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# Thoughts and Exploration of the Path to Foster Virtue Through Education of Colleges Teachers in China

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**Abstract:** To foster virtue through education is the fundamental task of education. To foster virtue is to put moral education first. And cultivating people is to train qualified builders and reliable successors for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. At present, colleges and universities can achieve the goal of fostering virtue in following aspects: To strengthen teachers' codes of morality and nurture teachers' consciousness of fostering virtue through education; adhere to the student-centered policy and reinforce the pertinence of fostering virtue through education; exploit advantages of major courses to the full and enhance the effectiveness of fostering virtue through education.

**Keywords:** Path, Virtue, Education, Colleges, Teachers, China

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## 1. Introduction

As for a fundamental task crucial for generations to come, we should regard education as the foundation. What kind of people should we cultivate, how to train people, and for whom we cultivate people are the eternal themes of education. Without good virtues, a country can't prosper and a man can't live on without good virtues, for fostering virtue through education is not only an essence for a successful career but also a way to administer state affairs well and ensure national security. Colleges and universities shoulder historic responsibilities to train qualified builders and reliable successors for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and it is the necessary requirement for college teachers to realize the goal of cultivating talents with "foster virtue through education" as basic task.

## 2. "Foster Virtue Through Education" Is the Fundamental Task of Higher Education in China

"Foster virtue through education" is a reflection based on the

socialist public ownership of economic and social relations as well as a fundamental requirement of maintaining public ownership as the mainstay of the economic foundation and safeguarding the fundamental interests of the masses. Sue Home Linsky once pointed out: "the process of cultivating all-round and harmonious personalities, lies in the fact that educators should not ignore such a case at any time when paying attention to process of building people's characteristics in every aspect that harmony of people's all aspects is determined by some dominant, determined thing-- morality. [1]

Cultivating talents is always the basis of rationality and legitimacy, with which colleges and universities exist and develop." [2] China attaches great importance to the significant role of "Virtue" in talent training. The report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China recommended fostering virtue through education as a fundamental task of education. "Fostering virtue through education" was first established as a fundamental task of education, which deepened the educational idea--"adhere to people-centered education, put foster virtue through education first", pointing out the direction of educational reforms. In December 2016, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forth

requirements in the national ideological and political work conference, which are "to adhere to foster virtue through education as the central link, to make the ideological and political work throughout the entire process of education, to realize the whole process education, and all-round education, and to strive to create a new situation for developing China's Higher Education industry." [3] In the year of 2017, the Central Committee of Communist Party of China, the State Council issued "opinions on strengthening and improving Ideological and political work in colleges and universities under the new situation" (hereinafter referred to as the "opinions"), which made it clear once again, "Based on fostering virtue through education, we should cultivate qualified builders and reliable successors for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics who are equipped with socialist-mind, professional abilities and comprehensive development". [4] Series of such documents and speeches, standing in the commanding heights of the times, put forward new hopes and new requirements for ideological and political work in colleges and universities and pointed out the direction for teachers to impart knowledge and educate people.

### 3. The Interpretation of the Scientific Connotation of "Foster Virtue Through Education"

There is a saying in "Spring and Autumn Annals" which goes like this, "the best thing is to establish virtues, followed by the establishment of meritorious deeds, again followed by the creation of the doctrine, which will not be abandoned even after a long time. Of these three immortals, fostering virtue through education is put in the first place. Hulbert, an education expert of German, once said, "Morality is generally considered as the highest goal of mankind, and therefore the highest goal of education. [5]

"Virtues" of fostering virtue through education is a generalized virtue as well as a morality, consisting of "moral" and "education". First of all, from the original meaning of "foster", it contains the meaning of "making upright", "making, setting out". If we want to achieve "standing", we cannot stay in the oral. We must make certain actions in practice. Secondly, from the point of view of morality, it not only includes the ideological and political quality and moral accomplishment of individual internality but also contains certain social behavior norms. In order to reflect the basic content of morality, an individual should behave according to the moral requirements of society. The meaning of fostering virtues is to put moral education first and inspire people with positive education. The highest state of life is to establish virtues, gain virtues and realize moral ideals. The "people" of educating people, is to cultivate qualified builders and reliable successors for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which is the essential requirement of cultivating all-round successors, embodying the core values of socialism. Thirdly, in terms of the relationship between "foster" and "Virtue", "foster" is the premise and foundation of

virtue and "Virtue" is the starting point and foothold of "foster". In order to realize "Virtue", we must put "foster" into practice". Deprived of virtues, a nation can't prosper. Deprived of virtues, people can't live on. Fostering virtue through education is not only the foundation of nurturing talents but also a way to administer state affairs well and ensure national security.

Fostering virtue through education means to take people-oriented measures in education, to put people first, and take people as the starting point of education. Besides, we should follow people's talents, enhance people's instinct, and take care of people's development as well as mobilize students' subjectivity and initiative and explore their wisdom potential, thus cultivating them into sane people. Therefore, if young teachers want to use "fostering virtue through education" to achieve the goal of "nurturing talents", that is, people with a certain degree of self-cultivation, both ability, and political integrity, and noble virtue, they themselves should be upright, self-control and open-minded in imparting knowledge and educating people. Then teachers are required to adhere to people-oriented policy and care for students, cultivate students, trust and treat each student well with full enthusiasm. What's more, teachers should cultivate students' positively psychological qualities and optimistic attitudes, teach them how to create happiness and share happiness, and pay attention to students' inner world, thus shaping the students pure and perfect mental abilities, so that students have the ability to develop lifelong learning.

### 4. The Main Practice Approach to "Foster Virtue Through Education" in Chinese Universities and Colleges

"Fostering virtue through education" means to take people-oriented measures in education, to put people first, and take people as the starting point of education." [6] Chinese universities shoulder the important task of cultivating and carrying forward the socialist core values and providing talents and intellectual support for striving to realize the Chinese dream of great national renewal. Under the circumstances of multi-cultural blending, a variety of ideas surging, and diverse values coexisting, adhering to "fostering virtue through education" is to keep pace with the times and continue to explore mode of education which suits our nation, thus cultivating qualified builders and reliable successors for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics who are equipped with socialist-mind, professional abilities and comprehensive development.

#### 4.1. To Strengthen Teachers' Codes of Morality and Nurture Teachers' Consciousness of Fostering Virtue Through Education

Fostering virtue through education has always been the great tradition of China. Han Yu expounded the important role of teachers in preaching, teaching, and solving doubts in his book "On Teachers". "The book of rites of the University" is

about "self-cultivation, regulating the family and country and making the whole world peaceful". Self-cultivation means to adhere to fostering virtue through education and be a man with moral integrity. Gu Mingyuan, an education expert from China, once pointed out, "The work to foster virtue through education of a school shouldn't entirely rely on the vice president of the moral education department but rely on all the teachers; not only should head teachers and counselors be responsible for it, but also all teachers. Fostering virtue through education belongs to education teaching work as well as the school management. So, if a school wants to foster virtue through education, manage and affect students through the environment, it should secure that everything in the school can improve the qualities and edify sentiments of students [7] even a person, an event, a blade of grass and a tree. At present, there is a certain imbalance among preaching, imparting knowledge and solving doubts. There exists a phenomenon of speaking important, doing little, and forgetting when busy. Some professional teachers identify "teach" with "foster virtue through education", thinking that teaching itself is to train talents and all teachers should do is to teach knowledge from books as well as carefully follow the syllabus to organize teaching procedure, which is the same as nurture talents. Therefore "teaching" and "foster virtue through education" become completely different.

As the ancient Chinese educator, Confucius said: "if you are not upright yourself, how can you teach others to have moral integrity. The process of fostering virtue through education is the process of teaching by precept and example. The premise of teaching by precept and example is that teachers should attach great importance to moral self-discipline, and constantly improve their moral cultivation. Political qualities, moral sentiments, academic attitudes, work styles and attitudes towards the life of teachers in universities and colleges all have strong influence and appeal to young students. Therefore, if teachers want to shoulder the sacred duty of fostering virtue through education, they must constantly improve their own qualities, strengthen self-cultivation, thus becoming an example to their students. College teachers should consciously take up the historical mission of foster virtue through education, make preach, teach and solve doubts combined together. And they should identify moral education with talents cultivation, and foster virtue through education well in accordance with the requirements of the education law as well as the true ability of students.

#### ***4.2. Adhering to the "Student-Oriented" Policy and Reinforcing the Pertinence of Fostering Virtue Through Education***

The No. 16 document of CPC Central Committee and the State Council clearly pointed out that for the purpose of strengthening and improving the ideological and political education of college students, we should adhere to the people-oriented policy, close to reality, close to life, close to the students, and strive to improve the pertinence, effectiveness, attraction and appeal of ideological and political education, with which we can cultivate qualified builders and

reliable successors for the cause of socialism with all-round development. Fostering virtue through education clarifies the essence of our country's education, and it is the important direction and the basic standpoint as well as foothold of our current educational development. [8] Adhering to the student-oriented ideological and political education is the need of the development of our times, as well as the requirement of fully implementing China's higher education policy, helping to promote the comprehensive qualities of college students in an all-around way. The ideological and political education which is based on students should be targeted and effective to ensure the effective realization of the goal of training higher educated people.

With deepening reform and opening up and continuously improving the socialist market economic system, new ideas, new things, and new contradictions appear all the time to strike the hearts of college students. As engineers of the human soul, teachers are guides and conductors for the growth of young students. To strengthen the pertinence of fostering virtue through education, we should be apt at tracking and finding out what the students concern about. Because what they concern about tends to reflect the youth's ideological tendency at a stage. Only by tracking and finding out their concerns timely and accurately and leading students correctly, teachers' fostering virtue through education can be done purposely and wonderfully. Due to the fact that the situation of students is very different, each student will face different problems in different stages of learning in universities. Therefore, teachers should adhere to the student-oriented policy, go deep into students, and play the role of feelings, as well as do in-depth and meticulous researches, and enhance the pertinence of fostering virtue through education.

#### ***4.3. Using Specialized Courses to Maximum Advantage and Enhancing the Pertinence of Moral Education***

The curriculum is the core of education and the main form of school educational activities. "After entering the comprehensively deepening reform of curriculum, the core of the curriculum reform is to foster virtue through education." [9] The teaching method of some professional courses lacks psychological communication and idealistic improvement between teachers and students and generally the historical background, the interlude of historical annals and the exploration and discussion of problems are often omitted. Not every classroom plays the educational role properly. To emphasize that college teachers should foster virtue through education doesn't mean that teachers should give moral speeches in the classroom, but teachers can consciously combine the actual situation of disciplines with professional disciplines, and carry out education in the teaching process organically and effectively.

On the one hand, the moral education curriculum of the university should pay attention to social value orientation, adhering to science, pertinence and be in line with the times. Besides it also should constantly optimize the curriculum structure and integrate the moral education into the teaching of every discipline, enabling students to learn knowledge of

different disciplines and be influenced gradually by moral education, which reflects the whole process of education. All of these require the innovation of class teaching method, vigorously promote discipline education, and change the situation of relying entirely on teaching books rather than nurturing talents, letting education return back to its essence to realize the organic unity of cultivating knowledge and values. What's more, we should improve the comprehensive qualities of students by making moral education in an intellectual physical and aesthetic way. On the other hand, universities and colleges should strengthen the construction and management of classroom teaching and all kinds of thoughts and culture. Teachers should be encouraged to explore and make full use of each subject which contains the ideological and political education resources and teachers should work through all aspects of reforming, making discipline education and the content of education an organic unit. Besides, we should explore cultural connotation and moral factors to promote Chinese culture, excellent traditional culture, revolutionary culture and socialist advanced culture. The implementation of the Chinese cultural heritage project promotes the Chinese traditional culture to integrate into educational teaching, to strengthen Cultural Revolution and socialist advanced cultural education, merging the socialist core values into the educational teaching practice.

## 5. Conclusion

In a word, "foster virtue" emphasizes the foundation of being a man while "talents cultivation" stresses comprehensiveness of the goal of nurturing talents. [10] Fostering virtue through education is a long-term and arduous task in higher learning institutions. Teachers are not only the transmitters of knowledge but also the leaders of morality and the inspiration of thought. Higher schools should give full play to the role of teachers, to enhance teachers' sense of honor and responsibility of fostering virtue through education, and strive to build a student-centered and teacher-directed system with

all men involved and the whole process, thus taking up the historical mission of fostering virtue through education.

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