

Discussion on Mao Zedong's Educational View

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Abstract: *Labor education has the comprehensive educational value of cultivating morality, increasing intelligence, strengthening physical fitness, and nurturing beauty. Valuing labor education is a glorious tradition of socialist education. Revisiting Mao Zedong's discourse on labor and labor education has important practical significance. This article proposes the concept of labor education, emphasizing the combination of education and productive labor; focusing on cultivating people's labor concepts and skills, shaping correct values, and making an indelible contribution to the cultivation of socialist builders and successors, promoting the theoretical and practical development of labor education in China. It also provides important ideological sources and practical references for the development of labor education in the new era.*

Keywords: *Mao Zedong; labor; labor philosophy; labor education*

1. Introduction

Labor is the essential characteristic and mode of existence of human beings, with comprehensive educational values of cultivating morality, increasing intelligence, strengthening physical fitness, and nurturing beauty. Valuing labor education is not only a glorious tradition of socialist education, but also a long-term plan related to the development of our nation. Standing at a new height in the new era, revisiting Mao Zedong's series of profound discussions on labor and labor education is of great significance for fully implementing the Party's education policy, cultivating the labor spirit, labor value orientation, and labor skill level of billions of students.

2. The value reflection of labor concept

On November 21, 1921, Mao Zedong published "What We Hope for from the Labor Union", in which he wrote: "Those who do not work cannot eat! Labor is sacred! Everyone should do their best and take their value! The whole world belongs to laborers!" Emphasizing the simple truth that labor is the foundation of survival, concise and profound, with a long aftertaste, it not only reflects Mao Zedong's great childlike heart of advocating labor and respecting laborers, but also reflects our re-understanding and adherence to Mao Zedong's labor view, which is a Chinese Marxist labor view[1].

How to understand Mao Zedong's labor philosophy? Firstly, from a theoretical perspective, it is an innovative development of the Marxist view of labor practice. In the classic literature of Marxism, expressions such as "labor is the first condition of human life", "labor is the creator of all value", and "labor creates man himself" ultimately condense into three major propositions: labor creates the world, labor creates history, and labor creates man himself. Mao Zedong, starting from the reality of the Chinese revolution and construction, pushed the position, connotation, role, and value of labor in the process of human historical development to unprecedented heights, repeatedly emphasizing that "the production movement is not only necessary in the past, but also in the present and in the future". The reason is straightforward and profound: "Faced with serious difficulties, should we starve to death? Should we disband? Or should we do it ourselves? No one agrees with starving to death, and no one agrees with disbanding. Let's do it ourselves! This is our answer. In October 1943, when the mass production movement was vigorously carried out, he timely warned: "All military and civilian people who do not pay attention to production but are lazy, are not good soldiers and good citizens." It was written into the Party Constitution of the CPC written into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, and has long been internalized as an important component of the Party's fine traditions.

From the perspective of the Party's purpose, Mao Zedong's labor outlook is a vivid embodiment of

the CPC's view of the people. Mao Zedong once made four different metaphors for the "people", comparing them to "God", "eyes", "land", and "water". These metaphors fully reflect his deep feelings of worshiping the working people, standing on the working people, relying on the working people, and caring for the working people, as well as the Communist Party's view of serving the people wholeheartedly [2]. He said, "I must write about those who work in the fields, forge iron, and dig coal as heroes and heroines." He praised labor heroes and model producers as "leaders of the people". At the 7th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, he solemnly declared the fundamental Marxist viewpoint that 'the people, only the people, are the driving force behind the creation of world history'. In December 1947, he once again emphasized that "history was not created by emperors, generals, and ministers, but by the working people." On the afternoon of February 18, 1953, he talked to a vendor in front of the Yellow Crane Tower site in Sheshan, Wuhan. The crowd rushed in, excitedly shouting, "Long live Chairman Mao!" He took off his hat on the boat, greeted the crowd, and shouted loudly, "Long live the people. This is not only a eulogy of the great labor enthusiasm of the people for changing the world and building socialist countryside, but also the best portrayal of the tragic history of the Chinese people's heroic dedication to the centenary of the revolution [3]. At the same time, he cared about the people's love for the people, and shared weal and woe with the people, which was more permanent in the memory of the people and integrated into the blood of generations of CPC people.

From a cultural tradition perspective, Mao Zedong's labor philosophy is a critical inheritance of traditional Chinese labor thought [4]. Loving labor is a traditional virtue of the Chinese nation, which is renowned for its perseverance and hard work. As some scholars have pointed out in their article "Qishi", "labor is the fundamental force that has created the glorious history of the Chinese nation". However, traditional labor thought is in line with ancient Chinese social practice. In the context of traditional Chinese thought, there are significant differences in people's understanding of labor and the status of workers, as well as the degree of respect for the personality of workers. There are both the "royal way" of "valuing the people over the ruler and nurturing the people" and the "active thinking" of condemning Fan Chi, who "invited learning to cultivate crops" and "invited learning to be a nursery", as a "petty person"; There is both the ideal of great harmony, where the wise cultivate and eat together with the people, and govern through feasting. There is also the universal principle, where those who work hard govern and those who work hard govern; There is both the folk tradition of 'farming and reading have been passed down for a long time' and the outdated concept of 'only reading is high'. For those bad traditional thoughts, Mao Zedong criticized: "In history, officials did not farm the land, and scholars did not farm the land." The CPC led the masses of the people to fight the world, relying on "everyone to do": "If the national party, government, military, civilian education, party running, official, everyone to do, it is not a new China?" In the early days of the founding of New China, the rural population accounted for 89.4%, and the ratio of agricultural labor force was more than 85%. In this context, it is inevitable for the Party and the state to attach importance to physical labor and develop agricultural production. However, fundamentally changing the erroneous concepts of "shameful", "unproductive", and "lowly" farming that have been passed down for thousands of years is particularly urgent and crucial.

3. The principle of combining education and labor is unshakable

The combination of education and productive labor is one of the legacies of Mao Zedong's educational thought, and also one of the basic characteristics of socialist education. It was clearly defined as an important component of the Party's educational policy in September 1958. In August 1958, Mao Zedong pointed out that the principle of combining education with labor is unshakable; On the 13th of the same month, he emphasized that "combining education with productive labor" is one of the three things that higher education institutions should grasp; On September 8th of the same year, he once again emphasized that "combining education with labor is a fundamental principle and central issue"; On December 9 of the same year, he summarized in the outline of his speech at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China: "In 1958, the education system was reformed and the combination of education and labor was implemented, which was a major event." In just a few months, Mao Zedong emphasized the principle of combining education and labor intensively, regarded it as the "basic principle", "central issue" and "a major event" in education work, and emphasized that it was "irreplaceable", which can be said to be very rare, and at the same time, it was natural [5]. The underlying reasons are not only the specific manifestation of his Marxist labor view in the field of education, but also the practical need for the education industry to adapt to the development and requirements of the national economy at that time. It is also determined by the basic idea of combining education with labor, and is aimed at cultivating a new generation of

all-round development.

It is also a major drawback of the present education, which must be corrected and improved effectively. As early as his student days, he felt that "studying behind closed doors, its learning is useless", determined to learn "no word book". In November 1917, he pointed out: "At present, the great disadvantage of schools is that they are tied into two scolops with society, and there is still a gap between east and west." In his view, the separation between school education and social practice has become so serious that "there will never be a day of union." On March 7, 1920, he once again pointed out: "In today's Chinese society, educated people cannot work, and those who work cannot receive education". The current academic system in China means that one cannot make a living while studying, and one cannot study while making a living." In January 1934, he explicitly stated that the general policy of Soviet cultural education was "to link education with Labor". In the early years of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the number of students enrolled in primary and secondary schools soared, and education and employment began to become a particularly prominent issue. According to statistics, in 1954, more than 60% of junior high school graduates and primary school graduates could not go to school. In 1957, about 80 percent of middle school students across the country could not go to school. These graduates should have entered society and joined the labor force, but many of them did not want to become workers. In this context, the Party and the state must put more emphasis on the combination of education and labor. In May 1951, the Central Government issued a special directive emphasizing the need to "correct": "The idea and method that students are only allowed to study in closed rooms and are not allowed to participate in social activities are incorrect." In November 1953, the Government Administration Council issued a directive on primary education, emphasizing the need to "overcome the current tendency of some students to despise physical labor." In April 1954, the Government Administration Council again issued instructions on secondary education: "Particularly serious is the neglect of Labor education. It was a mistake of principle." In May of the same year, the Central Committee instructed the Party Group of the Ministry of Education: "The guiding ideology of secondary and primary education is biased towards ignoring labor education. This is a principled mistake in the middle and primary school education policy." In October 1955, the Central Government issued a summary instruction: "One of the basic shortcomings of primary and secondary education in China at present is the disconnection between education and production left over from the old society." There are many problems in students' thinking that have not been solved, erroneous views have not been criticized, and correct views have not been truly established." In June of the same year, Premier Zhou Enlai also pointed out that "many young students despise physical labor, despise workers and peasants, and are unwilling to participate in industrial and agricultural production after graduation".

Through simple sorting, we can find that whether it is "incorrect" or "particularly serious", whether it is "principled error" or "a major basic flaw", whether it is "insufficient attention" or "failure to take practical measures", from these words, we can fully feel how severe Mao Zedong and the Party Central Committee's criticism of the separation of education and labor was, how much emphasis was placed on the principle of combining education and labor, and how urgent the need for labor education was. However, it must be pointed out that correction often leads to over correction, which is not only a manifestation of excessive political color in decision-making, but also causes many places to engage in excessive labor, even using labor as a substitute for education, widespread suspension of classes, and even shouting slogans such as "labor is honorable, education is not honorable", which brings serious losses to the Party's education cause.

In terms of basic content, Mao Zedong's emphasis on the principle of combining education with labor is mainly reflected in three aspects:

Firstly, combining mental and physical labor. This is a fundamental knowledge of Marxist labor theory. But as mentioned earlier, the separation of work and effort is not only a major problem in traditional education, but also a pressing issue that must be addressed in building a new China. As early as August 1921, when Mao Zedong and others founded the "Hunan Self study University" in Changsha, they stated that its purpose was to "achieve the equal development of mental and physical abilities", advocating the use of both hands and brains, and the unity of labor and effort [6]. At the beginning of the founding of New China, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China repeatedly emphasized the need to "correct the erroneous thinking of underestimating physical labor and underestimating manual laborers". At that time, among the vast majority of students, the problem of neglecting physical labor and manual laborers had become so serious that it had to be solved, because "they verbally valued labor, but in reality only valued mental labor and did not value physical labor". On August 16, 1958, Mao Zedong explicitly stated in his personally reviewed and signed publication

by Lu Dingyi, "Education must be combined with productive labor," that "the educational policy of separating work from work cannot meet the needs of socialist construction." One month later, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued instructions requiring that in all schools, the "labor perspective, which combines mental and physical labor," must be cultivated.

Secondly, the combination of intellectuals and the masses of workers and peasants. Mao Zedong believed that intellectuals should take the path of combining with the masses of workers and peasants, which is called "cultural and military cooperation" and "can be considered the best in the world"; On the contrary, 'one will achieve nothing'. In May 1939, he made it clear that the only criterion for measuring whether young people were revolutionary was whether they were united with the masses of workers and peasants. In May 1942, he used his own experiences as a student to explain his emotional changes towards the working people, believing that "the cleanest are still workers and farmers, even though their hands are black and their feet have cow dung". On August 5, 1949, he satisfactorily pointed out in a commentary: "Experience has proven that practical labor education is necessary in all schools and training classes that transform intellectuals. This must be clearly stipulated in educational policies." However, it is undeniable that Mao Zedong and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China had made incorrect estimates of the ideological status of intellectuals, leading to the "expansion of anti rightism" and causing unfortunate consequences. This is something we must learn from.

Thirdly, combining theory with practice. This is one of the three major styles of the Party, the essence of Mao Zedong Thought, and the core of the principle of combining education with labor. Mao Zedong, starting from adhering to the "living Marxism that actually plays a role in the lives and struggles of the masses," emphasized that "by using hoes, machines, and other tools to transform the world, our understanding deepens." He criticized the dogmatism and subjectivism errors of "antique connoisseurs" who read many "arrows" without releasing them, and self evaluated themselves as "relying on summarizing experience to make a living. What makes us even more grateful is that he also demands the same from his own children. In February 1946, Mao Anying returned to China from studying in the Soviet Union. He said to his beloved son, who had been separated for 20 years, "You still need to go to another university to learn the other half's knowledge. This university did not exist in China or abroad before, and it is called the 'Labor University'." The original name of the 'Labor University' scientifically and vividly summarized and deepened our understanding of the combination of theory and practice promoted by labor. What is the deeper meaning behind it? Mao Zedong once stated in "Rectifying the Party's Work Style": "The most important thing is to be good at applying this knowledge to life and practice

In terms of fundamental purpose, Mao Zedong emphasized that the combination of education and labor is to cultivate a new generation of people to build the motherland. How to quickly change the situation of "poverty and backwardness" and how to develop the education industry in New China are the questions that Mao Zedong often pondered. In February 1957, he explicitly proposed: "Our educational policy should enable learners to develop in moral, intellectual, and physical education, and become cultured laborers with socialist consciousness." A few days later, he further emphasized at a symposium on general education work: "Students should be able to endure hardships and start from scratch... Don't make them like flowers in a greenhouse." This educational policy is actually the consensus and unified will of the Party and the state on the cause of education.

Objectively speaking, education should cultivate the concept of "workers", which is a concept that develops logically in the educational process. This is not only necessary to correct the long-standing problems of the separation of education, teaching, and labor in traditional education, but also because there were two important issues in the field of education at that time: first, the fundamental problem of "embarrassing but not embarrassing farming, and having potential but not having potential" had not been solved; The second is unrealistic thinking such as 'thinking that everything should be fine in socialist society '. Therefore, Mao Zedong's proposal of the educational purpose of cultivating "laborers" is not only a rational criticism of the traditional educational purpose view, but also a response to the erroneous ideas of a considerable number of students at that time who believed that labor was "useless" and "inferior", and a serious dissatisfaction with the separation of education and labor. Of course, Mao Zedong's concept of "laborers" is not the traditional concept of physical laborers, nor is it a purely abstract concept. Instead, it is based on the practical needs of building the motherland and includes the three in one of "comprehensive development", "socialist consciousness", and "cultured" as a whole of laborers. Among the three, the most important is undoubtedly the "socialist consciousness" that he refers to as the "moral education of our era", which is the "soul" of laborers.

This goal itself is not wrong, but there has been a "left deviation" in practice. After the reform and opening up, we continued to adhere to the principle of combining education with productive labor, retained the connotation of "development in morality, intelligence, and physical fitness", and developed the concept of "laborers" into the concept of "builders and successors of the socialist cause". Comparing the two, although their essence has not changed, after all, builders and successors are also laborers, and the fundamental purpose of labor education is to cultivate high-quality laborers who are valuable to society. However, Mao Zedong's fundamental purpose of unifying the purpose of education, labor, and revolution has been downplayed, which to some extent has led to the narrowing, weakening, and dilution of the important way of combining education and labor that still exists today.

4. The new era reflection of labor education

Labor is the foundation of struggle and the most important struggle. 80 years ago, Mao Zedong pointed out in his speech at the Yan'an Model Youth Conference that "China's youth movement has a good revolutionary tradition, which is 'permanent struggle'..." Permanent struggle 'is the most important one. Without it, everything is empty.'" After nearly a century of revolution, construction, and reform and opening up, the face of our country and the lives of the people have undergone earth shaking changes. We are now in the best period of development in modern times, and we are closer to the goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation than any other period in history. In this context, does Mao Zedong still want the permanent tradition of struggle that he hoped for back then? The answer from Chinese leaders is: "Today, our living conditions have improved, but the spirit of struggle cannot be lacking at all. The good tradition and unity of Chinese youth's eternal struggle cannot be lost."

The basic viewpoint of Marxism on labor struggle and the fine tradition of labor struggle created by Mao Zedong and other older generation revolutionaries are the ideological foundation and inexhaustible driving force for our hard work and continuous struggle in the new era. In a sense, the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics also began with revisiting the memory of our party's eternal struggle and unleashing the spirit of eternal struggle. Standing at a new starting point and height in the new era, we should shoulder the banner of struggle and create new combinations of education, new labor, and new creativity to reach new horizons. This is the latest development of Marxist labor theory, the adherence and promotion of the tradition of permanent struggle, and the fundamental requirement of the Party for labor education in the new era. The main mission of labor education in the new era is to firmly establish the "four most" labor values among students, and to firmly oppose all erroneous ideas of getting something for nothing, seeking pleasure, and advocating instant wealth. Let the labor spirit of diligence, thrift, struggle, creativity, and dedication of the Chinese nation flourish among generation after generation of young people.

5. Conclusion

In the current and future period, the education system and teachers and students need to conscientiously implement the important national discourse on labor and labor education, adhere to the principle of permanent struggle, think and study how to make labor education take root and bear fruit, establish a complete labor education system, cultivate the labor concept of young students in labor practice, focus on improving the support, guarantee and organizational implementation ability of labor education, create a good atmosphere of care and support for labor education in the whole society, further radiate labor enthusiasm, release creative potential, and achieve the goal of comprehensively consolidating labor education to forge new talents in the era.

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