interactivity, and experiential nature, make the abstract quality philosophy perceivable, understandable, and acceptable, thereby effectively promoting the internalization of the philosophy. For example, Polus College, through the traditional craftsmanship production experience in the dynamic museum, enables students to personally feel the ultimate pursuit of quality in the spirit of craftsmanship, thereby internalizing it as their own quality values.

### (2) Behavior Practice and Platform Support

In the behavioral formation stage of the internal generation path, it needs to be realized through specific platforms and activities. The distinctive carriers provide rich scenarios and diverse opportunities for teachers and students to practice quality behaviors. The 3A scenic campus and the dynamic museum clusters of the college offer real or simulated professional environments for teachers and students,

making quality behavior training no longer an abstract classroom lecture but a concrete situational experience. For example, the "Shiying Film Studio" created by the film and multimedia technology major group is not only an experimental platform but also a practical field for behavioral formation. The studio sets up five departments - marketing, planning and directing, shooting, post-production, and coordination - following the enterprise's job standards, and has professional teachers leading students to complete real projects. In this real working environment, students naturally form strict requirements for work quality.

### (3) Cultural Self-consciousness and Activation of Cultural Vehicles

When the distinctive carriers continue to provide high-quality cultural experiences and practical opportunities for teachers and students, the carriers themselves will be "activated" and become symbols of the students' emotional identification and spiritual belonging (Wang Jianming, 2019). This emotional identification is an important catalyst for cultural consciousness. In the academically-oriented institution, the dynamic museum is not only a teaching venue but also a common spiritual home for teachers and students. Every exhibit and every story in the museum carries the college's persistent pursuit of the quality concept of "beauty and health", and subtly influences the value orientation and behavioral choices of teachers and students.

## **6. The Effects and Implications of Quality Culture Construction**

Through the case analysis of Polus College, it can be observed that its quality culture construction path has achieved remarkable results and has provided important illumination for other higher vocational colleges.

### (1) Construction Achievement

The college has achieved remarkable results through the combination of internal development paths and characteristic carriers in the quality culture construction:

1. The quality recognition of teachers and students has significantly improved. Through internalization of concepts, institutional guidance, behavioral incentives, and culture edification, the recognition of the college's quality values by teachers and students has continuously strengthened, shifting from "I should achieve high quality" to "I want to achieve high quality". For example, students in the Early Childhood Education Department enhanced their professional skills by participating in the choreography and performance of "The Fluttering Rhythm of Ink", and also strengthened their recognition of the quality concept.
2. The quality culture atmosphere on campus has become increasingly intense. The distinctive carriers such as the 3A scenic area campus and the dynamic museum cluster make the quality concept visible, tangible, and accessible, creating a strong atmosphere where "everyone values quality, everyone creates quality, and everyone enjoys quality". The college's characteristic cultural education model of "six museums supporting, three classrooms interacting" has permeated the various corners of the campus with quality culture.

3. The quality of talent cultivation has steadily improved. The quality culture construction ultimately focuses on the improvement of talent cultivation quality. The graduates of Polus College are highly favored by the industry, with a consistently high employment rate, achieving internationalization, high-levelness, and high-salary employment. The graduates can be found in 52 countries and regions around the world. This fully proves the positive impact of quality culture construction on talent cultivation.

## (2) Illumination

The practical experiences of Polus College provide important inspirations for the quality culture construction of other vocational colleges:

1. To Adhere to Distinctive Development. Polus College did not simply copy the quality construction models of other universities. Instead, based on its own educational philosophy of "beauty and health", it created a unique quality culture carrier. Other vocational colleges should also base themselves on their own educational positioning and professional characteristics, and explore quality culture construction paths that are suitable for their own realities.
2. To Focus on Innovation of Carriers. Quality culture construction requires tangible material carriers as support. Polus College achieved this by establishing a 3A scenic area campus and a group of dynamic museums, making abstract quality concepts have concrete material forms. Other universities should also attach importance to the construction of material carriers, so that the quality culture can be perceived and experienced.
3. To Strengthen Internal Driving Force. The key to quality culture construction lies in stimulating the internal driving force of teachers and students. Polus College strengthened the autonomous management ability of teachers and students through mechanisms such as "three guidance and one self", achieving the transformation from external regulation to internal self-discipline. Other universities in quality culture construction should also focus on stimulating the internal driving force of teachers and students, avoiding relying solely on external coercion.

## 7. Conclusion

The quality culture construction practice of Polus College indicates that the quality culture construction in higher vocational colleges is a systematic project from concept to action, which requires following an internal development path and relying on distinctive carriers to achieve effective transformation (Shi Weiping & Hao Tiancong, 2021). Through the progressive stages of spiritual guidance, institutional guarantee, behavioral formation, and cultural consciousness, combined with the innovative application of distinctive carriers such as 3A scenic area campuses and dynamic museum clusters, the transformation of quality culture from external regulation to internal self-discipline can be effectively achieved.

The practice of Polus College provides a reference example for the quality culture construction in higher vocational colleges. Its experience shows that quality culture construction should not remain at

slogans and forms, but should be deeply integrated into the entire process of school education and teaching, and incorporated into the daily behaviors and values of teachers and students. Only in this way can the internal development of quality culture be truly realized, providing continuous impetus for the connotation construction of higher vocational colleges.

In the future, with the continuous development of vocational education, quality culture construction will face new opportunities and challenges. How to further strengthen the deep integration of distinctive carriers and quality culture, and how to utilize new technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of quality culture construction, are issues worthy of further discussion. It is hoped that this research can provide useful references for the quality culture construction in higher vocational colleges and promote the high-quality development of vocational education in our country.

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