

The Birth of a Chinese University Museum: A Study on the Construction Mechanism of Museums from the Perspective of Anthropological Thick Description

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Abstract: University museums have done a good job of boosting the teaching strength of universities and providing public services. Related studies have examined the functions, features and practical applications of university museums, as well as curation and public education, but they have not investigated the process of how a university museum is built from the ground up and how the initial idea is realised. The China Teachers Museum is the subject of this study, and I have collected 262 related news articles and carried out step-by-step coding analysis with NVivo software to uncover the internal factors influencing the museum's planning and construction. Based on the above study, it has been concluded that the three basic problems in construction subjects are: "why build", "what to build", and "how to build". In accordance with the concept of rooting in local conditions and the direction of national strategy, construction plans have been developed to make leading activities the foundation, use special social resources, and promote regular operation. They will also use all the achievements gained in the course of museum construction to confirm that it is necessary and special, thus speeding up the construction of the museum. This paper will offer some theoretical support for the construction laws of university museums and provide a reference for the actual construction work of university museums.

Keywords: university museums, construction mechanism, China Teachers Museum, NVivo12.0

1. A Review of Research on University Museums

Scholars started to study university museums in the 1930s. With the development of China's museum industry since the reform and opening up, research on university museums has gradually deepened, and they can be divided into four types. First, research on the functions of university museums. Zhang Huilang (1988) has put forward the four functions of university museums: collection of cultural relics, university teaching, ideological and political education, and scientific research^[2]. Gao Rongbin (1997) thinks that the functions of university museums are to collect cultural relics, educate university students, teach, carry out scientific research and spread culture^[3]. Many scholars have conducted particular studies on the various functions of university museums, and the educational function has been one of the main research topics. Some representative works are "The Function of University Museums in University Innovation Education" (2011), "A Discussion on the Educational Function of University Museums" (2017) and "Educational Concepts and Practices of Contemporary American University Museums" (2017). Recently, people have also started to be interested in the social service function of university museums. Second, there are studies on the nature of university museums. Chen Defu (1990) believed that the reasonable category structure, high staff quality and a small number of visitors were the main features of university museums^[5]. Zhang Aimin (2006) pointed out that, based on the attributes of public social museums, university museums are also strong in professional training, scientific research and collection acquisition^[6]. In addition, works such as "On the Characteristics and Functions of University Museums in China" (2008) and "An Analysis of the Value of Popularising the Construction of University Museums" (2020) have also investigated the reasons for the construction and development of university museums in China. Third, Research on Problems and Countermeasures in University Museums. Lin Yihong (2012) has put forward the "eight excesses and eight deficiencies" in the construction and development of university museums, covering collections, exhibition design, practical work and social responsibility^[7]. Huang Weijuan (2012) pointed out problems in university museum management, placement, exhibition modes, funds and social services^[8], and based on this

problem analysis, many scientific and reasonable suggestions and countermeasures have been put forward by scholars. Liu Liu (2012) proposed that university museums should focus on functional positioning, management systems, exhibition design and digital construction, and these areas are to be given high priority in the optimisation of museum development^[9]. Fourth, there are also some case studies of university museums. These are collection and exhibition work, operation and management, cultural and creative product development, and volunteer services. Several typical works have been carried out on the actual operation of university museums, such as "Characteristics, Effectiveness and Strengthening Measures of Collection Exhibitions in University Museums" (2008), "Volunteer Interpretation Services in University Museums and College Student Quality Education" (2009), "Training and Development of Volunteer Docents in University Museums" (2011) and "A Study on the Construction of a Cultural and Creative Theory System for University Museums from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage" (2020).

Based on the above, it can be seen that most of the current research on the construction and development of university museums provides descriptive and general analyses of the connotations, characteristics, problems, countermeasures and specific cases of museums. Most of the above studies are in the form of norms, and few use specific cases. Research on the construction of museums as a type of organisational behaviour and process is still lacking. This paper is a case study, begins with the concept of anthropological thick description, and uses the NVivo 12.0 analysis software to explore all the stages and construction experiences of the birth of the China Teachers Museum in detail. Therefore, this paper presents two kinds of innovations in both the manner and the content of university museum research.

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Object

The China Teachers Museum is in Qufu, Shandong Province. Qufu Normal University started the work in 2016 and had been preparing for a long time. The museum has received full support from the Ministry of Education, the Government of Shandong Province and many other social organisations, such as the Tin Ka Ping Foundation. By the end of 2022, some results had been achieved in the preparatory stage, such as the construction of the museum's physical space and the establishment of a complete museum system that included collections, exhibitions, research and development of cultural and creative products. As the only such institution in Shandong Province, the museum was chosen as the "Teacher Morality and Style Construction Base" by the Ministry of Education. It has also been named the "Sino-Foreign Youth Exchange Base" by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and has received many honorary titles, such as the "Courage to Innovate" award from the Shandong Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Shandong Provincial Government. In short, the preparation and operation of the museum have received strong support from all sides and are popular with the public.

On the one hand, the whole preparation process for the China Teachers Museum shows the whole course of development of a university museum from the ground up and is thus a typical case for the research topic "Construction Mechanism of University Museums". At the same time, the China Teachers Museum is also a typical case of the development trend in China of university museum construction and shows that higher education institutions are aware of, appreciate and value museums. Therefore, this case is also typical.

2.2 Research Methods and Approach

NVivo 12.0 qualitative analysis software is used in this paper to conduct textual analysis of the 262 news reports on the construction of the museum from October 2016 to December 2022. Materials are taken from the official website of the China Teachers Museum and other places, such as China Education Daily. Coding was used to obtain 1,032 reference points, and these were organised into three nodes; one of these nodes is "Motivations and Significance of Museum Construction", and then a cross-sectional analysis of these nodes over different time periods was carried out. The following sections are the research results.

3. Why Build: Highlighting Task Attributes and Social Significance

First, clarify the reasons for building the museum and the positive effects it will bring in addressing the problems of legitimacy and necessity. The reasons for the construction of the China Teachers Museum and the corresponding purposes are organised here.

According to the reasons, construction work has an attribute: the Ministry of Education and local governments have ordered that the museum be added to the scope of administrative management. In addition, many plans have been put forward by the university, such as the National Memory Project and the Local Cultural Heritage Development Demonstration Zone and its own positions, to provide a reason for building a museum.

The main contents of the explanation of significance are the social benefits: at the level of "university development", it can help build a first-class university and promote the strategy of "establishing the university through culture" for all-round development; at the level of "regional development", it can be integrated into the regional cultural innovation service system to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the region; and at the level of "cultural and educational significance", there are four types of values: protecting and inheriting excellent traditional culture, promoting the development of education and teacher culture, fostering the growth of the museum industry, and providing symbolic and guiding functions.

4. What to Build: Combining Standout Images with National Strategy

The direction and purpose of the construction of the museum will provide the basis for its establishment and guide the preparatory work for the museum. In light of the idea of grounding in local features and in line with national plans, the China Teachers Museum has set its purpose and goals.

4.1 Nature Orientation: Presenting an Original Image

The three nodes of the museum's nature orientation are: "cultural education base", "first teacher museum" and "all-weather thematic museum". Using the word frequency search function in NVivo 12.0, this paper will further explore and summarize the specific contents of nature orientation based on word frequency. The results of the word frequency search are shown in the chart below.



Figure 1 Word Cloud of Search Term Frequencies for the "Nature and Positioning of the China Teacher Museum"

Table 1 Keywords and Frequency for the Nature and Positioning of the China Teacher Museum

Keywords for Nature and Positioning of the China Teacher Museum	Frequency	Weighted Percentage (%)
Teacher Ethics	32	3.47
Thematic Focus	30	3.25
Culture	28	3.03
Education	24	2.60
Unique	19	2.06
Comprehensive	14	1.52
Public-Benefit	12	1.30
Base	12	1.30
Teacher Ethos	10	1.08
Modernization	8	0.87
Project	8	0.87
Cultivation	6	0.65
Significant	6	0.65
Leading Role	4	0.43
Center	4	0.43
Function	4	0.43
Heritage	4	0.43
Training	3	0.33

Note: Weighted percentages are presented as originally calculated.

The two main directions of the China Teachers Museum are its teaching functions and the theme of teacher ethics and culture. The museum has been named a provincial and national teacher ethics base, carries out its cultural and educational functions, has organised many teacher ethics education and training activities, and is now a popular place for teacher training and student study tours. High-frequency words such as 'culture', 'education' and 'foundation' show that the teacher's ethics and the basis of cultural education are among the goals. The museum is the first and only one in China with the theme of "teacher culture", and it is thus outstanding and special. The high-frequency word is "unique" and therefore considered important. High-frequency words such as "teacher ethics" and "teacher conduct" indicate that the theme is teacher culture, and many functional areas show that it is very all-encompassing. A university museum is now a new type of work by the university that showcases its educational strengths and characteristics. With a teacher theme, the China Teachers Museum will be more distinctive and influential; it will embody the educational ideals and aspirations of our country's teachers and thus create strong synergy between the university and the museum.

4.2 Development Goals According to National Strategy

The three goals of the development of the museum are the "National Famous Museum Project", the "Cultural Heritage Protection Centre" and the "All-weather Functional Centre". The results of the NVivo word frequency search in this node are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Word Cloud of Search Term Frequencies for the "Development Goals of the China Teacher Museum"

Table 2 Keywords and Frequency for the Development Goals of the China Teacher Museum

Keywords for the Development Goals of the China Teacher Museum	Frequency	Weighted Percentage(%)
Education	97	6.57
Culture	70	4.74
Center	45	3.05
Teacher Ethics	43	2.91
Base	34	2.30
Community	28	1.90
Spirit	28	1.90
Heritage	28	1.90
History	23	1.56
Research	14	0.95
National-level	12	0.81
Premier	11	0.74
Heritage	9	0.61
Promotion	8	0.54
Exemplary	8	0.54
Teacher Ethos	7	0.47
Dissemination	6	0.41
Function	6	0.41
First-class	6	0.41

Note: Weighted percentages are presented as originally calculated.

The China Teachers Museum hopes to be a top-tier national museum and is aiming to lead the way in teacher ethics education and cultivation across the country. Given that the construction goals are to be a "high-quality project and a century-old famous museum", words such as "national-level", "high-quality", "demonstrative" and "first-class" are often used to show these strategic aims. As a university museum, its main direction of development is to promote the inheritance and dissemination of the culture of excellent teacher ethics in China, create an educational historical and cultural heritage, build a spiritual home for teachers, and establish a new cultural landmark. High-frequency words such as "culture", "teacher ethics", "home", "spirit", "heritage", "history", "inheritance" and "promotion" indicate that the focus is on protecting and inheriting excellent traditional culture; they are in line with the theme of teacher culture and provide a meaningful direction for the operation of the museum. The

China Teachers Museum wishes to be a public institution that spreads the culture and science of our country through exhibitions for everyone. All the founding goals of museums around the world are to educate the public; this is the general direction^[1]. As the foundation for the cultivation of teacher ethics, the China Teachers Museum also aims to achieve educational goals.

5. How to Build: Highlighting External Forces and Soft Guidance

The construction plan and construction method will determine whether the museum building can be completed and put into use on schedule, and they are the core and main links of university museum construction. In addition to preparing the business content and building the hardware for regular operation, the construction of the China Teachers Museum will also use external forces and apply the associative and driving effects of soft activities.

5.1 Seeking Outside Help

Since the beginning of its construction, the China Teachers Museum has actively sought cooperation and exchange with all sides. The five kinds of support are specifically: academic and professional guidance, assistance from government forces, corporate financial support, inter-museum exchange and cooperation, and alumni care and promotion; the first two are the main types of cooperative support.

There were some renovations of the museum in the years 2016-2025. The news materials in this period are the research subjects, and five databases have been built according to the "year". Cross-sectional analysis is carried out on all the sub-nodes of the museum's "cooperation and support from various parties" in different years, as shown in Figure 4. Based on the above analysis, the total number of samples in the node "cooperation and support from various parties" has generally been rising over time; thus, it can be seen that many collaborations and exchanges have occurred among all kinds of social organisations in the construction and development of the museum. Active and positive cooperation and communication should be promoted in the construction, development and improvement of the museum. Looking at the changes in each type of cooperation separately, government cooperation support and academic cooperation have been provided at all times in the development and construction of the museum and serve as important cooperative and supporting forces for the museum. As the construction of the museum has advanced, so too has academic cooperation; thus, the function of the museum for academic research has also been gradually strengthened. With the construction and development of museums, cross-museum exchanges and cooperation have also increased. Alumni cooperation and support are cooperative resources of the university that mainly play a role in the middle and early stages of the construction of the museum.

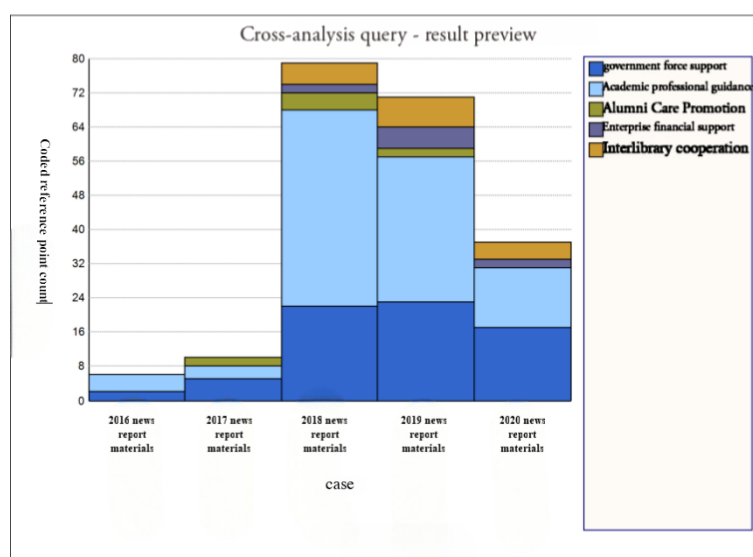


Figure 3 Cross-Tabulation Analysis of Node Coding for "Seeking External Cooperation" by Year

First, the three basic functions of a museum are education, research and collection^[14]. Promote the educational, research and collection functions of university museums and strengthen academic

exchange and cooperation among them. China Teachers Museum cooperates with all kinds of universities, research institutions, scholars and other experts. Guidance from experts can provide a theoretical basis for the scientific construction of the museum, improve the systemisation and scientific spirit of the construction, and increase work efficiency. From the beginning of the preparation, the museum has actively built an expert cooperation system, held expert demonstration meetings for construction planning, and appointed experts and scholars to serve as honorary curators and committee members of the expert committee. The above experts will give practical advice on collection acquisition and development, exhibition design, building design, plan development, fundraising, management systems, operations, etc. According to the plans, directions and demonstrations provided by the experts, the construction plan of the museum will be more scientific, optimised and all-encompassing.

Second, the government will undertake some of the construction work for the museum. Based on the coding analysis, the cooperation and support from the teacher museum and government institutions can be divided into three sub-nodes: "superior competent authorities", "national-level institutions", and "university-local government cooperation". The construction and development of museums should be promoted by government policies and related functional institutions, and they need to be regulated and guided by laws^[15]. Construction of the China Teachers Museum has drawn the attention of the Ministry of Education, relevant national departments, the provincial party committee and government, and has received important instructions from the leaders of its superior competent authorities. Some local government departments have also been fully in favour of it. All departments at all levels have taken the initiative to offer policy support and service guarantees for the construction of the museum. Generally speaking, university-local government cooperation refers to all kinds of cooperative relationships established among universities and local governments for the purposes of talent cultivation and regional economic development^[16]. Local governments and other organisations have offered support and cooperation for the construction of the teacher museum in terms of cooperative content, such as talent cultivation in culture, and have also established educational bases. The construction and development of the China Teachers Museum have also provided new ideas for the joint construction and sharing of resources in university-local government cooperation, and have improved the quality and level of such cooperation. Both sides will make full use of the various resource advantages of combining the university, the museum and the local government to create a unique brand of university-local government cooperation and promote the joint development of the museum, the university and the local area.

Thirdly, in terms of "inter-museum exchanges and cooperation", many other museums have also established cooperation and exchange channels with the museum, such as the Shandong Museum and others. Inter-museum exchanges can help to strengthen the whole system of museums, and they are also good ways to create special features for museums and provide additional support for expanding the business scale of museums^[12]. China Teachers Museum is continuously increasing the scale and deepening the form of exchanges and cooperation with all kinds of museums to strengthen support for the expansion of museum resources, improvement of operations and enhancement of management experience.

The teacher museum has also established cooperation with organisations and enterprises in the category of "corporate financial support" from the social foundation to promote academic research in the museum, advance the construction of a digital museum, and provide financial support for collection acquisition. The Relationship between university museums and enterprises is one of mutual promotion and joint achievement. For instance, the teacher's museum has organised a special exhibition of the charitable activities of Mr. Tin Ka Ping did this for the public good of education. The cultural core of the teacher museum can promote the corporate culture and spirit of the Tin Ka Ping enterprise and offer a good model for university-enterprise cooperation. The company will provide funds and technology for the construction of a university museum, and in return, the university museum will organise corporate cultural activities and help the company strengthen its social responsibility for economic development.

Finally, alumni resources refer to the total value of the human resources of the alumni themselves, as well as the value of information, culture, financial resources, material resources and social influence that they possess^[13], and they provide important support for the university. At the time of the construction of the China Teachers Museum, it sought cooperation and support from the alumni network. With the help of many alumni, the museum has made good progress in the planning of construction guidance, exhibition design, fundraising and collection of cultural relics and materials through surveys. At the same time, a large number of alumni have also volunteered to participate in the

survey of teacher materials and the collection of cultural relics to contribute to the construction of a first-class China Teachers Museum.

5.2 Starting Activities as a Motivation Source

Generally speaking, the four types of soft activities in the preparation and construction of museums are traditional ritual performances, educational training and study programmes, academic thematic seminars and public exhibitions. When it was first built, there were no buildings or other materials for the China Teachers Museum yet. The museum organised all kinds of activities actively, paid more attention to them, improved the soft construction of the museum, and better realised all the functions of the museum.

The news materials in this study are from 2016 to 2025, and "year" in the five databases has been taken as the unit; cross-sectional analysis is carried out for each sub-node under the node "organised activities" of the teacher museum (see Figure 4 for details). Therefore, it can be seen that the number of activities is increasing. At all times during the construction period, academic activities will be organised to make good use of the university's resources for supporting teachers and students and to promote research. The number of training and study activities has been increased, so cultural education and communication skills have improved; now, these activities serve as an important way to conduct research and teaching. At the start of construction, the museum organised traditional ritual performances and used the cultural resources of the university to spread the news quickly and increase brand awareness. In the middle and later periods, the museum opened to the public and regularly organised public exhibition activities; thus, it achieved the basic functions of exhibition, education and collection, which are regarded as the particular forms of social services provided by museums.

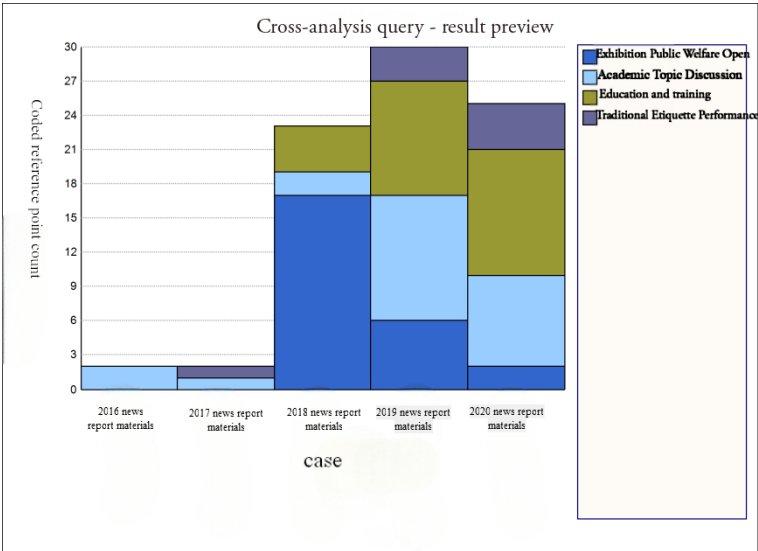


Figure 4 Cross-Tabulation Analysis of Node Coding for "Activity-First Driving" by Year

Traditional Ritual Performances. The China Teachers Museum has collected traditional Chinese culture materials and cultural relics from the university to organise a number of exhibitions and performances that have been well-received by the public and have increased the museum's brand awareness. Organisation of the first batch of cultural relic exhibitions and the creation of original plays, such as "The Master", have helped the museum build a cultural brand and develop high-quality projects to spread the charm of traditional ritual culture.

Educational Training and Study Programs. The museum is actively carrying out its functions of cultural education and training by designing special courses and experience programs, hosting visits and study tours from all kinds of organisations, conducting university-local government cooperative training with local authorities, and organising excellent traditional culture education and study programmes for groups of teachers to improve the effectiveness of teacher ethics education.

Academic Thematic Seminars. To improve its ability to translate scientific research results, the museum has organised many high-quality academic activities, carried out academic research, developed excellent educational materials, innovated in the cultivation path for teacher ethics, established research bases in museology and educational history, etc., and achieved good results. The

above efforts provide think tank support for the development of social and cultural education and create an academic brand for the "Chinese and Foreign Teachers' Apricot Altar Colloquium".

Public Exhibitions. The first goal of the university museum is public service. The social work of the museum is carried out through volunteer services and study tours for the public. At the same time, it also provides services for all teachers and students of the university, organises various on-campus activities such as departmental visits and teacher ethics education courses for teacher training majors and tuition-free normal students, and achieves the function of talent cultivation through culture.

5.3 Deployment of Routine Operations

Based on the analysis of textual coding, the following substantive preparation content for the China Teachers Museum has been identified and divided into three sub-nodes: "Collection Acquisition", "Exhibition Design" and "Museum Building Planning".

Collection Acquisition. Collection is the basic function of a university museum, and cultural relics are the core and essence of museum construction. The general objectives of the museum are to collect, organise, conserve and research cultural heritage in accordance with the themes of the museum. The two ways the China Teachers Museum carries out its work are coordination with higher competent authorities and public fundraising. The main source of funds for the museum is donations and other support. Competent authorities at all levels issue documents to the national and provincial education and culture systems to promote learning. At the same time, the museum has made extensive appeals to all sectors of society to collect cultural relics related to the theme of teacher culture from all departments, staff, students and alumni of the university.

Exhibition Design. The first sense of cultural education in a university museum is to build an organised, scientific and comprehensive collection system, and a good exhibition design plan will be very helpful for the construction of the museum^[18]. Exhibition Design for Collections is a necessary condition and the first step to achieve the aims of a university museum. The main work of the China Teachers Museum is to develop exhibition plans and revise outlines; in terms of construction, experts will present demonstration cases of exhibition plans, conduct extensive public opinion solicitation, and design proposals will be donated by alumni. Based on the above analysis, the construction subjects believe that the main purpose of exhibition planning is to strengthen brand identity, build brand operations, and highlight the founding cause of the museum: teacher culture. The four types of exhibitions are: physical cultural relics, sculptures, images and videos, multimedia, etc.; all aim to show the development history of Chinese teacher culture.

Museum Building Planning. The temporary exhibition hall of the China Teachers Museum is now the history museum of the university. In the future, the design of the exhibition building will include a main exhibition hall and branch rooms, such as the Teacher Calligraphy and Painting Hall, and the four major functional layout areas will be: "Exhibition Area", "Research Area", "Experience Area" and "Service Area". The identification system of the museum will be built into the basic construction of the museum and will positively affect the development of the service system for the museum^[19]. Since the start of its preparation, the teacher museum has held many meetings and public participation activities to discuss the design of the China Teachers Museum logo, and has also produced the first batch of identification systems for the museum. The development of cultural and creative works at the university museum has expanded the medium for carrying the material elements of museum culture and the spirit of the university. The teacher museum actively develops cultural and creative works based on the themes of Confucian culture and teacher culture in line with the cultural core of the museum to create a collection of such works.

5.4 Accomplishment Promotion and Feedback

All the results that have been achieved in the preparation of the museum are good evidence of its work, and they also show that the decision to build a museum is correct and necessary. The first two are media promotion cooperation and the establishment of operating brands; the third is receiving honours and awards.

Cooperation with Media Promotion. Publicity is one of the necessary links and an important link in the progress of museum construction work^[20], and it provides the foundation for museum construction. According to the analysis of text coding, the three sub-nodes under the publicity work of the China Teachers Museum are "media publicity", "material publicity" and "online publicity". These direct forms

of publicisation need to be used to achieve the museum's goals of publicity, education and exhibition, and have effectively increased the museum's brand influence and awareness.

Forming Operating Brands. Since the beginning of its preparation, the China Teachers Museum has organised a number of brand activities, such as social education programmes like the "Chinese and Foreign Teachers' Apricot Altar Colloquium" and the "Apricot Altar Academy", and has also developed special course modules and compiled traditional culture books. It has also served as a national base for the education of teacher ethics and style, and has attracted teacher training and student study tours from all over the country and abroad. The exhibition area of the museum is 1,200 square meters, and there are three permanent general exhibitions and many themed exhibitions; more than 3,000 items of educational and cultural relics have been collected.

Receiving Honours and Awards. The series of work carried out by the China Teachers Museum has been recognised and commended by the higher authorities, and the museum is now a model for others to learn from; thus, its influence and status in the field have been enhanced.

6. Research Conclusion

Based on the construction case of the China Teachers Museum, it can be concluded that the external organisation construction behaviour at the construction site was provided by the construction unit. By highlighting the task attributes of museum construction, strengthening the social significance of the construction, integrating it into national strategies, seeking external support, etc., the constructing party has accelerated the construction of the museum.

The first three problems that need to be addressed at the beginning of establishing a university museum are "why do we build it?", "what exactly should we build?", and "how can we build it?". First, "why build" refers to the reasons and significance of constructing the museum. We need to address the basic problems of "whether it can be realised" and "whether it is necessary" by producing construction results and creating social benefits; this will serve as the foundation and main goal of construction. The China Teachers Museum has refined the tasks and strengthened the reasons for its construction during the construction stage. Explain why it was built and what purpose it serves for other museums. Second, "what to build" needs to set the direction and goals of the museum; otherwise, it will be impossible to start building a museum. The China Teachers Museum has added some of its own characteristics to form a good and distinctive image in terms of the type of orientation. The aims of the development are in line with the national strategy, and a clear construction concept has been established to guide the work, create brand value, and achieve other goals. Finally, "how to build" is based on scientific strategies, and this will provide a foundation for the good construction and operation of the museum. The four directions for organising the operation and hardware construction of the China Teachers Museum are to seek external cooperation, organise development-promoting activities, carry out regular operations, and promote achievement and feedback. It can actively promote the association and motivation for soft activities and provide practical ideas for other university museums. A university museum should consider the external environment and use soft leadership in all aspects of construction and development.

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