ISSN: 2710-0723

Forging the Moral Character and Strengthening Faculty through the Spirit of Educators: The Value Implications and Practical Pathways for the Ideological and Political Development of University Faculty in the New Era

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Abstract

The spirit of educators serves as the fundamental value guiding the development of the teaching workforce in the new era. Since university faculty bear the fundamental responsibility of fostering virtue through education, strengthening the ideological and political development of university teachers is an inherent requirement for implementing this mission and building a leading nation in education. After elucidating the core tenets of the spirit of educators and their intrinsic alignment with the ideological and political development of university faculty, this paper explores its value in three dimensions: shaping moral character and providing direction, cultivating professional ethics, and fostering a sense of responsibility and commitment. It further proposes practical pathways in four areas: strengthening theoretical grounding, emphasizing the guiding role of professional ethics, promoting the integration of values, and improving institutional safeguards, thereby offering a reference for integrating the spirit of educators into the ideological and political development of university faculty.

Keywords

Spirit of Education; University Faculty; Ideological and Political Development; Professional Ethics and Conduct; Fostering Virtue through Education.

1. Introduction

In September 2023, General Secretary Xi Jinping first introduced the concept of the "spirit of educators" in a letter addressed to representatives of outstanding teachers nationwide, emphasizing the need to vigorously promote this spirit and make new and even greater contributions to the cause of building a strong nation and achieving national rejuvenation [1]. In 2024, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the Opinions on Promoting the Spirit of Educators and Strengthening the Development of a High-Quality, Professionally Competent Teaching Force in the New Era, providing a systematic framework for fostering educators' moral integrity and strengthening the teaching workforce through the spirit of educators [2]. These important statements and institutional arrangements profoundly elucidate the scientific connotation and contemporary value of the spirit of educators, establishing a value-based compass and a practical guide for the development of the teaching workforce in the new era.

University faculty bear the important mission of cultivating builders and successors of socialism; they serve both as guides for students 'growth and development and as the backbone of institutions dedicated to fostering virtue and nurturing talent. Faculty members' ideological and political qualities, as well as their professional ethics, directly influence the effectiveness of education and the overall quality of institutional operations. Strengthening the ideological and political development of university faculty and forging a high-quality teaching force characterized by strong political integrity, exemplary professional ethics, and outstanding

ISSN: 2710-0723

professional competence are inherent requirements for fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and building a leading power in education. However, current ideological and political development among university faculty still exhibits certain shortcomings in areas such as the cultivation of professional ethics, value-based guidance, and institutional safeguards; issues include the formalization of spiritual study, the lack of close integration between ethical development and professional growth, and the insufficient manifestation of the guiding role of the "spirit of an educator." How to integrate the spirit of the educator into the entire process of ideological and political development for university faculty, and transform this spiritual inspiration into teachers' moral consciousness and professional aspirations, has become a critical issue that urgently requires further research.

2. The Core Principles of the Educator's Spirit and Their Intrinsic Alignment with the Ideological and Political Development of University Faculty

Xi Jinping pointed out that the core essence of the educator's spirit lies in "the ideal conviction of having a great sense of self and sincerely serving the country; the moral integrity of letting words serve as a guide for scholars and actions as a model for the world; the educational wisdom of enlightening minds and nurturing hearts through tailored teaching; the diligent attitude of studying hard and practicing earnestly, seeking truth and innovating; the benevolent heart of enjoying teaching and loving students with a willingness to dedicate oneself; and the pursuit of spreading the Way with a global vision and cultivating people through culture" [1]. These six dimensions are interconnected and organically unified, encompassing both adherence to ideals and convictions and requirements for teacher ethics and conduct, as well as emphasis on educational competence and expectations for benevolence, dedication, and the responsibility to spread the Way. They profoundly reveal the spiritual characteristics and value pursuits of educators, forming the unique spectrum of the educator's spirit in China[3][4].

The spirit of the educator serves both as a source of value guidance and as a code of conduct; it aligns closely with the ideological and political development of university faculty in terms of objectives, content, and methodology. In terms of objectives, the ideological and political development of university faculty aims to solidify teachers 'political stance, cultivate professional ethics, and strengthen their sense of mission in educating students; this is intrinsically consistent with the patriotism and devotion to the nation, the high standards of professional ethics, and the pursuit of student development inherent in the spirit of the educator. In terms of content, the spirit of the educator provides a value framework and a benchmark for the development of teacher ethics and the shaping of teachers' values, thereby giving ideological and political development for teachers a clearer spiritual core. In terms of methodology, the spirit of the educator emphasizes the integration of spiritual inspiration with practical cultivation; it offers both value guidance at the theoretical level and behavioral exemplars at the practical level, thereby providing a more compelling and effective pathway for the ideological and political development of university faculty [5]. It can be said that the spirit of the educator and the ideological and political development of university faculty mutually support each other and move in the same direction. Using the spirit of the educator to guide the ideological and political development of teachers is not only an inevitable requirement for promoting this spirit, but also a key lever for improving the quality of such development and enhancing the relevance and appeal of ideological and political work in the contemporary era.

ISSN: 2710-0723

3. The Value and Significance of Integrating the Spirit of Educators into the Ideological and Political Education of University Faculty

(1) Cultivating the soul and setting direction: Strengthening teachers' ideals and convictions. The spirit of educators emphasizes "having a great sense of self and serving the country with utmost sincerity." Integrating this philosophy into the ideological and political development of teachers helps guide them to solidify their faith foundation, replenish their spiritual fortitude, strengthen their belief in Marxism and the distinctive socialism of China, remain committed to the original mission of educating people for the Party and cultivating talents for the country, consciously integrate their personal value pursuits into the grand cause of building a strong educational nation, and realize their own value by serving national development [1][3].

(2) Foster professional ethics among teachers and firmly establish professional ethics as the primary criterion. Teacher ethics and professional conduct constitute the primary criterion for evaluating the quality of the teaching workforce. The moral ideal expressed in the spirit of educators- "words serve as a guide for scholars, while conduct serves as a model for the world" -sets a higher standard and imbues the development of teacher ethics with greater depth. Integrating this principle into the ideological and political development of teachers helps guide them to establish themselves through virtue, pursue scholarship through virtue, and teach through virtue; encourages them to consciously strive to become "great mentors" for students in their studies, conduct, and character; uphold academic integrity; safeguard the dignity of the teaching profession; and foster a clean, upright environment for education and academic life [2][6].

(3) Encourage responsibility and foster intrinsic motivation for education. The educational wisdom, dedicated approach to teaching, and compassionate spirit embodied in the spirit of educators help inspire teachers' sense of responsibility and mission to devote themselves to scholarly inquiry and to provide meticulous education; guide them in updating their educational philosophies and enhancing their pedagogical capabilities; cultivate a professional ethos characterized by a passion for teaching, love for students, and willingness to dedicate themselves; and promote the transition of teachers from "professional practitioners" to "dedicated practitioners of a vocation," enabling them to realize the sublimation of their personal value through their ordinary roles in teaching and educating students, and to strengthen their professional aspiration to strive to become educators[4].

(4) Cultural cultivation: continuing the legacy of the teaching profession. The spirit of educators is rooted in the outstanding traditional Chinese culture of the teaching profession and embodies rich ideological resources such as "education without discrimination," "teaching in accordance with individual aptitude," and "never growing weary of learning and never tiring of instructing others." Integrating these principles into the ideological and political development of teachers helps guide them to draw nourishment from China's outstanding traditional culture, deepen their sense of devotion to the country and society and their commitment to education, strengthen their cultural confidence through the promotion and practice of the spirit of educators, and become inheritors, promoters, and practitioners of the outstanding traditional Chinese culture of the teaching profession [3][5].

4. Practical Approaches to Guiding the Ideological and Political Education of University Faculty through the Spirit of Educators

(1) Strengthen theoretical grounding and promote the integration of the spirit of educators into teachers 'minds and hearts. Incorporate the study of the spirit of educators into teachers' political theory study, specialized ethics education, and pre-service training systems. Through thematic lectures, study of exemplary deeds, and thematic discussions, guide teachers to deeply

ISSN: 2710-0723

understand the scientific connotation, spiritual essence, and contemporary value of the spirit of educators, thereby enhancing their ideological and behavioral commitment to promoting this spirit[3][5]. Adhere to using Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era to foster moral integrity and nurture talent, integrating the cultivation of the spirit of educators with education on ideals and convictions, as well as education on Party history and national conditions, thereby solidifying the ideological and political foundation of teachers.

(2) Emphasize the guiding role of teacher ethics and deepen the development of teacher ethics and professional conduct. Implement the principle that teacher ethics and professional conduct are the primary standard; integrate the requirements of the spirit of educators into teacher ethics assessments, excellence evaluations and commendations, the selection and promotion of exemplary figures, and other related processes; improve mechanisms for supervising teacher ethics and providing warning-based education; vigorously identify, promote, and publicize exemplary figures embodying the spirit of educators; guide teachers to emulate these role models; and foster a positive atmosphere that values, learns from, and strives to become exemplary figures[2][6]. Combine positive guidance with bottom-line constraints: while harnessing the power of role models, strictly observe the red line of teacher ethics, and promote the normalization and long-term sustainability of teacher ethics development.

(3) Promote the integration of values throughout the entire process of teaching and educating students. Guide teachers to internalize the spirit of educators and manifest it in their actions, integrating it across all aspects of classroom teaching, scientific research, and social service; deepen the development of ideological and political education within curricula; and incorporate value guidance into the transmission of knowledge and the cultivation of competencies, thereby achieving the unity of teaching and educating students, verbal instruction and exemplary conduct, and dedicated scholarly pursuit alongside attention to society[4][5]. Encourage teachers to engage deeply in academic research with a spirit of dedicated commitment and to care for students with compassion, putting the spirit of educators into practice through teaching and research activities.

(4) Strengthen institutional safeguards and establish a long-term mechanism for fostering the spirit of educators. Incorporate the cultivation of the spirit of educators into the ideological and political work system for faculty members under the Party committees of higher education institutions; improve safeguard mechanisms covering organizational leadership, education and training, assessment and incentives, and cultural enrichment; strengthen the overall coordination of ideological and political work among faculty members; and promote the normalization and institutionalization of the cultivation of the spirit of educators[2]. Refine the faculty evaluation and incentive mechanisms, place greater emphasis on actual achievements in student development and professional ethics, and improve the system for honoring and recognizing faculty members, thereby creating a favorable institutional environment and supporting conditions for faculty members to embody the spirit of educators and ensuring that its cultivation is organized, supported by concrete platforms, subject to assessment, and yields tangible results.

5. Conclusion

The spirit of educators serves as the soul and guiding principle for the development of the teaching workforce in the new era; it is a vivid embodiment of the integration of China's outstanding tradition of the teaching profession with the spirit of the times. Integrating the spirit of educators into the ideological and political development of university faculty not only continues and promotes the traditional culture of the teaching profession but also fulfills the contemporary requirement to implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. Universities should adhere to the principle of using the spirit of educators to

ISSN: 2710-0723

strengthen the moral character and professional competence of faculty, promote the unity of spiritual guidance and institutional safeguards, and the unity of theoretical cultivation and practical practice; guide faculty members to strive to become "great teachers" who satisfy the Party and the people; and endeavor to cultivate more new-era individuals capable of shouldering the responsibility for national rejuvenation, thereby providing solid talent support and intellectual assurance for the development of a strong education system.

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