

# The Development Status and Cultivation Pathway of Rural Elites' Spirit Among Public-Funded Teacher Trainees

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## Abstract

Under the Rural Revitalization Strategy, Public-Funded teacher trainees serve as a core force in revitalizing rural education. Cultivating their spirit of rural elites is crucial for preserving rural culture and enhancing educational quality. This study employed a self-developed "Rural Elites' Spirit Scale for Public-Funded Teacher Trainees" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.980$ ) to conduct an empirical survey of 539 such trainees in Guangdong Province of China, systematically analyzing the development status across six dimensions. Key findings reveal: (1) While the overall level of rural elites' spirit is favorable ( $M = 4.241$ ), significant structural imbalances exist across dimensions: Gentleman Spirit ( $M = 4.412$ ) and Teacher's Spirit ( $M = 4.281$ ) are notably strong, whereas Dedication Spirit demonstrates significant weakness ( $M = 4.039$ ) and exhibits the largest individual variation ( $SD = 0.715$ ). (2) Significant differences exist based on rural/urban background: Trainees from rural backgrounds outperformed their urban counterparts in Dedication Spirit, Sincerity Spirit (Filial Piety), Gentleman Spirit, and Teacher's Spirit ( $p = .015$ ,  $p = .043$ ,  $p = .048$ ,  $p = .050$ , respectively), as well as in the total score ( $p = .024$ ). (3) Insufficient post-service development motivation: No significant differences were found between current students and graduates across all dimensions and the total score ( $p > .05$ ), indicating a lack of effective mechanisms for cultivating the spirit after employment. (4) Strong synergistic effects across dimensions: Significant positive correlations were observed among all dimensions ( $r = .635 - .908$ ), with particularly strong correlations between Sincerity Spirit and Inheritance Spirit ( $r = .908$ ) and between Sincerity Spirit and Dedication Spirit ( $r = .842$ ), suggesting an emotion-driven synergistic network. Based on these findings, we propose a "Three-Dimensional Drive" cultivation pathway: addressing the deficit in Dedication Spirit through curriculum reconstruction; implementing tiered empowerment strategies to bridge group disparities; and leveraging dimensional synergy effects through integrated project-based learning. This research provides empirical evidence for addressing the dilemmas of "inability to retain" and "inability to teach effectively" among rural teachers and holds significant policy implications for strengthening the ethical foundation of educational revitalization.

**Keywords:** Public-Funded teacher trainees, rural elites' spirit, dedication spirit, rural education

## 1. Introduction

Rural schools are predominantly framed as entities requiring rescuing, revitalization, or restructuring (Blanks et al., 2013). The chronic shortage of rural teachers has escalated into a public policy crisis (Oyen & Schweinle, 2020). In recent years, alongside increased national investment in rural education and the advancement of the Rural Revitalization Strategy in China, Public-Funded teacher trainees have become increasingly prominent as a vital force in rural education. High-quality education fundamentally stems from the teacher's spiritual level, transcending reliance on textbooks and material resources (Parker, 2017). How these trainees can better integrate into rural communities and leverage their spirit of rural elites has emerged as a focal point of academic inquiry. Rural elites' spirit among Public-Funded teacher trainees represents an educational-ethical crystallization deeply rooted in China's rural society. Grounded in the gentlemanly ethos of self-cultivation and upholding integrity, centered on the mission of imparting knowledge and nurturing virtue, this spirit manifests through dedicated practices deeply embedded in local communities and sincere devotion to benefiting one's hometown. It fulfills cultural responsibilities by preserving heritage while driving rural educational revitalization and social development through innovative approaches that uphold tradition while embracing progress. Current research indicates that although Public-Funded teacher trainees play significant roles in rural education, challenges persist in cultivating their spirit of rural elites, particularly concerning theoretical frameworks and practical implementation pathways. This study aims to investigate the current developmental status of the rural elites' spirit among Public-Funded teacher trainees, propose concrete cultivation pathways, and provide references for future research directions and policy formulation.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Connotation and Value of the Rural Elites' Spirit

The spirit of rural elites constitutes a vital component of China's traditional cultural heritage, embodying multidimensional values through its profound connotations. Scholars have conducted in-depth discussions on the spirit of rural elites from different perspectives. Zhao Hao (2016) analyzed the ethical

philosophy of rural elites from three dimensions: the unity of individual life and public essence, the dialectical synthesis of moral particularity and universality, and the positive interaction between moral subjects and ethical entities. Ji Biao and Liu Qingqing (2019) explored this spirit during the Republican era, arguing that village teachers played crucial roles in promoting cultural continuity and social progress through their dedication to moral education and cultural inheritance. Ji Biao (2020) further emphasized that this spirit constitutes vital content for modern spiritual civilization development, with rural teachers serving as indispensable components driving social advancement. Li Zejuan (2020) examined the family education legacy reflected in the Qian Family Instructions, highlighting its unique significance in fostering civilized rural customs. Meng Zhaoyi et al. (2022) analyzed rural virtuous culture in Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province, identifying four core traits: reputation for integrity, principled honesty, proactive resistance, and optimistic openness. The spirit of rural elites holds profound relevance in contemporary rural education, not only enhancing social civility but also providing strong spiritual impetus for rural revitalization.

### 2.2 Current Status of Cultivating the Rural Elites' Spirit

Current cultivation efforts reveal a dichotomy between policy aspirations and implementation challenges. Zhu Yanfei et al. (2021), using comprehensive evaluation frameworks and the I-E-O model, examined three dimensions of motivation in local rural teacher training programs: application motives, learning engagement, and teaching aspirations. Their findings revealed that fixed student demographics solidified reciprocal application behaviors, while stakeholder collusion rationalized superficial learning investments. The push-pull dynamics between these factors led to excessive contractualization of teaching commitments. Li Haiping et al. (2022) noted that although the local Public-Funded teacher training policy aimed to optimize "exit-side" resource allocation, constraints like limited governmental resources and insufficient university incentives resulted in persistent challenges of "poor retention" and "incompatibility." Zhang Chunhai et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of identity reconstruction for ethnic minority rural teacher

trainees in the new era, proposing four dimensions: contemporary national identity builders, exemplary educators rooted in local communities, trailblazers for rural development, and cultural heritage ambassadors, aiming to promote high-quality rural education in ethnic regions. These findings collectively signal urgent needs for systemic refinement in cultivation frameworks and policy mechanisms.

### *2.3 Problems in Cultivating the Rural Elites' Spirit*

In depth analysis reveals that cultivating the spirit of rural elites faces multiple challenges. Liu Cheng et al. (2022) conducted an educational ethnography study revealing that rural teacher trainees develop dominant identities through policy interactions, yet the empowering and enabling roles of policies exhibit mutual constraints. Their subsequent research demonstrated that these trainees developed identity rejection under the influence of stigmatization perceptions but gradually adopted action strategies—passive compromise or proactive adaptation—through self-reconciliation and identity reconstruction. Zhang Xiaohui et al. (2022) highlighted that Public-Funded teacher trainees face role identity crises, hindering their career development and challenging the improvement of rural education quality. Xie Quanfeng et al. (2022) conducted in-depth interviews with Public-Funded teacher trainees at School S, exposing practical dilemmas including a lack of future role models, current disadvantaged positions, and residual connections from past relationships when staying in rural teaching. These challenges stem from limited professional networks, cultural-ethical structures, and local personnel management systems affecting teacher development. Qin Yiming et al. (2025) analyzed data from 20,599 Public-Funded teacher trainees nationwide, identifying grade endpoint effects in career trajectories with lower professional development levels during sophomore and junior years. These challenges stem from interconnected cognitive, institutional, and socio-ecological determinants.

### *2.4 Strategies for Cultivating the Rural Elites' Spirit*

Scholars have proposed systematic solutions to address the aforementioned issues. Luo Biqiong and Tang Songlin (2021) introduced “root-seeking education” to awaken latent rural memories, trace the life information of local culture, explore valuable historical heritage, and

cultivate future rural teachers' life consciousness, national sentiment, and cultural responsibility. Wu Xiaowei et al. (2024) conducted a three-year longitudinal study on 885 Public-Funded teacher trainees, finding that professional values surpassed professional belonging, with consistent “first decline then rise” developmental trends across dimensions. Qin Yiming et al. (2025) proposed enhancing professional development through measures like strengthening “contextualized” ethics cultivation and establishing “integrated” incentive mechanisms. Luo Biqiong et al. (2019) developed the “4ACCESS” cultivation model, emphasizing elements such as objectives, curriculum, classroom practices, practicum, culture, and conditions to build a culturally rooted training framework. Hu Ji (2022) suggested improving course systems combining pedagogy and local characteristics to address the “non-ruralization” of training content. Zhang Yichi et al. (2025) proposed the “Four Loves, Three Knows, Five Capabilities” cultural responsiveness competency structure, advocating for immersive rural cultural practice projects and exemplary educator behavior. These proposals provide critical references for constructing new-era cultivation systems.

While significant progress has been achieved, future research should prioritize:

- Empirical investigations into developmental trajectories of virtuous spirit cultivation;
- Theoretical refinement of conceptual frameworks;
- Innovative methodologies for pedagogical implementation.

Interdisciplinary approaches should forge distinctively Chinese theoretical paradigms and practical pathways, ultimately advancing rural revitalization through cultural assurance and talent development.

## **3. Research Design**

### *3.1 Research Objectives and Sample*

This study aimed to investigate the development status of Public-Funded teacher trainees' spirit of rural elites. A total of 539 participants were selected from multiple universities in Guangdong Province, China. The sample size provides robust statistical support.

Table 1 presents the basic demographic characteristics of the survey sample, analyzed

using frequency (f) and percentage (%). In terms of gender distribution, female participants accounted for 76.25%, while males made up 23.75%, resulting in a male-to-female ratio of approximately 1:3.2. This reflects the actual gender structure of public-funded teacher trainees, where women constitute a higher proportion. Regarding household location, students of rural origin accounted for 75.51%, while those of urban origin represented 24.49%, forming a roughly 3:1 ratio that highlights the predominantly rural student base, aligning with policy priorities. Regarding enrollment status, current trainees constituted 50.09%, while graduates accounted for 49.91%, maintaining a nearly balanced proportion. For educational background, undergraduates represented 58.26%, while vocational college graduates made up 41.74%, creating a 1.4:1 ratio demonstrating diverse academic levels, though undergraduates remain slightly dominant.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 539)

Factor	Items	N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	128	23.75
	Female	411	76.25
Home Location	Rural	407	75.51
	Urban	132	24.49
Status	Current Trainee	270	50.09
	Graduate	269	49.91
Education Background	Undergraduate	314	58.26
	Associate Degree	225	41.74

### 3.2 Research Instrument

This study employed questionnaire surveys to collect primary data on rural elite spirit development. This study employed a self-developed “Rural Elites’ Spirit Scale for Public-Funded Teacher Trainees” based on theoretical frameworks from Yang Like (2016), Ji Biao & Liu Qingqing (2019), Zhou Mengli (2019), Wang Caixia (2020), and Li Zejuan (2020). The scale comprises six dimensions measured by 30 items (5 items per dimension):

**Pioneering Spirit (PS):** Driving social transformation through innovation;

**Inheritance Spirit (IS):** Preserving cultural heritage and educational legacy;

**Sincerity Spirit (SS):** Serving communities through practical expertise and benefiting one’s hometown;

**Dedication Spirit (DS):** Commitment to rural development with modest means;

**Gentleman Spirit (GS):** Self-cultivation and upholding integrity;

**Teacher’s Spirit (TS):** Imparting knowledge and nurturing virtue.

**Reliability:** Table 2 shows excellent internal consistency reliability for all dimensions (Cronbach’s  $\alpha > .90$ ) and the overall scale ( $\alpha = .980$ ).

**Table 2.** Reliability of the Rural Elites’ Spirit Scale

Dimension	Abbr.	Items	Cronbach’s $\alpha$
Pioneering Spirit	PS	5	0.943
Inheritance Spirit	IS	5	0.955
Sincerity Spirit	SS	5	0.936
Dedication Spirit	DS	5	0.914
Gentleman Spirit	GS	5	0.947
Teacher’s Spirit	TS	5	0.900
<b>Total Scale</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>0.980</b>

**Validity:** Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Table 3) was highly significant (Approx.  $\chi^2 = 19512.434$ ,  $df = 435$ ,  $p < .001$ ), confirming strong correlations among items and supporting the scale’s factorability and the conceptual validity of the six-dimensional structure.

**Table 3.** Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity

Test Statistic	Value	df	p
Bartlett’s Test (Approx. $\chi^2$ )	19512.434	435	< .001

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1 Normality Test



A normality test (Table 4) was conducted on the total spirit score. Skewness ( $-0.265 < 0$ ) indicated a left-skewed distribution (more high scores), and kurtosis ( $0.535 > 0$ ) suggested a slightly peaked distribution. However, both Kolmogorov-Smirnov ( $D = 0.174$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Shapiro-Wilk ( $W = 0.902$ ,  $p < .001$ ) tests rejected

the null hypothesis of normality. This non-normality, reflecting overall high scores with some low-scoring outliers (particularly in Dedication Spirit), necessitated the use of non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U) for subsequent group comparisons.

**Table 4.** Normality Test for Total Rural Elites' Spirit Score (N = 539)

N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnov D	p (K-S)	Shapiro-Wilk W	p (S-W)
539	4.241	0.544	-0.265	0.535	0.174	0.000**	0.902	0.000**

Note: \*\*  $p < .01$ .

#### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics (Table 5) show the overall rural elites' spirit level was favorable ( $M = 4.241$ ,  $SD = 0.544$ ). However, significant structural imbalances existed across dimensions: Gentleman Spirit (GS:  $M = 4.412$ ) was strongest, followed by Teacher's Spirit (TS:  $M = 4.281$ ) and Pioneering Spirit (PS:  $M = 4.283$ ). Inheritance Spirit (IS:  $M = 4.213$ ) and Sincerity Spirit (SS:  $M = 4.218$ ) were moderately developed. Dedication Spirit (DS:  $M = 4.039$ ,  $SD = 0.715$ ) was the weakest dimension and exhibited the largest individual variation. This highlights Dedication Spirit ("Contentment in Poverty and Dedication to Rural Development") as the most vulnerable component requiring urgent attention in cultivation efforts.

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics for Rural Elites' Spirit Dimensions (N = 539)

Dimension	Min	Max	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
PS	1	5	4.283	0.568
IS	1	5	4.213	0.601
SS	1	5	4.218	0.608
<b>DS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4.039</b>	<b>0.715</b>
GS	1	5	4.412	0.516
TS	1	5	4.281	0.592
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4.241</b>	<b>0.544</b>

#### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis (Table 6) revealed

significant positive correlations ( $p < .01$ ) among all six dimensions of the rural elites' spirit, confirming its conceptual coherence. Correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) ranged from .635 to .908, indicating strong to very strong relationships. Key synergistic relationships include: Sincerity Spirit (SS) with Inheritance Spirit (IS) ( $r = .908$ ), Sincerity Spirit (SS) with Dedication Spirit (DS) ( $r = .842$ ), and Inheritance Spirit (IS) with Pioneering Spirit (PS) ( $r = .889$ ). Sincerity Spirit (SS) showed strong correlations ( $r > .747$ ) with all other dimensions, particularly high with IS, DS, and TS ( $r = .804$ ), suggesting it acts as a central, emotion-driven motivator linking cultural mission (IS), commitment (DS), and professional identity (TS). The weakest, yet still strong, correlation was between Gentleman Spirit (GS) and Dedication Spirit (DS) ( $r = .635$ ).

**Table 6.** Intercorrelations Between Rural Elites' Spirit Dimensions (N = 539)

	PS	IS	SS	DS	GS	TS
PS	1					
IS	.889**	1				
SS	.842**	.908**	1			
DS	.737**	.793**	.842**	1		
GS	.768**	.728**	.747**	.635**	1	
TS	.745**	.773**	.804**	.765**	.818**	1

Note: \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

#### 4.4 Non-Parametric Tests (Mann-Whitney U)

Group differences were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test due to non-normality.

**Status (Current Trainee vs. Graduate):** Table 7 shows **no significant differences** in median scores between current trainees and graduates across any dimension (PS:  $U = 34714.5$ ,  $p = .349$ ; IS:  $U = 34970.0$ ,  $p = .434$ ; SS:  $U = 34009.5$ ,  $p = .183$ ; DS:  $U = 34553.5$ ,  $p = .323$ ; GS:  $U = 34510.5$ ,  $p = .289$ ; TS:  $U = 35266.5$ ,  $p = .551$ ) or the total score

( $U = 36143.5$ ,  $p = .924$ ). This indicates that pre-service training establishes a stable core level of the spirit, but post-employment mechanisms fail to significantly enhance its development, revealing a “plateau phenomenon”.

**Table 7.** Mann-Whitney U Test Results: Status (Current Trainee vs. Graduate)

Dimension	Median (Current)	Median (Grad)	Mann-Whitney $U$	$Z$	$p$
PS	4.000	4.000	34714.500	-0.937	.349
IS	4.000	4.000	34970.000	-0.783	.434
SS	4.000	4.000	34009.500	-1.330	.183
DS	4.000	4.000	34553.500	-0.988	.323
GS	4.200	4.400	34510.500	-1.061	.289
TS	4.000	4.200	35266.500	-0.596	.551
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.033</b>	<b>4.033</b>	<b>36143.500</b>	<b>-0.095</b>	<b>.924</b>

Note:  $n(\text{Current}) = 270$ ,  $n(\text{Graduate}) = 269$ .

**Home Location (Rural vs. Urban):** Table 8 reveals **significant differences** based on background. Trainees from rural backgrounds demonstrated significantly higher median scores than their urban counterparts in: Dedication Spirit (DS:  $U = 23149.5$ ,  $z = -2.421$ ,  $p = .015$ ), Sincerity Spirit (SS:  $U = 23841.5$ ,  $z = -2.026$ ,  $p = .043$ ), Gentleman Spirit (GS:  $U = 23970.0$ ,  $z = -1.977$ ,  $p = .048$ ), Teacher’s Spirit (TS:  $U = 23890.0$ ,  $z = -1.964$ ,  $p = .050$ ), and the Total Score ( $U = 23378.5$ ,  $z = -2.253$ ,  $p = .024$ ). No significant

differences were found in Pioneering Spirit (PS:  $U = 25122.0$ ,  $p = .236$ ) or Inheritance Spirit (IS:  $U = 24576.0$ ,  $p = .122$ ). This suggests a rural background facilitates internalizing dedication (“deep-rootedness”) and local attachment (“benefiting hometown”), while innovation (PS) and cultural mission (IS) can be cultivated regardless of origin. Urban trainees showed relatively weaker spirit, particularly in dedication.

**Table 8.** Mann-Whitney U Test Results: Home Location (Rural vs. Urban)

Dimension	Median (Rural)	Median (Urban)	Mann-Whitney $U$	$Z$	$p$
PS	4.000	4.000	25122.000	-1.184	.236
IS	4.000	4.000	24576.000	-1.547	.122
SS	4.000	4.000	23841.500	-2.026	.043*
DS	4.000	4.000	23149.500	-2.421	.015*
GS	4.200	4.000	23970.000	-1.977	.048*
TS	4.200	4.000	23890.000	-1.964	.050*
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.067</b>	<b>4.000</b>	<b>23378.500</b>	<b>-2.253</b>	<b>.024*</b>

Note:  $n(\text{Rural}) = 407$ ,  $n(\text{Urban}) = 132$ . \*  $p < .05$ .

## 5. Discussion and Suggestions

### 5.1 Analysis of Development Status

Quantitative analysis of 539 Public-Funded teacher trainees reveals the following key

findings regarding the development of their rural elites’ spirit:

#### **Structural Imbalances Amid Overall Strength:**

The overall rural elites’ spirit demonstrates

favorable development, supported by high reliability and structural validity. However, significant disparities exist across dimensions. Gentleman Spirit and Teacher's Spirit emerge as strengths, reflecting robust development in ethical cultivation and pedagogical professionalism. In contrast, Dedication Spirit constitutes the weakest dimension, exhibiting substantial individual variability and highlighting a critical vulnerability requiring targeted intervention. Inheritance Spirit and Sincerity Spirit, while moderately developed, indicate potential for further enhancement.

#### **Significant Rural-Urban Disparity:**

Trainees with rural backgrounds demonstrate significantly higher development levels than their urban counterparts in Dedication Spirit, Sincerity Spirit, Gentleman Spirit, Teacher's Spirit, and total scores. This pattern underscores the formative influence of "rural immersion" in fostering deeper internalization of commitments to "local embeddedness" (dedication) and "hometown benefit" (sincerity). Notably, no significant differences emerged in Pioneering Spirit or Inheritance Spirit, suggesting competencies in innovation and cultural mission are equally amenable to cultivation regardless of origin.

#### **Intrinsic Synergistic Network:**

Strong positive inter-correlations exist among all dimensions, confirming the spirit's conceptual coherence. Sincerity Spirit exhibits particularly high correlations with Inheritance Spirit, Dedication Spirit, and Teacher's Spirit, positioning it as a central, emotion-driven node motivating cultural mission, altruistic commitment, and professional identity. Significant synergies were also observed between Gentleman Spirit and Teacher's Spirit and between Inheritance Spirit and Pioneering Spirit, indicating potential for leveraging inter-dimensional reinforcement in cultivation strategies.

#### **Post-Employment Development Plateau:**

Crucially, no significant differences were found between current trainees and graduates across any dimension or the total score. This indicates that pre-service training establishes a foundational level of the spirit but current mechanisms fail to stimulate further development post-employment, resulting in a distinct "developmental plateau".

### **5.2 Proposed Cultivation Pathway: A Three-Dimensional Drive**

Based on these findings, we propose a "Three-Dimensional Drive" cultivation pathway:

#### **Strengthening Spiritual Resilience (Addressing Dedication Spirit Deficit):**

Given Dedication Spirit status as the weakest dimension, curriculum restructuring is imperative. Recommendations include: Introducing a mandatory course, "Rural Education Ethics and Praxis", utilizing case studies of exemplary rural educators to reinforce the value of "contentment with modest means." Developing immersive courses deeply rooted in local cultural contexts. Expanding substantive field teaching placements in rural schools to foster internalization of dedication. Through strategic partnerships with rural communities and schools, teacher preparation institutions can leverage localized insights to drive evidence-based reforms in teacher education and professional learning (White et al., 2011).

#### **Strategic Tiered Empowerment (Bridging Urban-Rural Gaps):**

To address the significant disadvantage of urban-origin trainees, particularly in Dedication Spirit and Sincerity Spirit, implement differentiated strategies. Teacher education must cultivate place-consciousness to equip pre-service teachers for potential rural service with community readiness, given that each distinctive rural locale embodies a complex socio-spatial matrix woven from historical, cultural, and geographic dimensions (Reagan et al., 2019). Launch "Urban-Rural Immersion Partnerships" and structured "Summer Rural Teaching Fellowships" to provide authentic cultural experiences for urban students. Integrate targeted modules on rural cultural heritage and community engagement into urban student training. Advocate for policy reforms significantly improving rural teacher compensation and working conditions to overcome barriers to "contentment with modest means." Establish a post-service support system featuring a dynamic "Rural Virtue Development Index" monitoring platform and incorporating spirit development metrics into performance evaluations to counter the developmental plateau.

#### **Leveraging Dimensional Synergy (Integrated Development):**

Capitalize on strong inter-dimensional correlations (avg.  $r > .80$ ) through integrated pedagogical designs: Develop a Comprehensive Rural elites' Spirit Curriculum utilizing Project-Based Learning (PBL). For example, a "Rural Cultural Innovation Project" could synergistically develop Inheritance Spirit (preservation) and Pioneering Spirit (transformation). Tailor training phases: Emphasize theoretical foundations (e.g., self-cultivation under Gentleman Spirit) for current students, while focusing graduates on practical application (e.g., moral education praxis under Teacher's Spirit).

## 6. Conclusion

This study employed quantitative methods to systematically analyze the development status and cultivation pathways of the rural elites' spirit among Public-Funded teacher trainees. Key findings indicate that while the spirit demonstrates overall favorable development and strong internal coherence (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.980$ ) with significant synergistic effects ( $r = .635 - .908$ ), structural challenges remain pronounced. These include significant dimensional imbalances (notably the deficit in Dedication Spirit), substantial disparities based on rural/urban origin, and a critical stagnation in post-employment development.

Our proposed "Three-Dimensional Drive" cultivation pathway directly addresses these challenges by: (1) prioritizing the reinforcement of Dedication Spirit as the core vulnerability; (2) implementing tiered empowerment strategies to bridge urban-rural disparities; and (3) strategically leveraging dimensional synergies through integrated pedagogical approaches. Cultivating this spirit in modern Public-Funded teacher trainees transcends pedagogical enhancement; it serves as a strategic imperative for preserving Chinese cultural heritage and activating endogenous momentum for sustainable rural revitalization. Future efforts must therefore focus on deepening dedication and local identity, implementing nuanced interventions for underdeveloped groups, and systematically harnessing the spirit's intrinsic synergistic potential. Ultimately, this aims to forge a cadre of educators embodying "the virtues of a gentleman, the talents of a teacher, and the sincerity of a child," authentically fulfilling the mission of "educating hometowns and sustaining cultural continuity."

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