

# Problems and Countermeasures in Labor Education for College Students in the New Era

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**Abstract:** *In the new era, comprehensively strengthening labor education is a key link and important approach in higher education's mission to cultivate well-rounded individuals. This paper analyzes the current state of labor education among college students, elucidates the existing issues, and, based on the causes of these problems, proposes solutions from four aspects: school, society, family, and individual. These solutions aim to address the challenges faced and promote the healthy and smooth development of labor education.*

**Keywords:** *College Students; Labor Education; Current State; Problems; Practical Approaches; Countermeasures*

## 1. Introduction

Human labor inevitably exists within the realms of both nature and human society, encompassing numerous aspects such as the relationship between humans and nature, social and historical evolution, among others. The meaning of "labor" has been widely discussed. In the new era, it is necessary to imbue "labor" with a contemporary significance that aligns with new practical experiences of life. Moral education in universities, which targets college students as the specific educational subjects, not only reflects general characteristics in its practice but also aligns with the traits of this age group. That is to say, while the basic principles and overall objectives of implementing labor education remain unchanged, the process must be adapted to the students' age, psychological characteristics, and personalities to ensure appropriate education[1]. A leader has said: "The fine traditional Chinese virtues have been integrated into the blood of the Chinese people and have exerted an imperceptible influence on their thinking and actions." Therefore, in the new era, to ensure that labor education in universities remains dynamic and influential, it is essential to draw abundantly from the rich nutrients of China's fine traditional culture.

## 2. Analysis of the Necessity of Labor Education for College Students in the New Era

### 2.1 *The Inevitable Requirement for Realizing the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Dream*

The development of a nation necessitates the participation of everyone, and cultivating laborers is one of the significant educational contents of New China. To better adapt workers to our country's characteristic socialist cause, it is imperative to keep pace with the times, accommodating both the development of the era and possessing a certain level of foresight. Entering the new era, the primary demand of our time is to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese Dream, a task that requires the labor of the new generation, guided by labor education. Thus, labor education is an indispensable part of the new era. During the arduous period of rebuilding New China from a land once "full of devastation," education had already formed an inseparable bond with productive labor. To accelerate the pace of socialist modernization, labor education began to emphasize the cultivation of constructive socialist talents in line with the requirements of the "Four Modernizations" of science and technology, agriculture, industry, and national defense. Every step in the process of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation requires the participation of laborers; hence, improving the comprehensive quality of the vast majority of laborers has become a primary demand. Especially entering the new era, in the context of an era of technological waves led by artificial intelligence, talents of the new century need to become responsible, high-quality workers contributing to society through the proficient mastery of their own specialties, acquisition of professional skills in related fields, and continuous innovation based on their acquired knowledge. Particularly young college students, as part of the

workforce, must receive more labor education to establish a correct view of labor, making them a new type of laborer who can meet the demands of the times and shoulder the mission of building a modernized powerhouse and national rejuvenation[2].

### ***2.2 Strengthening Labor Education for College Students is an Urgent Need in the New Era***

China's development is at an important turning point, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Currently, the global landscape has been subjected to an unprecedented severe test due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the only country in the world to rise peacefully through its own efforts, China has always considered different nations and ethnic groups as part of a community with a shared future. While focusing on its own epidemic prevention and risk management, China also cares about the fate of people worldwide, striving to build a human community with shared breath and destiny. These efforts are inseparable from the support of talents, and contemporary college students are precisely the rich human resources contributing to the comprehensive development of the Motherland. The labor education in universities aims to nurture responsible and creative talents[3]. College students are at a special stage of personal growth, transitioning from school to society. Cultivating knowledgeable, skilled, and creative workers to advance social progress and national development, and delivering talents capable of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese Dream, is an essential goal of college labor education. However, even in contemporary society, after entering the new century, there is still a phenomenon of disdain for labor. This is exactly why universities need to strengthen labor education for contemporary college students, teaching them to respect labor, so that they form positive labor habits in daily life and develop a good sense of labor. One of the purposes of labor education is to enhance the willpower of college students, improve their labor literacy, and help them form a healthy labor perspective, all of which are based on the pedagogical practice of labor education for college students. Contemporary college students must have a sense of ownership, a clear understanding of the intrinsic connection between their development and that of society and the nation. Only then can they find appropriate roles for their professional knowledge within societal and national demands as they learn and grow[4]. Our country, with a population of 1.4 billion, also ranks among the world's largest in terms of the scale of higher education. Therefore, we must leverage the advantages of our population size and educational scale to ensure that college students can contribute to the nation and society in various fields after being cultivated through labor education.

### ***2.3 Enhancing Labor Education to Better Promote the All-Round Development of Individuals***

Labor represents a subjective cognition that arises from the interaction between the subject and the object, and is not only an action or manual work but also can be considered a cognitive approach to labor. In modern society, the concept of labor encompasses both physical and mental efforts. It is only with a correct understanding of labor that college students can play a positive role in their own development and in the advancement of the socialist cause. The labor enthusiasm of college students reflects their strong emotional connection to labor. Imagine a world without labor; the myriad of challenges faced during human development would be left unaddressed. If passion cannot be ignited, then no great feats will be accomplished. At the crucial juncture of China's journey toward building a comprehensively well-off society, the economic development of the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics has entered a new phase, with the tasks of reform, development, and stability being arduous and heavy. Starting from a new historical moment, young college students, as important builders for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and successors of socialism with Chinese characteristics, find labor to be one of the effective means to unleash and grow their potential. Universities are reinforcing labor education for college students, organizing them to participate in social welfare activities, give back to society, care for the elderly in the community, and engage in activities that spread "science, culture, and health" to cultivate their awareness of labor and to train their labor skills. Contemporary college students' classrooms are not confined to the campus alone, enabling them to transition from universities to the farmlands. Through the education and guidance of labor and technical teachers, contemporary college students can concretize their learned knowledge and skills through practical labor activities[5]. It is only through hard work and sweating in the process of labor that college students can better appreciate the satisfaction that comes with reaping the fruits of their labor. This joy can lead them to treasure the outcomes of labor, adopt the right attitude towards work, and hence, achieve the goal of establishing a correct view of labor. Through practice, college students can not only strengthen their physique through physical labor but also exert their intellectual capabilities to go beyond themselves through mental labor.

### **3. Issues with Labor Education for College Students in the New Era**

#### ***3.1 Insufficient Emphasis on Labor Education Courses in Universities***

In the new era, universities should consider enhancing the overall quality of college students as an important task, and the labor concepts, habits, and skill levels of students are directly related to the improvement of overall quality. Therefore, to promote the modernization of socialism in our country, it is necessary to strengthen the labor education of college students and accelerate the cultivation of high-quality, well-rounded technical and innovative talents. Although universities have enhanced their emphasis on labor and recognized its importance for the growth of students, some have not fully assumed their primary responsibilities for labor education or implemented specific actionable measures. First, there are not enough necessary moral education courses. Studies have shown that despite the recognition of the importance of labor for student development, some universities have only made cursory responses at the governmental level without assuming the primary responsibility for labor education or developing specific implementation methods. Second, teachers' evaluations of students' labor education are insufficient. Teachers do not provide timely guidance for students' labor practices nor feedback and evaluation of their labor outcomes, which often results in a lack of interest and engagement from students, ultimately reducing their labor practice activities to mere formalities. Therefore, how to effectively implement labor education work in universities is one of the important aspects of their labor education work[6].

#### ***3.2 Insufficient Social Support for Labor Education Platforms***

Although the work atmosphere in society is positive, support for labor education from various sectors is still slightly lacking. The most critical issue is the lack of a secure platform for social practice, which is necessary for conducting labor education. The absence of community service and productive practice opportunities leads to a discontinuation of the educational impact of labor outside school. Only by establishing practical activities for labor education outside of school can we ensure the normalization and long-term implementation of labor education.

#### ***3.3 Families' Lack of Support for Labor Education***

Labor is inseparably connected to everyone's daily life, and active family participation is the foundational guarantee for the effective conduct of labor education. However, surveys indicate that many parents hold misconceptions about their children's labor education. Parents do not place enough importance on labor education, thinking that as long as their children do well in professional and cultural classes, it is inconsequential to participate in labor as long as it does not affect their studies. In the eyes of parents, low-skilled physical labor is considered undignified, which subtly instills in children a disdain for physical labor, leading to the misconception that physical labor is useless and fostering an unwillingness to work and an undervaluation of the fruits of labor.

### **4. Practical Pathways for Labor Education of College Students in the New Era**

#### ***4.1 Deepening the Dominant Role of Universities in Labor Education***

Fully utilize the guidance of ideological and political education, integrating it with labor education to focus on the behavioral habits and value concepts of students. Through labor, students can develop good labor habits, master labor skills, and establish the values that labor is the most honorable, the greatest, and the most beautiful. University campus culture is a potential educational resource, serving a guiding, edifying, and standardizing role in people's lives; by integrating school culture with labor education, the correct labor values can be subtly incorporated into the daily lives and studies of students, as well as into their behavior and actions.

#### ***4.2 Strengthening the Supportive Role of Society in Labor Education***

Society is a significant characteristic of labor education, where it plays a coordinating and socializing role within this system. The entire society should fully leverage the strengths of each group, cooperate with each other, complement each other's advantages, and through effective connection and integration, create a new model of labor education to achieve the best educational outcomes.

#### ***4.3 Consolidating the Fundamental Role of the Family in Labor Education***

Leaders have pointed out more than once: "The family is the first school of life, and parents are the first teachers of children; we should help children to fasten the first button of life correctly." The ideological awareness and behavior of parents directly affect the children's consciousness and attitudes towards labor; therefore, paying attention to and carrying out family labor education is a fundamental and primary task in doing labor education work well.

#### ***4.4 Enhancing the Agency of College Students in Labor Education***

Labor education is an important part of the higher education system and a crucial requirement for universities to fulfill their fundamental mission of moral education and cultivating talent. However, during the educational process, some universities neglect labor education, and their teaching content still exhibits issues such as outdated labor education methods and objectives. The proverb "It takes more than one cold day for the river to freeze three feet deep" reminds us that these outdated educational thoughts, accumulated over years, need to be addressed seriously by universities, which should take active steps to strictly regulate labor education within their institutions. Firstly, it is necessary to further perfect the curriculum system of labor education. The curriculum system determines the overall development of specialized courses and is the action program and basic element for training talents among young university students. Young university students can only have a more systematic and holistic understanding of their professional knowledge within a complete curriculum system. Therefore, a well-rounded labor education system is a fundamental element of talent training. Secondly, enrich the content of labor education in universities. Teaching content is one of the cores of instruction, and the development of university labor education cannot be separated from its safeguarding[7]. However, due to some universities not fully recognizing the timeliness and significance of labor education, the content of labor education has been reduced, thus hindering the unfolding of labor education activities and preventing students from truly understanding the significance of labor education. Therefore, university education needs to improve by both horizontally strengthening the specificity of labor education and vertically enriching the content of labor education. Lastly, innovate the forms of labor education in universities. The forms of university labor education should be specifically reflected in the methods and means of conducting labor education. Although universities nationwide have gradually started to pay more attention to labor education and actively carried out many labor education projects such as social practice, professional internships, opening ceremonies, and employment guidance, with the development of society and the economy, these methods still need to adapt to the new characteristics and requirements of labor education for college students in the new era. It is necessary to consider the current era's background, comprehensively consider the development needs of society and the nation, and integrate them into the exploration of new educational methods. Educators should guide students on how to face new problems and needs they may encounter in their future growth and development by continuously expanding the capacity of educational methods. Labor education is an educational activity that has both scientific and value-based characteristics, and it embodies timeliness and practice. Its effectiveness in meeting the developmental needs of the era is significant, and the effectiveness of labor education will be greatly enhanced as long as the methods of its application are refined, producing a positive effect on both social and national construction. Thus, labor education is both a new and an old topic. It not only affects the formation of labor views but also influences the behavioral patterns of contemporary college students to a certain extent. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the leader has also mentioned laborers on different occasions and made a series of important speeches concerning the nature and essence of labor. The Chinese nation has always been a nation of labor, and contemporary college students should inherit the fine traditional Chinese ethos, adopting the correct view of labor as their work standard. Universities should strengthen labor education to disseminate the fine traditional Chinese ethos among young college students, help them establish the correct view of labor, and let young college students shine and contribute on the path of building socialism with Chinese characteristics and achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation—the Chinese Dream, letting the slogan "Labor is the most glorious" resound once again[8].

#### ***4.5 Guiding College Students to Establish Correct Labor Concepts***

The concept of labor is closely linked to human behavior, and a correct understanding of labor plays a proactive role. A correct concept of labor not only guides the choices of workers but also regulates their actions. Only those who have established a correct concept of labor can truly grasp the profound

meaning of "labor creates value." Instilling this concept entails educating workers that the value created through their own intellect and hard work is genuinely their own. Educators must guide college students to realize self-learning, self-educating, and self-correcting—starting from this moment, starting with oneself.

Labor education teachers need to intensify their educational efforts, teach students according to their individual abilities, and ingrain the notion that "labor creates value" deeply into the minds of contemporary college students, reinstating "labor is the most glorious" as the loudest slogan of the new century. Humanity has created the world through labor and propelled social development through it. All aspects of human production and life are inseparable from labor, which not only creates the material world for humanity but also enriches our spiritual world.

Therefore, in the educational process, university educators should not only teach students in the classroom but also involve them in practical labor. Only then can students experience the value of labor and the joy of harvesting during diligent work, thereby understanding the importance of establishing a correct view of labor for their personal development and for the development of society and the nation. Through labor concept education, young college students can truly comprehend the idea that "labor is essentially equal," learn to respect labor, regard work earnestly, and cherish job opportunities, treating every worker with kindness.

Actively creating platforms where college students can exhibit themselves is crucial for them to develop more actively. In the process of cultivating talents, universities must fully realize the educational proposition put forward by the renowned educator Cai Yuanpei, which advocates the simultaneous progression of "worldview education, military and national education, aesthetic education, pragmatism education, and civic moral education." Whether the synergistic effect of these five educational aspects can play a role together in the personal development and ideological education of college students depends on their collective promotion.

Universities should not only focus on professional course teachers but also turn their attention to physical education teachers, moral education teachers, aesthetic education teachers, intellectual education teachers, and labor education teachers. Universities need to play their coordinating role to organize educators from these five educational aspects, clarify their functional responsibilities, and manage their work, enabling these educators to cooperate and jointly promote educational development, leading students to grow in all aspects.

## **5. Innovative Strategies for Labor Education Models in Higher Education Institutions**

### ***5.1 Consolidating Value Consensus, Deepening the Connotation of Labor Education***

The fundamental purpose of implementing labor education in higher education institutions is to cultivate students' labor values, emotional attitudes, and ethics. To this end, it is essential to closely integrate the basic mission of fostering virtue through education, aiming at talent cultivation, and comprehensively carry out labor education to instill good labor concepts in students. Concurrently, it is vital to continually enhance their physical fitness, uplift their mental state, develop their practical labor skills, and cultivate their character. Quality is the foundation of being a person, and schools should implement labor education in a planned, purposeful, and organized manner; through targeted labor practice activities such as work-study programs, scientific and technological activities, social surveys, and services, enabling them to grasp technical essentials in practical work, improve their practical operation ability, and cultivate a correct labor value orientation. Achieving the long-term, wholesome development goals of college students is particularly important. In promoting the labor education process in universities, the integration of labor education with various disciplinary teaching activities can be fostered through the reform of curriculum ideology, gradually infusing the spirit of labor throughout. Upholding the labor spirit and carrying out labor education in universities to enhance the practical effectiveness of labor education is a creative adaptation of traditional moral education teaching methods.

### ***5.2 Vigorously Developing Curricula, Improving the Quality of Labor Education***

Currently, when implementing labor education, many higher education institutions in China have not fully realized its role, resulting in the gradual weakening of its value and function, which reflects a deviation from the original purpose of university labor education. According to the development of the

current situation and the actual needs of society, it is necessary to further improve the labor teaching curriculum system of Chinese universities to meet the requirements of quality education and cultivate a new generation of talents with virtue, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor skills. Educators should strengthen the understanding of 'cultivating virtue,' 'enhancing fitness,' and 'increasing intelligence'; in cultivating the role of aesthetics, they should highlight its practicality and contemporaneity, determine its value pursuit and basic purpose, continue its optimization, and introduce a wealth of practical teaching resources. Traditional disciplines have been reformed to realize their educational value. At the same time, under the premise of setting compulsory courses for labor education, the curriculum for labor education has been flexibly designed according to disciplinary characteristics and the unique features of higher education institutions' majors, and the content of labor education is to be integrated with the teaching of other disciplines. In addition, schools should also develop a new labor education course, merging the characteristics of various majors and fields, setting it accurately, and guiding students to actively participate in work-study programs, social practice, and professional services[9].

### ***5.3 Expanding Teaching Approaches, Establishing Collaborative Teaching Mechanisms***

While implementing labor education, it is essential to focus on resource development to form a pattern of overall planning, optimized allocation, and collaborative sharing. Schools should pay attention to the development of college students' understanding of labor, cooperation, innovation, and vocational skills, and cultivate a scientific labor value view among students, emphasizing the training of their labor operation skills and experimental skills. Labor education should be combined with various practical activities to enhance its effectiveness. For this purpose, high-quality social resources can be fully integrated, encouraging schools to make more use of student associations, allowing students more time to engage in social practice. It covers aspects such as agricultural production and commercial services, establishing labor education practice bases like "Agriculture + Labor," "Commerce + Labor," "Tourism + Labor," and making corresponding constructions according to the actual conditions of the school, enabling students to participate in moderate and standardized practices to improve their understanding of labor and practical operation skills. Practice is an important way for students to apply theoretical knowledge and promote their labor practice in the inspection and verification of their ideological and moral labor values. Therefore, schools should continue to expand the pathways for students to participate in internships, extending from the classroom to society, allowing them to find their career development paths and successfully transition from college graduates to professional talents.

### ***5.4 Promoting the Spirit of Labor and Its Role***

Labor culture is a noble spirit gradually accumulated by humanity throughout the long process of labor life, encompassing labor experiences, emotions, and skills, as well as the excellent qualities displayed by laborers. In this context, labor culture is an important social and cultural value, and in the labor education of college students, it is very necessary to promote labor culture and create a good labor education environment. First, by displaying the labor image of workers through the school's cultural construction[10]. When carrying out labor education, labor elements should be actively incorporated into the design of school buildings, creating a labor environment in school buildings, corridors, classrooms, etc., integrating labor elements into the school structure, and establishing a labor publicity column in the school to widely promote labor images. It is important for the labor education work of higher education institutions to be effectively carried out subtly. Second, by telling labor stories and linking them with the interests of modern college students, labor education suitable for college students is carried out.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, labor education is the cornerstone of higher education institutions implementing a "people-oriented" educational philosophy and bears the responsibility of nurturing well-rounded talents for Chinese society. With technological advances, new forms of labor and job positions are constantly changing, and the post-2000 generation's labor concepts and work attitudes differ significantly from the past. Therefore, in conducting labor education, it is necessary to adapt to these new circumstances and continuously innovate and reform, improving the relevance and contemporaneity of labor education.

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