

## CONCEPTUAL PAPER

# Connotation and Realization Path of Labour Education in Universities - Based on the Perspective of Chinese Universities

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### ABSTRACT

*Labour education has been weakened and alienated in higher education. Repositioning labour education is an important part of the deepening reform of colleges and universities as well as the focus of improving the higher education system. Practicing labour education can enhance college students' labour awareness, improve labour skills and enable college students to obtain a rational understanding of 'knowledge' from the practice of 'action'. This is an important way to realize holistic education. This article puts forward the connotation of 'labour' under the background of the new era and updates the traditional cognition of 'labour'. It proposes effective ways for colleges and universities to realize labour education according to the background of the era and the labour demand of employers; so as to break the shortcomings of labour education in colleges and universities as well as improve the quality of whole-person education to better meet the needs of the job market.*

**Keywords:** Labour; new era; traditional; education; universities



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Due to the pressure of entering higher education and problems in the systems, labour education in colleges and universities has been weakened and downplayed for a long time; and there are many shortcomings. The first shortcoming is cognitive shortcoming whereby labour education is simply limited to the scope of manual labour, causing students to not be able to understand the connotation of labour. The second shortcoming is in the training method whereby there is no incorporation of new technology due to time and events, which causes students to dislike labour. The third shortcoming is in the practice and experience in which the lack of pertinence and synergy result in students not being able to work. The fourth shortcoming is the shortcoming in the results of feedback. The existence of utilitarian and formalist tendencies causes students to not cherish the fruits of labour (Luo, 2020). In addition, undergraduates in the new era are mainly post-90s and post-00s, and are heavily influenced by the Internet. The Internet contains diversified information and ideas, which makes contemporary college students advocate hedonism even more. They also have a weak sense of work and some even disrespect the results of other people's labour (Meng, 2020). These have become an issue that cannot be ignored in college education.

Labour is the basis for human survival and development and is the most basic social practice of mankind. The concept of labour is the basic attitude and fundamental view of human beings towards labour, and the establishment of a scientific concept of labour is of great significance to contemporary college students (Wang, 2018). Moral, intellectual, physical, art and labour education are a comprehensive positioning of human's basic qualities and the overall goal of social education (Wu, 2020). Reshaping labour education is a major supplement to the education system in the new era. At the same time, promoting the spirit of labour in the new era and guiding students to respect labour, love labour and create labour are conducive in promoting the overall development of students and hence are important and significant in further guiding students to establish the correct values.

## **RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Labour Education and Its Definition in the New Era**

Labour education in colleges and universities refers to labour practice with educational significance (Wang & Jiang, 2020). It includes not only physical labour and mental labour, but also the cultivation of labour awareness. Labour education in colleges and universities should take students' professional learning and campus life as the main career; focus on professional goals as well as combine theoretical study in class and practice after class.

The concept of 'new era' was put forward by the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (2017.10.18): Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and the country has embarked on a new journey of decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society as well as a modern socialist country in all respects. The report clarified the basic path of higher education's intensive development in facing the new era, new contradictions and new journey. Specifically, labour education should focus on the new form and content characteristics that it embodies in the new era such as the combination with professional education and public welfare activities; and the characteristics of human-machine collaboration and high-tech content endowed to labour education in the information age.

Labour education can cultivate the outstanding quality of students' diligence, and the cultivation of labour awareness is important to the growth of students. Love of work is a traditional virtue of the Chinese nation. The 'National Medium and Long-term Educational Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)' promulgated in 2010 emphasized the need to strengthen labour education for students (Song & Zhang, 2020), cultivate students' labour awareness, and enable them to inherit the Chinese nation's excellent tradition, love labour as well as establish a glorious idea of labour. College students actively participate in all kinds of labour during school, take the initiative to receive labour education and establish the idea of labour glory, which will have a very positive effect on entering society and working positions as well as provide necessary preparations for college students to enter society.

Moreover, labour education is also a necessary way for colleges and universities to achieve the goal of talent cultivation. The development of modern society requires more and more high-quality talents. The quality of talents refers to the comprehensive quality, which includes one's labour skills and labour awareness. The training of labour skills requires a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical operation and labour education can combine students' theoretical knowledge with practice.

However, the current construction of the labour education training system in colleges and universities is not perfect and there is a phenomenon that college students' labour awareness is weak. Some college students even think that labour education is unnecessary, which makes it difficult for college students to develop labour habits. Under the background of the new era, society and enterprises have put forward higher requirements for college students, that is, they not only need to have professional skills, but also need to develop the habit of working through their perseverance and adhering to the hard work in a difficult environment. The spirit exerts its own value and lays a solid foundation for subsequent work and career. Based on this, this article will focus on analysing the path to the realization of labour education for college students under the background of the new era.

The exploration of labour education began in the last decade, and Luo (2020) pointed out the 'Four Ends' - education awareness, cultivation, practice experience and results feedback, to make up for the shortcomings of labour education in colleges and universities. On the other hand, Wu (2020) attempted to explore the status and role of enhancing labour education in four aspects, which are programme design, curriculum system, teachers' strength and labour practice bases. Moreover, Xiao (2020) proposed that the objectives of labour education should be clarified, the content of labour should be enriched, the form of labour education should be innovated and the field of labour education should be expanded. In addition, Wang and Jiang (2020) pointed out that labour education in colleges and universities has problems of different degrees in terms of curriculum setting, teaching practice, ideological and political education; and that it is necessary to strengthen the construction of the curriculum, use various forms to carry out labour education and establish a scientific and reasonable teaching guarantee system.

The literature shows that labour education, as a characteristic of Chinese universities, has long been neglected and marginalized as compared to professional education. Even though some scholars and university civics workers have realized the problems and tried to make conceptual and systematic counter measures, there is still a lack of more concrete measures.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research idea of the article is based on the investigation and study of the current situation of labour education in universities and colleges in Shanghai and the industry's demand for talented labour. This research puts forward the connotation of labour under the background of the new era, and updates the traditional cognition of labour according to the background of the era and the labour demand of employers. It also puts forward the effective ways for colleges and universities to realize labour education, cracks the shortcomings of labour education in colleges and universities, improves the quality of whole-person education, and better adapts to the needs of the job market. The specific research activities are as follows:

1. University research: In order to complete the periodic survey report, the researchers investigated the current situation of labour education in universities in Shanghai and abroad through visits, networks and questionnaires. The main problems such as one-sided understanding of the connotation of labour, students do not work as well as improper teaching methods were identified;
2. Employer survey: In order to summarize the labour demand indicators of employers, the researchers also visited employers and industry associations at different levels to learn more about their labour literacy and skill requirements for graduates;
3. Logical analysis: In order to put forward the connotation and realization path of college labour education in the new era, the researchers compared and identified the gap of labour education model of colleges and universities with the indicators of employers.

This article attempts to construct the realization path of college students' labour education from five dimensions - concept update, labour

education content, teacher team construction, labour base construction, and assessment system. See Figure 1 for details:

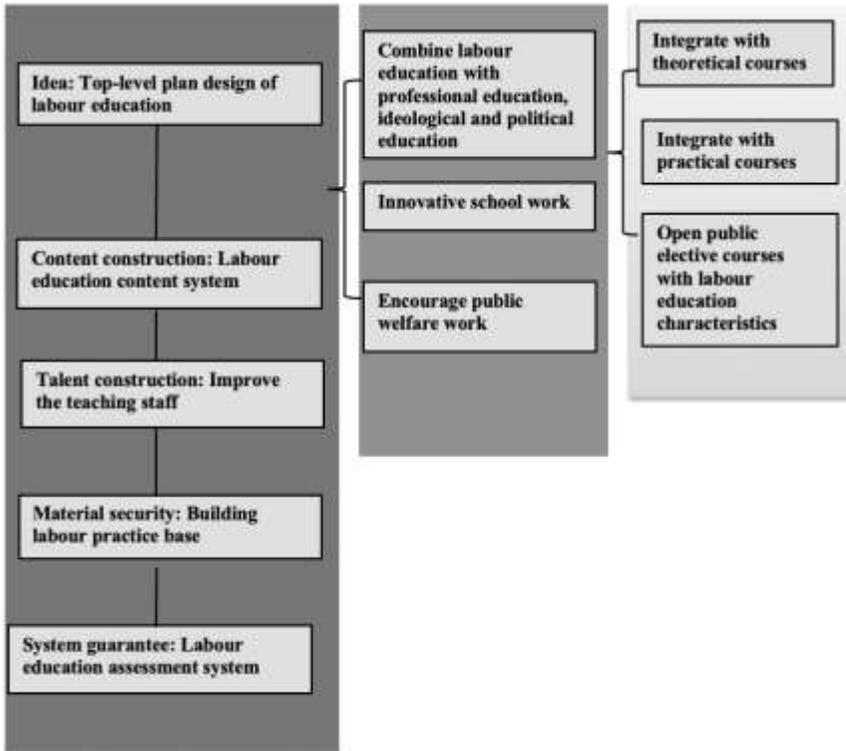


Figure 1: Analysis of Labour Education Realization Paths

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Improving the Position of Educational Concepts and Attach Importance to the Design of Labour Education Programs

The design of the top-level plan determines the vane and guiding line of labour education in colleges and universities. The labour ability of the students and the labour education mechanism can be improved through the design of the labour education program. In doing so, it is necessary to improve the concept and position, the benchmark and core values of the society, to plan the implementation of labour education design with a long-

term view, to raise the standard of talent training to the national standard for labour demand and to strengthen the cultivation of labour awareness among students (Wu, 2020).

## **Innovating the Form of Labour Education and Building a Labour Education System**

There is integration of the labour education system with professional education, ideological education and political education. The integration of labour education into the talent training program of colleges and universities as well as infiltrating it into moral education (Song & Zhang, 2020) and strictly implementing it is the most important task of labour education. The following sections further illustrates the concepts:

### **Integration of the concept of labour education in theoretical courses**

The connotation and importance of labour can be communicated to the students in a subtle and multi-dimensional manner in daily teaching in which the students' ideology can be updated, the students' sense of labour identity can be enhanced, a scientific understanding of labour can be formed and thus the labour ethics can be strengthened.

### **Focus on professional experience labour in practical courses, increase on the proportion of labour education and deepen the integration of industry and education**

The different forms of labour education practices include strengthening close collaboration with industry enterprises, integrating labour education into professional experience and professional education, strengthening the education and cultivation of the spirit of human power, guiding students to accumulate professional experience and establishing a correct perspective on employment. This can also be discussed through case analysis, project teaching, speeches and debate competitions. Through the different forms of labour education practice, we can realize the transformation from knowledge-oriented to literacy-oriented; keep in pace with the era; combine network information technology, simulation experiment, artificial intelligence and other new technologies to expand the forms of labour education as well as enhance their interaction, timeliness

and fun. Moreover, the form of labour education in practical courses can also be enriched by making full use of local traditional skills resources and combining traditional skills.

### **Assurance of the general knowledge of labour education and offer publicly selected courses with the characteristics of labour education**

Through the design of educational, interesting and experiential labour classes, the scientific knowledge of various labour can be taught systematically to enhance students' interest. In addition, MOOCs, online classrooms, micro-classes and other methods can also be used to create labour education courses (Luo, 2020).

### **Innovating school work**

The university campus covers a large area and has many infrastructures. This advantage can be used to carry out school affairs, enhance the students' sense of belonging to the school and the excellent qualities of respecting teachers and loving the school. It can start from the aspects of class, common labour area, campus facility maintenance, teaching equipment maintenance, dormitory housekeeping and others. It can be opened to students in the form of packaged projects and can be evaluated from various aspects such as project setting, development and efficiency; and can be enriched in the form of school labour and education function (Wu, 2020).

### **Encouraging public welfare work and improving the level of social services for college students**

Labour education cannot be implemented independently, and must cooperate with social education and family education. Under the new situation, it is necessary to fully mobilize college students to participate in public welfare labour, enhance social service awareness and enhance college students' social service skills. Public welfare labour can rely on student organizations to carry out professional public welfare labour and promote the socialization of student organizations.

## **Enhancing the Labour Awareness and Ability of the Teaching Staff and Providing Labour Education Support**

A strong team of teachers is a key point for successful labour education. The teachers of labour education should have labour-oriented, practical subject background or long-term professional talents in a certain practical field. Through training, a team of high-level teachers with both theoretical knowledge and labour professional skills can be created to ensure the quality of labour education so as to meet the needs of the students for labour education (Wu, 2020). On the other hand, it is necessary to hire front-line labourers for activities such as the expansion of labour education teachers in colleges and universities in the form of training, project cooperation and others. This can encourage interactive exchanges and cooperative teaching between school teachers and industry teachers.

## **Building Labour Practice Bases to Consolidate the Foundation of Labour Education**

Learning by doing, making progress and improving is an effective way of labour education (Xia & Zheng, 2018). Labour education is inseparable from a practical and distinctive subject practice base (Wu, 2020). It is necessary to establish and strengthen labour education bases through the 'school-enterprise alliance' model, 'school-local cooperation' and other forms. The labour practice base should highlight the local characteristics of labour and show the discipline characteristics of universities. Platforms such as docking companies, factories, network platforms and others can provide college students with internship training, professional services, social practice, work-study and others.

In addition, the innovation and entrepreneurship base focus on innovative and entrepreneurial labour, follows the laws of education, conforms to the development needs of the new era and effectively integrates the shaping of labour values with entrepreneurial awareness. This can promote the commercialization of college students' innovative ideas, further increase the conversion rate of college creative achievements and accumulate for students' vocational experience and the promotion of employment and entrepreneurship capabilities. These are also a form of labour practice base which are worth promoting.

It should be noted that in the Internet age, labour skills are characterized by human-machine collaboration and smart labour. Whether it is a traditional labour practice base or an innovation and entrepreneurship base, under the background of the new era, we must break through the shortcomings of traditional labour education that lacks technological content and actively use new technologies. Firstly, we must focus on cultivating college students' 'science and innovative thinking' and focus on emerging technical support and new changes in social services to cultivate students' scientific spirit and innovative thinking. Secondly, we must consolidate the foundation of 'network and labour education' and integrate new technologies such as linking cloud computing, big data, 5G, Internet, block chain and artificial intelligence in guiding students to interact 'online and offline' and carry out creative work. Thirdly, it is possible to open up a compound class of 'theory and production skills' (Xiao, 2020) to stimulate students' creative interest and train students' abilities in the compound work that combines mental and physical work in enhancing the students' ability to innovate and use.

### **Constructing A Scientific and Reasonable Labour Education Assessment System to Avoid Formalization**

Labour education in colleges and universities should establish a scientific evaluation system (Wang & Jiang, 2020) to encourage students' endogenous motivation and enthusiasm and eliminate formalism and superficial glamour. To implement the labour education system, it is necessary for the labour education norms, labour education policy and labour education standards to be consistent with each other.

Specifically, labour education evaluation, labour achievement assessment, and labour education quality evaluation can be used as the starting point. The labour education evaluation system can be improved, the talent training program can be revised, the weight of labour education credits can be increased, the students' in- and out-of-class labour processes and results can be comprehensively and objectively recorded and incorporated into the credit evaluation system to increase the broadness of students' participation. Moreover, a labour results evaluation system can be established and actively selected. Furthermore, a model of labour education can be established, used as the basis for prioritization and included in the archives. In addition, the labour education teaching supervision, inspection

and quality evaluation can be strengthened; the labour education quality monitoring mechanisms can be explored; and quality should be monitored as the basis for performance evaluation, while strengthening supervision and attaching importance to process management. Finally, in order to promote the implementation of labour education, it is necessary to strengthen the incentives for teachers to participate in labour education; consider converting them into class hours; grant workload recognition and remuneration; as well as affirm and reward teachers with outstanding performance so that students and the two main bodies of teachers are widely and deeply involved in labour education activities to avoid from becoming mere formalities.

Physical health is the foundation of the quality of a population and the physical health of college students is the guarantee of a strong country with talents. Incorporating labour education into the training plan for undergraduates is an important part of comprehensive education. Through labour education, college students' labour awareness can be enhanced, labour skills can be improved and the physical and mental health of students can be realized. These are the keys to cultivate qualified social people. It needs to be realized that labour education in colleges and universities is not a traditional simple manual labour, but a combination of specific labour, mental labour and also the cultivation of labour awareness. Professional learning and campus life should be used as the carrier, using both in-class and out-of-class methods. This conceptual update can be achieved in the following ways:

In the design of the top-level plan, it is necessary to take a long-term view, position the training goal of labour education at the level of training builders in the new era, raise it to the national standard for labour demand and improve holistic education. In terms of innovative labour education forms, labour education should be nested into the teaching of theoretical courses and practical courses. It is recommended to open labour general courses in the talent training program to achieve the same frequency resonance, complementary advantages, multi-party linkage and multi-dimensional construction of the labour education system of colleges and universities. Part of the campus labour can be packaged as a project and opened to students as well as evaluated in terms of project setting, development, efficiency and others to enrich the form and education function of labour education in colleges and universities. In addition to

school education, social labour education resources should also be integrated and college students should be mobilized to participate in public welfare labour so that their social service awareness can be enhanced. It is also recommended to create a team of high-level teachers with both theoretical knowledge and professional skills through training and induction. At the same time, front-line labourers should be hired to join the college labour education faculty to carry out cooperative teaching for labour education. Talent support can be provided by starting with the construction of a practice base with discipline characteristics and an innovation and entrepreneurship base to build a labour practice base and consolidate the foundation of labour education. Particular attention should be paid to the application of new technologies in labour education, starting with 'science and innovative thinking', 'network and labour education', 'theory and production skills', reflecting the characteristics of labour in the new era and enhancing student innovation in compound labour education. Besides, by creating labour ability, taking labour education evaluation, labour achievement evaluation, labour education quality evaluation as the starting point, constructing a scientific and reasonable labour education evaluation system, students and teachers can be widely and deeply involved in labour education activities to avoid being lost.

The renewal of labour education is a systematic project. In addition to the advancement of the high-level concept update, it can only start from the multi-dimensionality of the labour education content, the development of the teaching staff, the development of the labour education base and the related assessment and evaluation system, as well as comprehensively doing a good job in the upgrading and iteration of the education content. Only by updating the teacher reserve, guaranteeing materials and guaranteeing the system can labour education be more effective.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper redefines the concept of re-education through labour in colleges and universities. It is pointed out that labour education in colleges and universities is not a traditional simple human labour, but a combination of specific labour and mental labour, and it also includes the cultivation of labour awareness. Professional learning and campus life should be used as carriers and they should be carried out jointly in and out of class. Moreover,

it is proposed that labour education in colleges and universities is mainly realized through seven channels. In the design of the top-level plan, it is necessary to be far-sighted; to position the training goal of labour education at the level of cultivating social builders in the new era; to raise it to the national standard for labour demand, and to improve holistic education. It is also necessary to innovate the form of labour education; nest labour education into theoretical courses and practical courses; advocate the opening of labour general courses in the talent training program as well as realize the same frequency resonance, complementary advantages, multi-party linkage, and multi-dimensional construction of the college's labour education system.

Besides, universities can open part of campus's labour services to students in the form of packaged projects and conduct evaluations from various aspects such as project setting, development and efficiency as well as enrich the form and education function of labour education in colleges and universities. In addition to school education, we should also integrate social labour education resources, mobilize college students to participate in public welfare labour, increase social service awareness and enhance college students' social service skills.

It is proposed to create a team of high-level teachers with both theoretical knowledge and professional skills through training and employment; hire front-line workers to join the labour education faculty of colleges and universities at the same time; carry out cooperative teaching and provide talent support for the labour education branch. Starting with the construction of a practice base with disciplinary characteristics and an innovation and entrepreneurship base, it will build a labour practice base and consolidate the foundation of labour education. Particular attention should be paid to the application of new technologies in labour education, starting with 'science and innovative thinking', 'network and labour education', 'theory and production skills', reflecting the characteristics of labour in the new era, and enhancing student innovation in compound labour education in creating labour capacity. Furthermore, by taking labour education evaluation, labour achievement evaluation and labour education quality evaluation as the starting point, a scientific and reasonable labour education evaluation system should be constructed so that students and teachers can participate in labour education activities extensively and avoid becoming mere formalities.

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