

An Analysis of Pathways for Empowering Moral Education of Normal-University Students with the Educator Spirit

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Abstract: As the spiritual core for the development of China's teaching workforce in the new era, the educator spirit embodies the mission of fostering talent for the nation, and provides value guidance and operational guidelines for moral education of normal-university students in higher education institutions. As reserve teachers for basic education, normal-university students' moral attainment, professional ethics and value convictions directly determine the effectiveness of the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and the progress of building a powerful country through education. At present, in-depth integration between the educator spirit and moral education for normal-university students remains insufficient. Major shortcomings include superficial individual understanding of the educator spirit, the absence of spiritual-shaping dimensions in the whole training process, and inadequate integration of such spirit into educational probation practices. Starting from the connotative logic of the educator spirit and moral education for normal-university students, this paper clarifies the contemporary value of the former empowering the latter, analyzes practical dilemmas in educational practices, and proposes implementable practical pathways from the dimensions of subject-initiated awareness, whole-process training systems, practical-site development and improved evaluation mechanisms. It aims to transform the educator spirit from theoretical narratives into the internal moral consciousness of normal-university students, and support the cultivation of high-quality prospective teachers with firm ideals and convictions, moral integrity and benevolent care for students.

Keywords: Educator Spirit; Normal-university Students; Moral Education; Teacher Ethics Cultivation; Teacher Education.

1. Introduction

A strong country must first have strong education, and strong education must first rely on strong teachers. The development of the teaching workforce constitutes a fundamental project for building a powerful country through education. As the core carrier for pre-service teacher preparation, normal-major education shapes the moral baseline of the future teaching workforce. On the eve of Teachers' Day in 2023, General Secretary Xi Jinping wrote a letter to outstanding national teacher representatives, systematically elaborating the Chinese-specific educator spirit condensed into six dimensions: ideal convictions of serving the country with whole-hearted devotion and national aspirations; moral integrity of setting examples through words and deeds; educational wisdom of enlightening minds and teaching students in accordance with their aptitude; rigorous dedication of diligent learning, earnest practice and truth-seeking innovation; benevolent devotion of loving teaching and caring for students; and the pursuit of promoting culture with a global vision [1]. These six dimensions paint a complete spiritual portrait of distinguished teachers in the new era. They not only embody national expectations for teachers, but also offer fundamental directional guidance for moral education and teacher-ethics cultivation in normal universities. In August 2024, *Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Promoting the Educator Spirit and Strengthening the Construction of a High-Quality and Professional Teaching Workforce in the New Era* was officially issued. It explicitly incorporates the promotion of the educator spirit into the overall framework of teacher-education reform and requires its integration into the whole process of pre-service

teacher training [2]. In early 2025, *Outline for Building a Powerful Country through Education (2024-2035)* further deployed the initiative of forging teachers' soul and strengthening the teaching workforce through the educator spirit, promoting its comprehensive integration into all links of teacher training and professional development, and establishing its statutory position within the moral-education system for normal-university students from a national-policy perspective [3].

Existing domestic research has extensively discussed the connotative interpretation, contemporary value of the educator spirit, teacher-ethics construction and ideological-political education for normal-university students. Some studies have explored integrating the educator spirit into normal-major classrooms and campus-culture construction, laying a theoretical foundation for this research. Nevertheless, there remains room for further exploration. First, certain studies focus heavily on macro-policy interpretation while lacking detailed analysis targeting specific pain points in moral education for normal-university students. Second, practical studies mostly concentrate on curriculum reform, with insufficient comprehensive discussion on normal-university students' self-subject construction, teacher-ethics immersion in internships and practicum, and moral-education evaluation reform. Meanwhile, foreign research on teacher ethics is rooted in local cultural contexts, exhibiting substantial cultural divergences from China's educator-spirit value system and offering limited direct reference. Against this backdrop, grounded in the realities of domestic teacher education, this paper conducts layered analysis from theoretical value, practical dilemmas and practical pathways, exploring feasible approaches for the educator spirit to empower moral

education for normal-university students and providing references for normal universities to implement the soul-forging and teacher-strengthening initiative.

2. Connotative Logic of the Educator Spirit and Moral Education for Normal-University Students

The educator spirit delivers core value references for moral education targeting normal-university students, and the two feature high inherent compatibility. Clarifying their respective connotations and interrelationships serves as the logical starting point for exploring empowerment pathways.

2.1. Moral Education and Moral Education for Normal-University Students

Moral education refers to value-shaping practices in educational activities. Through purposeful, planned and organized educational interventions, educators guide recipients to renew ideological perceptions, consolidate political stances, cultivate moral character, establish awareness of the rule of law and improve psychological personality, ultimately realizing the unification of moral cognition, emotional identification and behavioral practice [4]. Within the framework of five-faceted education, moral education occupies a priority position. Its fundamental objective addresses the core educational proposition of “what kind of talent to cultivate, how to cultivate talent and for whom talent is cultivated”, namely fostering virtue through education. *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Evaluation in the New Era* explicitly advocates reforming moral-education evaluation orientations, reversing the tendency to prioritize test scores and enrollment rates, incorporating ideological conduct and value practice into comprehensive quality assessment, and taking moral-education effectiveness as a vital criterion for measuring educational quality, so as to cultivate all-round socialist builders and successors with sound morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor competence [5].

Moral education for normal-university students represents the concrete implementation of fostering virtue through education within teacher education. It is specialized moral education for prospective teachers, combining general moral-political education for college students and pre-service cultivation of teacher ethics. It fulfills both universal ideological-moral and ideal-conviction education for young college students and pre-service cultivation of teachers’ professional ethics, guiding students to comprehend teachers’ professional accountability, moral norms and educational missions. Moral education for normal-university students features transmissibility and pre-service nature: values formed by normal-university students today will be transmitted to primary and secondary-school students through teaching practices in the future, and their moral standards indirectly shape the personality development of the younger generation, marking its most critical distinction from moral education for other majors. Its content extends beyond mechanical memorization of regulatory documents such as *Code of Professional Conduct for Primary and Secondary-School Teachers in the New Era*. It also covers the establishment of educational ideals, cultivation of educational sentiments, shaping of student-centered perspectives and development of professional accountability. It aims to foster

sound educational perceptions among students, helping them fully understand that the teaching profession is more than a livelihood, but a public undertaking bearing social responsibility and national aspirations.

2.2. The Educator Spirit

The educator spirit constitutes a Chinese-specific spiritual paradigm for teachers, with six interrelated and logically progressive dimensions. “Ideal convictions of serving the country with whole-hearted devotion and national aspirations” serves as its spiritual foundation, answering the faith-oriented question “for whom should teachers pursue teaching”. “Moral integrity of setting examples through words and deeds” represents personal character, highlighting teachers’ exemplary role in cultivating virtue through personal conduct and teaching. “Educational wisdom of enlightening minds and teaching students in accordance with their aptitude” reflects professional attributes, emphasizing that education delivers not only knowledge but also spiritual nourishment while respecting individual differences among students. “Rigorous dedication of diligent learning, earnest practice and truth-seeking innovation” points to academic practice, requiring lifelong learning and reform-oriented exploration rooted in educational realities. “Benevolent devotion of loving teaching and caring for students” forms the internal emotional driving force for education, demanding devotion to education and respect for every student. “The pursuit of promoting culture with a global vision” embodies breadth of vision, undertaking the epochal mission of cultural inheritance and civilization enlightenment [6]. It should be emphasized that the educator spirit is not exclusive to a small number of distinguished educators. It applies equally to front-line teachers and pre-service normal-university students. As learnable, cultivable and progressively attainable spiritual qualities, it furnishes a complete value reference system for moral education of normal-university students.

2.3. Inherent Correlation between the Educator Spirit and Moral Education for Normal-University Students

The educator spirit and moral education for normal-university students feature isomorphic logic. On the one hand, the educator spirit supplies top-tier value objectives and personality models for moral education of normal-university students, elevating it from general professional-ethics education to the pursuit of educational faith and national sentiments. On the other hand, moral education for normal-university students acts as a critical channel for intergenerational inheritance and popularization of the educator spirit. Systematic moral-education practices translate abstract high-level educator spirit into perceptible, imitable and practicable behavioral norms and emotional experiences for normal-university students, realizing internalization and externalization of such spirit. Complementing each other, both pursue the ultimate goal of cultivating “four-havings” good teachers and distinguished national educators. Therefore, empowering moral education for normal-university students with the educator spirit essentially transforms national will and educational ideals into internal spiritual motivation for prospective teachers.

3. Contemporary Value of Empowering Moral Education for Normal-University Students with the Educator Spirit

Empowering moral education for normal-university students with the educator spirit is more than a simple theoretical graft. It bears profound contemporary value at individual, teacher-education and national strategic levels.

3.1. Individual Level: Facilitating Identity Transition and Consolidating Convictions in Teaching

The identity transition from student to people's teacher cannot be automatically accomplished merely by obtaining graduation certificates and teaching qualifications. It requires reshaping the inner spiritual world. Many normal-university students hold superficial understandings of the teaching profession upon enrollment, sometimes regarding it solely as a stable career choice with insufficient awareness of its sacredness and mission. The six dimensions of the educator spirit provide clear coordinates for individual moral growth of normal-university students. "Serving the country with whole-hearted devotion and national aspirations" guides normal-university students to transcend personal career gains and losses and establish lofty ideals of serving the nation through education. "Loving teaching and caring for students" helps them perceive the emotional core of education and form sound student-centered perspectives. "Diligent learning, earnest practice and truth-seeking innovation" reminds prospective teachers to maintain self-awareness of lifelong learning and enterprising attitudes. Immersive moral education rooted in the educator spirit enables normal-university students to go beyond memorizing teacher-ethics provisions, achieve genuine integration of cognition, emotion, volition and behavior, resist value alienation brought by utilitarian professional perceptions, and gradually build solid professional identity and mission, consolidating their inner spiritual foundation for teaching [7].

3.2. Teacher-Education Level: Advancing Pre-service Teacher-Ethics Education and Optimizing Talent-training Logic

Traditional normal education partly exhibits a "postponed" tendency in teacher-ethics education, where primary responsibility for teacher-ethics cultivation falls on in-service training after employment. Nevertheless, the formation of value convictions and educational sentiments is a long-term gradual process. Shaping such qualities after teachers take up posts often yields limited outcomes. The normal-university stage constitutes a critical window for shaping professional values. Empowering moral education for normal-university students with the educator spirit essentially implements pre-service teacher-ethics education, shifting soul-forging and teacher-strengthening work to pre-service training. It responds to national calls for implementing the initiative of forging teachers' soul and strengthening the teaching workforce through the educator spirit, requiring spiritual cultivation to be embedded in the full chain of normal-talent training. This helps break down barriers between ideological-moral education and professional teacher education, remedying the long-standing separation between moral education and specialized courses. Moral education is

no longer exclusive to ideological-political courses; professional learning, skill training and educational internships also undertake moral-cultivation functions. It promotes normal universities to construct a new talent-training logic integrating "value shaping, knowledge imparting and competence development", underpinning the cultivation of high-quality and professional reserve teachers.

3.3. Social and National Level: Reserving Teaching Workforce for a Powerful-Education Country and Inheriting Teacher-Ethics Culture

The foundation for building a powerful country through education lies in continuous supply of qualified and outstanding teachers. After systematic immersion in the educator spirit, normal-university students, as the future backbone of basic education, will transmit their ideals, convictions and benevolence to hundreds of millions of adolescents upon taking teaching posts, ensuring effective implementation of the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education at front-line basic-education institutions. From a cultural-inheritance perspective, the educator spirit carries forward the essence of fine traditional Chinese teacher-ethics culture while endowing it with contemporary connotations. Integrating this spirit into moral education for normal-university students realizes intergenerational transmission and creative transformation of teacher-ethics traditions. As batches of young teachers with national aspirations and devotion to education enter professional practice, they will improve the overall quality of basic education and foster a society-wide atmosphere of respecting teachers and valuing education, serving socialist cultural-ethical progress. Objectively, it should be noted that empowering moral education via the educator spirit belongs to value-guidance practices. Its full effectiveness relies on individual self-awareness, practical tempering and coordination of social environments rather than guaranteed instant outcomes.

4. Practical Dilemmas of Empowering Moral Education for Normal-University Students with the Educator Spirit

Despite the significant contemporary value of such empowerment, notable tensions and obstacles persist in concrete educational practices due to subjective and objective constraints. This section analyzes prevailing practical dilemmas from individual cognition, evaluation systems and teaching-practice dimensions.

4.1. Dilemma of Individual Cognition: Superficial Understanding and Inadequate Internalization of Spirit

First, some moral-education classrooms still adhere to traditional didactic indoctrination, failing to touch the core of spiritual values. Certain higher-education institutions conduct educator-spirit-related moral education mainly through ideological-political courses and thematic lectures dominated by theoretical instruction and policy publicity. Teaching modes prioritize one-way knowledge transmission. Although courses elaborate on six-dimensional connotations and recount touching stories of outstanding teachers,

contextualized and experiential instructional designs remain scarce. For students, learning mostly consists of memorizing concepts and key points, with limited capacity to empathize with profound emotions, firm convictions and lofty responsibilities embedded in the educator spirit. Unlike knowledge-oriented courses, simple conceptual memorization cannot generate moral attainment. Without emotional resonance and value identification, transformation from “awareness” to “conviction” cannot be achieved.

Second, constrained by life experience, normal-university students tend to interpret the educator spirit at a superficial level. Most normal-university students are aged 18-22, lacking long-term front-line basic-education experience and primarily living within university campuses. They have incomplete exposure to complex realities in primary and secondary-school education [8]. While comprehending literal meanings of concepts such as “loving teaching and caring for students” and “teaching students in accordance with their aptitude”, they lack firsthand experience in accommodating diverse individual students, confronting educational dilemmas and upholding educational ideals amid real-world scenarios. Many students can accurately reproduce connotations of the educator spirit in examinations and assignments, yet readily waver in their ideals when contemplating real-world contradictions in prospective teaching careers. Such cognitive limitations stem not from subjective student attitudes but from objective absence of authentic educational-situation exposure.

Furthermore, pluralistic social values exert external impacts on normal-university students. Amid objective employment pressure, some normal-university students prioritize practical factors such as salary, geographic locations and formal establishment in career choices, creating internal conflicts between ideal convictions and realistic survival rationality. This objectively weakens inspirational power of the educator spirit and generates discrepancies between cognition and inner choices.

4.2. Dilemma of Evaluation System: Virtualized Moral-Education Assessment and Absence of Sentiment-oriented Criteria

Evaluation systems exert powerful “baton-like” effects. Evaluation orientations for normal-major training directly guide students’ learning priorities and energy allocation. Current assessments for normal majors feature relatively mature quantifiable criteria for subject knowledge and teaching competencies, including specialized-course examinations, teaching-simulation competitions and calligraphy assessments, which are easy to score and compare. Nevertheless, implicit qualities embodied in the educator spirit, such as educational ideals, benevolent care, dedication and moral integrity, feature high implicitness and complexity and resist simple quantification, creating practical evaluation challenges.

On the one hand, portions of moral-education content within comprehensive evaluation systems tend to be virtualized. Judgments largely depend on explicit materials such as ideological reports and participation records in thematic activities, focusing on whether students attend activities rather than genuine shifts in inner convictions and consistent daily behavioral performance. Educational sentiments and professional convictions highlighted by the educator spirit are hardly incorporated into assessment

indicator systems. This fosters utilitarian learning orientations among some students: they regard academic performance and teaching skills as “hard indicators”, while moral education and spiritual learning become dispensable “soft tasks”.

On the other hand, educational-internship assessments exhibit a tendency of “prioritizing skills over moral attainment”. Internship evaluations focus predominantly on lesson-plan completion, class hours and classroom-teaching effectiveness, examining whether students “can teach classes”. By contrast, few detailed evaluation criteria target teacher-ethics practices in internships, such as attitudes toward students, communication skills in class management, patience and wisdom in resolving student conflicts, and depth of educational reflection. Even when internship supervisors perceive inadequate educational sentiments among certain normal-university students, they struggle to deliver explicit, recordable and convincing judgments. Biased evaluation orientations indirectly reduce normal-university students’ self-motivation to refine moral and spiritual qualities. It should be noted that difficulties in evaluating implicit moral qualities represent a universal global challenge in teacher education rather than a problem unique to individual institutions.

4.3. Dilemma of Teaching Practice: Disconnection between Theory and Practice and Scarcity of Teacher-ethics Practice Carriers

The educator spirit is inherently practical. Moral attainment cannot be acquired solely from textbooks; it gradually internalizes through repeated experience, reflection and refinement within authentic educational contexts. Noticeable gaps between theory and practice persist in current moral education for normal-university students.

First, disconnections exist between on-campus courses and front-line basic-education realities. When lecturing on the educator spirit, classroom teaching mostly cites well-known anecdotes of distinguished educators. Though inspiring, these stories are partially detached from ordinary grassroots teaching scenarios prospective normal-university students will likely encounter. Students may develop cognitive bias that the educator spirit belongs exclusively to “great masters”, unattainable for ordinary primary- and secondary-school teachers. Such sanctification overlooks how the educator spirit translates into ordinary teachers’ daily virtuous acts in routine work, diminishing practical guiding significance and affinity for prospective teachers.

Second, educational internships and probation fail to fully tap teacher-ethics cultivation potential. Educational internships constitute the most critical site for normal-university students to engage with authentic educational contexts and cultivate the educator spirit. Nevertheless, under certain internship frameworks, internship tasks excessively concentrate on lesson preparation, teaching and assignment correction. Many normal-university students gain limited access to complex educational scenarios such as in-depth class management, home-school communication and support for special-needs students. Some internship-base schools treat interns merely as teaching assistants, depriving them of complete experience of teachers’ holistic educational responsibilities. Internship supervision prioritizes polishing teaching techniques, with scarce guidance for interns to observe and analyze how in-service excellent teachers embody benevolence, dedication and aptitude-oriented

teaching in daily work, let alone targeted teacher-ethics reflection assignments. Post-internship in-depth reviews focusing on educational convictions and professional sentiments are rare. Consequently, normal-university students may improve teaching skills through internships yet achieve limited growth in educational sentiments and moral attainment, resulting in the awkward situation of “learning teacher-ethics theories without corresponding teacher-ethics practice”.

Third, full-staff, whole-process and all-round education implementation remains insufficient. Cultivating the educator spirit is by no means the sole responsibility of Marxist-college faculties or counselors. Specialized-course teachers, internship-base schools and the entire campus culture should undertake corresponding educational obligations. In reality, some specialized-course teachers prioritize knowledge delivery without conscious efforts to explore educator-spirit elements embedded in curricula. Meanwhile, mentor teachers at primary- and secondary-school internship bases rarely undertake teacher-ethics-immersion guidance for normal-university students, lacking clear task requirements and incentive mechanisms. Failure to fully integrate diverse educational forces leads to single-faceted carriers and low effectiveness for spiritual cultivation.

5. Practical Pathways for Empowering Moral Education for Normal-University Students with the Educator Spirit

To unlock the moral-education empowering value of the educator spirit, simple additional courses or thematic lectures prove insufficient. Multidimensional coordinated efforts are required to stimulate subject-initiated awareness, reconstruct training systems, strengthen practical immersion and improve evaluation mechanisms, transforming the educator spirit from theoretical texts into inner convictions and voluntary behavioral practices of normal-university students.

5.1. Stimulating Subject-initiated Awareness: Guiding Normal-university Students to Construct Spiritual Cognition Proactively

Moral education is fundamentally an “internally-generated” process. All external educational inputs ultimately rely on individual active absorption and reflection to achieve genuine effectiveness. If students remain passive recipients, sophisticated curriculum design cannot realize spiritual internalization. Therefore, the primary pathway lies in activating normal-university students’ subjective agency in moral education, reducing one-way indoctrination and facilitating active thinking and independent reflection.

First, optimize classroom pedagogy and transform pure lecture-based indoctrination. In teacher-ethics and ideological-political courses, expand case discussions and situational analysis. Beyond grand educator narratives, select daily-work cases from ordinary front-line outstanding teachers to help students perceive that the educator spirit is tangible in trivial daily interactions with students and teaching practices. Meanwhile, set ethical-dilemma scenarios for classroom deliberation: for instance, how to implement genuine aptitude-oriented teaching amid prominent individual disparities among students; how to maintain inner balance when ideal pursuits conflict with employment-pressure realities. Guide students to deepen their

understanding of the six dimensions of the educator spirit through critical thinking rather than receiving preset standard answers.

Second, establish regular reflection platforms to sustain self-dialogue for students. Encourage normal-university students to maintain educational-growth reflection journals, prioritizing genuine insights over lengthy compositions. Integrate reflections on educational ideals and benevolent teaching with specialized-course studies, campus volunteer services and probation observations. Facilitate consistent self-questioning: “Why do I aspire to become a teacher?” “What kind of teacher do I hope to be in future classrooms?” Continuous self-inquiry helps students clarify professional pursuits and distinguish two divergent perceptions: “teaching merely as an occupation” versus “education as a noble undertaking”.

Third, leverage peer-demonstration effects. Organize regular sharing sessions featuring outstanding alumni from normal-major programs. Having recently graduated and experienced similar academic confusions and growth challenges, alumni stories of grassroots teaching resonate more strongly with current normal-university students than distant historical figures. It should be noted that sharing sessions should objectively present genuine hardships and pressures in front-line education, avoiding unrealistic idealized glorification. This helps students develop rational professional expectations and prevents post-employment frustration stemming from drastic psychological gaps.

5.2. Systematic Overall Planning: Integrating the Educator Spirit into the Whole Talent-training Process

To implement full-staff, whole-process and all-round education, narrow perceptions confining educator-spirit cultivation to ideological-political classrooms must be discarded. Its core connotations should permeate talent-training schemes, curriculum systems and campus-culture construction to realize comprehensive educational patterns.

First, embed relevant requirements in top-level design of talent-training schemes. When revising talent-training programs, normal majors should explicitly incorporate educator-spirit-related competencies into training objectives and graduation requirements, translating soul-forging and teacher-strengthening demands into institutional documents. Instead of launching numerous new courses, adopt an “embedded-integration” approach and build a three-dimensional curriculum matrix consisting of general ideological-political courses, teacher-education specialized courses and discipline-specific curriculum-based ideological-political education. General ideological-political courses consolidate ideal convictions corresponding to “serving the country with whole-hearted devotion and national aspirations”. Teacher-education courses such as teacher-professional ethics, pedagogy and psychology systematically interpret full connotations of the educator spirit. Discipline-specific specialized courses should explore curriculum-based ideological-political elements organically integrating “diligent learning, earnest practice and truth-seeking innovation” and “the pursuit of promoting culture with a global vision”. Every normal-major course should reflect on which dimensions of the educator spirit it can cultivate, preventing spiritual education from becoming a one-man show of a small number of courses.

Second, strengthen faculty-team development and enhance educational self-awareness among all instructors. Specialized-course teachers constitute key practitioners of curriculum-based ideological-political education. Whole-process education cannot be fulfilled if instructors only deliver knowledge without shaping values. Higher-education institutions should organize thematic teaching-research activities for all normal-major faculty, helping them thoroughly grasp connotations of the educator spirit and explore educational elements matching disciplinary characteristics to achieve teaching by personal example. University teachers' own academic attitudes and ways of treating students serve as the most intuitive models for normal-university students, realizing the exemplary effect of "setting examples through words and deeds".

Third, capitalize on the immersive functions of campus culture and build normal-major-characteristic educational atmospheres. As implicit curricula, campus cultures subtly shape students' values. Regularly disseminate the educator spirit via Youth League activities, reading salons, teacher-ethics speeches and educational-documentary screenings. Build teacher-ethics cultural corridors and display profiles of outstanding alumni teachers to foster unique teacher-ethics atmospheres in normal universities. Moreover, expand social-practice programs and organize normal-university students to participate in rural volunteer teaching, community science popularization and youth-care volunteer services. Through concrete social-service practices, students personally perceive connotations of "serving the nation with devotion" and "willing dedication", linking campus learning to social realities.

5.3. Consolidating Practical Sites: Tempering Teacher-ethics Attainments in Internships and Probation

Cultivation of the educator spirit relies on authentic educational contexts. Educational internships and probation serve as critical transitional links for normal-university students moving from campuses to classrooms. Moral-education values within practical segments must be fully explored to reverse the "skills-prioritized, morality-neglected" internship tendency and embed teacher-ethics practice throughout internships.

First, assign pre-internship teacher-ethics practice tasks. Pre-internship orientation should cover not only lesson-planning and teaching-simulation skills but also thematic learning on the educator spirit, clarifying teacher-ethics practice objectives for interns: learning to observe and respect student diversity and comprehend real-world implications of "loving teaching and caring for students". Guide students to enter internship schools with clear moral-growth reflections rather than merely instructional assignments.

Second, establish a dual-mentor collaborative moral-education mechanism during internships. Both university supervisors and mentor teachers at primary- and secondary-school bases should undertake responsibilities for cultivating teacher ethics. Front-line mentor teachers should not only guide classroom teaching but also serve as role-models for teacher ethics, demonstrating benevolent educational practices in daily class management, home-school communication and student-issue resolution. Assign specialized teacher-ethics practice tasks for interns: beyond attending lectures and teaching classes, encourage

moderate participation in class management and individual student conversations. Require interns to compose teacher-ethics-themed internship reflections documenting real-world educational observations and reconsidering their perspectives on students and teachers. Considering heavy practical workloads in internship-base schools, task design should remain moderate and feasible, prioritizing observation and reflection rather than excessive written documentation burdens.

Third, organize thematic post-internship reviews. Beyond conventional internship grading, hold special internship seminars for normal-university students to exchange ethical dilemmas and educational insights encountered during fieldwork. Guide students to review internship gains and shortcomings against the six dimensions of the educator spirit, translating valuable practical experiences into resources for moral growth. This closes the developmental chain of "practical experience-reflective insights-moral advancement", preventing termination of teacher-ethics thinking upon internship completion.

5.4. Improving Evaluation Orientations: Constructing Diversified Moral-education Evaluation Mechanisms

Reform of evaluation confronts inherent difficulties: educational sentiments and moral integrity are implicit qualities resisting absolute quantification. Therefore, blind pursuit of fully standardized scoring should be avoided. A combination of process-oriented assessment and qualitative evaluation should be adopted, complementing quantitative materials with qualitative descriptions and exerting positive guiding functions for evaluation "batons", instead of pursuing simplistic score-based rankings.

First, optimize comprehensive moral-education assessment for normal-university students and enrich evaluation dimensions. Incorporate observation indicators related to the educator spirit within existing comprehensive-quality evaluation systems. Divide evaluation into "recordable hard materials" and "qualitative growth records". Hard materials document participation in thematic studies, social practices and volunteer services. Meanwhile, establish "teacher-ethics growth files" for each normal-university student, collecting educational reflections, teacher-ethics performance records during probation and internships, and supervisor comments. Emphasis falls on process tracking rather than one-off final grading. Moral-education evaluation must not be reduced to activity check-ins; attention should focus on dynamic shifts and genuine progress in students' thoughts and behaviors.

Second, optimize educational-internship evaluation systems and incorporate teacher-ethics practice into core assessment indicators. Add teacher-ethics-competence observation dimensions to internship-evaluation forms. Observation indicators should be concrete and observable, avoiding empty expressions, for example: sincerity and appropriateness in interactions with primary- and secondary-school students; effectiveness of student-teacher communication; sense of accountability toward educational work; depth and breadth of educational reflections. Adopt multi-subject evaluation synthesizing judgments from university supervisors, school-base mentor teachers and interns' self-reflections. Qualitative assessments primarily serve feedback and improvement purposes, identifying deficiencies and guiding growth rather than functioning as sole elimination or screening criteria.

Third, refine positive incentive mechanisms and optimize guiding orientations. Launch selection activities such as “Teacher-ethics Style Awards” and “Educational-Narrative Competitions”, encouraging normal-university students to narrate personal educational insights and growth stories. Recognize students demonstrating benevolence and dedication in volunteer services and educational internships to exert positive exemplary effects. Meanwhile, objectively acknowledge that evaluation mechanisms can only deliver guiding functions. Moral growth features prominent individual disparities. Evaluation should not demand identical developmental heights for all normal-university students within identical timeframes. Progressive and spiral-pattern growth patterns should be respected, preventing formalism and uniform standards in evaluation.

6. Conclusion

The educator spirit opens new value directions for moral education of normal-university students in higher education institutions. Far from empty slogans, it constitutes a complete spiritual reference system and value benchmark for prospective teachers. Empowering moral education for normal-university students with the educator spirit essentially implements the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education within pre-service teacher training, cultivating reserve teachers with national aspirations and noble ethics for building a powerful country through education.

Realistically, moral education for normal-university students still faces multiple constraints including superficial individual cognition, imperfect evaluation mechanisms and disconnections between theory and practice. Effective empowerment cannot be achieved through isolated curriculum reforms or single measures. Multilateral collaborative advancement is required: fully mobilizing normal-university students’ subjective reflective awareness; promoting systematic institutional embedding within full-chain talent-training frameworks in normal universities; leveraging educational internships and other practical sites for moral tempering; and establishing more scientific and inclusive moral-education evaluation orientations. Only in this way can a virtuous closed loop of cognition, emotion, practice and evaluation be accomplished.

Meanwhile, academic prudence should be maintained: integrating the educator spirit into moral education for normal-university students constitutes an important condition

for improving training quality yet is not a universal solution. Moral growth of normal-university students represents a long-term, recurrent and challenging process. On-campus moral-education cultivation merely marks the starting point of lifelong teacher-ethics self-improvement. After graduation and employment, real-world working contexts and continuous self-refinement will further shape their spiritual character. The core value of normal-university education lies in sowing seeds of ideal convictions, benevolence and dedication before students enter professional posts, equipping young prospective teachers with spiritual benchmarks for lifelong self-examination and self-improvement.

Looking ahead, major practical topics worthy of sustained exploration in teacher education remain, further resolving evaluation challenges for implicit moral-education qualities, better motivating collaborative-educational enthusiasm among primary- and secondary-school internship bases, and effectively counteracting impacts of pluralistic social values on normal-university students’ professional ideals.

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