
Innovative Paths and Future Prospects of the Educational Concept of “Great Teachers in the New Era” in the Construction of a Moral Cultivation System for Higher Education Faculty—A Collaborative Innovation Model Based on the Spirit of Educators and Generative AI

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Abstract: Centering on the construction demand of the teaching team in the new era, this study integrates the connotation of the spirit of educators with the technical characteristics of generative AI to construct a collaborative innovation model for the education of “Great Teachers”. Taking the “Three-Dimensional Radiation Model of the Spirit of Educators” (radiation layer of ideals and beliefs, moral practice, and innovative education) as the theoretical core, a “double helix” education system is built by combining the technical attributes of generative AI. The collaborative effect of technological empowerment and spiritual cultivation is verified through the data analysis of the “AI + Teacher Morality” experimental class of Hainan Normal University. The research finds that the deep integration of technological empowerment and humanistic guidance is the core key to optimizing the teacher moral cultivation education system. This research provides a paradigm reference for the construction of the teaching team under the background of Hainan Free Trade Port, and also offers theoretical support and practical paths for the transformation of teachers’ roles in the intelligent era.

Keywords: Great Teachers; the Spirit of Educators; Generative AI; Collaborative Education; Teacher Professional Morality

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1. Introduction

Higher education in the new era takes cultivating “new people of the era who shoulder the great task of national rejuvenation” as its core mission, putting forward higher requirements for teachers that go beyond the role of mere “knowledge instructors”. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that “teachers should be good great teachers and set an example for students in learning, doing things and being a person”^[1]. The Ministry of Education has proposed the policy orientation of the “Artificial Intelligence + Teacher Education” action plan, which makes the integration of digital

technology and teacher moral cultivation an important direction of higher education reform^[2]. The concept of “Great Teachers” is not only an inheritance of traditional Chinese educational wisdom, but also an era-specific reconstruction of the professional moral cultivation of modern higher education teachers, which points out the core direction for the construction of teachers’ professional ethics in the new period^[3].

At this stage, the construction of professional ethics of college teachers in China is faced with the problem of disconnection between theory and practice: some teachers regard teacher morality as a “slogan-based requirement” and lack the awareness of integrating value guidance into daily teaching and scientific research; the tendency of “valuing research over teaching” and “valuing quantification over quality” in the university evaluation system has reduced the construction of teacher morality to a “soft indicator” that is difficult to implement^[4]. With the arrival of the intelligent era, the role of college teachers is undergoing a triple transformation from knowledge transmitters to growth mentors and then to spiritual guides, which has become an inevitable practical demand for the connotative development of higher education^[5]. Therefore, exploring the practical transformation path of the “Great Teachers” educational concept and integrating it into the construction of the teacher moral cultivation education system is the key to improving the overall quality of the higher education teaching team, and also an important starting point for promoting higher education to return to its essential mission of education.

However, the existing research on teacher moral cultivation mostly focuses on the single application of digital technology, lacking a systematic research perspective of the collaboration between humanistic spirit and technological empowerment, and there is insufficient theoretical support for solving the problem of “alienation” and “suspension” in the construction of teachers’ professional ethics^[6]. Based on this, this study takes the spirit of educators as the humanistic core and generative AI as the technical support, constructs a collaborative innovation model of “spirit + technology” for the teacher moral cultivation education system, and verifies the effectiveness of the model through empirical research on Hainan Normal University. It aims to explore an effective application path for the practice of the “Great Teachers” concept, provide a paradigm reference for the construction of the teaching team under the background of Hainan Free Trade Port, expand the interdisciplinary dimension of teacher development research, and offer theoretical support and practical paths for the transformation of teachers’ roles in the intelligent era.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

2.1. Connotation Reconstruction of the “Great Teachers” Educational Concept in the New Era

The concept of “Great Teachers” is not a simple historical reproduction, but an innovative development endowed with new era connotations on the basis of inheriting traditional educational wisdom. Typical representatives of traditional “Great Teachers” such as Confucius, Cai Yuanpei and Tao Xingzhi embody the unity of “preaching, imparting knowledge and resolving doubts”, with the core connotation of setting an example in teacher morality, having profound academic attainments and teaching students in accordance with their aptitude^[7]. Entering the new era, the connotation of the “Great Teachers” concept has been reconstructed in three dimensions, forming a high fit with the core requirements of modern teachers’ professional moral cultivation: in the value dimension, it has shifted from “personal moral cultivation” to “social mission”, requiring teachers to combine academic pursuits with national development needs and guide students to establish a strong sense of homeland and country; in the professional dimension, it has changed from “knowledge authority” to “learning partner”, emphasizing that teachers should keep pace with the times in the interdisciplinary and digital context, and explore the truth together with students; in the educational dimension, it has transformed from “one-way knowledge indoctrination” to “spiritual life dialogue”, focusing on realizing the value guidance and spiritual leading for students through teachers’ personal charisma and professional ethics^[8]. This three-dimensional connotation reconstruction provides a clear value coordinate for the construction of the higher education teacher moral cultivation system, and the teacher professional moral cultivation is the practical carrier for the realization of the “Great Teachers” concept.

2.2. Core Theoretical Support: Visual Transformation of the Spirit of Educators

Zhao Xiuwen proposed the theory of “Visual Transformation of the Spirit of Educators” in the research on teacher education in Hainan Free Trade Port, emphasizing the special value of the “spiritual cultivation - practical cultivation - cultural infiltration” cultivation chain for the construction of teachers’ professional ethics^[9]. The core of this theory is twofold: on the one hand, it transforms the abstract connotation of the spirit of educators into observable and measurable teachers’ behavioral indicators, for example, converting the abstract requirement of “a heart of benevolence” into specific behavioral indicators such as the response time of teacher-student interaction and the frequency of after-school academic guidance; on the other hand, it constructs the “Three-Stage Cultivation Method” of teacher moral cultivation, which takes cognitive awakening (AI situational simulation), emotional resonance (virtual reality experience) and behavioral solidification (intelligent supervision system) as the core links, and realizes the step-by-step cultivation of teachers’ professional ethics from cognitive recognition to emotional identity and then to behavioral practice^[10]. As a pilot zone for educational reform and opening up, Hainan has issued relevant policy documents to support the innovation of teacher education models, which provides a favorable policy environment and practical soil for the landing and application of this theory^[11].

2.3. Adaptability of Generative AI to Teacher Moral Cultivation

The technical characteristics of generative AI show a high degree of adaptability with the “Visual Transformation of the Spirit of Educators” theory, which provides a solid technical support for the construction of the teacher moral cultivation system. First, the natural language processing (NLP) technology of generative AI can realize the “analysis of teacher morality speech patterns”, which can effectively match the “speech education index” proposed in the theory, and realize the quantitative evaluation of teachers’ moral expression in teaching and communication^[10]. Second, generative dialogue robots can simulate the tutoring and educational scenarios of “Huang Danian-style teachers” and other excellent educators, creating immersive moral education situations for teachers and realizing the cognitive awakening of the spirit of educators. Third, the big data analysis capability of generative AI can construct a dynamic evaluation system of teacher moral behavior, track and analyze teachers’ teaching behavior, teacher-student interaction and other data in real time, and realize the behavioral solidification of teacher moral cultivation through intelligent supervision and early warning^[12]. Based on this, this study visualizes the “Three-Stage Cultivation Method” through generative AI technology, and constructs a technical implementation system of teacher moral cultivation with AI moral dilemma generator, VR teacher morality situational laboratory and teaching behavior analysis engine as the core carriers, which provides a feasible technical path for the integration of the spirit of educators and teacher moral cultivation practice.

3. Research Design and Practical Dilemmas

3.1. Practical Dilemmas in the Practice of the “Great Teachers” Concept

Although the “Great Teachers” educational concept is a consensus in higher education, integrating it into teacher moral cultivation faces multiple obstacles. First, the university evaluation system has a prominent utilitarian tendency. Quantitative indicators like research funding, paper number, and project levels dominate, causing some teachers to focus on “explicit academic achievements” and neglect professional ethics and educational missions. A survey shows 68% of college teachers think “teaching input and moral cultivation practice are not proportional to career rewards”, weakening their “putting education and moral cultivation first” awareness. Second, the teacher - student relationship is alienated. With online teaching popularization and teachers’ increasing research pressure, offline extracurricular interaction between teachers and students has decreased, separating “imparting knowledge” from “preaching truth”. Students see teachers as “course providers”, making it hard for teachers’ professional ethics to play an educational role. Third, teachers’ professional identity of “Great Teachers” is weakened. Diversified social expectations for college teachers’ roles conflict with the traditional “sage - like” requirements of “Great Teachers”. Some teachers experience occupational burnout under

multiple role pressures and struggle to adhere to the spiritual core of teacher morality and educational mission.

3.2. Research Design: A Triad of “Concept-System-Action”

Aiming at the practical dilemmas, this study constructs a “concept - system - action” triad research design to explore the innovative path of integrating the “Great Teachers” concept into the teacher moral cultivation system. In the concept dimension, it takes the spirit of educators as the core, reconstructs the connotation of teacher professional moral cultivation in the new era, and clarifies the value orientation of “Great Teachers” for it. In the system dimension, it innovates the teacher evaluation mechanism and training system, breaks the utilitarian evaluation orientation, and establishes a teacher moral cultivation system combining “spiritual cultivation” and “practical assessment”. In the action dimension, it takes generative AI as the technical support, builds a “double helix” collaborative innovation model of the spirit of educators and digital technology, and realizes the integration of technological empowerment and humanistic guidance in teacher moral cultivation practice. The research uses the mixed research method of qualitative and quantitative analysis, taking the 2023 grade normal university students of the “AI + Teacher Morality” experimental class at Hainan Normal University as the research object. It sets up an experimental class and a control class for comparative research, verifies the effectiveness of the collaborative innovation model by analyzing core indicators like educational feelings score and spiritual radiation power, and puts forward targeted implementation paths and countermeasures based on the empirical research results.

4. Model Construction: The “Double Helix” Collaborative Innovation Model

4.1. Theoretical Framework of the Model

Based on Zhao Xiuwen’s revision and improvement, this study constructs the “Double Helix” collaborative innovation model of the spirit of educators and generative AI for the teacher moral cultivation system. Taking the spirit of educators and generative AI as the two core helices, they intertwine and promote each other, forming a teacher moral cultivation system centered on “spiritual guidance” and supported by “technological empowerment”. The left helix (spiritual gene chain) inherits Zhao Xiuwen’s “four-dimensional spiritual coding” of the spirit of educators suitable for Hainan Free Trade Port, such as red belief, Qiongya culture, marine openness and ecological harmony genes. This coding is the core connotation of the “Great Teachers” concept in Hainan and the fundamental guide for teachers’ professional ethics cultivation. The right helix (technology enhancement chain) is an AI technology support layer based on generative AI’s features, including two core modules: the teacher morality anomie early warning system using NLP speech analysis and the teaching wisdom AR sand table based on big data analysis. This layer enables quantitative evaluation, situational simulation and intelligent supervision of teacher moral cultivation, and provides technical guarantee for the visualization and practical application of the spirit of educators.

4.2. Core Implementation Carriers of the Model

To realize the practical application of the “Double Helix” model, this study constructs a four - level implementation carrier system integrating theoretical elements and technical realization, achieving the organic integration of the spirit of educators and generative AI in teacher moral cultivation (Table 1). The system’s core is the “DNA of the Spirit of Educators”, with four - dimensional spiritual coding at its center and stored in the Hainan Teachers’ Spiritual Gene Bank as the basis for teacher moral cultivation. Based on this, the AI empowerment layer centers on the cognitive awakening of the “Three-Stage Cultivation Method” and uses the teacher morality speech NLP analysis system for quantitative analysis of teachers’ moral speech and cognitive recognition. The practical cultivation layer focuses on the behavioral solidification of the “Three-Stage Cultivation Method” and constructs an intelligent educational decision-making sand table for situational simulation and practical assessment of teacher moral behavior. The final goal is to cultivate “Great Teachers in the New Era”, construct a comprehensive evaluation system of teacher moral cultivation with spiritual radiation power evaluation indicators as the core, and form a digital portrait of teacher development for whole - process tracking and personalized cultivation of teacher

moral cultivation.

Table 1. Core Implementation Carriers of the “Double Helix” Model

Flow Chart Node	Core Elements of the Spirit of Educators	Technical Implementation Carrier
DNA of the Spirit of Educators	Four-dimensional spiritual coding (red belief, Qiongya culture, marine openness, ecological harmony)	Hainan Teachers’ Spiritual Gene Bank
AI Empowerment Layer	Cognitive awakening of the Three-Stage Cultivation Method	NLP analysis system for teacher morality speech
Practical Cultivation Layer	Behavioral solidification of the Three-Stage Cultivation Method	Intelligent educational decision-making sand table
Great Teachers in the New Era	Evaluation indicators of spiritual radiation power	Digital portrait of teacher development

5. Empirical Analysis: A Case Study of Hainan Normal University

5.1. Experimental Design

This study takes 120 2023 grade normal university students from the “AI Teacher Morality Laboratory” of Hainan Normal University (participated by Zhao Xiuwen’s research team) as the research object, and adopts the quasi-experimental research method of experimental class and control class comparison^[10]. The control class L adopts the traditional teacher moral cultivation training mode, focusing on theoretical teaching and offline case discussion, without the intervention of generative AI technology. The experimental class N adopts the “Double Helix” collaborative innovation model constructed in this study, and implants two core technical systems on the basis of traditional theoretical teaching: the “Qiongya Educators” digital portrait system (integrating 56 cases of outstanding teachers in Hainan collected by Zhao Xiuwen’s team, including red educators and ethnic education models) and the AI ethical decision-making simulator (aiming at Hainan’s specific educational scenarios such as international school cultural conflicts, ethnic education practice and rural education revitalization, generating targeted moral dilemma decision-making cases). The experimental cycle is one semester, and the same teacher moral cultivation curriculum and teaching hours are arranged for both classes to ensure the consistency of experimental variables.

5.2. Key Experimental Data and Analysis

This study adopts the Teacher’s Spiritual Influence Evaluation Scale developed by Zhao Xiuwen to measure the core indicators of the two classes, including educational feelings score and spiritual radiation power, and uses SPSS software for statistical analysis^[10]. The experimental results show that the core indicators of the experimental class using the “Double Helix” model are significantly higher than those of the control class (**Table 2**), and the P-value is less than 0.01, indicating that there is a highly significant difference between the two classes.

Table 2. Comparison of Core Experimental Indicators Between Experimental Class and Control Class

Evaluation Indicator	Experimental Class N	Control Class L	P-value
Score of Educational Feelings (full score 5)	4.52	3.87	0.003
Spiritual Radiation Power (%)	82.3	61.5	0.008

Further in-depth analysis of experimental data yields three key conclusions. First, the VR memorial hall of red educators significantly improves teachers’ historical identity and educational feelings. The experimental class’s eye movement fixation duration in the red education VR scene is 7.2s per time, much higher than the control class’s 2.3s,

confirming that generative AI-based immersive learning can enhance teachers' emotional identity of the educators' spirit. Second, the Li educational wisdom knowledge graph constructed by generative AI can improve teachers' understanding of local cultural connotation. The experimental class using the knowledge graph has an 89% accuracy rate of Li culture association, while the control class without it only has 47%, proving that digital-technology-based structured knowledge visualization can promote teachers' integration of local culture into teacher moral cultivation. Third, the construction of the "spirit-technology" integration laboratory is crucial for the effectiveness of teacher moral cultivation. The correlation coefficient between teachers' technology acceptance (based on TAM model) and spiritual radiation power is $r = 0.79$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating that improving teachers' digital literacy and constructing technical hardware facilities are necessary for the integration of generative AI and teacher moral cultivation^[12].

6. Implementation Paths and Countermeasures

6.1. Construct a Teacher Moral Cultivation System with Qiongya Characteristics

Combined with Hainan Free Trade Port background, this study constructs a Qiongya - characteristic teacher moral cultivation system centered on local culture - educator spirit integration and supported by generative AI. The core is the AI Training Module for the Spirit of Educators, with the VR Memorial Hall of Hainan Red Educators and the Knowledge Graph of Li Educational Wisdom as core components. Experimental data show it can improve teachers' Li culture respect index by 73.4% ($p < 0.001$). Core implementation measures: First, reconstruct 8 red education scenes in the VR memorial hall based on eye - movement data and implant an AI moral dilemma generator. Second, use the Neo4j database to integrate Li ethnic educational wisdom and establish semantic associations. The key innovation is to transform "four - dimensional spiritual genes" into digital parameters for digital regulation and quantitative assessment.

6.2. Establish a "Spirit-Technology" Integration Laboratory for Teacher Moral Cultivation

Structural equation modeling shows a strong positive correlation between teachers' technology acceptance and spiritual radiation power, confirming the need for the laboratory. Its implementation path has three aspects: First, in hardware, equip with eye trackers and AR teaching sand tables. Second, in algorithm development, deploy a teacher morality anomie early warning model. Third, in spatial planning, divide the laboratory into "Spiritual Decoding Area" and "AI Enhancement Area". Benefit forecast shows that a 10% increase in equipment utilization raises teachers' spiritual radiation power by 6.3 points, and the investment payback period is ≤ 3 years, with good practical promotion value.

7. Conclusions and Future Prospects

7.1. Core Conclusions

This study takes the "Great Teachers" educational concept as value guidance, the spirit of educators as the humanistic core, and generative AI as technical support to construct a "Double Helix" collaborative innovation model for the construction of the higher education teacher moral cultivation system. Through empirical research on Hainan Normal University, three core conclusions are drawn. First, the deep integration of technological empowerment and humanistic guidance is key to optimizing the teacher moral cultivation education system in the intelligent era. Generative AI can visualize and quantitatively assess the abstract spirit of educators, while the spirit of educators can avoid the alienation of teacher moral cultivation due to excessive technicalization, and the two have a mutually promoting collaborative effect. Second, the connotation reconstruction of the "Great Teachers" concept in the new era provides a clear value coordinate for teacher professional morality construction. Its three-dimensional connotation of value, profession and education is highly consistent with the core requirements of modern teacher moral cultivation, which is the fundamental follow for teacher moral cultivation practice. Third, the construction of a teacher moral cultivation system with local characteristics is an important path to realize the localization practice of the "Great Teachers" concept. Integrating local elements like Hainan's

red culture and Qiongya ethnic culture into teacher moral cultivation can enhance teachers' professional and local cultural identity, and provide a feasible paradigm for regional higher education teacher team construction.

7.2. Future Prospects

Facing the 2035 educational modernization goal, integrating the "Great Teachers" concept into the teacher moral cultivation system will have three trends. First, lifelong cultivation of teacher professional ethics. With rapid knowledge update and educational digital transformation, teachers need "lifelong moral cultivation" awareness. Universities should build a lifelong learning system centered on "online learning communities" and "teacher morality continuing education credit system" for teachers to update concepts and moral cognition. Second, integration of globalization and localization in teacher moral cultivation. New-era "Great Teachers" need an international vision and national/local cultural confidence. In cultivation practice, compare Chinese and Western educational ethics, uphold Chinese educational wisdom, integrate local culture, and guard against "Western centralism". Third, in-depth intelligent collaboration between humans and technology. In the future, AI may handle some teaching and assessment, but the core values of "Great Teachers" will be more prominent. Teachers should collaborate with generative AI, master digital literacy, and use digital technology as a moral education assistant.

The practical transformation of the "Great Teachers" concept is a return to the "original aspiration of education and moral cultivation" in higher education. It requires college teachers to move from the "professional" to the "vocational" level and achieve self-unity in moral cultivation. Through institutional innovation, teaching reform, and technological empowerment, the concept will turn into concrete teaching behaviors, supporting higher education in cultivating more talents and providing a new path for high-quality teacher team development in the digital transformation era.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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