

# Study on Cultivating the Spirit of Educators in Physical Education Teacher Education under the Framework of Certification

Lei Yue

Graduate University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar 999097, Mongolia

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**Abstract:** This study adopts literature review and logical analysis as its primary research methods. Grounded in the contemporary drive to promote the spirit of educators in the new era and situated within the institutional framework of teacher education program accreditation, it systematically explores pathways for cultivating the spirit of educators among physical education (PE) teacher candidates. The study elucidates three core value implications of cultivating the spirit of educators: fulfilling the fundamental mission of moral education, aligning with the quality-oriented ethos of certification, and fostering high-caliber PE teacher candidates. It further constructs a logical framework encompassing goal alignment, process integration, and outcome unification, and proposes a practical approach that advances along three interconnected dimensions: curricular design, practical engagement, and institutional support mechanisms. This approach seeks to transform the spirit of educators from conceptual advocacy into behavioral practice, thereby establishing a high-quality PE teacher training model that unifies spiritual guidance with quality assurance. The findings offer both theoretical insight and practical guidance for cultivating outstanding PE teachers in the new era.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education Program Accreditation, Educator Spirit, Physical Education Teacher Candidates.

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## 1. Introduction

On September 9, 2023, General Secretary Xi Jinping addressed a letter to representatives of outstanding teachers nationwide, noting that among educators, a group of distinguished pedagogues and exemplary teachers has emerged. He praised them for possessing lofty ideals and firm convictions in serving the greater good and devoting themselves to the nation; moral integrity that sets an example for scholars and serves as a model for society; wisdom in nurturing minds through enlightenment and individualized instruction; a spirit of diligence, truth-seeking, and innovation; compassion that finds joy in teaching and devotion to students; and a broad cultural vision dedicated to educating through moral influence. These qualities, he emphasized, collectively embody the distinctive spirit of Chinese educators[1]. Amid this call of the times, how teacher education programs can internalize and advance this spirit has become an urgent issue confronting contemporary education. As the core institutional mechanism ensuring the quality of teacher education, the accreditation of teacher education programs provides a concrete framework and evaluative standards guided by the principles of “student-centeredness, outcomes orientation, and continuous improvement.” In the field of physical education, the training of PE teacher candidates bears a dual mission: on one hand, to transform the abstract spirit of educators into tangible professional convictions and personal qualities; and on the other, to ensure that the training process and learning outcomes remain systematic, verifiable, and aligned with the standardized requirements of professional accreditation. However, in practice, the cultivation of the educator spirit often remains at the level of declarative advocacy, lacking substantive integration with accreditation standards such as professional ethics and educational commitment. This disjunction has led to a persistent gap between spiritual guidance and quality assurance, weakening

the coherence between value orientation and outcome evaluation. Therefore, this study seeks to clarify the value implications and construct the logical framework for integrating the spirit of educators into teacher education accreditation systems. It further proposes feasible pathways for nurturing this spirit and develops a high-quality physical education teacher training model that unites spiritual guidance with quality assurance, providing theoretical and practical insights for cultivating exemplary educators in the new era.

## 2. The Value Implications of Cultivating the Spirit of Educators Among Physical Education Teacher Candidates in the Context of Certification

Education is a national priority and a central undertaking of the Party. As the core force shaping the future of primary and secondary school physical education, cultivating the spirit of educators among physical education (PE) teacher candidates not only concerns the formation of professional ethics and vocational conviction but also defines the value orientation for the high-quality development of physical education teacher education.

### 2.1. Cultivating Educator Spirit as an Intrinsic Requirement for Implementing the Fundamental Task of Fostering Virtue and Talent

In his essay *On Physical Education*, Comrade Mao Zedong stated that “physical education is the vehicle for knowledge and the dwelling place for morality; without physical education, there can be no moral or intellectual development.” This vividly elucidates the intrinsic connection between

physical education and moral education, emphasizing that physical education provides the foundation upon which moral and intellectual development can flourish[2]. Cultivating virtue through education constitutes the fundamental mission of China's education system and serves as the core orientation of teacher education reform in the new era. As the value foundation of this mission, the spirit of educators embodies the unity of lofty ideals, moral integrity, pedagogical wisdom, and benevolence guiding educators toward "cultivating virtue through education and establishing themselves through virtue." Within the accreditation framework, the "graduation requirements" provide measurable benchmarks and actionable pathways for realizing this mission, transforming a macro-level educational philosophy into concrete criteria throughout the teacher training process. For PE teacher candidates, sports education possesses a unique moral function: fostering character development through physical activity. Its ultimate goal is to realize holistic development through the integration of physical education and moral cultivation, promoting the unity of body and mind. Integrating the educator spirit into PE teacher training encourages teacher candidates to consciously embrace their dual educational responsibilities imparting motor skills and shaping students' values, thus fully leveraging the moral education function of physical education to cultivate perseverance and social responsibility. The ideals embodied in the spirit of educators selflessness, devotion to the nation, and commitment to the common good inspire PE teacher candidates to cultivate an educational ethos rooted in service to both the nation and the people. Their moral consciousness of "setting an example through words and deeds" directs them to uphold high professional ethics and act as moral exemplars for students' character formation. Their pedagogical wisdom of "enlightening minds and nurturing hearts through tailored instruction" teaches them to respect individual differences and unlock each student's potential. At a deeper level, nurturing the educator spirit establishes the foundational ethos through which PE teacher candidates internalize educational ideals and strengthen professional convictions. It translates the abstract mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talent into tangible educational philosophies and behavioral norms. This enables teacher candidates to organically integrate the teaching of sports skills with the guidance of students' growth, achieving the unity of knowledge transmission, competency development, and character formation. By systematically integrating the educator spirit, PE teacher candidates not only refine their pedagogical skills but also elevate their educational ideals and value commitments—becoming physical education teachers of the new era who "cultivate talent for the Party and nurture talent for the nation," embodying both professional excellence and moral integrity.

## **2.2. Cultivating the Spirit of Educators as an Inevitable Path to Respond to the Quality-Oriented Approach of Teacher Education Program Accreditation**

As the core system ensuring the quality of teacher education in the new era, teacher education program accreditation aims to ensure the systematic alignment of training objectives, curriculum design, practicum components, and assessment methods through a scientific standards framework and a continuous improvement mechanism. Its focus lies in fostering a learning outcomes-oriented quality

culture within teacher training institutions, particularly through clarifying the graduation requirements known as "one practice and three competencies." At its essence, teacher education accreditation and the promotion of the educator spirit share a synergistic, mutually reinforcing relationship. Both are grounded in educational practice and centered on the shared pursuit of cultivating "excellent teachers" and realizing "excellent education." The former establishes institutional conditions and quality standards for producing competent teachers, while the latter emphasizes spiritual guidance and moral elevation as intrinsic pathways toward educational excellence[2]. Integrating these two approaches facilitates a qualitative leap in teacher development—from producing merely qualified teachers to cultivating outstanding educators—through the dual integration of spiritual guidance and institutional mechanisms. Specifically, embedding the six core dimensions of the educator spirit into the training objectives of teacher education accreditation establishes a mutually reinforcing mechanism linking spiritual cultivation and competency development. This approach strengthens ideals and professional commitment within curriculum design, embodies moral consciousness and pedagogical wisdom within program implementation, and evaluates manifestations of benevolence and dedication through assessment mechanisms. Consequently, the cultivation of the educator spirit among physical education teacher candidates evolves from conceptual alignment to behavioral enactment, achieving deep integration between spiritual formation and quality assurance.

## **2.3. Cultivating the Spirit of Educators as a Lever for Developing High-Quality Physical Education Teacher Candidates**

Teachers constitute the core productive force in education and play a pivotal role in the national strategy of building China into an education powerhouse. The development of China's vast teaching workforce urgently depends on the exemplary guidance and moral leadership embodied in the spirit of educators[3]. Under the strategy of building an education powerhouse in the new era, the focus of teacher training has shifted from "quantitative expansion" to "qualitative enhancement." For PE teacher candidates, cultivating the educator spirit serves as the crucial lever linking professional competence with moral character development. Rooted in ideals and convictions, guided by pedagogical wisdom, and sustained by benevolence, this spirit provides both a moral compass and a practical guide for the holistic growth of PE teacher candidates. The "continuous improvement" mechanism mandated by accreditation offers institutional guarantees and sustained motivation for their high-quality development, ensuring that cultivating the educator spirit evolves as an ongoing, iterative process rather than a one-time initiative. Given that the learning trajectory of PE teacher candidates is inherently practical and experience-driven, integrating the educator spirit enables them to master scientific teaching methods while simultaneously cultivating the capacity to guide student growth. Guided by this spirit, PE teacher candidates unify knowledge transmission with value shaping, integrate physical training with moral education, and foster students' physical competence alongside moral character and social responsibility. This approach thus embodies the true educational value of physical education—integrating the cultivation of physical ability with the nurturing of virtue and

responsibility.

From a systemic perspective, integrating the educator spirit also helps construct an intrinsic motivational mechanism for the high-quality growth of PE teacher candidates. The “diligent attitude” instills perseverance and a sense of professional dedication; the pedagogical wisdom of “enlightening minds and nurturing hearts” fosters reflective practice and innovation in instructional design; and the pursuit of “embracing the world and educating through culture” inspires candidates to transcend disciplinary utilitarianism, cultivating a sense of mission and historical responsibility toward the teaching profession. Through systematic cultivation of the educator spirit, PE teacher candidates internalize value consciousness through learning, practice, and reflection, thereby achieving the synergistic integration of professional competence and educational compassion.

### **3. The Logical Framework for Cultivating the Spirit of Educators Among Physical Education Teacher Candidates from a Certification Perspective**

The deep integration between teacher education accreditation and the spirit of educators constitutes a comprehensive quality-assurance framework for cultivating physical education teacher candidates. This framework operates across three interrelated dimensions:(1) Goal isomorphism, which establishes the value orientation for spiritual cultivation;(2) Process integration, which constructs the practical pathway for nurturing this spirit; (3) Outcome unification, which achieves mutual empowerment between spiritual growth and quality enhancement.

#### **3.1. Goal Isomorphism: Materializing Spiritual Essence Through Accreditation Standards**

“Spirit” represents the refined essence of human thought and culture[4]. As the core value and moral essence of the teaching profession, the spirit of educators closely aligns with the value orientations embedded in the Graduation Requirements of teacher education accreditation. The accreditation standard’s requirement of “Practicing Professional Ethics” inherently aligns with the educator spirit’s ideals of “embracing the greater self and serving the nation with utmost sincerity,” as well as its moral injunction of “setting an example through words and deeds.” Similarly, the requirement to “master the art of education” resonates deeply with the pedagogical wisdom of “enlightening minds and nurturing hearts through tailored instruction” and the benevolent virtue of “delighting in teaching, cherishing students, and embracing dedication.” This shared foundation allows the abstract ideals of the educator spirit to gain institutional expression within the accreditation framework, transforming them from moral advocacy into concrete, assessable quality objectives. Practically, the learning outcomes orientation of accreditation provides behavioral anchors and measurable indicators for cultivating the educator spirit. Teacher candidates are required to demonstrate comprehensive attainment across three dimensions—knowledge, competence, and literacy—while the educator spirit imbues these dimensions with moral meaning and value elevation. For example, in physical education instruction, candidates are expected not only to

master disciplinary knowledge and skills but also to embody pedagogical wisdom by fostering students’ perseverance, teamwork, and social responsibility. Such practice concretely embodies both the “learning to educate” outcomes stipulated in accreditation standards and the “enlightening minds and nurturing hearts” ethos of the educator spirit. From the perspective of curriculum design and assessment, this goal-level alignment propels the educator spirit from external advocacy toward deep internalization within the intrinsic logic of physical education teacher education. It ceases to function as an auxiliary moral theme and instead becomes a structural mechanism for achieving individualized, value-based instruction.

#### **3.2. Process Integration: Weaving the Spirit Throughout All Stages via the Accreditation System**

Embedding the spirit of educators in physical education teacher training requires re-examining the existing cultivation system through new concepts, paradigms, and quality standards. Reform and optimization should focus on refining training objectives, curriculum design, and instructional practices[5]. Teacher education accreditation mandates that the cultivation process be traceable, evaluable, and outcomes-oriented. Within this dynamic framework, the development of the educator spirit unfolds as a systematic process that integrates conceptual alignment, behavioral transformation, and value elevation. Goal design serves as the starting point, aligning the six core dimensions of the educator spirit with the competency indicators of accreditation standards. This establishes observable behavioral dimensions and measurable benchmarks for abstract values, providing both value anchors and evaluative criteria across the training process. Curriculum instruction serves as the central arena for translating the spirit of educators into practice, operating through the pathway of “Three Integrations and Three Transformations.” Explicit articulation of spiritual elements in curriculum objectives ensures directional value guidance; contextualized teaching cases and scenarios concretize value carriers through lived experience; and inquiry-based, reflective pedagogy cultivates self-awareness and internalization of spiritual values. Collectively, these elements form a complete pedagogical chain that transforms the educator spirit from curricular design into student competence. Educational practice functions as the verification stage of spiritual cultivation. Establishing educator spirit portfolios allows teacher candidates’ ethical awareness, professional responsibility, and moral behavior during internships to be documented, evaluated, and reflected upon. This mechanism converts internal cognition into externalized, assessable evidence of value realization. Finally, continuous improvement serves as the core mechanism driving the quality enhancement of spiritual cultivation within the accreditation process. Drawing on course feedback and ethical evaluation data, institutions can dynamically monitor and refine the effectiveness of educator spirit development. This ensures that spiritual cultivation evolves from subjective, experience-based judgment into a data-informed, continuously improving virtuous cycle of teacher education quality assurance.

### **3.3. Outcome Unification: Empowering Quality Enhancement Through Spiritual Growth**

The spirit of educators forms a coherent logical system: it begins with ideals and convictions as its foundation, takes moral integrity as its central thread, relies on pedagogical wisdom, diligence, and benevolence as its supporting pillars, and culminates in the pursuit of enlightening others through culture as its ultimate purpose[6]. This spiritual framework infuses the accreditation system of teacher education with a profound value orientation, forming a unified logic in which spiritual cultivation and quality enhancement mutually reinforce one another. At the individual level, the spirit of educators provides intrinsic motivation for teacher candidates' personal and professional growth, enabling them to transcend mere compliance with standards and move toward excellence in meeting accreditation requirements. While accreditation defines the external framework of teacher competencies, the spirit of educators serves as the internal driving force that elevates professional growth beyond technical proficiency. When physical education (PE) teacher candidates internalize patriotic devotion and moral purpose in their educational practice, their instructional goals transcend technical skill transmission and evolve into the moral mission of fostering character, perseverance, and social responsibility through sports. Such spiritually guided, higher-order teaching behaviors demonstrate stronger achievement and greater capacity for continuous improvement within accreditation evaluations. At the evaluation level, the spirit of educators broadens the evaluative dimensions of accreditation, transforming its logic from a competency-based assessment to a holistic evaluation of the "whole person." Traditional accreditation tends to emphasize quantifiable knowledge and skills, whereas the educator spirit calls for assessing pedagogical wisdom and moral integrity. Classroom observations and teaching practicum evaluations, therefore, should focus not only on teaching techniques but also on whether teacher candidates demonstrate insight in individualized instruction, empathy and care for students, and reflective professionalism. Through this expanded evaluative lens, accreditation moves beyond the technical domain to form an integrated standard that values knowledge, competence, and virtue equally realizing a multidimensional enhancement of teacher education quality.

At the systemic level, the spirit of educators becomes the internal driving force behind the continuous improvement loop of accreditation. Universities can incorporate key behavioral indicators of the educator spirit, such as educational passion, professional ideals, and ethical norms into their data-driven improvement mechanisms. By analyzing performance data in these areas, institutions can identify weak links in their training systems, revise curricular goals, optimize instructional content, and strengthen practical components accordingly. Through such feedback-driven mechanisms, the spirit of educators evolves from a declarative training goal into an intrinsic factor that continuously propels the self-renewal and structural optimization of the teacher education system.

## **4. Practical Pathways for Cultivating the Spirit of Educators Among Physical Education Teacher Candidates Under Accreditation Frameworks**

Under the dual influence of institutional guidance from teacher education accreditation and the value orientation of the spirit of educators, physical education (PE) teacher candidates are undergoing a transformation from external compliance to internal self-awareness in their educational beliefs, teaching behaviors, and professional ethics. The cultivation of this spirit requires not only value guidance and institutional frameworks but, more importantly, systematic implementation at the level of educational practice. Accordingly, three interconnected dimensions—curriculum design, practical engagement, and institutional safeguards—should together form a comprehensive implementation framework to construct a multidimensional practice system for cultivating the spirit of educators.

### **4.1. Building Viable Carriers for Spiritual Cultivation**

Curriculum constitutes the primary arena for embedding and realizing the spirit of educators. To institutionalize the cultivation of this spirit within the PE teacher education system, every course, training session, and teaching activity must serve as a conduit for transmitting its values. PE instructors should consistently embody the ideal of "embracing the greater self and serving the nation with utmost sincerity," exemplify the moral integrity of "setting an example through words and deeds," and exercise the pedagogical wisdom of "enlightening minds and nurturing hearts through tailored instruction." Through their conduct, they exert a subtle yet enduring influence on students' moral character and spiritual growth[8] 9. At the curricular-objective level, the core elements of the spirit of educators should be explicitly embedded across general education, disciplinary specialization, and teacher-education courses to ensure value orientation and coherence throughout the training system. At the content level, key courses such as Physical Education Curriculum and Pedagogy, Foundations of Education, and School Physical Education should incorporate thematic modules on the spirit of educators through case studies, analyses of exemplary teachers, and engagement with educational narratives. These approaches help PE teacher candidates internalize and identify with core educational values. At the implementation level, universities should establish a "curricular cluster on the spirit of educators," integrating value education with professional learning through cross-disciplinary collaboration. Such integration transforms the spirit of educators from a declarative ideal into an intrinsic learning logic and lived educational experience. By creating a curriculum system that is both value-driven and practice-oriented, the spirit of educators evolves from conceptual advocacy into an internal force shaping students' learning trajectories and professional formation. Through this process, PE teacher candidates not only acquire pedagogical competence but also cultivate the moral strength and professional ethos required of teachers in the new era.

## 4.2. Strengthening Practical Pathways for Cultivating the Spirit of Educators

The formation of the spirit of educators cannot be separated from the verification of educational practice. Karl Marx distinguished the “real spirit” from the “speculative spirit,” innovatively grounding the existence of spirit in the realm of practice rather than abstraction[7]. Following the principle of integrating thought and action, and unifying knowledge and practice, physical education (PE) teacher candidates should cultivate, internalize, and embody the spirit of educators through active engagement in practice. Within universities, Experiential Teaching Workshops on the Spirit of Educators can be established to integrate microteaching, simulated classrooms, and reflective teaching exercises. These activities immerse students in authentic teaching scenarios, guiding them to comprehend the deeper educational meaning of enlightening minds and nurturing virtue. During teaching internships and community service, “spiritual growth portfolios” should be developed, incorporating indicators such as compassion, diligence, and reflective awareness into practicum assessment systems. Simultaneously, PE teacher candidates should be encouraged to participate in rural education initiatives and volunteer sports programs, allowing them to experience educational responsibility through service and cultivate professional commitment through dedication. Through the progressive process of actional experience, emotional resonance, and value reflection, the spirit of educators is transformed within PE teacher candidates from cognitive recognition to practical embodiment. This transformation signifies not only the internalization of values but also their creative regeneration within the lived realities of teaching practice.

## 4.3. Improving Institutional Safeguards for Spiritual Cultivation

Cultivating the spirit of educators requires a stable and scientific support system—anchored in systematic evaluation, feedback, and incentive mechanisms—to ensure its effective implementation and long-term sustainability. The first priority is to establish a multi-dimensional evaluation framework based on teacher education program accreditation, translating the abstract connotations of the spirit of educators into observable and assessable indicators. At the course assessment level, open-ended situational tasks reflecting pedagogical wisdom and professional ethics should be included in evaluation standards. The moral and value-guiding dimensions embedded in lesson planning and classroom simulations should also serve as core grading criteria. At the teaching practice level, universities and partner K–12 schools should co-develop observation rubrics on teachers’ moral and professional conduct. Using these rubrics, university mentors and frontline school teachers jointly evaluate the qualities of compassion, professional ethics, and reflective thinking demonstrated by PE teacher candidates. In the graduation outcome analysis, multi-source data—such as graduate surveys and employer interviews—should be used to examine “soft indicators” like educational commitment and vocational beliefs. These findings can provide empirical evidence to guide the continuous optimization of training programs. A dynamic documentation and feedback mechanism should also be established throughout the entire training process. Each PE teacher candidate should have a digital portfolio of spiritual growth, continuously recording

the development of their professional and moral qualities in coursework, educational practice, and extracurricular activities. Based on these records, a Spirit of Educators Progress Report system should be introduced, wherein mentor teams periodically provide individualized evaluations and developmental recommendations. These reports should serve as essential references for academic assessment and career recommendations, helping students achieve self-perfection and sustained spiritual growth. Finally, faculty development is crucial to ensuring the unity of teaching by word and by example. Regular workshops on the spirit of educators should be organized to enhance teachers’ moral cultivation and educational capabilities, encouraging them to integrate spiritual education throughout professional instruction. Teacher performance appraisal and promotion criteria should place greater emphasis on the effectiveness of moral education and students’ spiritual growth outcomes. Through this approach, a shared spiritual community of teachers and students can be established—mutually fostering growth and advancing together—thus providing a solid foundation for cultivating the spirit of educators among PE teacher candidates.

## 5. Conclusion

The spirit of educators serves as the moral compass for building the teaching profession in the new era and as a core driving force for enhancing the quality and depth of teacher education. Under the guidance of teacher education accreditation, the cultivation of this spirit among PE teacher candidates has transcended the scope of individual curricular reform to become a comprehensive system requiring coordinated advancement across training objectives, instructional processes, practicum components, and evaluation mechanisms. By concretizing the spirit of educators into behavioral indicators within accreditation standards, embedding it as a value-guiding principle from classroom instruction to teaching practice, and integrating it into the culture of continuous improvement, PE teacher education achieves the deep fusion of professional competence and moral conviction. Looking ahead, it is essential to further strengthen the constructive interaction between accreditation standards and the spirit of educators—building an education system with clear objectives, practical pathways, and robust safeguards. Such efforts will enable PE teacher candidates to transcend the role of mere transmitters of athletic skills and become genuine guides for student growth. In doing so, this framework lays a solid foundation for cultivating a new generation of physical education teachers who shoulder the mission of national rejuvenation and provides sustained high-quality faculty support for realizing China’s vision of becoming an education powerhouse.

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