

Research on Quality Improvement Strategies for Primary School Labor Course Construction in Beijing under the New Curriculum Standards

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ABSTRACT

The promulgation and implementation of the Compulsory Education Labor Curriculum Standards in 2022 marked the formal return of labor education to the core curriculum system of compulsory education, pointing out a new direction for the construction of primary school labor courses. As a frontline area for educational reform, Beijing has achieved certain results in implementing the new curriculum standards and promoting the enhancement of quality and efficiency in primary school labor courses. However, it also faces practical challenges such as insufficient systematic course construction, a shortage of full-time teachers, and an underdeveloped evaluation mechanism. Based on this, this study proposes targeted quality improvement strategies from the dimensions of curriculum system restructuring, teaching staff development, and evaluation mechanism innovation, aiming to provide references for the high-quality development of labor courses.

KEYWORDS

New curriculum standards; Beijing; Primary school labor courses; Quality improvement strategies

1 Introduction

In 2020, the state successively issued two documents: Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Universities, Middle Schools, and Primary Schools in the New Era and Guidelines for Labor Education in Universities, Middle Schools, and Primary Schools. This marked the beginning of a new era of "integration of five educations". In April 2022, the Ministry of Education issued the Compulsory Education Curriculum Plan, completely separating labor from the previous comprehensive practical activity curriculum, and released the Compulsory Education Labor Curriculum Standards, providing the basis for implementing labor courses. As the capital, Beijing has always been at the forefront of educational reform. To promote the effective implementation of labor education, the Beijing Municipal Education Commission has successively promulgated the Implementation Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Universities, Middle Schools, and Primary Schools in the New Era in Beijing and the Guidelines for the Formulation and Implementation of Labor Education Lists in Beijing's Primary and Secondary Schools, proposing a "one-school-one-list" system for labor education. It encourages schools to integrate technological elements and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) skills into labor education and to build a collaborative labor education framework involving schools, families, and society. However, in practical implementation, some schools still face the awkward situation where labor courses are "deemed important verbally, forgotten in practice, and absent in evaluation," with course quality falling short of the requirements of the new curriculum standards. In this context, exploring quality improvement pathways for primary school labor course construction in Beijing holds significant practical importance.

2 Achievements in Primary School Labor Course Construction in Beijing under the New Curriculum Background

2.1 Initial Establishment of Curriculum System and Gradual Highlighting of School-based Characteristics

Guided by the new curriculum standards and leveraging regional resources, Beijing has built a diversified labor curriculum system. Taking the Chenjinglun Middle School Affiliated Branch as an example, based on the national labor curriculum, it has constructed a tiered labor curriculum system covering 4 educational stages, 10 major fields, and 156 specific tasks. Among these, planting records in grades 1-2 encapsulate reflections on life growth; creative processed products in grades 3-4 connect the complete "fruit and vegetable chain" from picking to storage; and rice products in grades 5-6 document the complete "rice journey" from harvesting, threshing to packaging, conveying the experience of "every grain comes from hard work" ^[1]. Another example is the "4×3" curriculum model of Changping District Second Experimental Primary School, which designs content from four dimensions—curriculum, educational stage, subject, and pathway—achieving comprehensive coverage of home, school, and community settings ^[2]. As a representative of high-quality schools in Dongcheng District, Shijia Hutong Primary School focuses on "cultivating labor literacy + career enlightenment" to develop diverse labor course modules. Lower grades engage in traditional craft practices like recreating ancient architectural door knockers with ultra-light clay, integrating ICH culture and aesthetic education.

Middle and upper grades offer practical skill courses like milk tea making and bicycle repair, placing greater emphasis on cultivating students' service awareness and problem-solving abilities through labor practice. The curriculum design moves beyond single-skill training to focus on the deep cultivation of labor spirit and literacy. Furthermore, distinctive school-based courses are emerging continuously. For instance, Tai Tou Primary School in Haidian District has the "Half-Acre Cotton Field" project combining labor with textiles and art; the Experimental Primary School Affiliated to the Petroleum Institute integrates solar term culture with planting practice in its "Vitality Farm." These courses not only implement the new curriculum requirements but also demonstrate the innovative vitality of "one school, one specialty."

2.2 Continuous Innovation in Teaching Models and Deepening of Interdisciplinary Integration

Traditional labor courses often focused on relatively singular manual or physical labor. In recent years, based on the requirements of the new curriculum standards, Beijing has continuously deepened the exploration of labor education in the new era, attempting to introduce project-based teaching and interdisciplinary learning to build a high-quality primary and secondary school labor education system with capital characteristics. For example, based on the Guidelines for the Formulation and Implementation of Labor Education Lists in Beijing's Primary and Secondary Schools, Tongzhou District compiled the Tongzhou District Labor Education List with regional characteristics, providing schools with a standardized reference. Schools report their School-level Labor Education Lists via electronic platforms, realizing "one school, one list" for labor education. Leveraging regional resources, Tongzhou District set up 10 major task groups around three types of labor and coordinately developed nine interdisciplinary, project-based labor course cases at the regional level, such as "BOE Industrial Labor Exploration Tour" and "Tour Planner Takes You Around the Sub-center"^[3]. Another example is Yuxin School, which established modules like "Skill Refinement & Research Thinking" and "Heritage of Craftsmanship," integrating laser engraving and ICH crafts into labor courses, promoting the organic combination of tradition and modernity.

2.3 Widespread Establishment of Practice Bases and Initial Formation of Resource Integration Mechanisms

Beijing has continuously expanded the field of labor practice through a dual-track approach of "on-campus + off-campus." For example, the First Branch of Capital Normal University built a labor "Four Cultivations" curriculum system, focusing on "farming and reading" labor education. It moved from classroom to extracurricular, from campus to society, exploring large classrooms that integrate moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, such as family "micro-farms" and indoor "vegetable planting," guiding children to establish the value that labor creates a better life in real labor scenarios. Junzhuang Central Primary School in Mentougou District, through party-building cooperation with the local village committee, secured a plot of land (one and a half mu) adjacent to the school wall, opened a garden named "Five Grains Garden," and launched five grains culture courses. This provides a place for children to learn, labor, practice, and research, enhancing their learning and promoting their all-round development. Tsinghua University High School Changping Yuefu Primary School actively tapped community resources, secured space in a community park to build the "Yue Dyeing Garden" with 240 planting boxes. Centered on the theme of "Chinese Medicinal Herbs," it systematically designed and arranged labor education courses, developing students' core competencies from six dimensions: "planting, learning, applying, explaining, creating, and connecting"^[4]. The labor education in these schools effectively breaks through the limitations of campus space, providing authentic and rich practical scenarios for labor education.

3 Main Problems in Primary School Labor Course Construction in Beijing under the New Curriculum Background

3.1 Insufficient Systematic Curriculum Construction, Weak Educational Effectiveness

Surveys show that even though most schools in Beijing have initially established their labor curriculum systems, the content of labor education courses in some schools remains fragmented and offered arbitrarily. Labor course evaluations mostly remain at the level of assessing mastery of specific labor knowledge or skills, lacking diverse evaluation standards. This indicates that labor education courses lack top-level design, are not systematic, and lack professional curricular development, leading to weak effectiveness of labor education. Labor education in the new era, like subject teaching, should undergo scientific and standardized curricular construction to inject new vitality and motivation, thereby improving the effectiveness of labor course implementation^[5].

3.2 Insufficient Number of Full-time Teachers, Professional Competence Needs Improvement

The shortage of full-time labor teachers is a core challenge currently facing Beijing in implementing labor education. There are obvious shortcomings in the labor education teaching force. Problems such as insufficient teacher numbers, limited sources of teachers, and lagging teacher support policies are prominent. Constrained by factors like staffing

quotas, class hours, and evaluation/appointment systems, the shortage of labor education teachers is a common issue reported by schools. Problems like few full-time teachers, difficulty in recruitment, and poor channels for social recruitment are prominent ^[6]. For example, existing teaching staff mostly consists of part-time teachers from other subjects who have weak professional foundations. They can only teach basic theoretical knowledge by the book and are unable to design innovative and practical labor activities based on students' age characteristics and real-life situations. Some schools do not fully exploit regional resources or introduce social professionals like ICH inheritors and artisans to participate in teaching, resulting in course content being disconnected from local cultural characteristics and the needs of contemporary development, making it difficult to stimulate students' interest in labor. At the same time, supporting policies for full-time and part-time labor teachers regarding salary, professional training, professional title evaluation, and performance assessment are still incomplete, making it difficult to ensure the stability and professionalism of the teaching force. Accelerating policy innovation for teacher support and building platforms for professional growth appear particularly urgent and important.

3.3 Evaluation Emphasizes Results Over Process, Mechanism Needs Urgent Improvement

There is a clear tendency in labor course evaluation methods to "emphasize results over process," seriously hindering the full realization of the educational value of labor education. Most schools only use explicit indicators like student labor product competitions and labor outcome displays as the core basis for evaluation, neglecting implicit process indicators such as the development of labor habits, changes in labor attitudes, sense of labor responsibility, and teamwork abilities. This fails to comprehensively and objectively reflect students' growth and progress in labor education. This simplistic evaluation model can easily lead students into the misconception of "emphasizing form over experience," making it difficult to cultivate the labor quality of being down-to-earth and persevering. Although some schools like Changping District Second Experimental Primary School have conducted beneficial explorations, attempting to build an evaluation system from multiple dimensions like mastery of labor skills, daily labor habits, and practice of labor spirit, such innovative practices have not yet formed replicable and scalable experiences, nor have they been widely adopted across the city.

4 Quality Improvement Strategies for Primary School Labor Courses in Beijing under the New Curriculum Standards

4.1 Deepen Curriculum System Construction, Strengthen Educational Orientation

Curriculum construction cannot remain at the superficial level of "offering and completing class hours." The core is to return to the unique educational value of labor, addressing the aforementioned problems of insufficient systematization and weak effectiveness. This means curriculum design needs to deeply integrate competency orientation, be based on the physical/mental development patterns and cognitive characteristics of primary school students, and concretize the cultivation of labor concepts, labor abilities, labor habits, and labor spirit into segmented, operable, and evaluable learning objectives and teaching content. This forms a curriculum system with a closed loop of "objectives—content—implementation—evaluation," avoiding content fragmentation and implementation arbitrariness. Furthermore, actively explore "Labor+" interdisciplinary project-based learning to break down subject barriers, allowing deep integration of labor education with multiple subjects, aligning with the comprehensive and innovative nature of labor in the new era. Combined with Beijing's regional culture and urban characteristics, interdisciplinary labor projects integrating scientific inquiry, traditional culture, and information technology can be designed: for example, integrating labor with science to launch "Campus Waste Sorting and Resource Recycling" projects, enabling students to master labor skills and scientific inquiry methods through field research, data analysis, and program design; integrating with traditional culture by introducing ICH skill-based labor like Beijing paper-cutting and kite making, inheriting regional culture and cultivating labor aesthetics through hands-on practice; integrating with information technology by using programming tools to design simple labor tool models or online platforms to record labor processes and outcomes, showcasing the modern forms of labor. This project-based learning, driven by real-world problems, allows students to "learn by doing and understand through learning." It not only helps them master labor skills but also enables them to appreciate the complete value of labor in solving practical problems and promoting social development, truly achieving the educational goals of "cultivating morality and enhancing intelligence through labor."

4.2 Strengthen Teaching Staff Development, Resolve Professional Bottlenecks

Teachers are key to curriculum implementation. First, promote the development of full-time teacher teams by increasing staffing quotas and recruiting interdisciplinary talents to alleviate the teacher shortage. In addition to tapping internal potential, it is more important to establish a part-time teacher database, recruiting skilled artisans and professionals from various industries as part-time teachers. In the long term, it is necessary to promote the establishment of labor education-related majors in normal universities to cultivate professional teachers. Simultaneously, improve

training and certification by incorporating labor teacher training into municipal and district-level teaching research plans, regularly conducting new curriculum standard interpretation and teaching case seminars. Municipal and district levels should establish "think tanks" similar to Labor Education Teaching Guidance Professional Committees to provide schools with continuous professional development support and case guidance, aiming to continuously improve teaching quality.

4.3 Improve Diverse Labor Education Evaluation, Build Incentive Mechanisms

Evaluation is the baton for effectively implementing labor education. A diverse labor education evaluation system should be improved, and the exploration of labor education incentive mechanisms should be accelerated. On one hand, build a diverse evaluation system, emphasizing the combination of process evaluation and summative evaluation^[7]. Attention should be paid to students' performance in labor attitudes, habit formation, skill mastery, and innovative abilities. Methods combining student self-evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher evaluation, and parent evaluation should also be adopted to comprehensively and objectively assess the development of students' labor literacy. On the other hand, establish labor education incentive mechanisms. Awards such as "Labor Star" and "Excellent Team" can be set up, linking labor evaluation results with student commendations and comprehensive quality evaluation to stimulate students' enthusiasm and initiative in participating in labor.

5 Conclusion

This study systematically explored quality improvement strategies for primary school labor course construction in Beijing under the new curriculum standards. Research indicates that while current labor courses in Beijing have achieved significant results, further reforms are needed in areas such as systematic construction, teacher cultivation, and labor education evaluation. Through the three major strategies of constructing a systematic curriculum system, strengthening teaching staff development, and improving diverse evaluation mechanisms, labor education can be effectively promoted to shift from "quantitative" accumulation to "qualitative" leap. With technological development and social change, primary school labor course construction in Beijing also needs to keep pace with the times. To cultivate new-era talents with labor spirit, innovation capability, and social responsibility, future research could further explore issues like labor course construction in the context of intelligent technology.

Funding

This research was funded by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission Social Science General Project "Research on Quality Improvement Strategies for Labor Curriculum Construction in Beijing Primary Schools under the Background of New Curriculum Standards" (NO: SM202311417015) And Beijing Union University Scientific and Technological Innovation Cultivation Program Funded Project "Construction and Application Research of Evaluation Indicator System for Digital Textbooks in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Intelligent Era" (NO: JSK30202501).

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