

# Exploring the Path of Cultivating “Three Spirits” in Higher Vocational Colleges and Universities

Chunyang Guo\*

Chongqing Energy College, Chongqing 402260, China

\*Corresponding author: Chunyang Guo, gchuy@163.com

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**Abstract:** The “three spirits” is a strategic concept for the comprehensive construction of a strong modernized socialist country in the new era, and it is an important way for higher vocational colleges to cultivate high-quality technical and skilled talents. The “three spirits” consist of the spirit of labor, the spirit of model workers, and the spirit of craftsmanship. This paper proposes labor education as the basis, three-dimensional coeducation of classroom, extracurricular, and practical, and integration of school and enterprise in cultivation, to explore practical ways to cultivate the “three spirits” in higher vocational students.

**Keywords:** Higher vocational colleges and universities; Three spirits; Cultivation paths

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## 1. Introduction

The implementation of the strategy for a strong manufacturing country to realize the Chinese dream of rejuvenating the Chinese nation requires tens of millions of high-quality technical and skilled talents. Higher vocational colleges and universities bear the important responsibility of cultivating high-quality professional and technical talents for the country, and they are the backbone of delivering a large number of virtuous and qualified workers to the country. Inheriting and carrying forward the spirit of model worker, labor, and craftsmanship, hereinafter referred to as the “three spirits”, in higher vocational education can not only effectively promote the development of China’s higher vocational education, but also play a very important role in the promotion of China’s socialist modernization.

## 2. Fully understand the significance of cultivating and promoting the “three spirits”

### 2.1. Cultivating the “three spirits” for the national spirit

On September 10, 2018, the National Education Conference proposed to promote the spirit of labor, education, and guidance for students to advocate labor, respect labor, and understand that labor is glorious, noble,

and great <sup>[1]</sup>. On November 24, 2020, the National Model Workers and Advanced Workers Commendation Conference, pointed out that the spirit of the model worker, the spirit of labor, the spirit of work, and the spirit of craftsmanship are the core of the spirit of nationalism. Emphasizing patriotism as the national spirit of reform and innovation is to inspire the whole nation of all ethnic groups of the people to work hard despite hardships <sup>[2]</sup>.

The Education Law of the People's Republic of China revised in 2021 puts forward the new goal of "cultivating socialist builders and successors who are all-rounded in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, and aesthetics." From the view of national law, labor has been incorporated into the quality structure of students' comprehensive development. In the quality structure of the all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, and aesthetics, labor can promote the cultivation of students to establish a correct attitude towards labor and labor habits, and play an important role in cultivating morality, intelligence, physical fitness, and aesthetics through labor.

"Skills to become talents, skills to serve the country" is in line with the modern developmental theme, but also the inevitable requirements of cultivating outstanding socialist successors. As a kind of spiritual culture, the "three spirits" convey the distinctive value orientation of revering labor, respecting models, and learning from craftsmen, and contain the spiritual character of socialist laborers who should pursue a lofty state of mind, noble morality, excellent style, positive attitude, and noble pursuit. Cultivating and promoting the "three spirits" is an urgent requirement for implementing the important instructions of the CPC Central Committee and the party's education policy in the new era, and it is also a practical need to improve the quality of education and realize the overall goal of cultivating morality and educating people. Promoting the "three spirits" is an important way for higher vocational colleges and universities to implement the fundamental task of establishing moral character <sup>[3]</sup>.

## **2.2. Cultivating the "three spirits" to improve higher vocational students**

Higher vocational students should utilize their profession or skills in the labor process. However, there is a dilution of the status quo and a reduction in labor quality among current students. Through the questionnaire survey of nearly 300 students in the college, nearly 90% of the students come from rural areas such as townships, and the number of times they take the initiative to clean their dormitories and classrooms more than three times a week is about 30%, and most of the students lack the awareness of labor and tend to rely on the duty roster or cope with the work, and some even turn a blind eye to the schedule, which leads to the uncleanliness of the dormitories. The students who take the initiative to tidy up the tools after class in the school training courses are not enough, with less than 60% of the students aware of tool hygiene, and more than 20% of them not willing to be model workers.

The reasons for these phenomena are that in the current social environment, families do not pay much attention to children's labor education, so a considerable number of children lack the concept of labor, leading to the "lying flat" ideology. Secondly, the students tend to have utilitarian values, their concept of service as the purpose and labor practice is poor, and they tend to be egoists, only doing things directly related to personal interests. Thirdly, there is a prejudice against the division of labor and a failure to correctly understand the value of labor. In short, students are affected by a variety of external factors, especially by the network environment of hedonism, individualism, and other trends of thought, coupled with their immaturity, so their labor consciousness is relatively weak, and are greedy to enjoy the fruits of labor, but unwilling to assume the obligation of labor. Therefore, higher vocational colleges and universities should cultivate and promote the "three spirits" to implement the fundamental task of moral education. Students should enter society for labor with good professional spirit, using their noble professional ethics and behavior to promote the development of the industry or profession, and then promote the development and progress of the whole society.

### **2.3. Cultivating the “three spirits” for promoting the reform of talent cultivation**

On November 24, 2020, the National Model Workers and Advanced Workers Commendation Conference profoundly elaborated the essence of the “three spirits”, “in the long-term practice, we have cultivated the formation of love and dedication to their work, strive for excellence, hard work, the courage to innovate, indifferent to fame and fortune, and willing to dedicate to the spirit of the model workers, the spirit of respect for labor, love of labor, love of work, and dedication to the spirit of the model workers. We have cultivated and formed the spirit of model workers, the spirit of labor, the spirit of reverence for labor, love of labor, hard work, honest labor, and the spirit of craftsmen, who are persistent and dedicated, meticulous, and striving for excellence.” The spirit of model worker focuses on promoting the spirit of exemplary role models, the spirit of labor advocates the encouragement of labor, and the spirit of craftsmanship is a spiritual quality that arises from a more specific group of people and a specific scenario, such as the spirit of outstanding skilled laborers in the process of production and labor.

Among these three spirits, the spirit of labor is the prerequisite and foundation for the emergence of the spirit of model worker and craftsmanship. First of all, labor is the way for human beings to maintain their survival and development; without labor, there would be no human survival, and there would be no carrier of the spirit of model workers and craftsmanship. Secondly, the initial identity of model workers and craftsmen is, after all, a worker, and a worker without the spirit of labor cannot become a model worker or a craftsman. Only when a worker deeply grasps the significance and value of labor will they transform it into an inexhaustible spiritual impetus to motivate themselves to keep pursuing advancement to achieve the specific spirit of model workers and craftsmanship.

Based on the above analysis, the spirit of labor should be a universal spiritual quality of human beings, and model workers and craftsmen originate from the spirit of labor. Therefore, in the cultivation of higher vocational students, the spirit of labor can be regarded as the basic quality of students, and the cultivation of the spirit of model workers and craftsmanship is the improvement on this basis <sup>[4]</sup>.

## **3. Paths and methods for cultivating the “three spirits”**

### **3.1. Labor education as the foundation**

The spirit of labor is the basis of the spirit of model workers and craftsmanship, and it is also a necessary condition for the survival and development of human beings. Therefore, vocational colleges and universities should make students’ labor assessment a mandatory condition for graduation. First, a compulsory labor system should be implemented. Students must be obliged to participate in a variety of compulsory labor organized by the school, such as cleaning practical training venues, classrooms, dormitories, and other public areas. Schools should enforce the evaluation of excellence, scholarships, and awards to make the corresponding punishment for bad students. With this punishment system, students are urged to develop good daily behavior and cultivate the spirit of labor. The second is to establish a labor evaluation system. Schools should incorporate labor evaluation into the comprehensive quality evaluation system of students, formulate evaluation methods and standards, establish public evaluation and other related systems, make labor education a compulsory course, increase corresponding credits, incorporate it into the talent cultivation program of higher vocational colleges and universities, and strengthen the assessment of labor skills and value cognition. Schools should also organize and carry out activities such as demonstration of labor skills and labor achievements, labor competitions, and so on, and record not only the results of cultivating the concept of labor but also the process to ensure that the spirit of labor is implemented into daily behaviors through the system.

### **3.2. The three-dimensional co-education of classroom, extracurricular, and practical**

The ideology of the curriculum should be implemented in the classroom. First of all, teaching needs to focus on creating a great atmosphere of learning model workers, glorious labor, paying attention to teachers or students around the “three spirits”, guiding students to participate in the discussion of real issues, and cultivating students’ model worker sentiment. Secondly, for the professional skills courses, schools should sort out and excavate the elements of political thinking and education in students, and make the hidden purpose of political thinking and education in professional knowledge visible through course political thinking, so that students can understand the value of the meaning behind professional knowledge and skills, and understand the meaning of what they are learning and how they will use what they learned.

Schools should implement expanding extracurricular activities and practicing thought leadership by carrying out various activities with the theme of promoting the “three spirits.” Schools can use clubs to set up educational bases, collect traditional cultural education materials, combine them with modern workplace cases, hold regular lectures and exchanges on Chinese excellent traditional culture, lead students to read traditional cultural classics in a planned manner, organize audio-visual materials on excellent traditional culture so they can learn the beneficial components of the spirit of labor, craftsmanship, and model worker, and carry forward the spirit of industriousness, dedication, and striving for excellence. Schools can carry out a series of activities to learn the “three spirits”, such as speech contests, storytelling sessions, and short video contests, to guide students to spontaneously learn more about the spirit of labor, model worker, and craftsmanship.

Co-education between schools and enterprises is needed to realize role model guidance. The cooperation between schools and enterprises should be strengthened by understanding the needs of enterprises. Hiring industry experts and enterprise technical workers to the school as part-time teachers to teach technical skills, labor stories, and history of struggle to the students, can form hard-working, meticulous craftsmanship, and subconsciously influence the students to cultivate the “three spirits.”

Students should practice exercise, personal experience, and understanding. First, regular internships should be implemented. Schools should organize students to school-enterprise cooperation enterprises each year for a certain period for internships so that students can participate in field labor and understand the “three spirits” through personal experience. The second is the organization of various forms of on-campus voluntary work and public welfare activities so that students can experience the hard-working character of labor of the “three spirits.” Third, schools should actively encourage students to participate in social practice activities during the summer and winter vacation to, evaluate outstanding students to promote the “three spirits.”

### **3.3. Combine school and enterprise to cultivate the “three spirits”**

When in school, skill competitions are used to refine students’ growth. First of all, no matter which level or type of skills competition, it will certainly contain certain technical skills standards, and the quality, craftsmanship, and precision of the work are important standards for measuring the skill level of the participants, which will certainly emphasize the elements of striving for excellence. Secondly, the students selected for the skills competition are bound to be excellent in technical skills and possess excellent qualities. The process of preparing for the competition is bound to be full of hardships, requiring students to train repeatedly, defy difficulties, and devote themselves, so students can cultivate the qualities of not being afraid of hardship, innovation, and concentration. The students who have won prizes in the skills competitions are often the high-skilled talents that the various enterprises and units are competing for. In the future, they will become masters of skills with top talents, so referring to them as role models will directly motivate the students to study hard to reach their goals. Therefore, skills competition is a good way to cultivate students’ “three spirits.”

After graduation, a graduate tracking system should be implemented to keep track of their progress. First, schools should establish a regular communication system with the cooperative enterprises, and pay regular visits to the graduates to understand their work and development in the units. Secondly, schools should establish a platform for the exchange of graduates, and provide guidance and suggestions for the issues encountered by the graduates after they have started to work, to guide the students to correctly realize that the spirit of labor is the necessary quality of workers, the spirit of model worker is the exemplary model of workers, and the spirit of craftsmanship is the quality of workers so that the students can successfully realize the quality of workers in the actual work with the “three spirits.” This will enable students to realize the transformation from students to model workers and craftsmen in actual work.

#### **4. Guarantee measures to promote the “three spirits”**

System construction is an important means to promote school management. In the development of student management, schools should integrate the “three spirits” into internship training, assessment, evaluation, school regulation, and school-enterprise cooperation. First, the school should implement moral and technical training systems, such as skills training and school-enterprise cooperation. The implementation of alternating work and study vocational practice courses with job experience internship training allows students to be personally involved in the production process of the enterprise as a part of ideological education. In terms of ideological education, cases of ideological education courses with characteristics of vocational education are selected and gathered to promote in students. At the same time, the cultivation of “three spirits” is integrated into the classroom ideology and skills training, to strengthen the in-depth combination of students’ professional knowledge and vocational spirit. Secondly, the teachers should take the initiative to enter the employing organization. By visiting enterprises and understanding the development status of the employing units and the demands of the industry, teachers can learn to organically integrate the “three spirits” into their teachings. Schools should take the initiative to invite industry experts and scholars to the campus to give lectures, publicize the advanced deeds, and become role models for the students <sup>[2]</sup>.

The third is to increase education and publicity. The campus environment is the space for teachers and students to work, study, and live, so the elements of model workers and craftsmanship should be integrated into the school buildings, roads, classrooms, and training bases, to emphasize the “three spirits.” This productive atmosphere with the help of the media, such as the opening of the alumni column, can produce excellent and outstanding students. The publication of the alumni column can display the growth history of outstanding graduates in enterprises, the advanced deeds of industrial labor models, and the excellent qualities and contributions of master craftsmen in front of the teachers and students, acting as role models to help the students set up correct labor values and guiding them to set up a noble goal in life.

In conclusion, cultivating and promoting the “three spirits” is an important task for talent cultivation in higher vocational colleges and universities in the new era, and is also a realistic demand for comprehensive improvement of the overall quality of higher vocational students. Higher vocational colleges and universities should combine their characteristics and strengthen the ideological and moral construction of teachers and students in campus culture construction from the classroom, extracurricular, practice, and so on. Higher vocational colleges and universities should also deepen the cooperation between schools and enterprises via practical training and practice, joint cultivation of schools and enterprises, to make the cultivation of the “three spirits” a practical reality, thus improving the comprehensive quality of higher vocational students and promoting the high-quality development of higher vocational education.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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