

Practical Exploration of Labour Education Improvement Based on Humanism* --A Case Study of Lixin Experimental Primary School in Mudan City

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Abstract: *Improvement of education on the hard-working spirit based on the concept of humanism is a natural requirement for students' core competencies development in the new era. In recent years, Lixin Experimental Primary School, located in the city of Mudan, has implemented humanism-based new education on the hard-working spirit, which has greatly promoted improvement of the effect of implementation of school labor education through a series of measurements during the process, such as highlight students-oriented value orientation to stimulate their thinking of hard-working; practice the inherent requirements of students' overall development to refine hard-working teaching mechanism and focusing on students' intrinsic individual needs to promote self-realization, and so on.*

Keywords: *Humanism; Labor Education; Classroom teaching of labor; Overall development; Self-realization*

1. Introduction

In the spring of 2020, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council have unveiled a guideline on strengthening education on the hard-working spirit among students in universities, secondary and primary schools in the new era, which clearly states that education on the hard-working spirit should be shifted from fragmented learning to curriculum-based learning, integrating it into all school levels and all aspects of life with the combination of four aspects education: all-round moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic grounding with a hard-working spirit. It has pointed out the direction for the improvement of education on the hard-working spirit. At present, difficulties in the practice of education on the hard-working spirit of primary and secondary schools mainly comes from teachers' ambiguity understanding on its concept, limited space for activity and funding, inadequate mechanisms related to the teaching of this education in schools, as well as the overall unsatisfactory effects of education on the hard-working spirit in practice.

How to break through the dilemma to enhance its effectiveness of cultivating people has become the main problems of education on the hard-working spirit in primary and secondary schools. In recent years, Lixin Experimental Primary School of Mudan city has been exploring the theory and practice of "new education on the hard-working spirit" with the concept of humanism as its guide. After twenty years of exploration, the school has achieved initial outcomes with the help of the platform of "Pilot Project" of ministry of education, which gained highly social recognition.

2. The relevance of the concept of humanism to the practice of education on the hard-working spirit

2.1 Humanistic theory

In the 1950s and 1960s, the famous American psychologist Abraham H. Maslow put forward the theory of humanism. Soon afterwards, the theory of humanistic teaching was developed. He advocated that the students' "ego" is at the heart of education which should develop human potential and emphasized understanding oneself and others, getting along well with them, meeting the basic human needs, and development towards self-fulfilment. Such an education helps people to realize their full potential and become the best they can be [1]. According to scholar Gong Bo, humanistic education has

three core points: firstly, student-centred; secondly, all-round development; and thirdly, individuality freedom[2]. Among these features, student-centred means students are the main focus, and teachers play the role of instructors following their cognitive characteristics; comprehensive development means promoting the organic unity of students' knowledge, emotions, thoughts and actions, and enhancing the effectiveness of students' comprehensive competencies; individuality freedom means taking students as the centre and starting point, opposing mechanical teaching, advocating a relaxed and interesting classroom atmosphere, and encouraging students to develop their personalities[3]. Students are taught by campus courses through an education of student-centred, well-rounded holistic and personality-development, clarifying the status of teachers and students in the classroom, which contributes greatly to the overall development of students.

2.2 Definition of education on the hard-working spirit

The Dictionary states that labour education is not only a part of moral education, but also an educational activity that cultivates students' love for labour and working people, developing a right view of labour and labour habits as well as skills based on practical life.[4] The Dictionary of Education states that labour education is an education on labour production, technology and literacy, which aims to guide students to establish a correct concept of labour and cultivate good labour habits.[5] Professor Tan Chuanbao believes that labour education is an educational activity that aims to develop students' labour values and literacy. [6]

In the context of life of big data, labour education not only has new features in its connotation, but also new changes in its form. The connotation of labour education is defined as a comprehensive education value of "cultivating morality, increasing intelligence, strengthening physical fitness and nurturing beauty" in the guideline on strengthening education on the hard-working spirit among students in universities, secondary and primary schools in the new era, and also clarifies that the focus of labour education is to return to the real life world of students, thus cultivating the spirit of labour and practical ability of students to strive for innovation. In short, the profound connotation of labour education lies in its nurturing function. Some scholars have further pointed out that there is a need to think about and respond to the challenges posed by information technology and digitalization to labour education in the context of a post-industrial society, but also a need to learn labour skills, concepts and values through labour to complement classroom education in schools [7]. As can be seen, the forms of labour education have become diverse in this new era, with new forms such as digital labour and immaterial labour. Therefore, improving labor education is a natural consequence of the development of the times.

2.3 The "new labour education" under the concept of humanism

"The New Labour Education" is an improvement of labour education based on the concept of humanism. The three main characteristics of humanism, namely human orientation, comprehensive development and individuality freedom, largely meet the essential requirements of labour education through the subject (the student), the educational activities (resources and methods) and the educational ideology that promotes comprehensive development and individuality freedom (student's self-realization) in the school field. The strengthening of the use of humanism in the development of labour education, the realization of humanistic conceptual guidelines as well as the comprehensive development of the subject, contribute to the improvement of labour education.

The "New Labour Education" is a strategy to improve labour education by creating a new form of labour education with the concept of humanism at its core, integrating the core elements of labour education and aiming to develop students' core literacy (as shown in Figure 1). On the one hand, the humanistic theory as a guiding theory can lead the way for the practice of labour education. The improvement of labour education based on the humanistic concept should be based on the overall development of students, focus on their future, pay attention to their main role, wake up their enthusiasm for labour and cultivate their labour literacy. At the same time, the all-round development of human beings in humanism requires us to focus on tapping the educational resources of schools and enriching the forms of educational and practical activities to achieve the all-round development of students' moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic qualities; on the other hand, the improvement of labour education promotes the development of humanism. By establishing a systematic curriculum system and guiding students to discover and understand the multi-dimensional value of labour, it is not only conducive to students feeling the joy in the process of laboring, but also creating a school culture featuring labour and finding paths for students' all-round development to be realized. The improvement

of labour education in schools based on the concept of humanism not only makes humanism richer, but also fully reveals the vitality of humanism in practice.

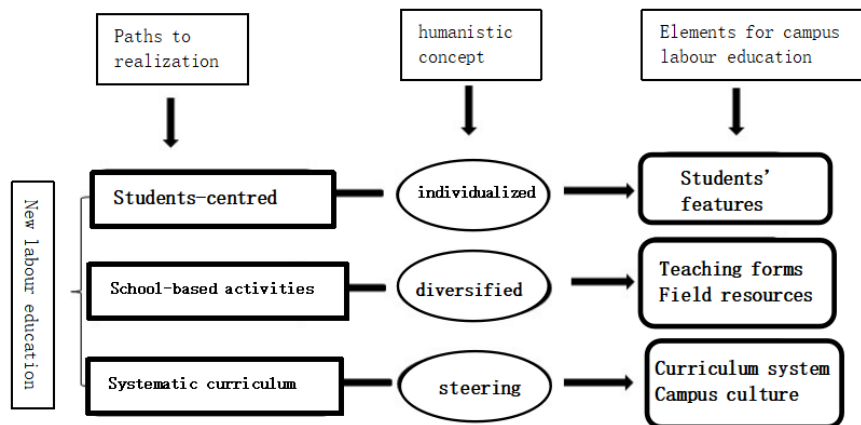


Figure 1: Implementation strategies for the New Labour Education based on humanism

3. Improvement of education on the hard-working spirit supported by the concept of humanism

The improvement of education on the hard-working spirit in Lixin Experimental Primary School aims to break the barriers of traditional labour education and promote the achievement of students' overall development goals. In other words, through labour, students can acquire basic labour knowledge and skills to meet their own development needs, gain inner spiritual strength, and ultimately promote the internalization of labour literacy for students' future careers.

3.1 Highlight student-centred values and stimulate students' thinking about labour

In educational and teaching activities, it is important to respect the subjectivity of students and to focus on guiding them in order to make the most of humanism for human development. Therefore, in the process of implementing improvements in labour education, schools should focus on clarifying the direction of improvement in the context of the school's educational philosophy, emphasizing that students are in a subjective position in labour education, stimulating students' thinking about labour and developing positive labour concepts and qualities.

3.1.1 Rooted in the school's humanistic philosophy, establishing the direction of labour education

Through long-term practical exploration, the school has clarified the direction of improving labour education based on humanism, built a conceptual system and implementation strategy for the "New Labour Education", and insisted on carrying out labour education under the guidance of the school philosophy of "putting people at the centre of the school and building a good foundation for students' lives". In the light of the new features and requirements of labour education, the school has identified the following directions for improving labour education: firstly, to develop the characteristics of labour education by combining the school's regional culture with the content of labour; secondly, to focus on the generation of students' labour experience, highlight the charm of labour education in the school, and cultivate students into creative citizens with the spirit of labour; thirdly, to create a school-based labour education model and create a distinctive, efficient and warm labour classroom. The establishment of the direction of labour education improvement has far-reaching implications for labour education in providing new ideas for nurturing people and promoting the formation of students' labour values.

Under the environment of labour education, the school has organized a special labour curriculum based on the campus culture. The school's labour education has been fully recognized and highly appreciated by the leaders of the Ministry of Education, and has been awarded the titles of "National Advanced Unit of Labour Education" and "National Distinguished School". The improvement of the school's labour education has contributed to changes in students' knowledge, emotions and behaviour, reflecting the distinctive and efficient characteristics of the school education, and has had a profound impact on students' continuous self-improvement.

3.1.2 Follow the law of physical and mental development and pay attention to the growth of students' hard-working spirit

Humanistic learning theory emphasizes students are at the centre of learning and organic unity of knowledge, emotion and action should be valued. Therefore, the labour curriculum needs to be context-oriental to help individuals refine their understanding of the world [8], emphasizing the practical nature of the curriculum and the subjectivity of students. Schools are committed to providing a labour education that meets the needs of students' growth, offering labour courses that are in line with their physical and mental development, and allowing students to receive labour education in their daily lives, which mainly includes the following approaches. Firstly, building a student-centred teaching model, providing a variety of experiential positions suitable for students' physical and mental work, and setting up supervisors for labour experience positions. Students are free to choose their own labour courses according to their individual development needs. Secondly, students are guided to explore questions about the practical labour activities they are involved in to promote active thinking, and teachers provide guidance to students so as to promote a deep understanding of the meaning and value of labour. Thirdly, different types of labour courses are offered at different levels, taking into account the physical and mental development of students, and cognitive labour courses, practical courses and innovative courses are offered at lower, middle and upper levels respectively. The courses are progressive, relevant and practical, which can better facilitate students' independent construction of a labour education knowledge system. Fourthly, designing labour practice themes with careful consideration, create a pleasant classroom atmosphere and set up labour practice activities suitable for students. Fifthly, fully acknowledge students' labour achievements, let them experience the hardships of labour and the pleasure of labour harvest, encourage students to investigate, innovate and practice, and stimulate students' enthusiasm for labour.

3.1.3 Diversifying the content of the labour curriculum courses and nurturing students' core literacy

Being student-centred and attentive to students' needs is a requirement of humanistic teaching, where the teaching process takes care of students' feelings, is not limited to a particular learning content and gives them the opportunity to develop [9]. In labour education, the students' subjective role is exercised in terms of the freedom of curriculum content, learning styles and the degree of participation.

The development of labour education in primary schools cannot be achieved without three major aspects: firstly, the creation of a distinguished labour education curriculum; secondly, the development of socially beneficial labour practices and thirdly, the realization of a collaborative labour education approach involving school, society and family[10]. The "new labour education" is based on the school's reality, integrating resources from various sources to develop a featured labour curriculum and cultivate good labour education qualities, such as labour knowledge, practical labour skills, dedication and cooperation, which are core qualities for students to adapt to modern social production patterns (as shown in Figure 2).

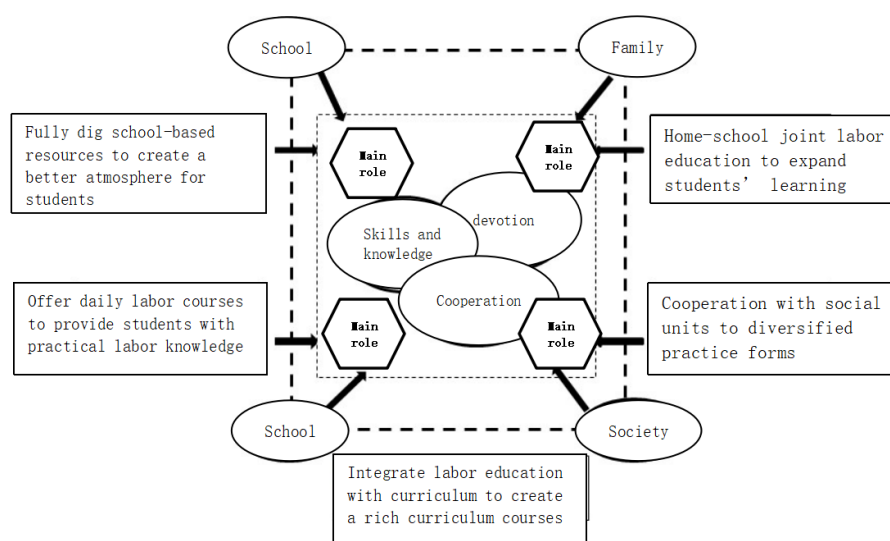


Figure 2: Development of a special labour curriculum for the "New Labour Education"

By integrating resources and developing a special school-based labour curriculum to encourage the diversified and comprehensive development of students, the main approaches include the following

aspects. Firstly, building school-based labour practice sites, such as vineyards, agricultural gardens and flower gardens, and actively conducting labour-themed lessons to create a strong labour atmosphere for students. Secondly, creating regular labour lessons on the theme of students' daily life affairs, so as to build a channel for students to understand labour and feel the beauty of life. Thirdly, strengthening the socialization of labour and conducting self-service labour lessons jointly with families, so as to seek more opportunities for students to work and broaden the content of their labour learning. The school has set up labour practice bases with a number of social units such as dairy farms, air-conditioning plants and residential communities, where students complete their labour practice tasks by observing, understanding, receiving guidance and participating in labour. Fourthly, enhancing the subjectivity and participation in labour, based on the requirement for all staff to participate in labour, a flexible teaching system is adopted, whereby teachers provide targeted labor instruction to students after centrally arranged labour lessons. Fifthly, it combines labour education with subject teaching, focusing on combining subject knowledge, with the labour curriculum, creating multi-disciplinary labour knowledge for students, who gain new knowledge in the rich subject labour curriculum and play the main role, continuously improving, creating and developing themselves in the process of laboring.

3.2 Practising the inherent requirement of students' all-round development and improving the mechanism for teaching

Chen Bochong pointed out that labour education is an important way to achieve the overall improvement of students' quality and promote their all-round development[11]. In the context of the new era, labour education can be ensured effectively by strengthening the curriculum, improving the modern vocational education system, promoting diversified cooperation among families, schools and society, and improving the labour evaluation mechanism[12]. It is true that a sound mechanism for teaching labour and practising a systematic curriculum is an effective way to enhance the effectiveness of labour teaching.

3.2.1 Strengthen the top-level design and improve the labour education system

Labour education is an important part of Marx's doctrine of the all-round development of the human being, and is of great significance in the training of a knowledgeable, skilled and innovative workforce in the new era [13]. The improvement of labour education brings the characteristics of humanism further to the fore. Firstly, the top-level design of labour education improvement should be strengthened, a team of professional teachers for labour education improvement should be established, and the direction, guiding ideology, guarantee and implementation of labour education improvement should be clarified so as to effectively and efficiently promote labour education improvement and application. Classify labour education improvement funding as a key protection item, invest and apply it in an orderly manner, and form a continuous and institutionalized protection mechanism. Improve various labour education institutional systems, such as curriculum content, scientific research, practice sites, teacher training, organizational and management departments and labour evaluation systems, is to ensure orderly implementation of labour education improvement.

Secondly, from the requirement of comprehensive development of students' labour education, different types of teaching methods and educational resources are built to be intrinsically linked, to enhance the penetration of subject knowledge and abilities in labour education, and to promote the construction of a new form of operating mechanism for labour education. At the moral level, labour is used to promote the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, such as making Beijing opera faces, learning tie-dye and embroidery and weaving crafts, etc., broadening students' vision of labour and nurturing their love for the motherland and traditional culture. At the intellectual level, students are taught a wealth of knowledge about work, such as learning about the "24 Solar Terms" and starting a workplace observation programme, which helps students understand the meaning of work. At the physical education level, we actively promote the sports spirit of students and integrate physical education into labour education, for example, by organizing labour sports activities, harvesting the fruits of labour and basketball exercises during class, etc., which effectively improve the physical fitness of students. In terms of aesthetic education, through labour courses and practical labour activities, such as the "24 Solar Terms" art festival, the introduction of local folk artists into the campus, lectures on regional culture and "July 1st" activities, and so on. These activities not only cultivate students' aesthetic skills, but also stimulate their enthusiasm for laboring. At the level of education on the hard-working spirit, the school-based curriculum is actively innovated to enrich the teaching content of labour education. For example, the spring ploughing experience activity "Busy in spring during the rainy season" not only helps students understand relevant agricultural knowledge, but also develops basic labour skills, which is conducive to stimulating students' creativity and cultivating the

good quality of hard work and saving.

3.2.2 Practice systematic teaching to improve the effectiveness of labour teaching

Labour education attaches importance to the systematic learning of scientific knowledge and to the guidance of students in the labour process, advocating the true unity of labour and education[14]. The construction of labour knowledge in schools has a systematized curriculum that progresses from lower to higher grades in accordance with students' receptive and learning abilities, forming a graded labour curriculum system that helps to promote a deeper understanding of labour education and to enhance students' own labour literacy and abilities. Based on students' daily labour lessons, three different types of labour courses have been developed, focusing on cultivating students' knowledge of labour in the lower grades, enhancing the labour learning abilities of the middle grades and developing the labour creativity of the upper grades, greatly enriching the content of labour education for students.

The school also guarantees all elements and links of teaching and learning to promote the step-by-step development of students' labour literacy. Firstly, the school has created an atmosphere close to the life of the students and stimulated their interest in labour through the use of specialized courses such as creative practice, handicraft and cooking. Secondly, the school has integrated faculty to ensure that there are full-time teachers for the labour courses, focusing on collaborative inquiry in the teaching of labour and promoting the effective implementation of the labour education curriculum. Thirdly, the school has attached importance to the students' labour experience, recorded the results of their labouring and focused on stimulating their creative thinking in labour and enhancing their ability to use their hands and brains.

3.3 Concern students' intrinsic need for individual freedom and promote their self-realization

Humanistic education, which values individuality freedom, plays an important role in the development of the whole person. The exploration of labour education highlights the school's cultural nurturing characteristics, which makes the school more clear about the future direction of labour education, namely, the school will continue to practice labour education under the guidance of the humanistic philosophy.

3.3.1 Fully reveal the efficacy of education and individual development

Based on the goal of all-round development of students, the school-based distinguished labour education improvement curriculum system is built to cultivate students' labour knowledge, labour skills, labour spirit and labour qualities, so that labour education is happening all the time and students are growing all the time and everywhere. In order to break the current barriers to the implementation of labour education, the school is actively exploring the direction of labour education improvement through the school-based labour curriculum, such as labour service class, field work class, vocational job experience class, household chores class, etc., building students' positive perception of "labour" in a multi-dimensional way, guiding students to grow their skills and confidence from doing things, and to develop a sense of family and social responsibility. It also protects and stimulates students' curiosity and interest, their desire to know and explore, and their inquisitive learning style.[15] In the information age, creative abilities of workers is more valued during social production. It's a natural requirement of productivity as well as relations of production in the new era to foster students' working imagination and spirit of enquiry.

3.3.2 Implement individualized and diversified assessment mechanisms to promote students' all-round development

Student assessment system guided by the philosophy of humanism for labour education objectively records the process and results of students' labour, reflecting the characteristics of humanism and diversity. In order to better develop students' appreciation of the value of labour, the school has developed a series of programs to evaluate students' development and diagnose the effectiveness of the implementation of the labour curriculum by strengthening the labour assessment system. For example, through a system of identifying students' special talents, a comprehensive evaluation of students' work, student self-evaluation, parental evaluation and the display of students' work achievements to gain the evaluation of others, and other methods of recording and evaluating students' practical work activities, forming a growth profile of practice. The multi-directional and comprehensive evaluation of students' labour practices make students feel that they are concerned and motivated, achieving a comprehensive assessment of their labour abilities.

4. Conclusion

The development of labour education does not stand alone, but is closely linked to the development and needs of society. Improvements in labour education will not only make a significant contribution to the development of individual students, but will also help to break down the current barriers to labour education. It provides a new perspective on the improvement of labour education from a humanistic perspective, which not only focuses on the value of students as human beings, but also gives better play to the nurturing effect of labour education, providing a new practical path for the improvement of labour education in the new era, which is important for the cultivation of labour creators in the new era.

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