

# Exploration on the Construction of Labor Education Curriculum in Higher Vocational Colleges

Fei Yu

*Tongren Preschool Education College, Tongren, Guizhou, 554300, China*

**Abstract:** Labor education is an important component of the education system in the new era. The labor education curriculum in higher vocational colleges holds significant value and offers distinct advantages. While some progress has been made in developing labor education courses, challenges and issues persist. These include insufficient understanding of labor education, incomplete curriculum structures, unclear course objectives, content that requires optimization, inconsistent course evaluations, and the need to strengthen textbooks and teaching staff. Therefore, in-depth research is essential for improving the construction of labor education courses in higher vocational colleges. This paper identifies these issues and proposes solutions, including enhancing the integration of educational concepts, refining teacher development, improving instructional guidance, optimizing evaluation methods, strengthening labor practice opportunities, cultivating a labor culture on campus, and fostering a sense of collective honor and social responsibility among students.

**Keywords:** Labor Education; Curriculum Construction; Higher Vocational Colleges

## 1. Introduction

Labor education, in its broadest sense, is a comprehensive discipline that encompasses a wide range of content and knowledge. It is closely tied to practical application, making it particularly accessible and relevant in the context of vocational education. The successful implementation of labor education requires efficient management of students' spare time. At the same time, labor education should engage a wide range of students, with nearly all students actively participating. This broad involvement presents challenges, particularly in allocating appropriate time for practice activities. Effective labor education should combine theoretical knowledge with practical experience, while also encouraging students' active participation and initiative. The ultimate goal is to develop both the practical skills and the self-driven learning abilities of students.

## 2. The Theoretical Basis of Labor Education

### 2.1 Marxist Labor Values

Marx believed that "Labor is the foundation upon which human survival and development rests. No matter which nation it is, if all labor were to cease, there is no doubt that it would face extinction—not in a year, but within a matter of weeks. This is undeniable, whether it involves adults or children." [1] The primary aim of labor education, according to Marxist principles, is to cultivate students' understanding of labor values. Marxist labor values emphasize that education both supports and is supported by labor. On one hand, education improves the ability to perform labor, and on the other, labor serves as a powerful educational tool. Engaging in labor not only fosters the development of practical skills but also enriches one's spirit, broadens talents, and facilitates personal growth and self-realization.

### 2.2 Sukhomlinsky's Labor Education Thought

Sukhomlinsky argued that "Labor education should be closely integrated with moral, intellectual, and aesthetic education. [2]" Therefore, labor education cannot be viewed as an isolated educational system. The labor education curriculum should be part of the broader educational framework and integrated into the "five educations" in terms of educational objectives. The construction of labor education courses should adhere to the principle of integrity and reflect the needs of contemporary

society. Sukhomlinsky emphasized that labor is a key, if not the most important, means for shaping individuals. He believed that comprehensive and harmonious human development must be built upon a foundation of labor education. According to Sukhomlinsky, education cannot be effective without labor, and labor education should permeate all aspects of schooling. It is an essential component of moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and physical education, contributing to the holistic development of students.

### ***2.3 Humanism Learning Theory***

Humanistic learning theory posits that the learning process should be a meaningful construction of learners' own experiences and practices, emphasizing meaningful learning. This approach prioritizes the learning process over content, focusing on teaching methods rather than outcomes. According to this theory, the goal of modern curriculum reform is to select content that meets the needs of societal development, while also aligning closely with students' interests and life experiences. Moreover, it calls for innovation in teaching content, particularly in practical settings. Therefore, the construction of labor education curricula should follow the principle of placing the student at the center, emphasizing the integration of students' labor learning with real-world practice. This approach allows students to understand labor concepts through hands-on experience, enabling them to analyze, think critically, and solve labor-related problems in everyday life.

### ***2.4 John Dewey's Idea of "Learning by Doing"***

John Dewey, a renowned American philosopher and educator, proposed the concept of "learning by doing" based on pragmatist epistemology and educational practice. Dewey critiqued traditional, teacher-centered teaching models that overly emphasized the transmission of systematic knowledge. Instead, he advocated for a teaching approach that begins with students' actual life experiences, encourages active participation, and guides students to acquire knowledge and skills through hands-on activities. Dewey's philosophy respects students' role as active participants in their learning process, emphasizing the importance of direct experience and aligning with the progressive trends of the time.

## **3. Challenges in the Construction of Labor Education Courses in Higher Vocational Colleges**

### ***3.1 Insufficient understanding of labor education***

In many higher vocational colleges, administrators and educators often hold a narrow view of labor education, mistakenly equating it solely with vocational and technical education. While vocational skills are indeed an important aspect of labor education, they do not encompass the full scope of the concept. Labor education should not be reduced to the acquisition of technical expertise alone. Additionally, some educational administrators oversimplify labor education by equating it to tasks typically assigned in primary and secondary schools. For example, they may focus primarily on monitoring dormitory cleanliness and organizing voluntary labor activities, believing that these actions fulfill the objectives of labor education. This limited understanding fails to recognize that labor education should go beyond mere task completion to foster broader life skills, personal development, and social responsibility.

### ***3.2 Incomplete Curriculum System***

Although some higher vocational colleges have introduced both theoretical and practical labor education courses, these courses are often not integrated into the broader talent development programs. Labor education is typically offered as a standalone subject, lacking a cohesive and comprehensive curriculum framework. In many cases, labor education courses are optional rather than mandatory, which undermines their effectiveness and impact. Furthermore, there is a noticeable deficiency in clearly defined teaching objectives and measurable learning outcomes, particularly for practical labor education components. This lack of clarity hinders the systematic development of a robust labor education curriculum. Therefore, there is an urgent need for higher vocational colleges to establish a more integrated and comprehensive labor education system that clearly outlines learning goals, aligns with broader educational objectives, and emphasizes both theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

### ***3.3 Insufficient Labor Awareness among College Students***

The weak labor awareness among college students is most apparent in their low enthusiasm for participating in labor education and practical activities. Many students, living in an era of material abundance, are often only children in their families and enjoy favorable living conditions. As a result, they have limited opportunities to engage in labor activities both at home and in school, contributing to a pampered lifestyle. This lack of hands-on experience further fosters a weak work ethic. Additionally, many students are distracted by activities like online gaming, lack motivation, and remain disconnected from real-world labor experiences. Consequently, they fail to recognize the importance of labor education in personal development and lack the necessary traits of diligence, perseverance, and a strong work ethic.

### ***3.4 Ambiguous Curriculum Objectives***

Although labor education theory courses have been integrated into higher vocational colleges, they remain primarily focused on practical activities. For example, during Labor Week, emphasis is placed on daily tasks, social practices, and physical labor. Unfortunately, there is insufficient focus on more profound issues, such as the significance of labor in personal and social development, as well as the intrinsic value of labor itself. These critical aspects are often overlooked, and the curriculum lacks a robust exploration of labor philosophy and the cultivation of productive labor habits. This gap in the curriculum hinders students' ability to fully appreciate the contemporary and societal values of labor, limiting the potential impact of labor education.

### ***3.5 Content Settings Optimization***

The labor education curriculum in higher vocational colleges is often poorly integrated with other subjects. From a horizontal perspective, it lacks strong connections to other disciplines and is not incorporated into the "five educations simultaneously" framework. As a result, the labor education content does not align with or complement public courses, ideological and political education, or innovation and entrepreneurship courses. Furthermore, it is not cohesively integrated with professional courses, which weakens the synergy between different areas of study and impedes the development of a unified educational force. From a longitudinal perspective, there is a lack of continuity between the labor education curriculum in higher vocational colleges and that in primary and secondary schools. Additionally, the curriculum fails to connect with future career paths and specific forms of productive labor. This lack of alignment creates an unclear direction for the course, undermining its practical application and overall effectiveness.

### ***3.6 Irregular Curriculum Evaluation***

The assessment and evaluation framework for labor education curricula in many higher vocational colleges tends to be overly simplistic, primarily focusing on students' labor skills and achievements while overlooking the evaluation of labor quality. This narrow approach fails to effectively guide students in developing a deeper, Marxist understanding of labor through their practical experiences. Additionally, some institutions have yet to establish a comprehensive and scientifically grounded assessment system for labor education. As a result, labor education components, such as student performance, attitudes toward work, and the significance of labor, are not fully integrated into the overall evaluation framework. This lack of emphasis has contributed to diminished student enthusiasm, lower participation rates, and, in some cases, negative reactions from students regarding labor education courses.

### ***3.7 Strengthening Textbook Resources for Educators***

The development of labor education courses in certain higher vocational colleges faces several challenges, including the use of non-standardized, poorly structured teaching materials and a shortage of qualified instructors specializing in labor education. These areas require significant attention and continuous improvement. Although some higher vocational colleges have successfully integrated labor education into their talent training programs, the teaching system remains underdeveloped, with most institutions still in the early stages of exploration. As a result, labor education is often marginalized within the broader curriculum, limiting its overall educational impact. In terms of teaching staff, the shortage of adequately trained professionals in labor education has resulted in a small number of

instructors, many of whom lack specialized training in this field. Consequently, many teachers are hesitant to invest additional effort into the development and delivery of labor education courses.

#### **4. The Optimization Strategy of Labor Education Curriculum in Higher Vocational Colleges**

##### ***4.1 Enrich the Content of Labor Education***

The effective implementation of the labor education curriculum requires a solid foundational framework, followed by the enrichment of its content. One of the defining characteristics of labor education is the integration of industry and education, with basic knowledge serving as the essential foundation. Key components of this foundational knowledge include labor laws, labor safety, and social security, all of which are crucial to improving the labor quality of higher vocational students. A deep understanding of these concepts is vital for enhancing students' preparedness for labor practices. In practical teaching, instructors should carefully structure the content for each class session, ensuring a clear and focused teaching design. This includes defining specific teaching objectives, identifying key points, and addressing challenging topics, with the goal of providing clear direction and priorities for both teaching and student learning. Such clarity helps guide students in identifying the most important areas of focus in their studies. Regarding teaching methods, it is important to adopt a variety of approaches. These may include case studies, situational analysis, and the incorporation of relevant, contemporary social issues to foster a deeper understanding of labor education content. Such strategies help break through learning barriers and enhance student engagement. Additionally, there should be a focus on cultivating students' reflective thinking and promoting autonomous learning, both of which are essential for reinforcing the mastery of foundational knowledge. By enriching the curriculum content in this way, the labor education program will not only solidify students' theoretical understanding but also better prepare them for labor practice through the application of key principles.

##### ***4.2 Build Labor Education Carrier***

To effectively integrate labor education into higher vocational colleges, it is essential to incorporate it into both professional course teaching and practical training. Professional courses, which constitute a significant portion of class hours and credits in vocational education, are directly linked to students' future careers. As students dedicate most of their time and effort to specialized courses, embedding labor education within these courses can enhance both the quality of labor education and its synergy with professional education. This integration allows specialized courses to serve as a carrier for labor education. For instance, professional courses should delve into the labor-related elements within their content. This can be achieved by incorporating the achievements of model workers, exemplary labor cases, and establishing a resource database that showcases the spirit of skilled workers, technical craftsmen, and grassroots employees. Such initiatives will create unique and engaging labor education topics. Moreover, the duration of internship periods should be extended to provide students with more opportunities for hands-on experience. During these practical training sessions, emphasis should be placed on fostering a strong work ethic, encouraging students to adhere to labor discipline, acquire essential social labor skills, and apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, thus laying a solid foundation for their future professional work. Additionally, labor education should be integrated into ideological and political courses, strengthening the theoretical guidance of labor education within the framework of political education. By aligning labor education with ideological and political instruction, vocational colleges can foster a coordinated, comprehensive approach to student development that emphasizes both professional and moral growth.

##### ***4.3 Improving Teaching Methods***

The implementation of labor education curricula should adopt a multifaceted approach, incorporating strategies such as the integration of labor knowledge, contextualization of labor education, phased labor practice, autonomy in labor learning, and the valorization of labor's meaning. Teaching should align with clear educational objectives, update course content to reflect contemporary needs, enhance teacher development, and improve the overall educational environment. Additionally, innovative educational models should be explored to facilitate the effective delivery of labor education.

Given the practical and action-oriented nature of labor, experiential, cooperative, and inquiry-based teaching methods should be prioritized. These methods allow students to actively engage in labor practices closely related to their professional studies. By doing so, students not only develop the

necessary technical skills and work habits but also cultivates a deep respect and appreciation for labor. This process strengthens their sense of responsibility and encourages an attitude of respect toward work. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to engage in collaborative activities, thus enhancing their teamwork skills and collective consciousness. In this way, labor education becomes student-centered, promoting individual development, critical thinking, and fostering initiative and creativity.

#### ***4.4 Improve the Effect of Labor Education***

To enhance the effectiveness of labor education, it is essential to leverage campus resources by creating practical platforms that allow students to apply their learning in real-life contexts. Higher vocational colleges should organize campus activities centered around labor education, such as recreational and sports events, student entrepreneurship competitions, and welcome activities for freshmen. These events, which contain rich labor elements, provide valuable opportunities for students to engage in labor practice in a more informal setting. In addition to campus-based activities, schools should collaborate with external social resources to build a diverse range of practical platforms. It is crucial that the theoretical knowledge students acquire in school is put to practical use. Vocational colleges should align their educational goals with students' career prospects and clarify the direction of their training programs. One way to achieve this is through partnerships with enterprises, where schools regularly send students for internships. Enterprises can offer a variety of positions, providing real-world experience that complements academic learning. By jointly establishing talent training plans, schools and businesses can ensure that labor education is more targeted, improving its outcomes and promoting the continuous development of students. Experienced employees in partner organizations can guide students, providing them with valuable industry knowledge and hands-on experience, which ultimately enhances the students' labor skills and professional growth.

#### ***4.5 Standardize Teaching Evaluation***

Labor education, as a comprehensive course that integrates both theoretical and practical components, requires the establishment of a diversified evaluation system. This system should include indicators that reflect the contributions of schools, families, and society, in order to accurately assess the effectiveness of the teaching process. The assessment of students' labor education is primarily carried out by teachers, who can establish multiple evaluation criteria. These might include theoretical knowledge, students' attitudes toward labor, the quantity and quality of their labor efforts, and other relevant indicators. Teachers would then use these criteria to provide a comprehensive assessment. For off-campus activities such as production practice and social practice at external bases, evaluations should be conducted by practice instructors and employers, taking into account students' actual performance and practice reports. The focus of these assessments should be on evaluating students' practical abilities, innovative thinking, and their capacity to serve society. During the winter and summer vacations, students' performance in social practice and household chores should also be evaluated by the practice unit and parents. This holistic evaluation would allow for a more thorough understanding of the effectiveness of labor education. After these multi-faceted assessments, the results should be included in students' comprehensive academic evaluations throughout their entire time in higher vocational colleges. These evaluations should serve as an important reference for decisions related to scholarships, graduation assessments, and other academic or administrative considerations.

#### ***4.6 Strengthening the construction of teaching staff***

First, it is essential to optimize the structure of labor education faculty by establishing a pool of part-time labor education teachers. This pool should consist of a diverse group, including full-time school teachers, model workers, and industry professionals. Such a combination will ensure a robust and high-quality teaching staff, which is critical for the successful development of labor education programs. Second, the professional development of full-time teachers should be prioritized. This can be achieved through a combination of in-school and external training opportunities that foster changes in teaching methodologies, enhance subject knowledge, and broaden teachers' perspectives. Improving the theoretical and practical teaching capabilities of full-time teachers is essential for enhancing the quality of labor education. Furthermore, teachers should be encouraged to maintain regular contact with enterprises, stay informed about trends in industrial development, and update their knowledge base. This ongoing engagement with the industry will help teachers continuously improve the relevance and content of the labor education curriculum.

#### ***4.7 Integrate Labor Education Resources***

The integration of labor education resources between schools and enterprises offers complementary advantages that can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of labor education. Specific strategies to achieve this integration include:

**Collaboration between Schools and Enterprises:** Schools and enterprises should collaborate in implementing labor education programs, providing students with a more realistic working environment and abundant resources. This cooperation helps students better understand career development and adapt to the demands of the workforce. **Establishment of Practice Bases:** Schools and enterprises can jointly establish labor education practice bases, with enterprises offering facilities, advanced equipment, and technology. This allows students to acquire practical skills more effectively through hands-on experiences in real operational settings. **Vocational Competitions and Training:** Schools and enterprises can collaborate on vocational skills competitions, vocational training, and exchange programs. These activities enrich the content of labor education, giving students a deeper understanding of various career fields, enhancing their labor skills, and improving their professional literacy. **Development of Teaching Materials:** Schools and enterprises should work together to optimize and develop teaching materials tailored to the specific needs of different majors. This collaboration will ensure that labor education content is continuously updated and aligned with the practical needs of students, helping them gain the skills necessary for their future careers.

#### ***4.8 Promoting the Integration of Labor Education with Campus Culture***

The integrating labor education into the broader context of campus culture can subtly influence students' perception of the value of labor. This integration encompasses two key aspects:

**Spiritual Integration:** At the spiritual level, labor values can be drawn from the historical culture of the school and the narrative of its development. By incorporating these elements into labor education, students can develop a deeper appreciation for the intrinsic value of labor. This helps cultivate a professional belief in respecting labor and achieving excellence through diligence. **Action-Oriented Integration:** At the practical level, the continuous organization of campus cultural activities can encourage students to learn from the experiences of role models, such as labor heroes and outstanding craftsmen. These activities create a campus atmosphere that prioritizes the value of labor and fosters moral development. By engaging in these activities, students can better understand the essence of labor, inherit the spirit of hard work, and become more inclined to participate in labor practices consciously.

#### ***4.9 Building an Open Ecosystem for Labor Education***

The labor education ecosystem should be seen as an open and dynamic system, rather than a static or closed one. It is intrinsically linked to professional knowledge and must evolve in response to ongoing changes in both industries and educational needs. Key elements of this open ecosystem include:

**Curriculum Adaptability:** The design and formulation of the labor education curriculum must be continuously refined in line with the development of industries and sectors. As professional training objectives evolve, the curriculum should adapt to ensure that it remains relevant to both current and future labor market demands. **Student-Centered Approach:** Since college students are independent thinkers with the capacity for critical thinking, reasoning, and creativity, the construction of the labor education curriculum must prioritize their needs and interests. A student-centered approach is essential in fostering engagement and promoting the development of skills that are meaningful and relevant to students' personal and professional growth. **Adaptation to Technological Change:** In the face of rapid technological advancement, the nature of productivity and labor forms is constantly changing. The labor education system must keep pace with these transformations by remaining flexible and responsive to emerging trends in labor forms. This includes the incorporation of new technologies and the evolution of labor practices into the curriculum, ensuring that students are equipped to navigate the evolving labor landscape. **Alignment with Industry and Economic Trends:** The labor education curriculum should be designed to support the changing goals of labor education, while aligning with the development trends of new industries, economies, and professions. This integration will promote a cohesive development of industries, careers, academic disciplines, and courses, creating a holistic educational ecosystem that benefits both students and the broader society. [4]

## 5.Conclusion

Labor education is essential for the personal growth and development of students, particularly in higher vocational colleges, where it plays a significant role in enhancing students' overall qualities and driving educational reforms. As noted, "Labor education not only enhances students' practical skills and work ethic but also fosters their sense of social responsibility and civic engagement, which are essential for their future roles as active and responsible citizens" [3]. Higher vocational colleges should fully recognize the value and significance of developing labor education curricula. They must actively explore diverse labor education models and enhance the effectiveness of these courses by enriching their content, establishing dedicated platforms for labor education, improving teaching methods, and strengthening educational outcomes. Additionally, they should standardize teaching evaluations, invest in building a qualified teaching staff, integrate labor education resources, promote the integration of labor education with campus culture, and foster an open ecosystem for labor education. These strategies collectively aim to nurture the comprehensive development of students across moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor dimensions.

Higher vocational colleges serve as a vital platform for cultivating skilled talents, and labor education is an indispensable part of their educational framework. As the construction of labor education curricula gains more attention, challenges remain. However, by understanding the contemporary significance and overall objectives of labor education, aligning with the realities of higher vocational colleges, and securing broader support from schools and society, the implementation of labor education curricula will continue to progress smoothly.

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