

“Learning through Doing” and “Doing while Learning”: Exploring the Implementation Path of Integrating Labor Education into Senior High School English Teaching in the New Era

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Abstract: Labor education, as a fundamental requirement of educational policies, is one of the effective approaches to implementing the core socialist values. In recent years, it has gradually received attention from the government, society, schools, and individuals. In July 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the “Guidelines for Labor Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Trial Implementation),” which stated the need for “organic integration of labor education into academic disciplines”^[1]. Integrating labor education into subject teaching can promote the daily implementation and comprehensive development of labor education. As a core subject in the basic education system, English carries rich labor knowledge and connotations in senior high school, and holds profound significance for guiding students’ labor practices. Therefore, English teaching should be regarded as one of the important battlegrounds for labor education in senior high school. Through the organic combination of English teaching and practice, it can promote the improvement of students’ labor literacy and the cultivation of a labor spirit. To integrate labor education into senior high school English teaching, this study explores the connotation of labor education, seeks the convergent points between English and labor education, and aims to “learning through doing” and “doing while learning,” thereby exploring the implementation path of integrating labor education into senior high school English teaching. The goal is to provide insights for English teaching.

Keywords: Labor education; English teaching in Senior High school; Learning through doing, Doing while learning

1. The Connotation of Labor Education

Labor is the activity through which humans create material and spiritual wealth, and it serves as the sole means for human self-survival and self-development. Labor education has been intertwined with human development, shaping it in significant ways. Li (2019) conducted a systematic review of the literature on labor education in the 70 years since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, summarizing the evolution of the concept of labor education in different historical stages^[2]. During the early days of the People’s Republic of China until the “Cultural Revolution” period, labor education in our country primarily focused on physical labor, service-oriented production, and ideological transformation. From the early stages of reform and opening up until the mid-1990s, labor education emphasized the integration of manual and intellectual work, comprehensive development, and the cultivation of technical education. In the late 1990s to the first decade of the new century, labor education gradually incorporated modern concepts such as quality education, innovation, and creativity. Since entering the new era, the educational function of labor education has garnered increased attention and prominence.

The current discussions on the connotation of “labor education” mainly revolve around two perspectives. The first perspective views “labor education” as activities aimed at fostering students’ formation of labor values and the cultivation of labor literacy (Tan, 2019)^[3]. In other words, it entails guiding students to develop correct labor values and nurturing their positive labor qualities through various labor-related educational activities. The second perspective regards “labor education” as a curriculum, suggesting that it can effectively cultivate students’ labor literacy when implemented as a subject in the curriculum (Wang & Yin, 2021)^[4]. From the essence of labor education, it becomes evident that it represents not only an educational philosophy but also a teaching method. Implementing

“labor education” embodies the implementation of the educational policy and serves as an important means to fulfill the mission of moral education and the nurturing of talents in the new era.

In conclusion, this study asserts that labor education is a form of education that aims to cultivate students’ labor values and labor literacy through labor education activities or curriculum-based practices. Labor education not only prioritizes the individual development of students but also aligns with societal needs, carrying a significant educational mission.

2. The Convergent Points Between Labor Education and English Teaching

Language is the collective wisdom created by humans and is also a product of labor. English, as a means of expressing world culture and facilitating human communication, plays an important role in social development. Labor education is inherently closely linked to English teaching. From a linguistic perspective, labor education aligns with the communicative function, expressive function, and cultural transmission function of English.

Firstly, labor education provides students with authentic communicative contexts, enabling them to use English for practical communication and interaction. Secondly, labor education aligns with the expressive function of English. In the learning process, students need to describe labor scenes, express their labor experiences, and share their insights on labor. Moreover, labor education carries the mission of cultural transmission, aligning with the cultural transmission function of English. Through labor practices, students not only acquire labor skills but also develop a deeper understanding of the essence and values of labor culture. Simultaneously, through English learning, students can explore the labor cultures of different countries, broaden their cultural horizons, and enhance their cross-cultural communication abilities.

Regarding textbook content, the categorization of labor education content highly corresponds with the content of high school English textbooks. Senior high school English textbooks typically cover various themes such as man and self, man and society, and man and nature. These three themes align with the categorization of labor education content (production labor education, daily life labor education, and service-oriented labor education) (see Table 1 for details). Furthermore, English textbooks offer diverse discourse types, and by exploring labor elements within the discourse, students’ awareness of labor can be strengthened, and the spirit of labor of the Chinese nation can be promoted.

Table 1: The Convergent points between Labor Education Content and Senior High School English Textbooks

Categorization of Labor Education	Specific Content	Theme and Context
Daily Life Labor Education	Personal Life Affairs Management; Good Life Habits; Self-Reliance and Self-Empowerment Awareness	Man & Self
Service-oriented Labor Education	Modern Service Industry Labor; Craftsmanship Labor and Volunteer Services	Man & Society
Production Labor Education	Agricultural Production Labor; Traditional Craftsmanship Production; Industrial Production Labor; New Technology Experience and Application	Man & Nature

3. Challenges in Integrating Labor Education into Senior High School English Teaching

To understand the current situation of senior high school English teachers integrating labor education into senior high school English teaching, the author conducted a survey among ninety-three senior high school English teachers in Ganzhou City and found the following challenges.

3.1. Insufficient Exploration of Labor Education Elements

Textbooks, as the basic medium for achieving educational goals, play a crucial role in teachers’ instructional practices. Textbooks carry rich educational content and concepts. However, in this survey, most teachers reported a lack of labor education elements in current textbooks. Concrete data reveals that over half of the teachers have a relatively low frequency of exploring labor education elements.

Among them, fifty-seven teachers stated that they “sometimes” delve into labor education elements. However, it is concerning that twenty-four teachers indicated “hardly any” exploration of labor education, and even more alarming, three teachers chose “none” when it comes to exploring this aspect. This data further highlights the issue of insufficient labor education resources and inadequate exploration currently in senior high school English teaching. It is crucial for us to urgently address and prioritize this problem.

3.2. The Need for Improvement in Teachers' Teaching Abilities

Teachers play a key role in educational reforms. Integrating labor education into senior high school English teaching poses a new challenge for most teachers. According to the survey, most teachers have a strong awareness of labor education and believe it is necessary to integrate it into English teaching in senior high school. However, in actual teaching practice, most teachers do not incorporate labor education elements into senior high school English teaching. Only a few teachers occasionally mention knowledge points related to labor education in their classrooms, but they fail to effectively stimulate students' interest in labor, leading to unsatisfactory integration of labor education into English teaching. The main reasons for this are twofold. On the one hand, English and labor education are considered as separate subjects. English teachers' professional knowledge mainly focuses on the English subject and teaching methodology, resulting in a limited understanding of labor education theories. On the other hand, teachers lack the ability to integrate or incorporate labor education content into English teaching, resulting in students having few opportunities to participate in English-related practical activities. As a result, it is difficult for students to directly experience the complete process of labor practice, appreciate the content of labor education such as traditional Chinese culture and craftsmanship spirit, and consequently struggle to develop the correct values and qualities related to labor.

3.3. Lack of a Comprehensive Evaluation System

Evaluation is an important means of measuring students' learning outcomes. In this survey, 42 teachers reported that they did not establish appropriate evaluation criteria to assess students' work or performance in terms of labor education. This highlights the incomplete state of the labor education evaluation system in senior high school English teaching, emphasizing the urgent need for its enhancement. Although the importance of labor education in the education system is increasingly emphasized, the current evaluation system lacks sufficient attention to it. Due to the limitations of the evaluation system, teachers find it challenging to accurately assess the actual effect of labor education in English teaching and cannot adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. This hinders students' holistic development.

Overall, the survey reveals the existing challenges in integrating labor education into senior high school English teaching, including the lack of exploration of labor education elements in textbooks, the need for improvement in teachers' teaching abilities, and the absence of a comprehensive evaluation system. Addressing these challenges is crucial to effectively integrate labor education into English teaching and promote students' comprehensive development.

4. Implementation Paths of Integrating Labor Education into Senior High School English Teaching

To successfully integrate labor education into high school English teaching, it is crucial for schools and teachers to collaborate effectively. Schools should prioritize the development of their teaching staff and make good use of second classroom. Teachers, on the other hand, should focus on designing specific teaching objectives, creating diverse learning tasks tailored to different types of classes, seamlessly incorporating labor education into English teaching, and establishing a comprehensive evaluation system.

4.1. Strengthening the Construction of the Teaching Workforce and Enhancing Teachers' Professional Competence

Teachers are the driving force behind educational reforms and the foundation for promoting continuous development and innovation in education. When integrating labor education into senior high school English teaching, schools should prioritize the development of their teaching workforce. Firstly, schools should provide targeted training and guidance to enhance teachers' professional

competence in labor education. They can organize training courses or lecture series on labor education to deepen teachers' theoretical understanding of the subject. Secondly, schools should provide resources and platforms for collaboration. For instance, establishing a collaborative platform for teachers to facilitate communication and knowledge sharing. For example, organizing teaching research activities, seminars, or workshops where teachers can share their experiences and case studies of implementing labor education. This collaborative platform will enable teachers to inspire each other, explore labor education elements collectively, and enhance their ability to implement labor education effectively.

4.2. Effective Utilization of Second Classroom to Improve Students' Labor Literacy

While first classroom teaching is the primary focus of integrating labor education into senior high school English teaching, the second classroom plays a vital role. The second classroom encompasses practical learning experiences outside the first classroom, such as social practices, academic and technological activities, social work, volunteer services, student clubs, arts and sports (Peng & Xie, 2011)^[5]. Schools should recognize the value of second classroom and encourage students to actively participate in labor education-related activities, such as delivering English speeches, hand-copying English newspapers, or utilizing English in promoting labor practice on campus. These activities provide significant platforms for sharing labor stories and fostering the spirit of labor, helping students understand the importance of labor education. Additionally, schools can explore labor stories, promote labor role models, reinforce the guidance of the labor spirit, and create a positive atmosphere of labor on campus. For example, using English to introduce exemplary workers on bulletin boards. Through active participation in second classroom, students can experience the labor process, develop a proper understanding of labor, and enhance their teamwork, innovative thinking, and problem-solving skills.

4.3. Emphasizing the Design of Teaching Objectives with a Focus on "learning through doing"

Table 2: Teaching Objectives Design of Labor Education

Textbook Theme	Units	Teaching Module	Labor Classification	Objectives of Labor Education
Man& Self	Unit 2 Morals and virtues	Reading module Listening and speaking module	Service-oriented Labor	Promoting the spirit of dedication and devotion to work. Carrying forward the craftsmanship spirit of traditional culture.
<i>Continued Table 2 Teaching Objectives Design of Labor Education</i>				
Textbook Theme	Units	Teaching Module	Labor Classification	Objectives of Labor Education
Man& Society	Unit 1 Festivals and Celebrations	Reading module Listening and speaking module	Productive Labor	Respecting the concept of labor and acknowledging its outcomes. Developing the habit of diligence, thrift, and frugality in labor. Mastering the skills of food preparation.
Man& Nature	Unit 4 Space Exploration	Listening and speaking module	Productive Labor	Promoting the spirit of dedication and devotion to work. Inheriting the spirit of exploration, innovation, and striving for progress in the era.

To effectively implement "learning through doing," teachers should prioritize the learning aspect of practical engagement (Xu, 2015)^[6]. This requires teachers to design teaching objectives in a well-defined manner. To avoid overly general objectives that cannot be effectively implemented, teachers should design specific sub-objectives of labor education based on the core literacy of the English curriculum. This approach promotes the formation and development of labor literacy. Using the compulsory third volume of the New Standard English textbook for senior high school as an example (refer to Table 2), specific labor education objectives help students understand and grasp the values of labor education, thereby fostering a strong labor literacy. Moreover, specific labor education objectives provide clear standards and criteria for evaluating labor education, making the evaluation process more objective, fair, and systematic. Through the evaluation of students' outcomes in labor practices, teachers can promptly obtain feedback on students' learning, adjust teaching strategies accordingly, and

optimize the effectiveness of labor education.

4.4. With the Aim of “Learning while Doing”, Designing Various Learning Tasks in Different Lessons

“Learning while doing” refers to the process in which students engage in tasks or practical activities under the guidance of the teacher while acquiring language knowledge. To effectively integrate labor education into senior high school English teaching, teachers should design diverse learning tasks in different lessons.

Firstly, promoting the spirit of dedication in reading class. For example, in the compulsory textbook Unit 2, “Morals and Virtues”, teachers can guide students to analyze the life experiences of Lin Qiaozhi by examining her life timeline and analyzing her choices. This activity helps students develop a sense of service to others and society, understand the importance of dedication to work, and cultivate a spirit of selfless devotion.

Secondly, facilitating the communication of labor skills in listening and speaking class. In Unit 1 “Festivals and Celebrations” of the compulsory textbook, students can improve their language proficiency by discussing different festival foods. This activity not only enhances language skills but also guides students to appreciate the labor involved in food preparation, fostering a mindset of respecting the outcomes of labor.

Thirdly, writing tasks serve as a means to express labor-related emotions. In English writing classes, teachers can design authentic labor scenarios that provide students with opportunities to express their views on labor, share labor experiences, and showcase their labor outcomes. Through this process, students can comprehend the value of labor and develop a proper perspective on work.

Finally, homework can be used to appreciate the beauty of labor. For example, in the compulsory textbook Unit 1, “Festivals and Celebrations,” teachers can assign a project-based homework task, such as creating an English video that demonstrates the process of making Laba porridge. By shifting from “learning about labor” to “engaging in labor,” students can enhance their practical abilities, transition from mere competence to excellence, and experience the beauty of labor.

4.5. Constructing a Diverse Assessment System: Aiming at the Integration of Knowledge and Action

The integration of “learning through doing” and “doing while learning” ultimately lead to the unity of knowledge and action. Teaching evaluation serves as a crucial means of assessing knowledge through action. Teachers should establish specific evaluation criteria based on teaching objectives and content, implementing diverse forms of assessment to measure the effectiveness of labor education.

Firstly, the content of evaluation should be comprehensive, reflecting students’ overall qualities. Specifically, teaching evaluation should closely integrate the core competencies of English language learning and labor literacy to assess students’ comprehensive development. English language core competencies primarily include language proficiency, learning abilities, cultural awareness, and thinking qualities, while labor literacy encompass elements such as labor concepts, labor abilities, labor habits and qualities, and labor ethics. These elements are of significant importance in cultivating students’ sense of social responsibility and practical capabilities. Detailed evaluation criteria can be found in Table 3.

Secondly, the evaluation subjects should encompass a diverse range of individuals or entities. Throughout the evaluation process, teachers should prioritize expanding and diversifying the participants, steering clear of the constraints of traditional one-way teacher evaluations. It is crucial to proactively establish relevant evaluation criteria and promote self-assessment and peer assessment among students. By receiving feedback and suggestions from various sources, students can develop a comprehensive grasp of their performance and progress in both labor activities and English learning. Additionally, they will experience the attention and expectations from diverse perspectives, fostering a drive for self-improvement and a sense of fulfillment.

Thirdly, evaluation should embrace a variety of formats. Teachers can integrate formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment primarily emphasizes students’ proficiency in labor literacy and the development of their labor values. Summative assessment can take the form of outcome presentations or student journals to evaluate students’ performance. For instance, assessing labor outcomes and reflecting on the labor process can be achieved through activities like

designing posters, delivering English speeches, or participating in theatrical performances, thus fostering innovation and expressive abilities. Students' journal writing enables teachers to gain deeper insights into their labor experiences and personal journeys, providing abundant materials for evaluation.

Table 3: The Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Dimensions	Evaluation Criteria
Core Competence	Language proficiency: In the context related to labor, students are able to apply their knowledge of the English language comprehensively, understand and express relevant labor-related knowledge, and describe perceived labor processes and outcomes.
	Learning ability: Students are able to broaden their English learning channels by integrating learning with labor, learning through doing. They can develop qualities such as unity, cooperation, and appreciation for the results of their labor.
	Cultural awareness: Students are able to establish the correct values regarding labor, perceive the spirit of loving their work, being dedicated, and willing to contribute like model workers. They can cultivate the revolutionary spirit of perseverance and hard work, as well as the craftsmanship spirit of pursuing excellence and continuous improvement. They can use English to promote the fine traditions of the Chinese nation, such as diligence, frugality, dedication, and hard work.
	Thinking qualities: Students are able to, make sound value judgments, and express their viewpoints creatively after stepping out of the classroom.

5. Conclusion

Integrating “labor education” into English teaching poses a new challenge for senior high school English teachers. They need to strengthen theoretical understanding of “labor education” and incorporate labor education elements into their English teaching practices, taking into account students' interests and levels. By subtly integrating labor education, teachers can enhance students' language expression skills while guiding them to develop an awareness of work, cultivate work-related skills, and ultimately foster work competence. This integration allows English teaching and “labor education” to complement each other and achieve mutual benefits.

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