



Research on the Characteristics and Optimization Pathways of High-Level Talent Introduction Policies in Higher Vocational Colleges

Chenyu Cai^{1*}, Chunjie Lyu²

¹ Zhejiang Financial College, Hangzhou 310018, Zhejiang, China

² Hangzhou Institute of Medicine, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Hangzhou 310022, Zhejiang, China

Abstract: This study takes higher vocational colleges in Zhejiang Province as a case to systematically analyze the evolutionary stages, characteristics, and challenges of their high-level talent recruitment policies against the backdrop of vocational education reform. The research finds that these policies have generally evolved from a phase of “scale expansion” to one of “categorical quality enhancement”, and further toward “strategic ecosystem building”, reflecting a shift from meeting quantitative targets to fostering connotative development, and ultimately aligning with long-term strategic goals. Meanwhile, the study identifies persistent core issues in current talent recruitment efforts, including insufficient foresight in planning, underdeveloped support systems, and mismatches between evaluation mechanisms and the characteristics of high-level talent. Based on these findings, systematic recommendations for optimization are proposed, focusing on precision recruitment, professional support services, and development-oriented evaluation mechanisms.

Keywords: higher vocational college, high-level talent, introduction policy

1. Introduction

Cultivating a high-quality and professional teaching force serves as the fundamental pillar for advancing the national strategy of strengthening education and deepening the reform of vocational education in the new era. From the establishment of national model institutions to the “Double High-Level” initiative, and from the Implementation Plan for National Vocational Education Reform to the Outline for Building a Strong Education System (2024–2035), a series of major policies and programs have consistently placed the development of a high-caliber teaching workforce at the forefront[1]. Against this backdrop, higher vocational colleges in Zhejiang Province, as a representative case, have actively responded to national strategies and policy mandates. Confronted with the elevated standards for faculty resulting from the advancement of undergraduate-level vocational education and the growing demand for high-level talent, these institutions have formulated and implemented a range of high-level talent recruitment plans. Therefore, systematically examining and analyzing the evolutionary trajectory, stage-specific characteristics, and underlying logic of talent recruitment policies in Zhejiang's higher vocational colleges not only contributes to understanding the common patterns and innovative practices in regional policy implementation but also provides valuable regional insights and practical pathways for higher vocational colleges across the nation to optimize their talent recruitment systems, strengthen faculty development, and achieve high-quality growth.

2. Evolution and Characteristics of High-Level Talent Recruitment Policies in Higher Vocational Colleges

2.1 Stage One: Scale Expansion and Institutional Inception

This phase is commonly observed during critical development periods for higher vocational colleges, such as institutional upgrading evaluations, expansion in scale, or compliance assessments. The core objective of policies at this stage is to rapidly supplement the faculty with highly educated personnel (particularly doctoral degree holders), optimize the academic qualification structure of the teaching staff, and meet the rigid requirements of external evaluations[2]. Taking higher vocational colleges in Zhejiang Province as an example, in response to the national demonstration college initiative and subsequent connotative development, institutions widely began to introduce specialized doctoral talent recruitment plans. Although policies at this stage emphasized principles such as “holistic planning and application-oriented recruitment”, in practice, the “need” was often simplified to a quantitative demand for doctoral qualifications. For instance, Zhejiang Financial College's 2016 Implementation Measures for the Recruitment of High-Level Talents (Trial) marked the initial establishment of its institutional framework. Its characteristics included relatively broad recruitment criteria (e.g., an age limit generally under 45 years, with a focus on core disciplines) and compensation policies centered on market-competitive

incentives such as housing purchase subsidies (500,000 to 1,000,000 RMB) and research start-up funds (100,000 to 300,000 RMB), reflecting a “high-cost, large-scale” approach. At this time, the management focus of institutions was predominantly on the “recruitment” phase, with little attention given to systematic post-recruitment development, categorized assessments, or long-term support mechanisms. This stage represents a typical period of institutional groundwork.

2.2 Stage Two: Categorical Development and Quality Enhancement

As institutional scale stabilized, the focus of higher vocational colleges shifted toward connotative development and quality improvement. Project-driven initiatives, such as the “Double High Plan”, became a defining feature of this stage. Talent recruitment in Zhejiang’s higher vocational colleges gradually evolved from merely supplementing academic qualifications to emphasizing quality through alignment with specific tasks like the development of high-level professional clusters and the establishment of innovative teaching teams. A typical approach was the establishment of an internal talent classification system, enabling differentiated recruitment policies tailored to talent categories. For example, Zhejiang Financial College revised its implementation measures in 2018, introducing for the first time a four-tier classification system—“Top Talent, Leading Talent, Distinguished Talent, and Core Talent”—marking a shift from “recruiting doctoral holders” to “recruiting talent meeting specific standards”. Compensation policies were accordingly differentiated to align with these categories, and the proportional structure of incentive funds was standardized. Simultaneously, institutions began to strengthen post-recruitment management by explicitly setting service periods and multi-dimensional performance requirements. However, as evidenced by common practices among colleges in Zhejiang, challenges remained in designing assessment mechanisms that genuinely reflect the characteristics and growth patterns of high-level talent. The refinement and precision of management practices required further development.

2.3 Stage Three: Strategic Alignment and Ecosystem Construction

Currently, some forward-thinking higher vocational colleges in Zhejiang Province have begun exploring this stage. Its core hallmark is the deep integration of talent recruitment into the institution’s overall development strategy, with a focus on constructing a sustainable talent development ecosystem. Policy evolution is reflected in several aspects: in strategic positioning, shifting from “meeting current needs” to “serving future development plans”, emphasizing alignment with disciplinary optimization and long-term strategic goals; in evaluation criteria, transitioning from an emphasis on “talent titles” to prioritizing quantifiable assessments of actual contributions, such as research achievements; and in management mechanisms, striving to establish clear cross-departmental collaborative recruitment systems, comprehensive service support frameworks, and dynamic assessment systems linked to career development pathways. These reforms collectively aim to build an institutional ecosystem that organically integrates “recruitment, cultivation, utilization, and retention”, fostering mutual benefits between individual talent development and institutional strategic objectives.

3. Common Core Challenges in Attracting High-Level Talent to Higher Vocational Colleges

3.1 Lack of Foresight and Precision in Talent Planning

Many secondary colleges or departments within higher vocational institutions have yet to conduct forward-looking and systematic talent demand forecasting and planning that closely aligns with regional industrial development trends and disciplinary transformation and upgrading[3]. Talent recruitment often falls into a passive model of “recruiting only when positions are available”, rather than proactively “building talent reserves for future development”. Additionally, recruitment channels remain reliant on traditional university job portals and general job fairs, resulting in weak connections with the professional networks of high-end technical talent and applied doctoral candidates in the industry. This leads to information asymmetry and low effectiveness in talent attraction.

3.2 Prevalent “Emphasis on Recruitment, Neglect of Support” Phenomenon and Inadequate Ecosystem Support Systems

The management and service models in higher vocational colleges are predominantly designed around routine teaching operations, making them ill-suited to meet the specific needs of high-level talent during recruitment, onboarding, and development. Prominent issues include: rigid administrative procedures, where cumbersome and time-consuming processes for onboarding, housing arrangements, and research initiation dampen initial enthusiasm; a lack of professional support, with most institutions lacking dedicated units or personnel to provide one-stop services such as policy consultation, project application assistance, team-building support, and industry-academia collaboration facilitation; and insufficient support from

secondary colleges, where administrative teams at the departmental level often lack the capacity to address the specific challenges faced by talent, resulting in poor experiences and delayed problem resolution.

3.3 Misalignment Between Assessment, Development Mechanisms, and Talent Characteristics

This is a critical bottleneck that hinders the effective utilization and long-term retention of high-level talent. Key issues include: **Misguided Assessment Orientation:** Many institutions still apply uniform evaluation criteria focused on teaching hours and general academic publications, failing to establish performance appraisal systems tailored to high-level talent that emphasize technological research and development, achievement transformation, significant contributions to disciplinary development, and cultivation of high-end talent. This often leads to a mismatch between talent capabilities and institutional expectations. **Unclear Career Pathways:** There is a lack of well-defined and diversified post-recruitment development pathways for recruited talent. Additionally, sustained institutional arrangements for team support, resource allocation, and professional development are often inadequate. **Disconnect Between Institutional and Departmental Management:** Macro-level policies at the institutional level often fail to align effectively with micro-level management at secondary colleges or departments. **Ambiguities in assessment accountability, lack of transparency in processes, and ineffective management loops** further undermine the intrinsic motivation of talent.

4. The Optimization of High-Level Talent Introduction Policies in Higher Vocational Colleges

4.1 Strengthen Strategic Planning and the Primary Responsibility of Secondary Colleges to Build a “Precise Matching” Talent Recruitment Mechanism

To address the prominent issues in the current talent recruitment practices of higher vocational colleges, such as insufficient forward-looking planning, weakened primary roles of secondary colleges, and mismatches between recruitment channels and talent needs, it is recommended to promote a transformation of the talent recruitment model from “passive response” to “active planning”. The core lies in establishing a strategic demand-driven collaborative talent recruitment system. Specifically:

Deepen the Role of Secondary Colleges in Planning and Implementation. The planning and implementation effectiveness of talent recruitment should be incorporated into the annual core performance evaluations of secondary colleges and directly linked to resource allocation. Secondary colleges should be encouraged to conduct systematic structural analysis of their faculty and forward-looking demand forecasting based on regional industrial development trends and their own professional cluster development plans. They should formulate and dynamically update annual and medium- to long-term “demand lists” and “recruitment maps” for talent introduction, fundamentally changing the passive situation of “waiting for resources to become available”.

Build an Integrated “Institutional-Departmental” Demand Management and Recruitment Network. The human resources department at the institutional level should transition from handling specific administrative tasks to focusing on policy formulation, standard setting, resource coordination, and process supervision. It should take the lead in establishing a regular joint consultation mechanism for institutional and departmental talent needs and integrate demands across the institution to create a unified “dynamic talent demand database”[4]. Simultaneously, secondary colleges, along with their academic leaders and professional teams, should be empowered and supported to leverage their academic networks and industry resources. This includes establishing regular, targeted connections with key universities (particularly relevant departments and mentor teams in “Double First-Class” universities), research institutions, and leading enterprises. Strategies such as setting up talent liaison points, participating in high-level academic forums, and engaging in pre-research project collaborations can facilitate a shift from “broadcasting job postings” to “precision talent scouting”.

4.2 Optimize Service Delivery and Process Reengineering to Create a “Full-Cycle, Professional” Talent Support Ecosystem

To address the prevalent challenges of “emphasizing recruitment over support”, fragmented support systems, and poor initial experiences for talent, it is recommended to shift the focus from “transactional processing” to “ecosystem-based services”. The core lies in constructing a professional support system covering the entire process before and after recruitment. Specifically:

Establish an Institutional-Level “One-Stop” Service Center for High-Level Talent. A dedicated unit or designated lead department should be established to coordinate service matters involving multiple departments such as human resources, research, logistics, finance, and basic education (e.g., onboarding procedures, housing support, children's education, research

initiation, etc.). Particularly during peak recruitment periods, a “green channel” and time-bound commitment system should be implemented to streamline key processes (e.g., apartment applications) to completion within one week, thereby enhancing service responsiveness and predictability.

Implement a “Talent Service Specialist” System in Secondary Colleges. Each secondary college should establish a dedicated or designated part-time service position to provide point-to-point policy consultation, daily administrative support, and feedback on development needs for recruited talent. The specialist team should undergo systematic training on policies and service standards, enabling them to serve as a reliable bridge connecting institutional policies with talent needs. This addresses the “last-mile” service challenges and facilitates a transition from “passive response” to “proactive support”.

Promote Service Process Standardization and Evaluation Institutionalization. Develop and publicly release a High-Level Talent Service Manual, clearly outlining the standards, timelines, and responsible entities for various services. Additionally, establish a service satisfaction feedback and continuous improvement mechanism, incorporating talent evaluations into the performance indicators of relevant departments. This forms a closed-loop management system for service quality, effectively enhancing talent's sense of belonging and satisfaction.

4.3 Reform Assessment, Evaluation, and Incentive Mechanisms to Design “Development-Oriented, Diversified, and Compatible” Career Pathways

To address current issues in talent assessment and development mechanisms, such as misguided evaluation criteria, mismatches with talent characteristics, and unclear career paths, it is recommended to upgrade talent management from “contractual constraints” to “developmental empowerment”. The core lies in establishing a differentiated evaluation and incentive system centered on contributions and value creation. Specifically:

Build a Multi-Dimensional, Categorized Assessment and Evaluation System. Assessment criteria should go beyond mere publications and teaching hours, incorporating comprehensive evaluation indicators that cover contractual outcomes (teaching, research, social service), professional ethics, team building, and contributions to the discipline. Evaluation standards should fully reflect the characteristics and growth patterns of different types of talent (e.g., technology R&D-focused, teaching innovation-focused, industry-education integration-focused), allowing for individualized development pathways. The assessment process should be standardized and transparent, implementing a hierarchical mechanism of “departmental preliminary evaluation – functional department review – academic committee final decision.” Standards and procedures should be disclosed in advance and subject to oversight.

Strengthen the “Developmental” Application of Assessment Results. Assessment results should not only serve as the basis for contract renewal or compensation but also act as a “diagnostic report” for talent development and a “guiding tool” for resource allocation. For top performers, “green channels” for accelerated promotions and priority support for major project applications should be established. For those who temporarily fall short but show potential, a structured mechanism for extension applications and support should be implemented. The assessment process should emphasize communication and feedback to help talent identify areas for improvement.

Design a Diversified, Long-Term Incentive and Development Support System. Beyond ensuring competitive baseline compensation, increased special rewards and matching support should be provided for significant contributions and high-level achievements. Establish a tiered and categorized honors system to enhance talent's sense of professional fulfillment. More importantly, tailor-made career development support plans should be designed for talent, including: an “academic sabbatical” and visiting scholar funding system to support knowledge renewal and skill enhancement; platforms for interdisciplinary teams and industry-academia collaboration to provide stages for talent to showcase their abilities; and systematically designed multi-path development options to meet diverse growth needs. Through such institutional design, the personal growth of talent can be deeply aligned with the strategic goals of the institution, enabling sustainable development.

Acknowledgments

This paper was supported by The Fundamental Research Funds Project for Provincial Universities in Zhejiang Province (Project number: 2025ZX17)

References

- [1] Xu Zhenzhen, Wei Qing. A Survey on the Current Situation of the Introduction and Development of Doctoral Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges[J]. *Communication of Vocational Education*, 2024(07):69-80.
- [2] Zou Yun, Zhang Xiaochao. Research on the Introduction Policies for Doctoral Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges

from the Perspective of Policy Tools—A Quantitative Analysis Based on 60 Policy Texts[J]. *Chinese Vocational and Technical Education*, 2024(11):86-95.

- [3] Han Feiyin, He Zhiwei, Pu Linlin, Luo Ying. The Dilemma and Breakthrough in the Introduction of Doctoral Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges[J]. *Vocational and Technical Education*, 2024(11):68-74.
- [4] Wu Qiuchen, Xu Guoqing. Reflections on the Relationship between Doctoral Graduates in Vocational Education and Higher Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Vocational Education Research[J]. *Education and Vocation*, 2023(05):44-50.