

Synergistic Strategies for Labor Education and Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The synergistic value of labor education and mental health education has been highlighted in the context of the parallel development of five-domain education in the new era, but the isolated implementation of the two in primary and secondary education practice has weakened their effectiveness in educating people. This study focuses on solving the practical problems of effective synergism between the two, and analyzes the mental health value of labor education and the internal logic of the two by using the literature research method, combining the Marxist labor view and embodied cognition theory, etc. The study points out that there are limitations in the current domestic and international studies such as insufficient cross-cultural adaptation, lack of systematic research in primary and secondary schools, and weak localized theoretical constructs. At the same time, a hierarchical and progressive synergistic strategy system of labor education and mental health education in primary and secondary schools is constructed from the dimensions of curriculum, teaching, teachers' qualifications, and school-family-society collaboration, so as to provide primary and secondary school educators with an operable implementation plan, realize the bidirectional empowerment of both labor education and mental health education, assist primary and secondary school students in shaping the correct value of labor and fostering a healthy mental quality, and promote the optimization of the education system as a whole as well as the implementation of the integration of the five education systems.

Keywords

Labor education; mental health education; primary and secondary schools; synergistic strategies; integrated five-dimension education.

1. The Meaning, Characteristics and Research Value of Labor Education

1.1. The core definition of labor education

The connotation of labor education can be systematically defined from multiple dimensions. From the division of content system, it mainly includes production technology labor, social public welfare labor and life service labor; from the dimension of literacy cultivation, it focuses on the establishment of labor viewpoints, correcting labor attitudes and the formation of labor habits. In terms of its fundamental mission, labor education has always been centered on two core objectives: one is to systematically cultivate students' labor skills and practical abilities, and the other is to comprehensively carry out the education of ideology, morality and values. In the practice of school education, labor education is inseparable from moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic education, labor technology education is an important extension of intellectual education, labor ideology education is the core component of moral education,

labor health education and physical education complement each other, and labor creativity education is a vivid embodiment of aesthetic education. Its importance is self-evident, therefore, labor education should become an important part of education [1].

1.2. The core definition of mental health education

Mental health education is an educational activity that is based on students' psychological and developmental characteristics, utilizes relevant psychoeducational methods and means, cultivates students' good psychological quality, promotes their overall coordinated physical and mental development and comprehensively improves their quality, and is an important part of quality education [2]. Effective mental health education in primary and secondary schools can cultivate students' positive psychological qualities, help them build a clear self-awareness system, master scientific emotion recognition, expression and regulation strategies, and guide them to establish a healthy mode of interpersonal interaction. At the same time, it cultivates students' rational problem-solving thinking and frustration coping skills, effectively relieves the psychological load brought about by academic pressure and interpersonal conflicts, builds a barrier for the early prevention of psychological crises, and reduces the risk of the occurrence of common psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression, from the source.

1.3. The basic characteristics of labor education in primary and secondary schools

Labor education is an important element of the socialist education system with Chinese characteristics, the essence is to give play to the nurturing function of labor, students to carry out love of labor, love of working people's educational activities [3], its core features can be summarized as seven points: First, ideological, as the primary feature, with the Marxist concept of labor as the fundamental guidelines, guiding the students to set up the labor is the most glorious, the most noble, the most great, the most beautiful idea, and against the wrong idea of getting something for nothing [4]; Second, social, labor is a unique social practice of human activities, primary and secondary school labor need to rely on social relations to carry out, integrate home, school and society, the integration of social relations. The second is social, labor is a unique human social practice activities, primary and secondary school labor need to rely on social relations to carry out the integration of home, school and social resources to cultivate students' sense of social responsibility and sense of collaboration; third is practical, with real labor tasks as a carrier, so that students experience the development of the plan, the use of tools, the process of implementation of the results of the test to the reflection of the complete process, and to oppose the mechanical labor and brainpower. Alternative [4]; Fourth, human education, through the five education system, students sense of responsibility, collectivism, cultivate practical, thinking and aesthetic ability, physical and mental health, basic and integrated human education value; Fifth, the times, into the digital economy, artificial intelligence and other emerging forms of labor, deepen the integration of industry and education, and strengthen the sense of honesty and legal labor [4]; Sixth, the stage, following the laws of physical and mental development of the students, designing the initiation, the process of implementation, and the results of reflection by semester, and opposing mechanical labor and brain power [4]; Sixth, stage, following the laws of physical and mental development of students, designing the initiation, the process of implementation, and the results of reflection by stage. The design of introductory, basic, upgrading and comprehensive labor content is divided into school segments; seventh, regionality, combined with the natural, cultural and industrial resources of each place, develop local special labor courses and projects, and create a special brand of education.

1.4. Research value

The global prevalence of mental health problems among adolescents has reached 20%, and about half of the mental problems first appear before the age of 14. Children's mental health has a direct impact on how they cope with their learning and life, and even affects their family life, social interactions and happiness index in adulthood [5]. At present, anxiety, depression, lack of motivation to learn, sense of worthiness and other problems among primary and secondary school students in China are spreading at an early age, and the traditional mental health education model based on classroom lectures and individual counseling is difficult to cope with the increasingly complex psychological challenges of adolescents independently because of the limitations of abstract teaching, detachment from the practice of life, limited coverage and other limitations.

From the perspective of embodied cognitive theory, labor education is not purely physical, but both mental refinement and personality shaping embodied practice, it is through the depth of interaction between the body and the environment, so that students in the hands-on practice to achieve cognitive development, emotional sublimation and value construction [6], just to make up for the short board of the traditional mental health education on paper; and mental health education can be injected into the value of labor education. Mental health education can inject value into labor education, enhance students' mental toughness and self-efficacy through systematic psychological interventions, and solve the problems of formalization and utilitarianism that commonly exist in labor education. The in-depth integration of the two can form a two-way synergistic effect of strengthening the heart with labor and promoting labor with the heart, which is not only one of the realistic paths to solve the current dual dilemma of primary and secondary education, but also an inevitable requirement to promote the integration of the five education and to realize the optimization of the education system as a whole.

2. The Psychological Significance, Mental Health Value and Logic of Association of Labor Education

2.1. The core psychological significance of labor education

The core psychological significance of contemporary labor education can be discussed from four aspects. The first is the level of personality psychology, based on the path of "labor education - self-efficacy - positive psychological qualities", labor education is inseparable from positive psychological qualities [7], and it is easier for students to gain a sense of achievement and self-affirmation through their own efforts in their personal experience [8]. Secondly, the emotional level, primary and secondary schools are the key period to cultivate the ability to regulate emotions, and obtaining a positive state of mind in labor can help students deal with emotional fluctuations in a more optimistic and rational attitude [9]. Third, the social level, harmonious interpersonal relationships in the development of primary and secondary school students' mental health system occupies a very important position [10], rich labor activities can effectively strengthen student-student exchanges, enhance the collective sense of solidarity and cooperation. Fourth, the level of self-knowledge, students through personal participation in practice, such as many campuses in the school opened a vegetable garden, in the whole process of planting labor, can intuitively feel the value of labor, and then enhance self-confidence [11].

2.2. The mental health value of labor education

In March 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Schools and Universities in the New Era, which once again elevated labor education to the strategic level of establishing morality and promoting the all-round development of students. Labor education

is the organic unity of cognitive education about labor and practical education through labor, both of which contain profound mental health values, help students develop a sound personality and expand their connection with the world, others and themselves [12,13]. In this article, we will discuss the following issues

It is worth mentioning that, due to the deep penetration of electronic media in the Internet era, the "hollowing-out" has shown a trend of spreading to younger ages, and some primary and secondary school students have begun to experience problems such as lack of motivation for learning and a sense of value. Physical activity can promote the secretion of dopamine and endorphins, making labor itself enjoyable—a core tenet of the Marxist concept of labor, which is also an effective way to reduce the rate of student depression and prevent the prevent student hollowness of students [14]. The labor curriculum based on the theory of flow state shows that by balancing the ability and the difficulty of the task, students can obtain the flow state experience and happiness through labor when focusing on labor, which can also effectively alleviate psychological pressure [15].

2.3. The relevance of labor education to mental health education

Labor education and mental health education jointly serve the fundamental task of establishing morality and educating people, and are the core support for promoting students' all-round development in the five education system. Labor education, as an important protective factor of mental health, has its core nurturing mechanism rooted in self-determination theory, which can satisfy students' autonomous needs and systematically activate their positive psychological qualities through daily labor, and the complete experience of the labor process can take psychological education out of abstract teaching and integrate it into real life. On the other hand, mental health education can provide conceptual guidance and psychological support for labor education, optimize students' motivation, emotional state and will quality, help students to correctly view the difficulties and setbacks in labor, enhance the initiative and continuity of participation, and solve the problem of formalization and utilitarianism in labor education, and the in-depth integration of the two is the most urgent task for the cultivation of new generations of physical and mental harmonious development.

3. The Research Methodology

This study adopts the literature research method, systematically combing the relevant research results of collaborative education in labor education and mental health education at home and abroad, including China Knowledge, Web of Science, Google Scholar, etc., from 2020 to 2026, and finally including more than 60 pieces of effective literature, which are classified according to the connotations, characteristics, values, realistic dilemmas, implementation strategies, and other dimensions. The literature was categorized according to various dimensions such as connotation, characteristics, value, practical dilemmas, implementation strategies, etc., and the core ideas and research consensus were refined. At the same time, we compare the practice cases of labor education in different school years, regions and types of schools, analyze the advantages and shortcomings of the practices in different places, and provide practical references for the construction of hierarchical collaborative strategies.

4. Synergistic Practical Strategies for Labor Education and Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

4.1. Curricular synergies to achieve a hierarchical integration of objectives and content

Curriculum synergy is the core vehicle for the in-depth integration of the two, and based on the self-determination theory, the cultivation of autonomy, competence and sense of belonging

should be embedded into the content of the labor courses of different school segments in different levels, avoiding a one-size-fits-all homogeneous design.

The first semester focuses on foundational labor activities, centered on fostering students' self-care abilities, while integrating education in self-awareness and emotional literacy. Teachers can organize fun activities such as schoolbag packing contest and table wiping contest, so that students can learn to identify and express their basic emotions through demonstration and imitation, practice and feedback, and family consolidation, and fill in the labor mood card in time. The second period focuses on basic labor, cultivating a sense of responsibility and peer interaction skills. Teachers can set up a weekly list of chores for a group of 4 to 5 students, or set up a class planting corner, so that students can learn to listen and negotiate and develop a sense of ownership in tasks such as dishwashing, watering flowers, and caring for green plants. In the third period, collective work is the main focus, and the grade levels can work together to develop activities such as class cooking contests and campus garbage sorting, to give full play to students' self-organization and planning skills, and to guide students to experience the value of being needed and enhance their sense of social responsibility in collective activities. In the fourth semester, students are encouraged to engage in comprehensive work, increase vocational experience and creative work, and focus on future career planning and resilience development. For example, by strengthening school-enterprise cooperation and setting up study and visit bases in local industrial and agricultural parks, courses on crop cultivation, such as sowing, pest control and harvesting, and the introduction of opportunities for social role-playing, will enrich the experience and strengthen the resilience of students in their lives.

4.2. Teaching and Learning Synergy, Building a Multi-Interactive Practice Model

According to the cognitive characteristics of different students, teaching needs to adopt experiential, interactive and other synergistic methods, and naturally integrate psychological guidance into the whole process of labor.

The first section adopts the game mode, which is suitable for the figurative thinking characteristics of the younger students. For example, in the Labor Adventure activity, there are levels such as Clean Little Man and Trash Point, and each completed level will be awarded a labor medal. During the process, teachers use encouraging language to affirm students' progress in time and strengthen the positive labor experience. The second semester adopts a task-driven model, such as the implementation of a semester of a task of green plant adoption program, each student independently adopt a pot of plants, complete a semester-long maintenance tasks, in the specific problems to overcome difficulties, exercise patience and perseverance. The third semester adopts the PBL model to enhance teamwork and emotional management skills. For example, in a research project on the labor needs of elderly homes during the holidays, students in the district work in small groups to interview the elderly and design a volunteer service plan. When differences of opinion arise, the PTA organizes round-table discussions to guide students to express their feelings and negotiate solutions, turning conflicts into opportunities for cooperation. Key Stage 4 advocates the use of an inquiry-based model to cultivate critical thinking and career adaptability. For example, teachers organize inquiry activities on the theme of labor and life, allowing students to interview exemplary workers around them, explore the social value of different occupations, and learn about life and mental toughness from vivid stories.

4.3. Faculty synergies for interdisciplinary team capacity building

Teacher synergy is the key guarantee for realizing the effective integration of the two, and it is necessary to integrate the professional advantages of many parties and build a mechanism for teacher training and teaching and research at different levels and classifications.

Each section should give full play to the nurturing role of the homeroom teacher, and at the same time, to expand the role of mental health monitoring and guidance by combining different teachers. In the first section, homeroom teachers and psychologists work together to improve emotional guidance and habit development through regular analysis of students' behavior in daily life. For example, the psychology teacher provides professional guidance to the class teacher on how to cultivate self-confidence through labor, while the class teacher observes the students' emotional changes in daily teaching and gives timely feedback to students who need to be paid more attention. In the second section, a team of school labor teachers focuses on the development of students' sense of responsibility and peer interaction through the school's wood carving workshop, bazaar experience day and other special labor education activities. In the third semester, a multidisciplinary team of labor, psychology, and moral education is formed, focusing on improving the psychological support ability in service work. Teachers from multiple disciplines organize different micro-courses under the same theme to realize the closed loop of values, practice and sense of acquisition. In the fourth semester, external career mentors are introduced to collaborate with school teachers, focusing on enhancing career guidance skills in vocational experience. For example, excellent workers from various industries are hired as external mentors to share their growth experiences from time to time, while the psychology teachers cooperate with them to carry out corresponding thematic lectures to help students face the difficulties they encounter in study, family and interpersonal relationships.

4.4. Collaboration between home, school and society to build a three-in-one ecological system for educating people

Primary and secondary school students have not yet entered society, and their interpersonal interactions and activities take place mainly in schools and families, supplemented by the community, so it is particularly important to give full play to the synergistic nurturing ecology of the family, school and community.

In the first semester, with the family as the main focus and the school as the guide, the class teacher guides the parents to formulate a family labor plan, avoiding substitution, cooperating with each other from the 21 days to develop a labor habit, selecting a few labor stars every week, and sorting out the correct concept of labor. In the second and third semesters, the school will give full play to the situation that the school is the main organization, and the family, school and community will work together to strengthen the students' ability to cultivate collective concepts, interpersonal and communication skills in the performance of their duties. Schools and communities can work together to build labor practice bases, regularly carry out environmental remediation, cultural awareness and other voluntary services, while students' labor performance in school and at home is synchronized into the growth file, giving full play to community recreation and red practice venues, and community recognition of students' labor achievements to enhance their sense of accomplishment. The fourth section gives full play to social enterprises, factories and other practical resources, and schools and enterprises formulate study and experience programs that respect students' interests and help them socialize.

5. Discussion

5.1. Limitations

This study is mainly based on theoretical derivation and literature analysis, and the findings are limited by the publication bias, uneven quality and insufficient coverage of the existing literature, which makes it difficult to comprehensively capture the hidden problems and personalized experiences in frontline educational practices. Meanwhile, the differences in the

parenting effects of different schooling strategies, the weighting relationships among the dimensions of the strategies, and the optimal ratios of the tripartite collaboration among families, schools, and communities are all theoretically derived hypothetical conclusions that are not supported by data. Moreover, due to the lack of empirical data and longitudinal tracking study, it is impossible to confirm the quantitative results of the stability and continuity of the actual parenting effect.

In terms of applicability, the four-dimensional collaborative strategy constructed in this study takes ordinary public primary and secondary schools as the default target, assuming that the schools have basic interdisciplinary teachers, basic labor practice sites and stable school-enterprise cooperative relationships. For rural small-scale schools, special education schools, and schools with a concentration of left-behind children with a shortage of teachers and resources, the existing strategy requires a significant adjustment of the content, pace and difficulty of implementation, and cannot be directly copied.

5.2. Comparative analysis with existing studies

Table 1. Comparison of this study with the results of related core research in China

Researchers	research perspectives	core research elements	The limitations of existing research	The innovations and optimizations of this study
Yao Benxian (2021)	Macro Perspectives in Pedagogy	The value of mental health education in labor education is demonstrated, and the concept of cross-border integration of the two is put forward to establish the theoretical basis of "strengthening the mind through labor".	It stays at the level of value explanation, does not build specific implementation paths, has no differentiated design for school segments, and is theoretically strong but practically weak.	The introduction of self-determination theory reveals the intrinsic mechanism of the synergy between the two, transforms the macro value theory into an operable parenting system, and refines the implementation strategies in different school segments to make up for the shortcoming of the disconnection between theory and practice.
Xu Meidan et al. (2024)	Psychological perspectives (mind-flow theory)	Based on the theory of heart flow, we developed the labor curriculum, verified the positive effect of labor experience on students' emotional regulation and labor happiness, and optimized the teaching mode of labor classroom.	The dimension of the study is limited to classroom teaching, which is only applicable to elementary school, and does not take into account the collaborative parenting dimensions of teachers, families, schools, and communities, thus fragmenting the parenting system.	It integrates multiple theories to build a complete research framework, breaks through the single dimension of teaching, builds a four-dimensional system of "curriculum-teaching-teachers-home-school-society", covers the entire primary and secondary school segments, and improves the content of secondary school's special parenting.
Wu Yutian (2025)	Embodied Cognition Theory (School-Based Practice Perspective)	Based on the special school-based cases of elementary school, the concept of "Handy Mind" integration has been put forward, and an integrated school-based integration model of campus, curriculum, activities and evaluation has been constructed.	Relying on the case study of a single school, there are strong limitations in terms of geography and school boundaries, insufficient universality and replicability, and an imperfect mechanism for synergy between teachers and society.	We have stripped away the elements of school-based individualization, refined common strategies suitable for primary and secondary schools across the country, and supplemented interdisciplinary teacher collaboration and school-society-enterprise linkage mechanisms to strengthen the promotion and implementation of the strategies.

This study further deepens the theoretical logic and practical path of the synergy between labor education and mental education on the basis of existing research. On the basis of Yao Benxian,

Xu Meidan, Wu Yudun and other scholars [12,15,16], based on the stage-specific characteristics of labor education and the law of psychological development of primary and secondary school students, differentiated strategies were designed in different levels, and core psychological theories were carried through the whole process of strategy design, realizing the breakthrough from a single dimension to a systematic integration, which is more targeted and scientific.

6. Conclusion

Based on the core theories of Marxist labor theory and self-determination theory, this study systematically analyzes the inner logic of labor education and mental health education through literature analysis, and constructs a collaborative parenting strategy system in four dimensions, including curriculum, teaching, teachers, and family, school, and community. The significance of this system lies in the design of differentiated pathways based on the characteristics of students in different school segments, which provides operational references for primary and secondary education practice.

In order to compensate for the limitations of this study, future research can be advanced step by step according to the following priorities, so as to gather the wisdom and strength of all walks of life to provide more solid support for the implementation of the five education integration: First, empirical validation research. Adopting a multi-center quasi-experimental design, we selected urban, rural, and primary and secondary schools of different sizes as the research subjects, and quantitatively assessed the impact of synergistic strategies on students' anxiety and depression levels, mental toughness, and sense of well-being through the pre- and post-test comparisons and longitudinal tracking, so as to validate the validity of the theoretical framework and applicability of the boundaries. Second, research on differentiated strategies. For rural small-scale schools, special education schools, and left-behind children groups, we will develop more adaptable collaborative parenting programs to fill the research gaps of special scenarios and special groups. Third, teacher training research. Explore the cultivation mode, training content and evaluation system of interdisciplinary teachers in labor education and mental health education, and solve the core bottleneck that frontline teachers do not know how to integrate and dare not integrate. Fourth, localized theory construction. Combining China's educational practice and cultural background, we will refine the experience of educating people through labor and mental health education with Chinese characteristics, improve the localized theoretical model of the synergy between labor education and mental health education, and provide a more solid theoretical support for the implementation of the integration of the five education systems.

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