

# *Exploration of Tao Xingzhi's Thought on Normal Education and Training Strategies for Normal Students in Mountainous Areas*

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**Abstract:** This article is guided by Tao Xingzhi's ideas on teacher education, and analyzes in depth the problems in the cultivation of normal students in the mountainous areas of southwestern Zhejiang: the system and evaluation mechanism for teacher ethics cultivation urgently need to be improved, the cultivation of mountain sentiment urgently needs to be strengthened, further emphasis should be placed on the cultivation of disciplinary thinking, and the cultivation of collaborative education ability urgently needs to be strengthened. Based on the analysis of the problem, the following countermeasures were proposed: improving the teacher ethics cultivation system, optimizing the teacher ethics evaluation mechanism, improving rural life courses, optimizing the emotional environment in mountainous areas, optimizing subject learning strategies, strengthening subject ideology cultivation, optimizing collaborative education environment, and enhancing collaborative education capabilities.

## 1. Introduction

In March 1927, Tao Xingzhi founded a rural normal school, Xiaozhuang Normal School, Tao Xingzhi once said that there were shortcomings in the old normal education, such as the tendency towards urbanization, agriculturalization, and foreignization in the old normal education. At the same time, based on critical absorption of Western educational thoughts such as Dewey, Strayer, Kebertschen, and Meng Lu, he integrated Chinese local cultural traditions and cultural resources and carried out a creative transformation of modern normal education, In the introspection practice of establishing Xiaozhuang Normal School, and in the reflective practice of establishing Xiaozhuang Normal School, it has formed its highly representative idea of localizing rural teacher training. Lishui School of Zhejiang Province follows the law of teacher education and talent training, implements the training goal of comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physique, beauty, and labor, and adheres to the main battlefield of teacher training in the mountainous areas of southwest Zhejiang. Guided by Mr. Tao Xingzhi's "action is the beginning of

knowledge, knowledge is the result of action" and "action is to seek knowledge and better action", it takes moral cultivation as its fundamental task to promote the all-round development of students and cultivate outstanding teachers in mountainous areas with "feelings in mountainous areas" and "spirit of action and knowledge"<sup>[1]</sup>. The goal is to cultivate outstanding teachers in mountainous areas with "feelings for mountainous areas" and a "spirit of action and knowledge". However, in the training practice of normal university students, there are still some problems, such as the imperfect cultivation system and evaluation mechanism of teachers' ethics, the need to further develop local feelings, the need to further strengthen the discipline thought, and the urgent need to improve the ability of collaborative education. Therefore, this article takes Tao Xingzhi's practice texts before and after the establishment of Xiaozhuang Normal School as the research object, takes Tao Xingzhi's normal education thought as the theoretical guidance, combs the connotation of Tao Xingzhi's localization of rural teacher training thought, and puts forward the practice strategy of rural teacher training in the southwest mountainous area of Zhejiang province.

## **2. The theoretical connotation of Tao Xingzhi's thought on teacher education**

### **2.1 A whip method to guide the teaching method in mountainous areas**

One whip method refers to the integration of teaching and practice. In "The Construction of Normal Education in China", Tao Xingzhi clearly stated: "The method of teaching should be based on the method of learning, and the method of learning should be based on the method of doing." He emphasizes putting action at the center, believing that action comes first and that both the teacher's teaching and the student's learning can be unified in action. This theory of "integrating teaching and practice" centered on "doing" is a perfect and scientific understanding of "teaching", emphasizing the connection between theory and practice, and correctly handling the relationship between teachers, normal students, and practice in the process of cultivating normal students, greatly enhancing the practical ability of normal students in rural life.

### **2.2 A system to guide the way of teaching in mountainous areas**

One system is the Art Friend System, which is a great invention of Tao Xingzhi's promotion of teacher education and a major feature of his teacher education. The so-called Art Friend System uses the identity of friends to teach people how to be teachers, with those who teach doing teaching and those who learn doing learning. Teachers and scholars should achieve "co-teaching, co-learning, and co doing". Through the art friendship system, young people can act as friends with each other as career experts based on their interests and talents, develop together, and cultivate educational talents more quickly, efficiently, and economically. Inspired by the art friend system, the mountain area has coordinated various teaching methods such as young teacher teaching and group mutual evaluation to strengthen collaborative education, so that normal university students can actively participate in the teaching process, play the main role, and have creative ability, and form a virtuous cycle<sup>[2]</sup>.

### **2.3 The Four Spirits Lead the Goal of Cultivating Talents in Mountainous Areas**

Tao Xingzhi emphasized that normal students should possess four spirits: great love, dedication, creation, and seeking truth. First of all, his great love spirit of "teaching people tirelessly and connecting hearts" reflects his deep emotion of "treating students like their own children", which has important enlightenment for cultivating normal university students with rural feelings in mountainous areas. Secondly, with the spirit of dedication of "people first, sacrificing oneself for

others", Tao Xingzhi devoted his whole life to popularizing education, being honest and generous, and integrating the spirit of dedication into the daily life of normal university students through the guidance of example and other forms. Furthermore, he advocates the creative spirit of "never giving up and daring to explore", and encourages the exploration of unknown truths and new fields, and his life education theory and innovative teaching models have a profound impact on the cultivation of teachers in mountainous areas. Finally, he adhered to the spirit of seeking truth and learning to be a real person, emphasizing that the responsibility of teachers is to teach people to seek truth, and the goal of students is to learn to be a real person. This spirit inspires normal school students in mountainous areas to courageously pursue truth and dare to question authority.

### **3. Analysis of the problems in the cultivation of normal students in mountainous areas**

#### **3.1 The system and evaluation mechanism for cultivating teacher ethics urgently need to be improved**

Firstly, in terms of the full disciplinary penetration required by teacher ethics, the current teacher ethics education for normal students in mountainous areas is often limited to specific teacher ethics courses or lectures, and has not been closely integrated with the teaching practices of various disciplines. This isolated approach to teacher ethics education makes it difficult for normal students to deeply understand and appreciate the connotation and requirements of teacher ethics, and also unable to truly integrate teacher ethics concepts into their teaching practices. Secondly, in terms of comprehensive education, the cultivation of normal students in mountainous areas often focuses too much on the cultivation of classroom teaching skills, while neglecting the educational responsibilities of teachers in extracurricular activities, student management, and home-school communication. Furthermore, it is particularly important to pay full attention to the cultivation of teacher ethics throughout the process<sup>[3]</sup>. In the current training of normal students in mountainous areas, teacher ethics education and evaluation are often only carried out at specific time points or stages, lacking continuity and coherence. This intermittent training method makes it difficult to ensure the effectiveness and quality of cultivating teacher ethics among normal students. In addition, academic work and academic affairs are two important pillars in the cultivation of normal students, and their coordination and cooperation are crucial for the comprehensive development of normal students. However, in practice, due to the differences in job responsibilities and work contents, the work of students and educational work is often independent, lacking effective communication and cooperation.

#### **3.2 The cultivation of mountain feelings urgently needs to be strengthened**

Firstly, regarding the characteristic courses in mountainous areas, although some courses offered to mountainous areas have been attempted, their coverage is still insufficient and they have not fully and deeply demonstrated the unique charm and educational needs of mountainous areas. At the same time, the characteristics of these courses are not clear enough, lacking sufficient attraction and infectiousness, making it difficult to effectively stimulate the love and emotions of normal students toward mountainous areas. Secondly, the environment for cultivating emotions in mountainous areas also needs further optimization. At present, our training environment has not yet fully created a strong mountainous atmosphere, lacking opportunities and platforms for normal student trainees to personally experience and experience mountainous areas. The lack of such an environment makes it difficult for normal school students to truly integrate into and understand mountainous areas, nor can they deeply appreciate the hardships and beauty of mountainous education. To sum up, to further strengthen the cultivation of mountainous sentiment, we need to start by expanding

characteristic courses in mountainous areas, optimizing the training environment, strengthening campus cultural construction, and improving incentive mechanisms. We need to comprehensively enhance the awareness and understanding of normal students towards mountainous areas, cultivate their deep feelings and sense of responsibility towards mountainous areas, and inject new vitality into the development of education in mountainous areas.

### **3.3 Further attention should be paid to the cultivation of discipline ideology**

In the current education system, it is not difficult to find a common phenomenon: in the implementation process of subject literacy, educators and learners often focus more on imparting and mastering subject knowledge and skills. This approach that places too much emphasis on knowledge and skills also brings some problems. The most prominent issue among them is the neglect of deep-seated content such as disciplinary ideas and methods. The disciplinary ideas and methods behind this knowledge and skills are not only the essence of the disciplinary knowledge system but also important qualities that students need to have in their future education and teaching work. They can help students better understand the essence and laws of the subject, improve their ability to analyze and solve problems, and thus better cope with various challenges in their future teaching careers. Unfortunately, there is still relatively little coverage of these contents in our education system at present. Many students, after completing their studies, may have acquired certain subject knowledge and skills, but their understanding of subject ideas and methods appears relatively weak. This undoubtedly limits the improvement of their teaching realm and level and also affects their professionalism as future teachers.

### **3.4 The cultivation of collaborative education ability needs to be strengthened**

The cultivation of collaborative education ability among teacher trainees is an important issue in the current education field. However, we have not yet established a complete and effective mechanism and method to support the cultivation of this ability. Firstly, in terms of campus culture, normal students often fail to deeply understand the rich educational value it contains. At present, many normal university students still have a superficial understanding of campus culture, which undoubtedly weakens its potential role in collaborative education. Secondly, due to geographical limitations, there are not many opportunities for home-school collaboration and practical connections between schools and communities, which limits the possibility for normal students to accumulate educational experience in a broader social environment<sup>[4]</sup>. In addition, communication and exchange between different subjects also appear to be quite limited. In modern society, the integration and intersection of knowledge have become a trend, and the field of education is no exception. However, currently, many normal students are still accustomed to making cars behind closed doors in their academic fields, lacking awareness and ability to communicate and cooperate with other disciplines. This is not conducive to the formation of a comprehensive and comprehensive knowledge system for normal students and also restricts their further improvement in collaborative education ability.

## **4. Practical Strategies for Cultivating Normal Students in Mountainous Areas**

### **4.1 Improve the system for cultivating teacher ethics and optimize the mechanism for evaluating teacher ethics**

We should deepen the research and practice of the cultivation system of teacher's ethics, build a scientific and effective cultivation system of teacher's ethics with professional characteristics,

innovate the evaluation and feedback mechanism of teacher's ethics, promote the in-depth development of the cultivation education of teacher's ethics, and train normal university students to become rural teachers in mountainous areas with "mountain feelings", "professional ethics" and "normal temperament". Firstly, building a school-based education system for cultivating distinctive teacher ethics. Building a teacher ethics education system centered on the spirit of practical knowledge, with theoretical guidance, experiential focus, integration of practical knowledge, all-round penetration, and full process design. Through the independent choice, active participation, self-experience, and self-reflection of normal university students, the level of teachers' ethics can be improved. Secondly, improve the series of school-based teacher ethics development activities. Based on the training objectives and graduation requirements, a systematic design will be carried out for the "Xingzhi Cup" series of activities, with orderly promotion and gradual improvement of requirements from first grade to fourth grade. Thirdly, optimize the education environment for cultivating school-based characteristic teacher ethics. Taking "Xingzhi Culture" as the theme, further optimizes the educational environment, closely combines Xingzhi courses, teaching Tao Xingzhi education activities, teacher ethics practice, and environmental education, and fully leverages the educational effect of the "Xingzhi" brand. Fourthly, implement the assessment and evaluation system for cultivating teacher ethics, and innovate the teacher ethics evaluation feedback mechanism. Taking the reform of "comprehensive quality evaluation of students" as the breakthrough point, the concepts of process evaluation and self-evaluation are integrated into the evaluation of teacher ethics development, and the indicators of teacher ethics development are moderately quantified. The system plays the role of curriculum penetration, teacher demonstration, activity experience, environment influence, and evaluation reflection, effectively promoting the standardized development of teacher ethics among normal students.

#### **4.2 Improve the curriculum of rural life, optimize the emotional environment of mountainous areas**

Deepen the research on the characteristics and cultivation of teachers in mountainous areas, and further clarify the connotation and cultivation methods of "mountainous sentiment" among normal students. Firstly, conduct special research to highlight the characteristic courses of "knowing and doing". Organize teachers to conduct specialized research on the characteristics and cultivation of teachers in mountainous areas, and use theoretical achievements to drive in-depth practical activities. By leveraging the "Rural Education Research Institute" platform and combining full-time and part-time positions, we will introduce relevant teachers, strengthen the construction of characteristic courses in mountainous areas, and enhance the influence of characteristic courses in mountainous areas. Secondly, Continuous specialized promotion. Continuously promote the concept of "two mountains" and the development of mountainous areas, enhance the understanding of teachers and students towards mountainous areas, and stimulate their enthusiasm for serving and building mountainous areas. Thirdly, Reform the teaching methods of educational courses to achieve the integration of tacit education knowledge and explicit education theory knowledge. Role flipping, using students to design lesson plans, showcasing their tacit knowledge, comparing excellent lesson plans, developing their tacit knowledge, analyzing specific activities, reflecting on their tacit knowledge, and forming an understanding of the relationship between tacit education knowledge and explicit education theory in practical educational and teaching scenarios. Fourthly, the practical course runs through the entire process. Guided by Mr. Tao Xingzhi's concept of "integrating teaching and practice", we strengthen practical orientation, and ensure that experimental and practical training courses run through the entire process, promoting the improvement of student's basic abilities. Provide attempts and experiences to cultivate teaching

abilities through relevant practical training courses, short semester practical training weeks, "Xingzhi Class" projects, mountainous characteristic courses, and laboratory open projects. Through four years of practical training in OPSPR, we could comprehensively enhance students' comprehensive teaching abilities.

#### **4.3 Optimize the discipline learning strategy, strengthen the discipline thought cultivation**

We need to deepen research and practice in cultivating disciplinary thinking, and strengthen the cultivation of student disciplinary thinking. One is to fully leverage the exemplary and leading role of teachers. Through various methods such as academic discussions and standardized requirements, clear requirements for subject ideology research and teaching are proposed to full-time teachers in their respective majors, promoting the formation of clear subject ideology among students. Secondly, schools should emphasize classroom teaching reform. Shift the focus of the classroom from teaching to learning, requiring teachers to use more methods such as case teaching, blended learning, and cooperative learning to promote students' understanding of the essence of the subject and improve teaching quality. The third is to pay attention to timely introducing cutting-edge knowledge in the discipline. Put forward clear requirements for the selection of teaching content, and strengthen the mastery of the development process and research methods of the discipline. Fourthly, emphasize the integration of disciplinary knowledge. We aim to enhance students' awareness and ability to integrate through the design of subject integration topics. Fifth, broaden the channels for subject learning. Further expand inter school and international communication channels, and improve the academic learning level of students.

#### **4.4 Optimize the environment for collaborative education and enhance the ability of collaborative education**

Deepen research and practice in collaborative education, optimize the collaborative education environment, and cultivate students' awareness and ability in collaborative education through environmental cultivation and practical training. Firstly, strengthen the awareness of collaboration. In student management and educational activities, emphasis is placed on the collaboration between teachers and students within the school, as well as the collaboration between schools and governments, schools and schools outside the school. Systematic design and implementation are carried out for student development. Integrated design before and after employment, orderly implementation of educational and teaching activities, and distinctive creation of student growth environment, etc., enable students to grow, experience, and comprehend in collaboration. Secondly, establish an effective mechanism for cultivating collaborative education, closely combining in-class experimental training with extracurricular practical training<sup>[5]</sup>. On-campus experimental training is mainly based on the "integration of teaching and practice" teacher education innovation practice base and smart education experience center, focusing on skill training. By implementing classroom teaching (skills courses), short-term experimental training, open laboratory projects, and experimental courses, a skills foundation is laid for improving educational and teaching abilities as well as extracurricular practical teaching; Establish a "three in one" collaborative education mechanism with local education administrative departments and primary and secondary schools (kindergartens) outside of school, with clear rights and responsibilities, stable coordination, and win-win cooperation, forming a collaborative community that integrates teacher training, scientific research, and services.

## 5. Conclusions

In summary, the training of teacher trainees in mountainous areas faces multiple challenges, among which the cultivation of teacher ethics, the cultivation of mountain sentiment, the cultivation of disciplinary thinking, and the enhancement of collaborative nurturing ability are particularly prominent. To address these problems, we should take Tao Xingzhi's thoughts on teacher education as a guide, deepen the education and teaching reform, improve the system and assessment mechanism of teacher ethics, strengthen the cultivation of mountain sentiment, optimize the learning strategy of disciplines, strengthen the cultivation of disciplinary thinking, and improve the ability of collaborative parenting at the same time.

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