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## The Historical Genealogy, Generative Mechanisms, and Practical Pathways of the Chinese Educator Spirit

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### Abstract

This study systematically examines the historical genealogy, generative mechanisms, and practical pathways of the Chinese educator spirit, constructing an integrated analytical framework that interconnects “history-theory-practice.” Findings reveal that since the founding of the People’s Republic, the historical evolution of the Chinese educator spirit has unfolded in three distinct phases: “Promoting Education for National Stability,” “Valuing Education for National Prosperity,” and “Prioritizing Education for National Strength.” Its essence has progressively expanded from initial political responsibility to economic empowerment during the reform and opening-up era, ultimately evolving in the new era into a uniquely Chinese educator spirit with civilizational significance. In terms of its formation mechanism, the spirit of educators exhibits a tripartite logical interaction among cultural roots, institutional safeguards, and practical momentum: the traditional Chinese teacher-disciple (the succession of teachings from masters to disciples) ethos establishes its cultural foundation, national education strategies construct its institutional framework, while the self-awareness and innovative practices of educators themselves generate sustained endogenous momentum. Based on this research, promoting the spirit of educators in the new era should cultivate a culture of “respecting teachers” to solidify its value foundation; refine “benefiting teachers’ mechanisms to stimulate professional creativity; and innovate “nurturing teachers’ systems to cultivate outstanding educators for a great nation. This will forge a practical pathway where cultural immersion, institutional safeguards, and systemic innovation advance synergistically, providing theoretical reference and practical support for cultivating a high-quality, professional teaching force capable of shouldering the great task of national rejuvenation.

**Keywords:** *TSpirit of educators, Teacher workforce development*

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### 1. Introduction

From a historical perspective, educators are a historical presence, while the spirit of educators serves as a cultural vehicle that reflects and perpetuates historical transformations (Li et al., 2025). The development of education hinges on

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teachers. On September 9, 2023, General Secretary Xi Jinping wrote to representatives of outstanding teachers nationwide, encouraging educators to “take educators as role models and vigorously promote the spirit of educators” (Xinhua News Agency, 2023). Subsequently, General Secretary Xi systematically elaborated on the core essence of China’s unique spirit of educators from six dimensions: ideals and convictions, moral integrity, pedagogical wisdom, dedicated attitude, benevolent heart, and pursuit of enlightenment. At the 2024 National Education Conference, General Secretary Xi Jinping further emphasized the need to “implement the initiative to forge the spirit of educators and strengthen the teaching profession, enhance the construction of teacher ethics and conduct, and cultivate a high-caliber teaching force for the new era” (Xinhua News Agency, 2024), charting the fundamental course for building a high-level teaching workforce in contemporary China. Evidently, systematically tracing and interpreting the ideological origins and historical trajectory of the Chinese educator spirit, clarifying its evolutionary path and internal logic, and exploring its promotion pathways are no longer merely theoretical propositions but rather contemporary challenges concerning the modernization of education and the construction of an education powerhouse.

However, existing research often remains confined to narrative celebrations of individual exemplars of the spirit of educators or static interpretations of policy texts. It lacks a dynamic, structural, and systematic examination of this spirit within the historical context since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. This results in fragmented understandings of its historical genealogy, generative logic, and practical pathways, making it difficult to address the core concern: “How can the spirit of educators truly empower the high-quality development of the teaching workforce?” Given this, it is imperative to examine the spirit of educators within the grand historical process of China’s educational and social development. This requires systematically tracing its continuity across different historical stages and its transformations through the ages, deeply revealing its generative mechanisms and external drivers. Ultimately, this will enable the construction of an analytical framework integrating its historical genealogy, generative logic, and practical pathways. Only by making the leap from “phenomenological description” to “theoretical construction” can research on the spirit of educators provide solid theoretical support and practical guidance for building the teaching workforce in the new era.

## 2. Literature Review

In terms of theoretical explanation, the research mainly concentrates on the contemporary connotation, historical evolution, and generation mechanism of the educator spirit. Liu and Zhang (2023) pointed out that General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important discourse on the spirit of educators not only reveals its core essentials and practical requirements, but also reflects the deep integration of the general laws of educational development with China’s outstanding traditional culture and advanced socialist culture, providing fundamental guidance for the construction of the teaching workforce in the new era. Zhang and Shi (2023) further proposed that the educationalist spirit, which has been a concentrated manifestation of the collective personality, professional spirit, and value pursuit, as well as era characteristics, has been internalized by the vast number of educators since the establishment of China’s education system. It has become a key spiritual driving force for promoting the modernization of Chinese-style education and building an educational power. From the perspective of historical genealogy, the educationalist spirit has changed from “loyalty to the people’s education cause” and “hardship-striving to fulfill the mission of educating” to the establishment of “four-good” teachers and “four-influencers” requirements, then to the concept of “great teacher” that unifies “teacher as an expert” and “teacher as a person”, and finally developed into a systematic “Chinese-specific educationalist spirit” (Zhang and Shi, 2023). This evolutionary trajectory not only outlines the historical trajectory of the educationalist spirit but also reflects its leading and carrying role in the process of China’s education reform and development. In terms of the generation mechanism, Lu and Yang (2024) proposed two paths: “natural generation” and “active construction”. The former follows the inductive logic of “practice-concept-spirit”, while the latter is manifested as the deductive logic of “spirit - concept - practice”. Both are dialectically unified in the formation and practice process of the educationalist spirit, constituting a mutually interactive organic whole.

In the aspect of educator spirit leading teachers’ development, scholars mostly discuss it from the perspectives of reconstructing teachers’ education curriculum, improving teachers’ professional ability, and building teachers’ morality and style. Ouyang (2025) pointed out that the educator spirit is helpful to strengthen the educational orientation of subject teacher education courses, promote the innovation of the teacher education theory system, promote the landing of the educational equity concept and the balanced allocation of resources, and is the soul of the high-quality development of teacher education. Zhu and Jin (2025) emphasized that the educator spirit can deepen teachers’ professional cognition, cultivate their professional feelings, and stimulate their professional pursuit, which is the key driving force to realize the

transformation of teachers from pedagogues to educators. Ma and Liu (2025) proposed that the educator spirit, as a unique spiritual symbol of teachers in China, is helpful to correct the cognitive deviation of teachers' morality, strengthen the self-cultivation of teachers' morality, improve the system of teachers' morality construction, and provide a core spiritual resource for remolding teachers' ethical coordinates in the new era.

The research on the individual spiritual characteristics of educators reveals its generating logic and personality characteristics through typical case analysis. Sun (2024), taking Cai Yuanpei, Wu Yuzhang and Zhu Jiusi as examples, analyzed the formation law of educator's spirit from three aspects: early experience and educational background, philosophical viewpoint and political standpoint, academic vision and mission responsibility, and found that early life and academic training laid the personality foundation, philosophical orientation shaped educational style, political pursuit influenced spiritual characteristics, and academic insight and pattern responsibility were the key factors for the final formation of educator's spirit. The spiritual characteristics of the above-mentioned educators are generated from the blending of the background of the times and personal characteristics, which is embodied in the conscious practice of integrating individual ideals into the needs of the country, and shows the lofty realm of thinking of the world and being the first. As a model of modern educators, Tao Xingzhi's initial intention and practice of saving the country and rejuvenating the nation through education further enriched the personality connotation and educational concept of the Chinese educator spirit (Li and Xu, 2025), which is highly consistent with the educator spirit of the new era.

Overall, existing research on the spirit of educators has developed three major directions: theoretical interpretation, teacher leadership, and case characteristics, providing important references for this study. In terms of historical genealogy, scholars have systematically traced the evolution of the Chinese educator spirit from "loyalty to the people's educational cause" to "China's unique educator spirit," revealing the educational ideals and national missions it embodied during different historical periods. Regarding its generative mechanisms, a bidirectional interactive model of "natural emergence" and "active construction" has been established, providing theoretical foundations for understanding the formation logic of the spirit of educators. In terms of practical pathways, existing findings focus on the guiding role of the spirit of educators in teacher professional development and the cultivation of professional ethics, opening avenues for exploring its practical transformation. However, current research remains largely confined to single-dimensional analysis, failing to integrate historical, generative mechanisms, and practical pathways into a unified framework. This limitation prevents a full revelation of the intrinsic interplay among these three elements—where "historical foundations shape mechanisms, mechanisms underpin pathways, and pathways perpetuate history"—making it difficult to systematically grasp the complete developmental panorama of the spirit of educators. To address this, this paper proposes constructing an integrated analytical framework that synthesizes history, theory, and practice. It aims to systematically elucidate the historical continuity, generative complexity, and practical reality of the spirit of educators, thereby deepening our understanding of the overall evolutionary logic and practical pathways of the spirit of educators with Chinese characteristics. This endeavor seeks to provide theoretical reference for advancing the construction of an education powerhouse and the great cause of national rejuvenation.

### **3. The Evolution of the Historical Genealogy of the Chinese Educator Spirit**

#### ***3.1 Promoting Education for National Stability: The Foundational Spirit of the Early Stage of Socialist Construction (1949-1977)***

In the early years of the People's Republic of China, the educational foundation was extremely weak. "The national illiteracy rate reached 80%, the enrollment rate for school-age children was only 20%, and the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions stood at just 117,000" (Zhao, 2019). Faced with the urgent need to rebuild education from the ground up, a group of educators represented by Xu Teli and Wu Yuzhang systematically studied the educational theories of Marx, Engels, and Lenin (Yang, 2025). They dedicated themselves to integrating the fundamental principles of Marxism with the realities of Chinese education, achieving a historic transformation from traditional teachers to educators of the people (Yang, 2025). The spirit of educators during this period centered on the core aspiration of "Promoting Education for National Stability." It both inherited the value ideal of "educating the world" from traditional Chinese teacher-disciple culture and creatively integrated Marxist educational concepts about "cultivating builders of socialism," thereby laying the initial theoretical foundation and practical orientation for the spirit of educators.

At the practical level, education was established as a vital instrument of proletarian dictatorship, bearing the fundamental mission of cultivating socialist builders and successors. Educators like Si Xia and Huo Maozheng upheld a people-centered educational philosophy, delving into grassroots communities to spearhead literacy campaigns and universal compulsory education, thereby setting spiritual benchmarks for the teaching profession (He, 2009).

Concurrently, educators like Meng Xiancheng and Cheng Fangwu elevated their dedication to the people's educational cause to the lofty ideal of "embracing the greater good and serving the nation with utmost sincerity." They regarded "the acquisition of wisdom and the cultivation of character" as vital pathways for advancing national and societal development (He, 2009), embodying the profound integration of Marxist educational thought with traditional pedagogical ethics. Although the theoretical framework of the educator spirit remained incomplete during this phase, its core attributes—loyalty to the nation, passion for education, and responsibility toward students—had largely taken shape, laying a solid foundation for subsequent development.

### ***3.2. Valuing Education for National Prosperity: The Expansion of the Educator Spirit During Reform and Opening-Up (1978-2011)***

Reform and opening-up propelled China's comprehensive socioeconomic transformation, presenting the education sector with historic opportunities for ideological emancipation and institutional innovation. The educator spirit entered an expansion phase centered on the core principle of "Valuing Education for National Prosperity".

In terms of value orientation, the educator's spirit has gradually changed from focusing on political function to giving consideration to economic function and educating people. Education is closely linked with the strategic goal of national prosperity and national rejuvenation. On March 5, 1986, Comrade Deng Xiaoping gave instructions on the Suggestions on Tracking and Studying the Development of Foreign Strategic High-tech put forward by four scientists, namely Wang Daheng, Wang Ganchang, Yang Jiachi and Chen Fangyun, stressing that this matter should be decided quickly without delay (Li and Li, 2024). In 1992, Deng Xiaoping emphasized in his talk in the South that the rapid economic development must rely on science and technology and education (Deng, 1993), which established the core position of education in the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education. In 1993, the Outline of Education Reform and Development in China clearly stated that education should be placed in a strategic position of priority development (Party Literature Research Center of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, 2011), and the development strategy of zoning planning and classified guidance was implemented, so that "Valuing Education for National Prosperity" became the era connotation of educator spirit.

On the professional cognitive level, educators such as Gu Lingyuan, Lv Xingwei and Li Jilin actively introduced international educational theories and made localized innovations, thus forming a series of educational achievements with China characteristics. Gu Lingyuan combined Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory with China's rural mathematics education practice, and constructed a teaching mode of trying to guide-feedback the effect (Gu et al., 2021); Zhao Zhongxin broke through the experience limitation of traditional family education through his first monograph Family Education and put forward the educational concept of combining education with education and paying equal attention to both ability and political integrity (Zhao, 1988); Wei Shusheng summed up the six-step teaching method of orientation, self-study, discussion, answering questions, self-test and self-conclusion, and established a teaching method system suited to the national conditions (Xu and Liu, 1990). The educator's spirit in this period emphasized the service of economic construction by cultivating high-quality talents and the combination of education and productive labor, which provided important talent support for national industrialization and modernization.

### ***3.3. Prioritizing Education for National Strength: The Deepening and Elevation of the Educator Spirit in the New Era (2012-Present)***

As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, building an education powerhouse has become a core issue in national strategy, and the spirit of educators has deepened and elevated to center on "Prioritizing Education for National Strength". Compared to the previous stage, the spirit of educators in the new era not only continues to support national development but also emphasizes guiding civilizational progress through education. This reflects a value leap from "prospering the nation" to "strengthening the nation," becoming the spiritual driving force behind building an education powerhouse.

They actively contribute in areas such as balancing basic education, innovating higher education, and enhancing vocational education, transforming educational practice into a vital force serving scientific and technological self-reliance and the cultivation of cultural confidence. Second, a practical commitment to upholding principles while innovating. Educators both inherit traditional pedagogical wisdom—such as "teaching according to individual aptitude" and "uniting knowledge with action"—and proactively address contemporary challenges like AI-empowered education and cultivating top-tier innovative talent. They drive systemic reforms in educational evaluation and teaching models, achieving an organic fusion of traditional essence with modern demands. Third, it embodies openness through mutual learning among civilizations. Rooted in China's educational practices, it actively participates in global education

governance. Through international forums, educational assistance, and other channels, it transforms China's practical experience in areas like educational equity and poverty alleviation into international public knowledge, showcasing the cultural soft power and global influence of an education powerhouse.

At the practical level, the spirit of educators is fully integrated into the teacher training system through policy vehicles such as the "New Era Basic Education Teacher Strengthening Program" (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China *et al.*, 2022) and the "Spirit of Educators: Soul-Forging and Teacher Strengthening Initiative" (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 2025), permeating all aspects of classroom teaching, scientific research, and social practice. Leveraging platforms like the "National Collaborative Innovation Center for Teacher Development" and "Master Teacher Studios for Basic Education," it promotes the cross-regional and cross-grade dissemination of advanced educational concepts. Resource allocation initiatives such as the "Group-Based Educational Talent Assistance Programs for Tibet and Xinjiang" (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2021) and the University Senior Faculty Support Program for Western Regions" (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020), the core ethos of "honoring education to strengthen the nation is deeply integrated with the contemporary mission of promoting educational equity. This demonstrates the contemporary value of the educator spirit in serving national strategies and addressing public concerns.

#### 4. Tracing the Generative Mechanisms of the Chinese Educator Spirit

The uniquely Chinese educator spirit is not a phenomenon without roots; its emergence stems from profound historical logic and practical necessity. The cultural foundation lies in the pedagogical ethos embedded within China's outstanding traditional culture, while the institutional framework is shaped by national education strategies and policy systems. The self-awareness and innovative practices of educators themselves provide sustained momentum. These three elements are interdependent and synergistic, collectively forming the mechanism for the emergence of the spirit of educators.

##### 4.1. Cultural Roots: The Inheritance of the Teacher-Disciple Tradition in China's Outstanding Traditional Culture

Culturally, traditional Chinese teacher ethics encompass three dimensions: the art of teaching and nurturing, the principle of respecting teachers and valuing education, and the path of seeking knowledge and learning (Yang and Dang, 2025), establishing a distinct cultural foundation for shaping the spirit of educators. In the early years of the People's Republic of China, the traditional principle of "education for all" was imbued with new contemporary significance, transforming into practices of educational equity for the working and farming masses. Teachers extensively engaged in grassroots literacy campaigns, demonstrating the cultural tradition's spiritual guidance in universal education. Following reform and opening-up, the pedagogical wisdom of "teaching according to individual aptitude" merged with the concept of quality education, driving educators to explore personalized teaching models. This provided historical grounding for the "wisdom of enlightening minds and nurturing hearts through tailored instruction" within the spirit of educators (Li and Luo, 2025). In the new era, the value pursuit of "educating the world" has evolved into "embracing the world and cultivating people through culture" (Xinhua News Agency, 2023), demonstrating the enduring vitality and expansive nature of traditional teaching ethics in contemporary times.

From the point of view of spiritual fit, the core elements of educator's spirit are highly compatible with the traditional teacher's culture. Traditional teachers emphasize preaching and teaching to dispel doubts, in which the lofty pursuit of preaching comes down in one continuous line with the ideal and belief of having a big ego and serving the country sincerely in the spirit of educators (Yang and Bloomberg, 2024). The mission of the vast number of educators is to educate people for the party and the country, which is the era interpretation of the traditional spirit of learning from the Tao. In addition, the traditional concept of learning to be a teacher and being a model is highly consistent with the moral sentiment of speaking as a teacher and behaving as a model in the spirit of educators, and has become an important yardstick for measuring teachers' professional ethics. The idea of benevolence in the traditional teacher's way has also evolved into the heart of loving students and being willing to contribute in the new era, which has been vividly reflected in educational practice. For example, Zhang Guimei has been rooted in mountainous areas for more than 40 years and blocked the intergenerational transmission of poverty through education (Ministry of Education, 2021); Zhang Yugun sticks to the platform in the deep mountains and accompanies rural children with love (Zhang, 2023).

##### 4.2. System Guarantee: The Support of National Education Strategy and Policy System

The national education strategy and policy system is the institutional carrier for the generation and development of educators' spirit. Since the founding of China, the state has not only provided institutional guarantee for the formation of educator spirit, but also shaped its characteristics of the times and practical orientation through the guidance of

educational strategy, system construction and policy promotion at different stages, and promoted the transformation of educator spirit from ideological form to spiritual identity and behavioral consciousness of teachers.

At the beginning of the founding of China, Mao Zedong pointed out in his inscription for the publication of *People's Education: Restoring and developing people's education is one of the important tasks at present* (People's Education Press, 2000), which laid the foundation for the educator's spiritual characteristics with people's position and reconstruction responsibility as the core. At the policy level, the right to education is extended to the broad masses of workers and peasants by taking over and transforming old schools, promoting curriculum reform, setting up workers and peasants accelerated middle schools, and implementing literacy education (Liu, 2019), which highlights the essential attribute of mass education and injects the spiritual core of national self-reliance into the spirit of educators.

Following the reform and opening-up, the establishment of the "Science and Education for National Revitalization" strategy shifted educational objectives toward enhancing national quality and cultivating specialized talents. The educator spirit's emphasis on "diligent study, steadfast practice, truth-seeking, and innovation through dedicated effort" was elevated to prominence. The promulgation and implementation of *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* in 1986 promoted the universalization of basic education through a "regional and phased advancement" strategy (China Legal Publishing House, 2021), providing institutional pathways for translating the educator spirit into practice. Concurrently, policy documents such as *the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Reforming the Education System (1985)* and *the Outline for the Reform and Development of Education in China (1993)* provided material safeguards and institutional support for the professional growth of educators. This fostered the gradual emergence of "diligent study, steadfast practice, truth-seeking, and innovation" as a shared ethos within the education sector.

In the new era, the "Education Powerhouse" strategy has endowed the spirit of educators with new mission-oriented connotations. Its core orientation has evolved from "serving modernization" to "underpinning national rejuvenation and participating in global competition." While upholding the fundamental principle of "standing with the people," it has further integrated contemporary characteristics such as "a global perspective," "the courage to uphold principles while innovating," and "enhancing digital literacy." China has successively issued key policies such as *China's Education Modernization 2035* (Xinhua News Agency, 2019) and *Opinions on Promoting the Spirit of Educators and Strengthening the Development of a High-Quality, Professional Teacher Workforce in the New Era* (Xinhua News Agency, 2024). These documents designate the promotion of the spirit of educators as a core task of educational modernization, explicitly proposing specific requirements such as "cultivating the spirit and strengthening the teaching force" and "nurturing professional ethics." This provides institutional support for the systematic development of the spirit of educators.

#### **4.3. Practical Momentum: The Integration Of Educators' Consciousness of Autonomy and Innovative Practice**

The emergence of the spirit of educators is not a purely theoretical construct but gradually takes shape and evolves through the continuous interaction between educators' self-awareness and innovative educational practices.

From the perspective of consciousness of autonomy, educators' consciousness of autonomy refers to the autonomous and self-directed process of spiritual growth formed through interaction with the external world (Jin and Wang, 2024), serving as the fundamental driving force for stimulating their intrinsic spiritual development. This process exhibits a three-stage evolution from "mission consciousness" to "professional consciousness" and ultimately to "spiritual consciousness." In the early years of the People's Republic of China, educators' self-awareness primarily manifested as "mission consciousness." They actively responded to the nation's call, dedicating themselves to the cause of universal education. By integrating personal ideals with national needs in advancing literacy campaigns and basic education, they initially embodied the spirit of "devotion to the greater good and sincere dedication to the nation." Following the reform and opening-up, this self-awareness shifted toward "professional consciousness." This was manifested in systematic exploration of educational principles and a heightened pursuit of educational quality, fostering professional traits such as "the wisdom of nurturing minds through enlightenment and tailored instruction" and "the diligent, pragmatic attitude of dedicated cultivation through earnest study and innovative truth-seeking" (Xinhua News Agency, 2023). This propelled the spirit of educators toward greater professionalism and scientific rigor. In the new era, this self-awareness has further evolved into "spiritual consciousness," manifested in educators' recognition, practice, and dissemination of the spirit of educators. The concept of the "great teacher" has become a defining symbol of this phase of spiritual consciousness. As General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized (2022), "Teachers should consciously strive to be models for scholars in their words and for the world in their deeds, continuously enhancing their moral cultivation to influence and inspire students through exemplary conduct. They should become 'great teachers' guiding students in

their studies, actions, and character.” This demonstrates that the spirit of educators has been transformed through exemplary role models into tangible paradigms that teachers can perceive and practice.

From the perspective of innovation practice, the continuous exploration of educational practice provides external traction for the generation of educator spirit, and the practical innovation at each stage is the expansion and deepening of educator spirit. At the beginning of the founding of China, the literacy movement and the popularization of basic education gave birth to a caring heart willing to contribute, and teachers went deep into rural areas and factories to practice their educational mission under difficult conditions (Yang, 2025). After the reform and opening-up, the educational system reform and the practice of quality education gave birth to the attitude of seeking truth and innovation, and teachers actively explored the curriculum reform and teaching methods, such as Li Jilin’s Situational Education (Bi, 2024) and Ye Lan’s New Basic Education (Teng and Liu, 2010), which reflected the practical and innovative characteristics of educators’ spirit. Since the new era, the digital transformation of education and the practice of cultivating top-notch innovative talents have promoted the expansion of educators’ spirit to the pursuit of the world and the lofty ideals of cultural people, and teachers have shown a broader international vision and civilized responsibility in the application of information technology and international educational cooperation.

## **5. The Practical Pathways of Carrying Forward the Spirit of Educators in the New Era**

Based on a systematic analysis of the historical pedigree and generation mechanism of educator’s spirit, we should construct a multi-dimensional and systematic practice path to promote educator’s spirit in the new era, and organically integrate it into the whole process of educational practice through the coordinated promotion of cultural infiltration, system guarantee and system innovation, so as to realize the creative transformation and innovative development of educator’s spirit in the new era.

### ***5.1. Cultivate the Culture of Respecting Teachers and Build A Solid Spiritual Foundation for the Dignity of Teachers***

To carry forward the spirit of educators in the new era, we should systematically build a cultural system of respecting teachers, and promote it in three aspects: cultural genes, narrative system and social ecology, so as to consolidate the cultural foundation of the inheritance of educators’ spirit.

First of all, activate cultural genes and promote the creative transformation of traditional teaching methods. Chinese traditional teacher culture is an important source of educator’s spirit. In the new era, efforts should be made to promote the deep integration of traditional teaching methods with Marxist educational concept and the Communist Party of China (CPC) people’s spiritual pedigree, and to integrate classic educational ideas such as learning from each other in *The Book of Rites* and teaching students in accordance with their aptitude in *The Analects of Confucius*, so as to dig deep into the internal convergence point between Tao Xingzhi’s life education theory and contemporary educator’s spirit, and guide teachers to understand the historical context of educator’s spirit in cultural traceability. At the same time, combining the standard of four hases and the personality characteristics of Mr. Big, we should reconstruct the modern value core of the traditional teacher’s way, so that respecting teachers can not only be reflected in the respect of etiquette, but also be sublimated into the deep recognition of teachers’ professional beliefs and spiritual pursuits.

Secondly, construct a narrative system to realize the concrete communication of educator’s spirit. Educators’ spirit needs to be spread effectively through typical characters and vivid narratives. We should systematically sort out China’s teacher models in different historical periods, such as Yu Yi and Huo Maozheng in the socialist construction period, Zhang Guimei and Yu Yongzheng in the new era, and deeply explore the internal relationship between their educational practice and educator spirit. It is suggested to organize the compilation of *China Teachers’ Spiritual Atlas (1949-2025)* and other documents to form a continuous historical narrative; At the same time, innovative narrative methods, using documentary films, stage plays and other artistic forms, will transform Zhang Guimei’s educational practice into perceptual narrative texts, so that the abstract educator spirit can be embodied as vivid characters, and enhance the public’s emotional identity and value identity of teachers’ profession.

Finally, create a social ecology and build a multi-coordinated support system. The cultivation of respecting teachers culture needs the coordinated promotion of system guarantee and social participation. At the institutional level, we should integrate the culture of respecting teachers into the education evaluation system and establish a rapid response mechanism for the protection of teachers’ rights and interests in accordance with the policy orientation such as Opinions of the State Council, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, on promoting the spirit of educators and strengthening the construction of high-quality professional teachers in the new era. At the social level, we will promote the formation of a cooperative atmosphere of respecting teachers among families, schools and society, and let the public go deep into the education scene through teachers’ open day and home-school co-education forum to understand

teachers' professional dedication and spiritual pursuit, break the stereotype of dignity of teachers and form a social consensus of respecting their teachers and believing in their teachings.

### ***5.2. Improve the Mechanism of Benefiting Teachers and Stimulate the Creative Vitality of Teachers***

To promote the spirit of educators in the new era, we must establish a systematic and institutionalized mechanism for supporting teachers, transforming policy advantages into creative momentum for the teaching workforce and effectively stimulating the innovative vitality of educators.

First, we should improve the institutional safeguards system to solidify the foundational framework for teacher development. Institutional safeguards form the bedrock for realizing the spirit of educators. Institutional development in the new era should prioritize systematic and precise approaches. Regarding compensation systems, we must move beyond the traditional "economic compensation" logic to establish a composite remuneration structure aligned with the essence of the spirit of educators. This involves exploring a model combining "base salary + performance incentives + spiritual motivation," integrating elements such as the ideal of "devotion to the greater good and sincere dedication to the nation" and the educational wisdom of "enlightening minds and nurturing hearts through tailored instruction" into performance evaluation systems. Regarding career development, a multi-stakeholder collaborative mechanism involving universities, governments, K-12 schools, and social organizations (U-G-N-S) should be leveraged to advance the construction of a teacher professional development system. This system should provide full-cycle support from induction training to leadership development. Concurrently, the dynamic adjustment mechanism for teacher staffing quotas should be refined, prioritizing rural and under-resourced schools to effectively address staffing constraints that hinder teacher growth, thereby creating institutional space for the practice of the educator spirit.

Second, optimize incentive and innovation mechanisms to unleash teachers' professional creative potential. Incentive mechanisms serve as a vital driving force in guiding educators to embody the spirit of educational pioneers. In the new era, incentive mechanisms should evolve from "single commendation" to "multi-dimensional empowerment." Regarding selection mechanisms, establish a four-tiered national-provincial-municipal-county honorary system for teachers, focusing on selecting exemplary models that demonstrate both professional representativeness and practical leadership. This approach should balance recognition for frontline "master educators" and "educator-type teachers," avoiding homogenized evaluation criteria. Regarding incentive methods, beyond traditional honors and material rewards, support for professional growth and innovative practices should be strengthened. This includes establishing an "Educator Spirit Practice Fund" to support teachers in educational reform and cultivating top-tier innovative talent; creating a mechanism for recognizing and transforming teaching innovations; and incorporating outstanding teaching cases and teaching-research achievements into professional title evaluations and excellence recognition systems. This fosters a virtuous cycle of "innovation-recognition-further innovation."

Finally, strengthen the mechanism of safeguarding rights and interests and create an institutional environment for teaching with peace of mind. The protection of rights and interests is an important prerequisite for teachers to focus on educating people and practice the spirit of educators. In the new era, we should focus on strengthening the institutional guarantee of teachers' professional dignity and autonomy. In terms of professional dignity, we should improve the mechanism of infringement prevention and disposal, standardize the disposal process of behaviors that interfere with teaching order according to law, and ensure teachers' normal education and teaching activities. In terms of professional autonomy, teachers' professional decision-making space in curriculum design, teaching method selection and student evaluation is guaranteed, and excessive administrative intervention in the teaching process is reduced, so that teachers can truly follow the law of education and practice the wisdom of educating people. In addition, we should pay attention to teachers' mental health rights and interests, build a normalized psychological support system, and carry out regular evaluation and professional counseling in view of teachers' excessive psychological pressure in special periods, so as to alleviate job burnout and provide a healthy and stable psychological foundation for the promotion of educator spirit.

### ***5.3. Innovate the Nurturing Teachers System to Cultivate Exemplary Educators Who Take on the Great Responsibility of National Rejuvenation***

To carry forward the spirit of educators in the new era, it is necessary to take the value of having a big heart and serving the country sincerely as the guide. Through concept innovation, curriculum reconstruction and practical innovation, we should build a modern teacher education system with the cultivation of educator-type teachers as the core, and create a good teacher of a big country who takes on the great responsibility of national rejuvenation.

First, promote in-depth innovation of cultivation concepts. The focus should shift from the traditional cultivation of "knowledge transmitters" to the systematic development of "educator-type talents". In terms of political literacy, it is

necessary to strengthen the integration of Marxist educational thoughts and their localized and era-specific achievements in China, and offer special courses on “General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Important Expositions on the Spirit of Educators” to solidify the original aspiration and mission of “educating people for the Party and nurturing talents for the country”. In terms of professional philosophy, it is essential to go beyond the limitations of “technical rationality”, focus on fostering educational passion and practical wisdom. By studying the practical cases of educators such as Tao Xingzhi and Yan Yangchu, teachers can realize the benevolent spirit of “devoting to teaching, caring for students, and being willing to contribute”. Meanwhile, it is important to establish the concept of lifelong learning, build a support system for teachers’ full career development, and rely on learning communities and digital platforms to achieve the transformation from “phased training” to “sustained growth”.

Second, reconstruct a competency-oriented curriculum system. Establish a trinity-based curriculum structure encompassing “values-capabilities-culture” to systematically nurture the spirit of educators. The values dimension should include courses on ideals and convictions, professional ethics, and educational philosophy to cultivate a sense of responsibility toward the greater good. The capabilities dimension should feature courses on differentiated instruction, educational innovation, and interdisciplinary integration to enhance pedagogical wisdom. The cultural dimension should incorporate courses on traditional Chinese pedagogical wisdom, comparative studies of educators globally, and specialized topics in educational history to strengthen cultural consciousness and the pursuit of educational ideals. Curriculum implementation must promote deep integration of theory and practice, translating concepts like “enlightening minds and nurturing hearts through tailored instruction” into practical components such as simulated classrooms and teaching internships to reinforce spiritual understanding and behavioral transformation. Curriculum content must also reflect contemporary relevance by incorporating cutting-edge topics like AI education and innovative talent cultivation to elevate teachers’ future-oriented professional competence.

Finally, innovate integrated and diversified practice models. Refine the multi-stakeholder collaborative mechanism centered on “University-Government-School-Nation,” establishing practical platforms such as “Educator Studios,” “Master Teacher Workstations,” and “Regional Teacher Development Centers” to foster mutual enrichment between theory and practice. In pathway design, implement targeted measures based on distinct stages of professional growth: - New teachers inherit the benevolent spirit of “joy in teaching, love for students, and dedication” through “mentor-apprentice pairing”; - Core teachers cultivate a diligent, pragmatic, and innovative mindset through “teaching innovation projects” and “classroom improvement initiatives”; Expert teachers expand their pursuit of “embracing the world and cultivating through culture” through international training, high-level forums, and comparative education research. Concurrently, a multidimensional evaluation mechanism centered on the effectiveness of practicing the spirit of educators has been established. Integrating classroom observations, student development feedback, peer reviews, and educational narratives, it forms a virtuous cycle system of “cultivation-practice-evaluation-empowerment,” providing robust support for nurturing outstanding educators with the spirit of educators.

## 6. Research Findings

### ***6.1. The Historical Evolution of the Educator Spirit Follows a Sequential Pattern of “Mission Iteration and Value Sublimation”***

Research indicates that over the 70-plus years since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the evolution of the Educator Spirit has followed a three-stage sequential logic: “Revitalizing Education to Secure the Nation—Valuing Education to Enrich the Nation—Prioritizing Education to Strengthen the Nation.” Its essence evolved from the “loyalty and responsibility” serving political objectives in the early years of the nation, to the “empowerment and innovation” focused on economic development during the reform and opening-up era, and has now been elevated in the new era to a “distinctively Chinese spirit of educators” that encompasses both national rejuvenation and civilizational leadership. This progression is not a simple linear succession but reflects the intrinsic logic of the spirit’s core dynamically adapting to national strategic needs, highlighting the continuously strengthened proactive role of educators in serving the broader national agenda.

### ***6.2. The Formation Mechanism of the Educator Spirit Follows the Synergistic Drive of the “Culture-Institution-Practice” Triple Logic***

Research reveals that the formation of the educator spirit is a complex process involving the interaction of multiple factors. It draws its cultural roots from the Chinese tradition of the Way of the Teacher, shaping the foundational values of the educator spirit. National strategic planning and policy frameworks provide institutional safeguards, defining its developmental direction and scope. Through the conscious integration of “mission-professionalism-spirit” by educators

themselves and innovative educational practices, it transforms into an endogenous driving force. These three elements form a synergistic mechanism where culture nourishes institutions, institutions guide practice, and practice in turn feeds back into cultural and institutional innovation, collectively propelling the emergence and evolution of the educator spirit.

### ***6.3. Upholding the Spirit of Educators in the New Era Requires Systemic Empowerment Through “Cultural Immersion, Institutional Safeguards, and Systemic Innovation”***

In the new era, upholding the spirit of educators necessitates deepening the culture of respecting teachers to solidify its value foundation, refining mechanisms that benefit teachers to stimulate creative vitality, and innovating teacher development systems to cultivate outstanding educators for a great nation. Only through the coordinated efforts of cultural cultivation, institutional support, and systemic restructuring can the spirit of educators be transformed into sustained momentum for the high-quality development of the teaching workforce in the new era.

## **7. Limitations and Future Directions**

This study systematically traces the historical genealogy, generative mechanisms, and practical pathways of the spirit of educators since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. It constructs an integrated analytical framework—“historical foundation mechanisms—mechanism-supported pathways—pathway-inherited history”—deepening our understanding of the evolutionary logic and practical patterns of China’s spirit of educators. However, constrained by research perspectives, methodologies, and available materials, this study leaves several areas for further exploration:

First, the breadth and depth of historical data mining need to be improved. Although this study outlines the overall context of the evolution of educators’ spirit, the use of first-hand historical materials such as local archives, oral history of education and teachers’ diaries is still insufficient, and it is difficult to fully reveal the micro-mechanism and local experience of grassroots educators’ spiritual construction. In the future, with the help of digital humanities technology, an educator’s spiritual and historical literature database covering multiple regions, multiple periods and multiple groups can be established, and the comparative analysis of national educational narrative and local practical logic can be strengthened, thus establishing a more explanatory connection between macro-structure and micro-action.

Second, the empirical test of the formation mechanism is still weak. This paper puts forward the theoretical framework of the triple generation mechanism of culture, system and practice, but the empirical analysis of its internal function path is insufficient. Follow-up research can combine qualitative research with quantitative research. Through in-depth interviews and follow-up surveys of educators with different generations, academic backgrounds and academic segments, a culture-system-practice linkage model can be constructed to empirically test the influence weight and interactive effect of each factor on the formation of educator spirit.

Third, the evaluation mechanism of practice path needs to be improved urgently. The path of cultural infiltration, system guarantee and system innovation put forward in this paper mostly stays at the level of theoretical deduction, lacking a systematic evaluation of the effect of policy implementation. In the future, we should design an index system for the effectiveness of educators’ spiritual practice, carry out follow-up policy evaluation research, especially measure the implementation effects of projects such as strengthening teachers’ plan and teaching in silver age in a multi-dimensional way, and provide scientific basis for policy optimization.

Fourth, the horizon of international comparison still needs to be expanded. This study focuses on the local generation and evolution of China’s unique educator spirit, but pays little attention to its dialogue and mutual learning with the spiritual pedigree of global educators. We can carry out a comparative study of Chinese and foreign educators’ spirit, explore the unique contribution of Chinese educator spirit in the history of world educational thought, and learn from the experience of various countries’ educator cultivation systems, so as to promote the sublimation of China’s educator spirit from local characteristics to international consensus.

In a word, in the future, this research will be devoted to building a four-dimensional research paradigm of history-theory-practice-international. On the basis of deepening historical data mining and historical research, we will strengthen the empirical test of the generation mechanism, build a scientific evaluation system, and expand the cross-cultural comparative vision, so as to promote the study of educators’ spirit from explanatory construction to leading innovation and provide more forward-looking, systematic and practical academic support for China to build an educational power.

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