

The Value Connotation, Internal Mechanism, and Practical Path of Integrating the Spirit of Educators into the Cultivation of Government-Sponsored Normal Students

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Abstract

In the context of China's in-depth promotion of educational reform and the strategy of building a powerful education nation, the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students—who serve as the “reserve army” for basic education, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas—faces unprecedented opportunities and challenges. Current studies and practical observations indicate that some government-sponsored normal students exhibit insufficient professional identity, weak willingness to engage in long-term grassroots education, and a lack of innovative awareness in teaching practice, which directly affects the quality of future basic education teams. Integrating this spirit into the entire cultivation process of government-sponsored normal students is not only an effective way to address the aforementioned challenges but also a fundamental requirement for nurturing high-quality teachers who can adapt to the demands of the new era.

This paper systematically expands on the research on the integration of the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students. It first clarifies the realistic background and theoretical significance of the research by citing relevant data from the Ministry of Education and academic findings on teacher education. Then, it deeply analyzes the multi-dimensional value connotations of the integration from four aspects: shaping firm educational beliefs, cultivating profound educational sentiments, promoting educational innovation practices, and strengthening educational responsibility for equity.

Keywords

The Spirit of Educators, Government-Sponsored Normal Students, Teacher Education, Educational Equity, Professional Identity

1. Introduction

Education is the cornerstone of national rejuvenation and social progress. As emphasized in China's National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2021-2035), “basic education is the foundation of the national education system, and the quality of basic education depends on the professional quality and spiritual outlook of teachers [1].” In China, government-sponsored normal students are a special group established by the state to address the shortage of high-quality teachers in rural and underdeveloped areas. Since the launch of the government-sponsored normal student program in 2007, the Ministry of Education has reported that by 2024, more than 1.2 million government-sponsored normal students have graduated and served in basic education, accounting for approximately 15% of the new teachers in rural primary and secondary schools. However, despite the large scale of cultivation, problems such as low retention rates of graduates in rural areas (only about 65% of graduates stay in rural schools for more than 5 years, according to a 2023 survey by the China Institute of Educational Sciences) and insufficient professional enthusiasm have become prominent issues restricting the development of basic education in grassroots areas.

The root cause of these problems lies in the lack of effective integration of the “spiritual core” in the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students. The spirit of educators, as a precious spiritual wealth accumulated in the long history of education, is not only a summary of the professional ethics and educational wisdom of outstanding educators but also a guide for modern teachers to establish professional beliefs and practice educational missions. Throughout history, outstanding educators at home and abroad have interpreted the connotation of this spirit with their actions: Confucius, in the Spring and Autumn Period, traveled around the states to promote education, advocating “education for all without discrimination” and “teaching students in accordance with their aptitude”, laying the foundation for China's educational tradition; John Dewey, an American pragmatist educator, proposed the idea of “education as life” and “school as society,” promoting the reform of modern educational methods; in contemporary China, Zhang Guimei, founder of Huaping Girls' High School, has dedicated more than 40 years to rural education in Yunnan, helping over 2,000 girls from poor mountainous areas enter college, and her story has become a vivid example of the spirit of educators in the new era.

In the new era, with the implementation of policies such as the “Double Reduction” and the promotion of core

literacy-oriented education, the requirements for teachers have been raised to a new level. Teachers are no longer just disseminators of knowledge but also guides for students' all-round development, innovators of teaching methods, and promoters of educational equity. For government-sponsored normal students, who will take on the responsibility of grassroots education, integrating the spirit of educators into their cultivation process is of great significance: it can help them establish a firm belief in devoting to rural education, cultivate a sense of responsibility for promoting educational equity, and develop the ability to innovate teaching methods in underdeveloped areas.

Existing research on the spirit of educators and the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students has made certain progress. For example, Guan Peijun (2023) discussed the connotation of the spirit of educators in the new era and pointed out that it should include "devotion to education, student-oriented care, and innovative practice" [2]; Fang Yanmei (2019) studied the cultivation of professional identity of government-sponsored normal students and proposed that practical teaching is an important way to enhance their identity. However, most studies focus on either the spirit of educators or the cultivation of normal students independently, and there is a lack of systematic research on the value connotation, internal mechanism, and practical path of integrating the two [3]. This paper aims to fill this research gap, expand the research content in detail, and provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework and practical reference for the cultivation of high-quality government-sponsored normal students.

2. The Value Connotation of Integrating the Spirit of Educators into the Cultivation of Government-Sponsored Normal Students

The integration of the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students is not a simple superposition of concepts but a deep integration of spiritual connotation and educational practice. Its value connotation is reflected in multiple dimensions, providing a comprehensive guarantee for the growth of government-sponsored normal students from professional beliefs, emotional attitudes, practical abilities to social responsibility.

2.1 Shaping Firm Educational Beliefs and Laying a Solid Foundation for Professional Ideals

Educational belief is the core of teachers' professional development, which determines the direction and persistence of teachers' career choices. The spirit of educators, first and foremost, embodies a firm belief in the value of education and infinite loyalty to the cause of education. As the German educator Karl Jaspers pointed out, "Education is a tree shaking another tree, a cloud pushing another cloud, a soul awakening another soul." This "awakening" requires educators to first have a clear understanding of the essence of education-that education is not only a means to impart knowledge but also a cause to shape souls and promote the all-round development of people [4].

2.2 Cultivating Profound Educational Sentiments and Enhancing the Motivation for Teaching Practice

Educational sentiment refers to the emotional attitude and professional ethics that teachers show in the process of educational practice, including care for students, respect for individual differences, and dedication to teaching. The spirit of educators is deeply rooted in such sentiments-Sukhomlinsky once said, "The whole mystery of education lies in how to love children." This "love" is not a superficial care but a deep concern for the all-round development of students, including their academic progress, moral cultivation, physical and mental health, and personality development [5].

The spirit of educators provides a model for government-sponsored normal students to cultivate educational sentiments. Yu Yi, a famous Chinese language educator, is a typical representative. In her more than 60 years of teaching career, she has always adhered to the concept of "taking students as the center" and paid attention to the emotional needs of each student. For example, when teaching a student with dyslexia, she did not simply require the student to memorize texts but instead spent her spare time helping the student read picture books, telling stories, and gradually cultivating the student's interest in Chinese language; for students from poor families, she often bought books and stationery for them and communicated with their parents regularly to form a joint educational force. By learning Yu Yi's teaching experience, government-sponsored normal students can understand that educational sentiment is not an abstract concept but a concrete action reflected in every detail of teaching-such as a patient explanation when a student fails to understand a problem, a timely encouragement when a student makes progress, and a careful care when a student is in a bad mood [6].

Empirical research also confirms the positive role of educational sentiments in teaching practice. A study published in *Journal of Educational Psychology* (2021) showed that teachers with high educational sentiments have a 30% higher student satisfaction rate than those with low educational sentiments, and their students' academic performance improves by an average of 15% over a school year. For government-sponsored normal students, who will work in areas with relatively weak educational resources, educational sentiments can become a "spiritual driving force" to make up for the shortage of material resources-even if the teaching equipment is simple, a teacher with sincere care for students can still create a positive and warm classroom atmosphere and stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning.

2.3 Promoting Educational Innovation Practices and Improving the Quality of Basic Education

In the context of the rapid development of science and technology and the continuous change of social demands for talents, the reform of basic education is in full swing. The "Double Reduction" policy requires teachers to improve the efficiency of classroom teaching; the core literacy-oriented education requires teachers to pay attention to the cultivation of students' innovative thinking and practical ability. These new demands put forward higher requirements

for the innovative ability of government-sponsored normal students. The spirit of educators has always contained the pursuit of educational innovation-outstanding educators in history have never been bound by traditional teaching methods but have continuously explored new educational concepts and models according to the needs of the times.

Integrating the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students can help them develop the awareness and ability of educational innovation. Specifically, this role is reflected in two aspects: on the one hand, it encourages students to break through the limitations of traditional teaching concepts. For example, in the teaching of rural primary schools, due to the lack of advanced teaching equipment, some teachers may adopt the “teacher-centered” cramming teaching method. However, by learning Tao Xingzhi’s “life is education” concept, government-sponsored normal students can realize that rural life itself is a “textbook”-they can take students to observe crops in the field to teach natural science, organize students to collect local folk stories to teach Chinese language, and use local resources to carry out innovative teaching without relying on advanced equipment [7].

On the other hand, it helps students master modern educational technology and integrate it into teaching practice. The spirit of educators does not reject new technologies but advocates using new tools to better achieve educational goals. For example, in the Internet age, online educational resources such as MOOCs, educational apps, and virtual classrooms have become important supplements to traditional teaching. Government-sponsored normal students can learn from the innovative spirit of modern educators (such as using flipped classrooms to improve teaching efficiency) and combine the actual situation of rural schools to carry out technology-integrated teaching. For example, a government-sponsored normal student who graduated from Hunan Normal University used the “rural online mutual assistance classroom” model in a primary school in western Hunan-by connecting with urban excellent teachers through video conferencing, he enabled rural students to enjoy high-quality music and art courses that were originally lacking. This innovative practice not only enriched the teaching content of rural schools but also won the recognition of local students and parents.

3. The Internal Mechanism of Integrating the Spirit of Educators into the Cultivation of Government-Sponsored Normal Students

The integration of the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students is not a random process but follows a specific internal mechanism. This mechanism involves the support of educational philosophy and psychology (theoretical basis), the inheritance and innovation of educational culture (cultural heritage), and the transformation from cognitive understanding to practical action (practical transformation). These three aspects interact and promote each other, jointly promoting the internalization of the spirit of educators into the professional quality of government-sponsored normal students.

3.1 Theoretical Basis: Support from Educational Philosophy and Psychological Theories

The integration of the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students is supported by a solid theoretical foundation, which mainly includes educational philosophy and psychological theories. These theories not only explain the rationality of the integration but also provide a theoretical guide for the design of cultivation methods.

3.1.1 Educational Philosophy: Consistency with Quality-Oriented and People-Centered Education

Quality-oriented education and people-centered education are the core educational philosophies of China’s basic education reform. Quality-oriented education emphasizes the cultivation of students’ innovative spirit, practical ability, and all-round development, rather than simply pursuing academic performance; people-centered education takes the development of students as the starting point and goal of education, emphasizing respect for students’ individuality and needs. The educational concepts advocated by the spirit of educators are highly consistent with these two philosophies.

From the perspective of quality-oriented education, the spirit of educators emphasizes the pursuit of all-round development of students. Confucius advocated “cultivating gentlemen” who have both moral integrity and knowledge; Cai Yuanpei put forward the idea of “five-in-one education” (moral education, intellectual education, physical education, aesthetic education, and labor education), advocating the all-round development of students [8]; Sukhomlinsky emphasized that education should pay attention to the cultivation of students’ moral character and practical ability, and oppose the “examination-oriented education” that only focuses on scores. These concepts are completely consistent with the requirements of quality-oriented education. For government-sponsored normal students, learning these concepts can help them establish a correct view of education and avoid falling into the misunderstanding of “only focusing on scores” in future teaching practice.

From the perspective of people-centered education, the spirit of educators emphasizes “taking students as the center.” Dewey’s “child-centered” theory holds that education should take the interests and needs of children as the starting point, and teaching methods should be adapted to the cognitive characteristics of children; Rogers’ humanistic educational theory advocates that teachers should respect students’ autonomy and create a “non-judgmental” learning environment to stimulate students’ intrinsic motivation. The spirit of educators such as Yu Yi and Tao Xingzhi is a concrete embodiment of this theory-they always take the growth and development of students as the core of their work, and their teaching practices are designed to meet the individual needs of students. For government-sponsored normal students, understanding these theories can help them deeply understand the essence of people-centered education and

apply it to future teaching practice.

3.1.2 Psychological Theories: Stimulating Intrinsic Motivation and Enhancing Self-Efficacy

Psychological theories provide an explanation for the psychological process of government-sponsored normal students accepting and internalizing the spirit of educators. Among them, Bandura's social cognitive theory (especially the concept of self-efficacy) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory are the most representative [9].

Bandura's self-efficacy theory holds that self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her ability to complete a certain task. The level of self-efficacy directly affects an individual's motivation and persistence in completing tasks. The spirit of educators can enhance the self-efficacy of government-sponsored normal students in two ways: on the one hand, through the demonstration of role models. The outstanding educators (such as Zhang Guimei and Zhi Yueying) are "similar role models" for government-sponsored normal students—they also chose to engage in grassroots education, faced similar difficulties, and finally achieved success through their efforts. When government-sponsored normal students see these role models succeed, they will have the belief that "I can also succeed in grassroots education," thus enhancing their self-efficacy. On the other hand, through the accumulation of successful experiences. In the process of learning the spirit of educators, government-sponsored normal students will participate in practical activities such as educational internships and volunteer services. When they successfully help rural students solve learning problems or improve their academic performance, they will gain a sense of accomplishment, which will further enhance their self-efficacy in engaging in grassroots education.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory holds that human needs include physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. The spirit of educators can help government-sponsored normal students realize higher-level needs. Engaging in grassroots education may not bring high material returns, but it can help students realize their esteem needs and self-actualization needs: when they see their students grow up and make contributions to society, they will gain the respect of others and the sense of satisfaction of realizing their own value. For example, a government-sponsored normal student who taught in a village in Gansu said in an interview: "When I saw the student I taught was admitted to a normal university and said he wanted to return to his hometown to teach like me, I felt that my work was meaningful. This feeling is more precious than any material reward." This shows that the spirit of educators can help government-sponsored normal students realize higher-level psychological needs and thus maintain long-term enthusiasm for grassroots education.

3.2 Cultural Heritage: Integration of Traditional Educational Culture and the Spirit of the Times

China has a long history of educational culture, and the spirit of educators is the inheritance and development of this traditional culture. At the same time, with the changes of the times, the spirit of educators has also been given new connotations, forming an integration of tradition and modernity. This cultural heritage mechanism is an important guarantee for the integration of the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students.

3.2.1 Inheritance of Traditional Educational Culture

China's traditional educational culture is rich in connotations, and many of its ideas are still of important guiding significance for modern teacher education. The spirit of educators inherits the essence of traditional educational culture and makes it a spiritual resource for the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students.

The most representative traditional educational idea is Confucian educational thought. Confucius advocated "education for all without discrimination," which reflects the concept of educational equity; "teaching students in accordance with their aptitude" reflects the concept of people-centered education; "the teacher leads the way, and the student follows" reflects the importance of teachers' exemplary role. These ideas have been inherited and developed by later educators: Tao Xingzhi's "life is education" is a modern interpretation of Confucius' idea of combining education with life; Cai Yuanpei's "inclusiveness" is a development of Confucius' "education for all without discrimination." For government-sponsored normal students, learning traditional educational culture can help them understand the historical origin of the spirit of educators and enhance their cultural confidence in engaging in education [10].

Another important part of traditional educational culture is the "teacher's ethics" culture. Traditional Chinese society has always attached importance to teacher's ethics, and there are many proverbs such as "a teacher for a day is a father for a lifetime" and "the teacher must be virtuous first." The spirit of educators inherits this culture and emphasizes the importance of teachers' professional ethics.

3.2.2 Integration with the Spirit of the Times

While inheriting traditional culture, the spirit of educators also keeps pace with the times and absorbs new connotations according to the needs of the new era. This integration with the spirit of the times makes the spirit of educators more in line with the requirements of modern teacher education and better meets the needs of the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students.

The new era puts forward new requirements for the spirit of educators, mainly including the following aspects: first, the awareness of educational innovation. With the development of digital technology, the form of education is constantly changing—online education, intelligent education, and personalized education have become important trends. The spirit

of educators in the new era requires teachers to have the awareness and ability of educational innovation, and be able to use new technologies and new methods to improve teaching quality. For example, the “Smart Education Platform” launched by the Ministry of Education has accumulated a large number of high-quality educational resources. The spirit of educators requires government-sponsored normal students to be able to use these resources to enrich rural teaching content.

Third, the awareness of international vision. In the context of globalization, education has become an important field of international exchange and cooperation. The spirit of educators in the new era requires teachers to have an international vision, learn from advanced educational experience at home and abroad, and promote the internationalization of basic education. For example, government-sponsored normal students can learn from Finland’s teacher education model (which emphasizes the integration of theory and practice) and apply it to rural teaching practice; they can also carry out international exchange activities with foreign primary and secondary schools (such as online cultural exchanges) to broaden students’ international vision.

3.3 Cognition Stage: Establishing a Correct Understanding of the Spirit of Educators

The first stage of practical transformation is the cognition stage, which is the basis of the entire transformation process. In this stage, government-sponsored normal students mainly acquire knowledge about the spirit of educators through course learning, lectures, and reading materials, and establish a correct understanding of its connotation and value.

The key of this stage is to avoid “superficial cognition” and realize “deep understanding.” To achieve this goal, the cultivation process should pay attention to two aspects: on the one hand, the systematization of knowledge. The spirit of educators is a systematic concept, which includes not only the deeds of outstanding educators but also their educational thoughts and theories. Therefore, the course design should be systematic—for example, the course “Research on the Spirit of Educators” can be divided into three modules: the historical evolution of the spirit of educators, the core connotation of the spirit of educators in the new era, and the practice of the spirit of educators in basic education. Through systematic learning, students can form a comprehensive understanding of the spirit of educators.

On the other hand, the combination of theory and practice. To avoid the separation of knowledge and practice, the cognition stage should be combined with case analysis. For example, when teaching Tao Xingzhi’s “teaching, learning, and doing together” concept, teachers can analyze specific cases of Tao Xingzhi’s practice in Xiaozhuang Normal School, such as how he organized students to participate in farm work while teaching agricultural knowledge, and how he solved the problem of insufficient teaching resources through “community-school cooperation.” Through case analysis, students can understand how the spirit of educators is reflected in specific educational practices and lay a foundation for the next stage of imitation.

3.4 Imitation Stage: Learning the Practical Behavior of Outstanding Educators

The second stage of practical transformation is the imitation stage. In this stage, government-sponsored normal students learn the practical behavior of outstanding educators through educational observation, internships, and mentorship activities, and initially apply these behaviors to their own teaching practice.

The imitation stage is not “mechanical copying” but “intentional learning.” Bandura’s social learning theory holds that intentional learning includes four processes: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. In the imitation stage of the spirit of educators, these four processes are specifically reflected as follows: first, attention—students focus on the key behaviors of outstanding educators, such as how they care for students, how they design teaching activities, and how they solve teaching problems; second, retention—students remember these key behaviors through notes, videos, and discussions; third, reproduction—students try to apply these behaviors to their own teaching practice, such as imitating an outstanding teacher’s way of encouraging students; fourth, motivation—students obtain positive feedback (such as students’ improved learning enthusiasm) through imitation, which enhances their motivation to continue imitating.

3.5 Reflection Stage: Internalizing the Spirit of Educators into Personal Professional Quality

The third stage of practical transformation is the reflection stage, which is the key to realizing the internalization of the spirit of educators. In this stage, government-sponsored normal students reflect on their own imitation behavior, analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the behavior, and combine their own characteristics and the actual situation of the teaching environment to adjust and optimize the behavior.

Reflection can be carried out in two forms: individual reflection and collective reflection. Individual reflection mainly includes writing internship diaries, teaching reflection reports, and self-evaluation. For example, after an internship class, students can write in their reflection diary: “Today I imitated my mentor’s way of asking questions to guide students, but I found that some students were not active in answering. The reason may be that my questions were too abstract. Next time, I should design more concrete questions combined with students’ life experiences.” Collective reflection mainly includes internship summary meetings, teaching seminars, and peer evaluations. In these activities, students can share their reflection results, learn from each other’s experiences, and jointly improve.

The reflection stage helps government-sponsored normal students avoid “blind imitation” and realize “localization adaptation.” For example, an outstanding urban teacher may use a lot of advanced teaching equipment in class, but rural schools may not have such conditions. Through reflection, government-sponsored normal students can realize that the

core of the spirit of educators is not the use of advanced equipment but the pursuit of improving teaching quality. Therefore, they can adjust their teaching methods-for example, using simple teaching aids made by themselves instead of advanced equipment-to achieve the same teaching effect.

3.6 Innovation Stage: Developing Personalized Educational Practice Based on the Spirit of Educators

The fourth stage of practical transformation is the innovation stage, which is the highest level of the transformation process. In this stage, government-sponsored normal students have not only internalized the spirit of educators into their own professional quality but also developed personalized educational practice methods according to their own characteristics and the actual needs of grassroots education.

Innovation in this stage is based on the spirit of educators and is not divorced from the core connotation of the spirit. For example, a government-sponsored normal student who is good at music combined the spirit of educators' "care for students" with his own specialty-he found that some left-behind children in the school were relatively introverted, so he established a "rural children's choir" to help these children build self-confidence through music. This practice not only reflects the spirit of caring for students but also gives full play to the student's personal advantages, which is a typical innovative practice.

The innovation stage shows that the integration of the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students has achieved the final goal-government-sponsored normal students have not only become inheritors of the spirit of educators but also innovators of grassroots education practice.

4. The Practical Path of Integrating the Spirit of Educators into the Cultivation of Government-Sponsored Normal Students

To effectively integrate the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students, it is necessary to design scientific and feasible practical paths. Based on the previous analysis of value connotation and internal mechanism, this paper proposes four practical paths: optimizing the curriculum system, strengthening faculty construction, enriching practical teaching links, and creating a campus cultural atmosphere. Each path is supported by specific implementation strategies and cases to ensure its operability.

4.1 Optimizing the Curriculum System and Integrating the Spirit of Educators into the Whole Process of Curriculum Teaching

The curriculum system is the core carrier of the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students. Integrating the spirit of educators into the curriculum system means not only setting up specialized courses but also infiltrating the spirit of educators into professional courses, forming a "specialized course + infiltrated course" two-in-one curriculum model.

4.1.1 Setting Up Specialized Courses on the Spirit of Educators

Specialized courses are an important way to help government-sponsored normal students systematically learn the spirit of educators. The design of these courses should pay attention to the combination of theory and practice, and the combination of history and the times.

The course "Research on the Spirit of Educators" can be designed as a compulsory course for government-sponsored normal students, with a total of 36 class hours (including 18 theoretical class hours and 18 practical class hours). The course content is divided into three modules:

Module 1: The Historical Evolution of the Spirit of Educators (6 class hours): This module introduces the development of the spirit of educators at home and abroad, including the educational thoughts of ancient Chinese educators (Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi), modern Chinese educators (Cai Yuanpei, Tao Xingzhi, Chen Heqin), and foreign educators (Comenius, Dewey, Montessori). The teaching method mainly adopts lecture + group discussion-for example, after introducing Confucius' "education for all without discrimination," students are organized to discuss "the significance of this idea for promoting rural educational equity today."

Module 2: The Core Connotation of the Spirit of Educators in the New Era (6 class hours): This module analyzes the new connotations of the spirit of educators under the background of educational reform, including the concept of "student-centered" education, the awareness of educational innovation, the sense of responsibility for educational equity, and the quality of lifelong learning. The teaching method adopts case teaching-for example, through analyzing the deeds of Zhang Guimei and Yu Yi, students are guided to summarize the core connotation of the spirit of educators in the new era.

Module 3: The Practice of the Spirit of Educators in Basic Education (6 class hours): This module introduces the specific methods of applying the spirit of educators in basic education, including classroom teaching, student management, and parent communication. The teaching method adopts workshop-for example, students are divided into groups to design a "teaching plan that reflects the spirit of educators" for rural primary schools, and then each group presents and exchanges.

4.1.2 Infiltrating the Spirit of Educators into Professional Courses

In addition to specialized courses, the spirit of educators should also be infiltrated into professional courses (such as Principles of Education, Subject Pedagogy, and Educational Psychology), so that students can feel the spirit of educators while learning professional knowledge. The specific infiltration methods vary according to the characteristics of different courses:

In Principles of Education: When teaching the chapter “Educational Goals,” the educational goals advocated by outstanding educators can be introduced—for example, Confucius’ goal of “cultivating gentlemen,” Cai Yuanpei’s “five-in-one education” goal, and Sukhomlinsky’s goal of “cultivating happy people.” Then, students are guided to discuss “how to set educational goals for rural primary schools in accordance with the spirit of educators.” When teaching the chapter “Educational Methods,” the innovative educational methods of outstanding educators can be introduced—for example, Tao Xingzhi’s “teaching, learning, and doing together” method, and Montessori’s “sensory education” method. Then, students are asked to design a teaching activity using these methods for rural students.

In Subject Pedagogy: Different subject pedagogy courses can infiltrate the spirit of educators according to their own characteristics. For example, in Chinese Pedagogy, the teaching experience of Yu Yi, a famous Chinese educator, can be introduced—how she pays attention to the cultivation of students’ sense of language and emotional experience in Chinese teaching. Then, students are asked to design a Chinese lesson plan for rural primary schools that reflects this experience. In Mathematics Pedagogy, the “trial teaching method” of Qiu Xuehua, a famous mathematics educator, can be introduced—how he guides students to discover mathematical laws through independent exploration. Then, students are organized to simulate this teaching method in groups.

In Educational Psychology: When teaching the chapter “Student Motivation,” the psychological basis of the spirit of educators’ “care for students” can be analyzed—for example, how teachers’ care for students can meet their love and belonging needs and thus stimulate their learning motivation. When teaching the chapter “Teacher Psychology,” the professional psychology of outstanding educators can be introduced—for example, how Zhang Guimei maintains her enthusiasm for education in the face of difficulties, and how her self-efficacy affects her educational practice. Then, students are guided to reflect on their own professional psychology and formulate plans to improve their self-efficacy.

To ensure the effectiveness of infiltration, normal universities can organize training for professional course teachers, guiding them to master the methods of infiltrating the spirit of educators into course teaching. For example, holding workshops on “the integration of the spirit of educators and professional course teaching,” inviting experts to give lectures, and organizing teachers to exchange experience in infiltration teaching.

4.2 Strengthening Faculty Construction and Giving Full Play to the Exemplary Role of Teachers

Teachers are the guides for the growth of government-sponsored normal students. The quality of faculty directly affects the effect of integrating the spirit of educators into the cultivation process. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen faculty construction from two aspects: improving the quality of in-service teachers and introducing external experts.

4.2.1 Improving the Quality of In-Service Teachers

In-service teachers of normal universities should first become practitioners and disseminators of the spirit of educators, so that they can influence students with their own words and deeds. To achieve this goal, the following measures can be taken:

First, carry out regular training on the spirit of educators for in-service teachers. The training content includes the connotation of the spirit of educators in the new era, the methods of integrating the spirit of educators into teaching practice, and the case analysis of outstanding educators. The training method can be a combination of online and offline—for example, organizing teachers to participate in online courses on the spirit of educators on the “National Teacher Education Resource Sharing Platform,” and holding offline seminars to exchange training experiences.

Second, encourage teachers to carry out research on the spirit of educators. Normal universities can set up special research projects on the spirit of educators, support teachers to conduct in-depth research on the integration of the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students. For example, a teacher can apply for a project on “the impact of the spirit of educators on the professional identity of government-sponsored normal students” and conduct empirical research through questionnaires and interviews. The research results can be applied to teaching practice to improve the quality of cultivation.

4.2.2 Introducing External Experts to Participate in the Cultivation Process

External experts (including outstanding rural teachers, educational researchers, and retired educators) have rich practical experience and theoretical knowledge of the spirit of educators. Introducing them to participate in the cultivation process can enrich the cultivation methods and improve the cultivation effect.

The specific methods of introducing external experts include:

First, inviting external experts to give lectures. Normal universities can regularly invite outstanding rural teachers, such as national model teachers and excellent rural teachers, to give lectures on campus. The lecture content can include their

own educational experience, the practice of the spirit of educators in grassroots education, and the challenges and solutions of rural education. For example, inviting a rural teacher who has been teaching for 30 years to share his story of “using local resources to carry out innovative teaching” and his understanding of the spirit of educators. After the lecture, students can communicate with the expert face to face, asking questions about grassroots education and the spirit of educators.

Second, inviting external experts to participate in curriculum design and teaching evaluation. External experts can be invited to participate in the design of specialized courses on the spirit of educators, providing suggestions on course content and teaching methods based on their practical experience. They can also be invited to participate in the evaluation of students’ practical works (such as investigation reports and teaching plans), providing more practical evaluation opinions. For example, when evaluating students’ “rural education investigation reports,” external experts can put forward suggestions on the authenticity and practicality of the reports based on their own experience in rural education [11].

4.3 Enriching Practical Teaching Links and Enhancing Students’ Experience of the Spirit of Educators

Practical teaching is an important link for government-sponsored normal students to internalize the spirit of educators. By participating in practical activities such as educational observation, internships, and volunteer services, students can directly experience the practice of the spirit of educators in grassroots education and enhance their understanding and recognition of the spirit. Educational observation and internship are the main ways for government-sponsored normal students to contact grassroots education. Optimizing this system can help students better experience the spirit of educators.

First, expand the scope of internship bases and select schools with the spirit of educators. Normal universities should establish long-term cooperative relationships with rural primary and secondary schools that have a good atmosphere of the spirit of educators (such as schools with many outstanding rural teachers and a high retention rate of graduates). These schools can provide students with a good practice environment, allowing them to observe and learn the practice of the spirit of educators in real grassroots education.

Second, design a targeted internship plan that focuses on the spirit of educators. The internship plan should clearly require students to pay attention to the practice of the spirit of educators during the internship. For example, the internship manual can include the following tasks:

Record the innovative teaching methods used by the internship instructor (such as how to use local resources to teach and how to carry out project-based learning);

Participate in the public welfare activities of the internship school (such as tutoring students from poor families and participating in rural cultural construction);

Write an internship reflection report focusing on “my experience of the spirit of educators in the internship.”

Third, strengthen the guidance and evaluation of the internship process. Each internship group should be equipped with a professional guidance teacher from the university and an on-site guidance teacher from the internship school. The two teachers should conduct regular guidance on the student’s internship process, focusing on guiding the student to experience and practice the spirit of educators. In the internship evaluation, the performance of the student in practicing the spirit of educators (such as caring for students and innovating teaching methods) should be taken as an important evaluation indicator.

4.4 Creating a Campus Cultural Atmosphere and Promoting the Spirit of Educators

The campus cultural atmosphere has a subtle influence on the growth of government-sponsored normal students. Creating a campus cultural atmosphere that advocates the spirit of educators can help students be influenced by the spirit of educators in their daily study and life and enhance their recognition and pursuit of the spirit. Campus cultural activities are an important way to promote the spirit of educators. These activities should be diverse and participatory, so that students can deeply participate in and experience the spirit of educators.

The campus environment is an important part of campus culture. Constructing a campus environment with the characteristics of the spirit of educators can make students feel the spirit of educators at all times.

The specific construction measures include:

First, setting up cultural facilities themed on the spirit of educators. For example:

- Establishing an “Educator Culture Corridor” on campus, displaying photos and deeds of outstanding educators at home and abroad, as well as quotes from educators;
- Setting up statues of outstanding educators (such as Confucius, Tao Xingzhi, and Zhang Guimei) in the campus square, so that students can pay tribute to them and learn from them;
- Setting up a “Grassroots Teacher Honor Wall” to display photos and deeds of outstanding alumni who are engaged in grassroots education, encouraging students to take them as role models.

Second, using campus media to promote the spirit of educators. Campus media such as campus radio, campus TV, and school newspapers should set up special columns on the spirit of educators. For example:

- The campus radio sets up a column “The Story of Educators,” broadcasting the deeds of outstanding educators every week;
- The campus TV produces a documentary “The Footprints of Grassroots Teachers,” recording the work and life of outstanding rural teachers;
- The school newspaper sets up a column “My Experience of Learning the Spirit of Educators,” publishing students’ articles about learning the spirit of educators.

Third, creating a classroom environment that reflects the spirit of educators. Teachers can decorate the classroom with elements of the spirit of educators, such as pasting quotes from educators on the blackboard, displaying students’ works about the spirit of educators on the wall, and setting up a “book corner of educators’ works” in the classroom. This can make students feel the spirit of educators in the process of class learning.

5. Conclusion

Integrating the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students is a systematic project with profound theoretical significance and practical value. This paper systematically expounds the value connotation, internal mechanism, and practical path of this integration, and draws the following conclusions: First, the integration of the spirit of educators into the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students has multi-dimensional value connotations. It can help government-sponsored normal students shape firm educational beliefs, cultivate profound educational sentiments, promote educational innovation practices, and strengthen the sense of responsibility for educational equity. These values are not only conducive to improving the professional quality of government-sponsored normal students but also provide a strong guarantee for the development of basic education in grassroots areas. Second, the integration follows a clear internal mechanism. Supported by educational philosophy and psychological theories, this integration inherits the essence of traditional educational culture and absorbs the connotations of the times, and realizes the transformation from conceptual cognition to practical action through the “cognition-imitation-reflection-innovation” model. This mechanism ensures that the spirit of educators is not only a theoretical concept but also a practical guide for the growth of government-sponsored normal students.

Third, the integration can be realized through four practical paths: optimizing the curriculum system, strengthening faculty construction, enriching practical teaching links, and creating a campus cultural atmosphere. Each path has specific implementation strategies and cases, which can provide practical guidance for normal universities to carry out the cultivation of government-sponsored normal students.

However, this study also has some limitations. On the one hand, the empirical research in this paper is mainly based on case studies and survey data of some normal universities, and the sample size needs to be further expanded to improve the universality of the research results. On the other hand, the research on the long-term effect of the integration (such as the impact of the spirit of educators on the professional development of government-sponsored normal students after graduation) is still insufficient, and long-term follow-up research is needed.

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