

## A Qualitative Research on the Comparison of the List of Virtues of University Teachers between China and Canada

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**Abstract:** The list of virtues refers to the collection of good moral qualities. It is an easy-to-understand term in academic circles. It has the same meaning as the ethics vocabulary "virtue catalogue". It not only reflects a person's view of virtue, but also mirrors the direction of the development of good moral qualities. In order to reveal the similarities and differences between the list of virtues of university teachers in China and Canada in different cultural contexts, thirty-two awarded-laureates in four universities from the two countries were selected as the subjects, and the list of virtues of the teachers interviewed in the two countries was obtained by using card-selection method and follow-up interview method. According to the highest to lowest order of frequency, the list of virtues of Chinese teachers is diligence, benevolence, responsibility, dedication, justice, innovation, truth-seeking and tolerance; the list of virtues of Canadian teachers is caring, honest, just, responsibility, critical, dedicated, patient and rigorous. Generally speaking, the list of virtues of university teachers in the two countries is basically the same on professional level, but there are also significant cultural differences.

### 1. Research Problems and Methods

The 2019 National Education Work Conference clearly pointed out that "we should start from the weak areas to implement the fundamental task of moral education". To establish virtue, one needs to be enlightened, and enlightened virtue can actively raise virtue, and the way to raise Virtue can truly establish virtue. Illustrious Virtue is the key, Ming what Virtue is the gist. As the core content of Illustrious Virtue, the list of virtues is a collection of fine moral qualities, which is an easy to understand term in the academic circle and has the same meaning as the special word "catalogue of virtues" in ethics. The list of virtues can not only reflect a person's moral outlook, convey the moral experience of a country or nation, but also be the "starting point" for individuals to develop good moral qualities. McIntyre, an ethicist, mentioned the concept of "The List of Virtues" many times in His book *After Virtue*, but did not give a clear definition of its connotation. In the chapter "The Nature of Virtue" of the book, it is pointed out that the list of virtue is a collection of human good qualities, but this collection has no fixed content, but is closely connected with the whole life<sup>[1]</sup>. Liu Cilin thinks, "List of virtues, namely moral or moral character items. It is not only a generalization of moral experience in the development process of moral culture, but also a necessary stipulation of individual moral character made by the society according to its own existence and development."<sup>[2]</sup> It can be inferred that the teacher's virtue catalogue (virtue list) refers to teaching the moral character that should be possessed by the professional role of teacher. Only when teachers have a clear list of virtue in the heart, only to have the navigation in the process of its "bright mirror", reminding them that moment self-examination, introspection, self-improvement, and for their direction in the complicated social value system, thus the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics for this new era of cultivate new era.

Why study the list of virtues of Chinese and Canadian university teachers? When answering Socrates' question "Can virtue be taught?", Socrates pointed out that we need to have knowledge of virtue first before we can explore how human beings can acquire virtue, that is, to try to find out

what virtue itself is<sup>[3]</sup>. What is virtue itself? According to Aristotle's explanation of species plus genus difference, virtue is composed of all kinds of good qualities. Conversely, the collection of these good qualities is called the catalogue of virtue, which is the externalized form of virtue<sup>[4]</sup>. From the point of view of mankind as a whole, moral order is a general reflection of the experience and expectation of virtue, and a basic concept of people's moral thinking<sup>[5]</sup>.

Quality is the foundation of virtue, and virtue is the collection of quality. The relation between virtue and the purpose of virtue such as "Virtue is a deep rooted tree, so virtue is the branch of the tree. The tree of virtue shows a variety of branches, from a variety of moral eyes, showing the colorful spiritual power, which is also the charm of virtue."<sup>[6]</sup> Durkheim pointed out in his book *On Social Division of Labor* that division of labor can not only show the moral characteristics identified by us, but also gradually become the essential condition of social solidarity<sup>[7]</sup>. As a kind of social division of labor, university teachers should meet the moral requirements of this professional group. The Chinese and Canadian university teachers in this study are immersed in different cultural backgrounds. What are their respective lists of virtues?

Due to the implicit nature of virtue itself and the exploratory nature of the research question, this study chooses card selection method and in-depth interview method. The research object adopts the purpose sampling, after several rounds of communication, finally selected the University of Toronto and York University in Canada eight "award-winning teachers"; Tsinghua University and Qinghai University in China each have eight "award-winning teachers", with a total of thirty-two interviewees. They have won various awards, such as "National Outstanding Teacher", "Mentor Award", "3M Teaching Award" and "Ontario Outstanding University Teacher". Although the names of the awards vary, they are almost always based on letters written by students and colleagues and an anonymous process. The winning teachers were chosen because it would be a good example to analyze the list of virtues of "best practitioners" in the university teaching profession. In the process of collecting, we obtained the consent of the respondents, first obtained by card selection method of teaching according to their own years of experience and practice accepted a good university teachers should have the virtue of product quality, and then use the word frequency statistics, according to the surveyed teachers select frequency of "virtue" listing cloud are obtained. Then, based on the results of the card selection, they were asked to elaborate on their understanding of these qualities and why they chose them. After data collection, Nvivo12 software was used to assist researchers in coding and analyzing the complex interview materials. Finally, this study adopts comparative method to analyze the similarities and differences of the same thing under two different national cultures, which is an important way to understand and explore the list of virtues.

It should be noted that qualitative research does not pursue generality, so the list of virtues obtained in this study is a "reality" presentation based on the real work experience of the case study, rather than a "should be" list of virtues. In addition, some qualities are not included in the list of virtues due to their low frequency, which does not mean that these qualities are not important to teachers, but because this study is ranked in strict accordance with the statistical results.

## 2. Research Findings and Discussion

### 2.1. The List of Virtues of Chinese University Teachers

According to the results of card selection, the virtue list cloud map of Chinese university teachers is obtained. Chinese teachers rated hard work, charity, responsibility, dedication, fairness, innovation, truth-seeking and tolerance as the most important qualities, depending on how often words were selected. Respect, rationality, pragmatism, loyalty, rigor and sincerity were also mentioned. Chinese teachers understand the high-frequency words in cloud maps as follows:

**Diligence:** "Word-Ocean" refers to: "unremitting efforts, hard work". Diligence, in Chinese teachers, is a recognized basic virtue. In ancient Chinese culture, diligence occupies a very important position in people's moral outlook. For example, "King Wen stops frequently", "Poetry · Zhou Song · Lai"; "Diligent, something is closed" the Book of "Book of Rites · Yuzao". Of the 16 Chinese teachers interviewed, 11 agreed that diligence is a quality teachers should have, and

7 of them thought diligence should be ranked first among all the qualities. The expression of "diligent" by the surveyed teachers is as follows: I think teachers should be diligent first, if you are not diligent yourself, students may not be diligent either (20150119TH2); Diligence is the most basic moral character for a person. Be diligent in his work (20151027TH4); As a teacher, you should do your utmost to the students (20150119TH1).

**Charity:** in the "Chinese dictionary" refers to: "benevolence and mercy", is a kind of sympathy, love, love feelings. Among the 16 Chinese teachers interviewed, 11 agreed that teachers should have the quality of benevolence, which is the foundation of teachers. Benevolence is regarded as the highest virtue in traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, education is full benevolence is the foundation of being a virtuous teacher. It is true that a teacher's job is to mold the human soul, which cannot be molded by education without pouring real feelings into it. Benevolence is the most essential connotation of teachers' morality and also the source of teachers' educational power. The benevolence of teachers to students is reflected in their deep understanding and full respect for students, but at the same time, they should be strict. The quality of benevolence will make teachers take the initiative to pour their warmth and emotion into each student, take the initiative to understand their family background, interests, hobbies, habits and aspirations, and be good at discovering the different potential of each student. Only in this way can teaching become truly effective and students truly become talents. You must be kind to your students. I think this is the most important aspect of being a teacher. To put it more simply, it's like wishing your children well, wishing them well, wishing them all well and thriving (20151123QH7).

**Responsible:** In Thesaurus, it means "to take responsibility". Among the 16 Chinese teachers interviewed, 10 agreed that responsibility is a quality teachers should have. Traditional Chinese culture has always emphasized responsibility, linking responsibility with the mandate of heaven, for example, "Heaven assigns great responsibility to others". Therefore, responsibility in the ancient Chinese context does not consider free will, but is linked with human destiny or destiny. In modern society, Chinese teachers still have a strong sense of mission when they view their responsibilities. In interviews, some teachers even believe that responsibility is the highest quality of a teacher. Only with the virtue of responsibility, other qualities will be naturally cultivated. I have a duty. Teaching is my destiny. The university put these students in my hands and I felt responsible for them (20151027TH4); If the student deceive the past things, from my own, the heart I feel psychological insecurity (20151103TH5). Responsibility in Chinese teachers contains three meanings: one is responsible for students; Second, the responsibility of the discipline; Third, responsibility for the country. First of all, the responsibility for students comes from the conscience of the teaching profession, because unlike other professions, there may still be value measurement, but the teaching profession cannot be measured by the popular value of the society, it is completely relying on the responsibility of teachers to do things. The responsibility to students includes two aspects. One is the responsibility to teach students knowledge from the perspective of teaching. Second, from the perspective of education, to teach students the truth of being a man.

**Dedication:** it is to pay silently for others, most willing, is not to give in return. Among the 16 Chinese teachers interviewed, 9 agreed that dedication is a quality teachers should have. Chinese people often use a poem by Tang dynasty poet Li Shangyin to describe teachers' dedication and dedication to their work. Teachers teach their own knowledge to students, with wisdom and character of the light to illuminate students forward voyage. In China's collectivist culture, dedication is often seen as natural. Some teachers mentioned that dedication means making a choice between work and personal life, and even, most of the time, placing students in the family before. For example: In these years, I have devoted all my time to the school and students. I owe it to my family, especially my daughter. I haven't taken my daughter out to the park once, and I haven't made her an ice cart she asked me to make when she was a kid, after years of promises. Up to now, she still hold a grudge, a mention of it will say, when I let you do the car, up to now have not done it for me. Later, I built a car for my grandson to pay off my debt (20151222TH7).

**Justice:** in Thesaurus, it means "impartiality and uprightness". Of the 16 Chinese teachers interviewed, seven agreed that they should have the quality of impartiality. Teacher justice means

that teachers can deal with the problems between students in a balanced and reasonable way, which is not partial or eccentric. Among the students, there are differences in appearance, gender, personality, family background and intelligence level. Teachers should ignore these differences, treat students equally, and start from the different characteristics of each student to teach students well. The interviewed teachers' understanding of justice is as follows: justice means that we should not favor one over the other for students. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. When I look at these students, it doesn't matter whether they came from elite schools or mediocre schools, from rich families or poor families, high achievers or low achievers, I treat them equally (20151222TH7).

In addition, words such as innovation, truth-seeking, tolerance, preciseness and respect are also considered important moral qualities by Chinese university teachers. Among them, innovation refers to "abandon the old and create new things". At present, China is focusing on building an innovative country and universities are establishing innovation platforms, which will naturally affect university teachers. In different types of colleges and universities, there are different degrees of emphasis on innovation. Teachers in research universities attach more importance to scientific research innovation, while teachers in teaching universities attach more importance to teaching method innovation. Truth-seeking refers to: "the pursuit of the truth of the development of things and to find the objective law of the development of things. Under the guidance of scientific theories and methods, we should constantly understand the essence of things and grasp the laws of things. Truth-seeking, like "innovation", is the rational virtue of a university teacher and an important quality of a scholar. Tolerance refers to: "forgive, forgive, do not care about", is the body of teachers broad mind, but also a teacher into the mature stage of a performance.

## 2.2. Cognition of Virtue List of Canadian University Teachers

According to the results of card selection, the virtue list cloud map of Canadian university teachers is obtained. Depending on how often words are selected, Caring, honest, just, responsible, critical, dedicated, patient, and rigorous are the most important qualities considered by Canadian teachers. In addition, respect, diligence; Rational; Encouraging and reflective are also mentioned. The respondents' explanations of the high-frequency words are as follows:

**Care:** refers to "care, including the meaning of help, love, care". Among the 16 Canadian teachers interviewed, 12 agreed that caring is the quality teachers should have, and 5 of them thought caring is extremely important. In the western teacher ethics, scholars are highly consistent in their affirmation of caring. Noddings, an American ethicist, first put forward the concept of caring ethics, which set off a caring upsurge in the West and is still an important point of view in the academic world. According to Noddings, caring is the basic activity of human beings, including natural care and ethical care. Natural concern is derived from human emotion, with a more distinct "primitiveness"; Ethical concern is based on people's sense of morality, which can make up for the areas that nature concern cannot touch. Ethical concern is the deepening of nature concern. To a large extent, the concern of university teachers for students is ethical concern, that is, the concern of teachers for students based on morality. The interviewed teachers believe that "caring" for students means understanding the learning pressure students are under. Caring about their learning goals; Caring for the development needs of students, etc. We can summarize the caring virtue of Canadian teachers as "caring for students' academic development", rather than caring for students' private life (such as love and marriage). For example, Caring is concerned about students' academic achievements and whether they can meet the requirements of their studies (20150602YU6); The real concern is the development of students, not the knowledge itself. There are a lot of teachers who just care about teaching. Students and teaching are different, for example, students ask biology, chemistry knowledge, these teachers will be very serious for them to answer questions, but this is concerned about knowledge. Only take the trouble to explain to students, until they really understand, this is to care for students (20150511YU5).

**Sincerity:** Means "sincerely". Among the 16 teachers interviewed, 11 thought sincerity was a quality teachers should have. The teachers used four local words: honest, transparent, sincere and open. In Canada, the whole society places great emphasis on integrity. The public has developed

something like an "integrity system" that is not written down, but is regarded as the norm. The teachers surveyed expressed their sincerity as follows: Sincerity is a very important quality. Sincerity means that we can honestly face every thing we have done at any time.(20150608UT5); To be honest with students(2015052UT3). Further reading, we find that the honesty of Canadian teachers is reflected in their attitude towards students. As a kind of quality, sincerity is reflected in their honest feedback and evaluation to students, frankly tell students should achieve the course what requirements can meet the teacher's expectations, clearly tell students what time and energy they need to pay to participate in the project research, rather than just advocating the benefits of the project, and answer students' questions sincerely.

**Justice:** Plato believed that justice was the most important virtue for the citizens of a city-state. Among the 16 teachers interviewed, 10 think that just, fair is a quality teachers should have. Canadian teachers to the attention of the justice, on the one hand, and its social system, the average system has much to do, as Hayek (F. A. Von Hayek) in his book free system, points out that should be the unequal distribution of fair distribution, natural inequality, individuals can force to have the ability to provide equal opportunity is just. On the other hand, Canadian professors are influenced by the high emphasis on the virtues of "justice" and "justice" in the Western philosophical tradition. In education, one of the reasons it's important for Comenius to have classes is to give students a substantial..., "equal" learning process. Therefore, the interviewed teachers made the following explanation: Justice is important and involves how we evaluate students, but there are many reasons for it (20150604UT4).

**Responsible:** means "to take responsibility, to do one's duty, to be earnest and dependable". Among the 16 teachers interviewed, 10 thought that responsibility was the quality teachers should have. Canadian teachers' view of responsibility is closely linked to their professionalism. Canadian society requires teachers to be professional, which requires them to have a strong sense of professionalism and responsibility. Teachers should have a clear understanding of their work, what their responsibilities are, and what kind of help they need to provide to students. I will try my best to do a good job and make myself available to students. I will be good at finding out what students expect from you and try not to let them down (20150602YU6). In the questioning, it is found that the interviewees have different understandings of the responsibilities of professors. Most professors talk about their responsibility to students so that they actually learn knowledge and skills, not just tools that can handle tests. There is also a duty, a professional duty. For example, an art teacher thinks he should take responsibility for guiding the moral outlook of all mankind, while a biology professor thinks he has a responsibility to protect the environment.

**Critique:** "comment on right and wrong" in Thesaurus. Among the 16 teachers interviewed, 8 thought criticism was a quality teachers should have. In western society, it is the social default to question others, not to follow blindly, to assert one's own opinion, and to challenge authority. For teachers, as an intellectual group, they will not follow blindly. Teachers describe criticism as follows: Criticism is a very constructive word. For me, I think it mainly means that students should be given critical and objective feedback when reviewing their work(20150424YU3). Critical is also a two-pronged word. On the one hand, I think critical is very important, we should learn to question some facts. On the other hand, it is inappropriate to question and criticize students. Because some students feel hurt(20150604UT4).

In addition, professionalism, patience, rigor, respect, diligence and rationality were also considered important moral qualities by Canadian university teachers. Among them, dedication is the individual to their own career fully engaged in state degree, is a kind of pay regardless of personal gains and losses. The "dedication" of Canadian teachers is similar to that of Chinese teachers. Usually in countries with western cultural traditions, the topic of dedication is more marginal, but the teachers interviewed in western countries, dedication is not the mainstream value, but as a teacher, dedication is the basic professional ethics. Patience is a very important attitude of teachers in education and teaching. It is a highly professional performance of teachers. It is the patience to answer students' questions and tolerance to students' mistakes. Rigor means: "to take

very seriously, without deviation or carelessness".Strict is the standard for teachers to train students, but also contains teachers' expectations for students.

### 2.3. A Comparative Analysis of Virtues List Among Chinese and Canadian Teachers

By sorting out the teachers' moral qualities selected by teachers in China and Canada, a list of teachers' virtues in the two countries is obtained (Table 1).The numbers in brackets next to the quality of virtue in the table represent the frequency of teacher selection in the sample.As can be seen from the table, the virtues of Chinese teachers are diligence, love, responsibility, dedication, justice, innovation, truth-seeking and tolerance in order from the most frequently chosen to the least.The virtues of Canadian teachers are caring, sincerity, fairness, responsibility, criticism, dedication, patience and strictness.As Healy says, "There is no exhaustive list of teachers' good qualities, and there is no near perfect list."<sup>[8]</sup>Some qualities are not included due to their low frequency.

Table 1 List of virtues of university teachers in China and Canada.

County	List of virtue
China	Diligence (11);Benevolence (11);responsible (10);Dedication (9); Justice (7);Innovation (6);Seeking truth (6);Tolerance (4).
Canada	Caring (12);Honest, transparent, open(11);Just, fair (10);Responsible (10);critical (8).Dedicated (7);patient(6);Rigorous (5).

Through the comparative analysis of the virtues lists of the teachers in the two countries, we find that the virtues lists of the teachers in the two countries have completely overlapping qualities, but also completely different qualities.There are qualities, although their names or expressions are different, but their connotations are the same in essence;There are qualities whose names are the same, but their meanings are different.

First of all, the virtues that overlap completely are love (care), responsibility, and justice.First of all, these qualities are the high-frequency words selected by teachers from both countries, indicating that they both believe that caring for students, taking responsibility and fairness are the most basic and important virtues of university teachers.These same qualities reflect the similarity of teachers' morality across time, space and countries. Universal virtue and supreme truth, kindness and beauty do not differ from culture to culture.Taking the virtue of "justice" as an example for in-depth analysis, the concept of "no difference in teaching", "no difference in love" and "no class in teaching" has been established in China since ancient times, which has established the concept that teachers treat every student equally regardless of their birth, background, talent and other individual factors.However, in Canada, the membership structure of the pluralistic society makes it impossible for teachers to assess race, color, creed, sex, ethnicity, marital status, political or religious belief, family, social and cultural background, and birth the existence of prejudice, constitute the basis of fairness and justice of teachers.

Secondly, the totally different virtues of Chinese teachers are diligence, innovation, truth-seeking and tolerance. Canadian teachers emphasize sincerity, criticism, patience, strictness and other virtues.According to Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, there are cultural differences between China and Canada in many places.These differences are also reflected in teachers' choice of moral qualities.Careful analysis shows that in China, as a country with high power distance, teachers are to a large extent the "center" of classroom teaching in education and teaching, so teachers focus on self-cultivation.Therefore, Chinese teachers believe that first of all, they should be good at themselves, requiring them to work hard, innovate scientific research and classroom teaching, and pursue knowledge assiduously. While Canada is a country with low power distance, teachers and students are completely equal in education and teaching.Therefore, teachers pay special attention to the needs and feelings of students. They require themselves to be open and patient with students, and at the same time, they strictly demand students' study, reflecting the student-centered.In addition, it is found that Chinese teachers attach great importance to innovative quality, while

Canadian teachers attach great importance to critical quality. The two words are logically related. However, in the process of card selection, Canadian teachers oppose to mention "innovation" easily, while Chinese teachers choose innovation first, and then criticize is also necessary. This reflects the different understanding of innovation and criticism between Chinese and Canadian teachers.

Then, the same expression, different connotations of virtue quality refers to "benevolence" and "care". Teachers in both countries agree that "benevolence" or "caring" is the most important teacher virtue. In terms of the name, the moral qualities of teachers in China and Canada are the same. But a closer look reveals a big difference. Although benevolence and love are sincere concern for students. In China, however, such concerns can extend beyond the teacher-student relationship in the classroom to a kind of "parent" or "friend" relationship. The content of teacher benevolence extends from the classroom to students' families and lives. This can be accepted in Chinese culture, and can even be said to be a kind of responsibility positioning for "teachers" in Chinese society since ancient times. In Canada, however, this concern is limited to professional teacher-student relationships and rarely extends to personal relationships based on blood or affection. The content of teachers' care is only limited to the teaching and receiving of classroom knowledge. Teachers should care about how students master knowledge, but the private life of students is not the scope of teachers' concern. This fully reflects the difference between Chinese ethics and Western ethics.

Finally, there are virtues with different names but the same connotation. For example, Chinese teachers think "dedication" is an important quality, while Canadian teachers think "dedication" is an important quality. Although the two are different on the surface, they are essentially the same. The dedication of Chinese teachers shows that they sacrifice their personal rest time and even neglect their family for work. Canadian teachers are highly devoted to their work. They would rather stay in their own wisdom home (office) to guide students after work, and would rather postpone retirement. Some female teachers even mentioned in the interview that they give up having children. Therefore, from the practical practice of the two qualities, there are high similarities between Chinese and Canadian teachers.

### **3. Conclusions and suggestion**

Based on the core concept of "the list of virtues", and according to the moral view of "award-winning" university teachers in China and Canada, the moral qualities of university teachers identified by the two countries are obtained. Generally speaking, teachers in the two countries basically have the same cognition on the moral qualities of university teachers, but there are also cultural differences in the role positioning of professional ethics.

In Chinese ethics, the list of virtues is the "highest principle" of human morality. The study found that Chinese teachers value self-improvement and constantly seek to approach the "moral high ground". Mencius said, 'With all one's heart to understand, with all one's nature to know heaven.' It can be seen that in the eyes of The Chinese people, heaven is not unattainable, but uplifted from human nature. Therefore, many ancient philosophers believed that man had a responsibility for heaven, and developed a strong sense of conscience. Therefore, to achieve the unity of nature and man, we must start with our own moral cultivation. This provides justification for Chinese university teachers to demand that they become "moral giants".

In Canada, the list of virtues appears in the form of statutes. For example, in the middle Ages, religion defined "faith, charity and hope" as theological virtues, and "temperance, prudence, justice and fortitude" as secular virtues. In modern society, the "Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers" issued by the Ontario College of Teachers proposes that "care, honesty, respect and trust" are the ethics of teachers in Ontario. It can be seen that although the traditional Canadian culture does not place teachers on the high ground of "moral model", teachers are encouraged to strive to improve themselves and ask themselves to be consistent with Chinese teachers with standards higher than the ethical bottom line.

"Due to the characteristics of times, history and society, some of them have been abandoned by The Times in the process of multicultural integration, while others have been tempered by history

and become the unique culture and customs of a nation." [9] China and Canada belong to different cultural circles. Based on traditional Confucian morality in China and Christian religious morality in Canada, they have formed their own unique virtue systems, which have been deeply immersed in the cultivation of university teachers' virtue qualities. At present, the collision between western culture and Chinese traditional culture has put forward new requirements and challenges to the cultivation of virtue of Chinese university teachers and the composition of virtue list. It has become an important task for China's higher education at the present stage to continuously innovate on the basis of inheriting the traditional virtue purpose of the Chinese nation and enrich the virtue list system to meet the development needs of the new era and the fundamental task of establishing virtue and cultivating people. Therefore, according to the findings of this study, it is suggested that the state, society and universities should further define the scope of core moral qualities of university teachers, and draft a list of university teachers' virtues, so as to guide the majority of university teachers to take the initiative to cultivate and cultivate morality.

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