

# Cultural Foundation Strengthening: Exploring the Integration of Chinese Poetry Education and Labor Education in Primary School

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**Abstract:** Labor education serves as an essential pathway for student development, offering comprehensive educational values in cultivating moral integrity, enhancing intellectual growth, strengthening physical fitness, and nurturing aesthetic appreciation. Using traditional poetry, a cultural gene of the Chinese nation, as a medium, students can not only expand their labor knowledge and practical skills but also gain insights into traditional virtues and strengthen cultural confidence. This paper attempts to explore innovative approaches to integrating Chinese poetry education with primary school labor education. Through in-depth analysis of current labor practices in primary schools and the innovative value of these integration pathways, the study provides innovative ideas and methods for primary school labor education. The goal is to help students deepen cultural literacy through hands-on experiences, use culture as nourishment to improve their labor literacy, and achieve the educational objective of holistic development.

**Keywords:** Chinese poetry education; Primary school labor education; Integrated practice

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## 1. Introduction

The *Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education in the New Era*, issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council in 2020, highlights, “In recent years, phenomena such as not cherishing the fruits of labor, unwillingness to labor, and inability to labor have appeared among some adolescents. The unique educational value of labor has been neglected to a certain extent, and labor education is being marginalized and weakened.” It emphasizes the need to “incorporate labor education into the comprehensive education system of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, adhering to the principle of fostering virtue through education.” Facing this practical challenge, it is a significant area worthy of exploration by educators to consider how, through labor practices, primary school students in their critical period of physical and mental development can establish correct labor concepts, master necessary labor skills, develop good labor habits, comprehend excellent labor spirit, and lay a solid foundation

for their future growth <sup>[1]</sup>.

As is well known, poetry holds a unique position in Chinese traditional culture due to its distinctive charm. Labor-themed poems stand out as particularly valuable treasures, characterized by their vast quantity and rich content that document various scenes of ancient labor. Moreover, these poems demonstrate sophisticated aesthetics and profound meanings, reflecting the ancient people's simple views of labor. They serve as excellent educational materials for labor education. Therefore, boldly innovating labor education through labor-themed poetry and expanding its educational scope not only enriches the cultural depth of labor education but also facilitates the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture through practical labor experiences.

## **2. Deficiencies of primary school labor education**

Labor, as a process of creating material and spiritual wealth, is a unique social practice of humankind, whose importance and necessity are self-evident. However, in real life, labor still faces issues of being weakened and softened, and labor education is fragmented and superficial.

### **2.1. Shortcomings of the current curriculum system**

The primary school stage is a critical period for enlightening children's labor concepts, cultivating labor habits, and tempering labor abilities. According to the "Compulsory Education Labor Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" (hereinafter referred to as the "New Curriculum Standards"), the labor education curriculum should encompass physical labor alongside hands-on and problem-solving activities. The program must cover three key areas: daily chores, productive work, and service-oriented labor.

In practical school labor education programs, the curriculum content remains monotonous, predominantly focusing on daily tasks like cleaning, handicrafts, cooking, and gardening, while production-oriented and service-oriented labor activities are insufficient. The teaching content lacks systematic organization, often consisting of teachers' "impromptu ideas" without coherent thematic frameworks. Secondly, labor objectives are poorly designed, oversimplified to mere skill acquisition or experiential learning, making it difficult to realize the full value of labor. Furthermore, the design of labor activities remains rigid, trapped in the "demonstration-practice-evaluation" teaching model that stifles students' motivation. Lastly, labor courses lack professional instructors, with most teachers being part-time staff who lack deep subject expertise. Curriculum development primarily revolves around physical labor, neglecting hands-on and problem-solving activities. The teaching guidance remains at a low level, and effective collaboration with parents and society is often not achieved, resulting in inconsistent implementation quality across labor courses <sup>[2]</sup>.

### **2.2. Limitations of the resource allocation**

To support children's individualized development, primary schools offer a rich and diverse range of courses, resulting in limited dedicated spaces for students to conduct labor practices. This is particularly prominent in older urban elementary schools. Additionally, many schools have a large number of classes with big class sizes and limited free space, exacerbating the spatial constraints. Schools are forced to squeeze labor education into existing spaces like cafeterias, corridors, and classroom balconies, resulting in repetitive and monotonous activity formats.

Labor is a process of learning by doing. It requires sustained funding for tools, materials, and activity organization, along with institutional frameworks to ensure its continuity. Currently, however, funding support

for labor education in various schools remains severely limited. Moreover, the time allocated for labor as an independent subject is relatively scarce, leaving its educational outcomes compromised. Spatial limitations, funding shortfalls, and time constraints not only erode students' initiative to participate in labor but also cause the absence of a long-term mechanism for labor education, which makes labor education tend to be superficial.

### **2.3. Lack of awareness among students**

Students are the main participants in labor. The strength of their labor awareness directly affects their motivation to participate and their actual experience during labor. However, many students still exhibit weak labor consciousness and outdated work concepts. This phenomenon stems from multiple factors: some parents excessively pamper their children, leading to students developing a dismissive attitude toward labor; some parents adopt a "soft approach" to labor education, lacking necessary guidance and supervision in family life; some students focus solely on experiential learning during labor activities, lacking reflection on its value, while teachers often fail to provide timely and effective guidance. This results in a situation where "more effort yields less reward," ultimately weakening students' labor awareness.

## **3. Innovative values of labor education in primary school from the perspective of Chinese poetry education**

Based on the above problems, this paper attempts to take Chinese poetry education as the carrier to optimize the content of labor curriculum, improve the awareness of teachers and students, enhance labor literacy, and promote the upgrade and transformation of primary school labor education.

### **3.1. Enriching the content of labor curriculum**

Integrating Chinese Poetry Education into the primary school labor education system can effectively expand and deepen the content of labor education. As an important carrier for inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture, Chinese Poetry Education, with its rich connotations and profound implications, combined with labor education, can help improve the current situation of singular labor course content and break the limitations of overemphasizing skill training.

Specifically, students can be guided to recite, comprehend, and appreciate classic poems depicting ancient labor scenes and celebrating the spirit of hard work. Representative examples include poems about farmer compassion, agricultural practices, pastoral life, silk weaving, water chestnut gathering, architecture, mining, craftsmanship, and shepherd children. These works not only vividly reproduce ancient labor methods and social landscapes, but also embody valuable labor concepts such as "respecting labor, loving labor, cherishing labor achievements, and labor creating a better life." This enables students, while engaging in hands-on labor activities, to deepen their understanding of labor from cultural, aesthetic, and value perspectives, gaining insight into the labor values embedded in traditional culture <sup>[3]</sup>.

### **3.2. Improving the awareness of teachers and students on labor**

Labor awareness, for an individual, refers to the basic understanding of labor, labor attitude, and value orientation. As this awareness grows, one's labor ability and literacy also enhance. Conducting primary school labor education from the perspective of Chinese poetry education provides an innovative humanistic path to improve the labor awareness of teachers and students.

For students, poetry is not just a form of literary appreciation but also a window to understand the value of

labor. By studying the refined aphorism “Who knows that each grain in the plate comes from toil?” in *Min Nong* (Sympathy for the Peasants), or comprehending the labor imagery in *Returning to Dwell in Gardens and Fields* with its verse “Rising at dawn, I weed the wasteland, / Shouldering the hoe, I return under the moonlight,” or experiencing the urgent depiction of day-and-night toil in *Book of Songs: July*, students can transform abstract labor principles into concrete, perceptible aesthetic images amid poetic immersion, building a sense of cherishing labor achievements and empathy for laborers, thereby enhancing their own labor awareness.

For teachers, integrating the concepts of poetry education promotes their roles from “instructors” of practical skills to “guides” of labor culture. In the process of lesson preparation and teaching, teachers need to deeply explore the labor spirit contained in classical poetry. This process itself is a tempering and reflection on the teachers’ own labor concepts. When teachers guide students to appreciate the inheritance of labor traditions in “Young grandchildren not yet able to help with farm work, / Also learn to plant melons by the shade of the mulberry tree,” or to understand the hard-won fruits of labor as described in “Feet steamed by scorching soil, backs burned by blazing sunlight,” a dynamic of mutual growth between teaching and learning emerges. This progression elevates teacher-student interactions from mere practice to a deeper level of cultural comprehension and value recognition.

## **4. Integration paths of Chinese poetry education and primary school labor education**

### **4.1. Curriculum concept integration: Deepening the cultural foundation of labor education**

The New Curriculum Standards indicate that primary school labor teaching should adhere to an educational orientation, implementing the cultivation of students’ labor concepts and spirit throughout the entire curriculum process. Chinese poetry contains many labor elements. Integrating Chinese Poetry Education into primary school labor education is supposed to fundamentally shift the core teaching concept from “skill imparting” to “cultural infiltration.” In this context, teachers need to establish an integrated approach of “inspiring labor through poetry, comprehending poetry through labor,” deeply excavate the labor scenes, concepts, and spirit contained in classical poetry, and based on this, develop innovative school-based labor education curricula.

Schools can develop labor-themed units such as “Farming in the Field,” “Craftsmanship Skills,” “Material Conservation,” “Unity and Cooperation,” and “Service and Dedication” to cultivate core labor values. They may create curriculum series like “Farming Wisdom in the Book of Songs,” “The Artisan Spirit in Tang Poetry,” and “Du Fu’s Vision of Thousands of Houses,” to systematize the labor teaching content. By integrating traditional 24 Solar Terms poetry, schools can design seasonal labor courses—such as campus sowing during the Spring Equinox or seed racing in designated fields during Grain in Ear. Additionally, adhering to the “tailored approach” principle, schools can leverage their unique strengths to develop school-based labor education programs with poetic education characteristics.

### **4.2. Campus culture integration: Creating a subtle atmosphere**

The campus, as an important space for student growth, bears a unique educational mission. Embedding the labor culture from classical poetry into the campus environment to create a strong cultural atmosphere of “poetry-labor integration” can exert a subtle influence on students.



#### **4.2.1. Arranging the campus environment to create an atmosphere**

Public spaces can be transformed into “Poetic Labor” corridors. Along campus pathways, “Labor in Poetry” exhibition boards will visually present scenes from classical verses, featuring depictions of lotus picking, the evening return of shepherd boys, herbal gathering, and farming activities, accompanied by corresponding videos. Corridors besides classrooms showcase artistic renditions of poetic themes, such as the perseverance captured in “Farming families have little idle time, / In May people are doubly busy,” and the craftsmanship spirit expressed in “The furnace fire illuminates heaven and earth, / Red sparks mingle with purple smoke.”

Classroom spaces can be created as a tangible poetry-inspired workshop culture corner. This area displays miniature replicas of traditional farming tools like hoes, sickles, and spinning wheels, accompanied by usage instructions to help students visualize the real forms of these tools featured in poetry. A thematic book corner showcases historical materials embodying ancient labor wisdom, including “Along the River During the Qingming Festival” and “The Exploitation of the Works of Nature.” Students’ craft creations inspired by poems can also be displayed here, such as handmade kites from the line “Busy chasing the east wind to fly kites” or planting diaries drawn during “learning to plant melons by the shade of the mulberry tree.” By transforming static displays into dynamic learning environments, students can physically interact with and actively participate in the cultural experience.

#### **4.2.2. Guiding students to participate, practice, and co-create**

Campus environment is not only about beautifying the space, but also an important course to guide students to inherit the culture of poetry and practice labor. Schools should guide students to actively participate in the construction of campus cultural landscape, so that they can change from passive spectators to active co-creators.

Schools can collaborate with students to create educational projects like the “Poetic Textbook Garden” such as establishing a “Little Practice Field” where students experience the principle of “Sow one seed in spring, reap ten thousand grains in autumn” through hands-on planting and caring for crops; or opening a “Green Adornment Area” where students participate in pruning and maintaining campus greenery according to the poetic imagery of “Jade-like willow trees dressed in height,” becoming creators of campus beauty. Campus cultural walls can also serve as creative platforms for students to express themselves, such as illustrating the hardships of silkworm rearing from the poem *The Silkworm Woman* through comic strips. This approach helps students prompt students to delve deeper into the stories behind the poems and closely integrate labor with cultural inheritance.

### **4.3. Classroom teaching integration: Innovating the labor practice mode in primary school**

Recently, China’s Ministry of Education released the *Guidelines for AI Literacy Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (2025 Edition)* to meet the demands of the digital and intelligent era. Amid this wave of digital-intelligent education, primary school labor courses should actively seek new anchoring points. Teachers can leverage virtual reality (VR) technology to construct immersive poetry-labor scenarios. For instance, students can use VR devices to step into the farming scene depicted in *Book of Songs: July*, personally experiencing the complete labor process of “building fields in September and harvesting crops in October,” thereby breaking the spatial constraints of the campus. Augmented reality (AR) technology can be utilized to transform poetic verses into 3D animations, such as dynamically presenting scenes of weeding fields or twisting hemp into thread. Artificial intelligence (AI) technology can be employed to create virtual images of ancient laborers, allowing students to interact with them. By monitoring labor activities through network cameras with

real-time facial detection and posture recognition feedback, combined with AI analysis, teachers can quickly assess students' attention and engagement during practical labor, providing factual evidence for improving subsequent curriculum design <sup>[4]</sup>.

#### **4.4. Practical activity integration: Promoting the inheritance and innovation of Chinese poetry education**

##### **4.4.1. Linking traditional festivals for poetic labor practices**

Traditional festivals, as vital carriers of China's outstanding traditional culture, contain abundant labor education resources. Using traditional festivals as a timeline and integrating relevant classic poems into thematic labor practices can guide students to understand the cultural core of the festivals through practice. For instance:

The Spring Festival embodies the cultural symbolism of bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new. Students can organize activities like thorough cleaning, writing and pasting the Spring Festival couplets and the character "Fu" (blessing), inspired by Wang Anshi's verse "Amid the dawn light of thousands of households, / Always replace old peach wood charms with new," to experience the tradition of renewal and positive life attitudes.

The Dragon Boat Festival carries profound patriotic sentiments. Linked with Qu Yuan's "Li Sao" verse, "The road ahead is long and winding, / I will search high and low," students can participate in activities like making zongzi (sticky rice dumplings) and crafting mugwort sachets, inheriting traditional skills through folding bamboo leaves, filling them with ingredients, and stitching sachets with needle and thread.

The Mid-Autumn Festival's reunion theme perfectly aligns with Su Shi's poetic wish, "May we all live long and share the beauty of the moon from afar." Activities like "Moonlit Poetry Festival" can be organized, where students make mooncakes and lanterns by hand. This labor process not only teaches traditional crafts but also provides profound experiences of reunion and harmony.

##### **4.4.2. Innovating campus activities: Hosting a poetic labor culture festival**

Providing students with multi-faceted platforms for display is an important means to stimulate their learning interest. A campus Poetic Labor Culture Festival serves as a main platform to showcase the integrated achievement of Chinese Poetry Education and labor education. Schools can organize drama festivals where student clubs create and perform miniature plays based on ancient labor-themed poems under faculty guidance. Skill challenges like "Turning Sweet Potato Stew into Poetic Verses" and "Crafting Ice Delicacies" can be held, featuring traditional snacks such as Qingtuan (rice cakes), Laba porridge, and tangyuan (sweet glutinous rice balls) to test students' innovative labor skills. Additionally, art fairs can be established with themed booths for classes and clubs, displaying handmade creations like paper-cutting, pottery, embroidery, and other student projects developed in daily classroom activities.

##### **4.4.3. Collaborating home, school, and community: Jointly building labor spaces**

The family serves as the primary classroom for students' growth. Home-school cooperation can provide a broader space for poetry-labor integration. Schools may promote the "Poetry and Etiquette Family Tradition" program, drawing inspiration from the "Disciple Gauge" verse: "Keep the room clean, the walls spotless, the desk tidy, the writing brushes and ink stones properly placed." This guides students to implement a "Bedroom Tidiness Plan," teaching them to organize books, clean desks, and arrange stationery. By creating a bright and tidy study environment, students internalize traditional culture as healthy habits. When appreciating the line "The thread in the kind mother's hand," students are encouraged to take care of family members by preparing simple

porridge and carefully arranging side dishes, transforming poetic emotions into practical actions. Schools should also proactively connect with community resources to organize students to participate in community service. For example, during the Double Ninth Festival, schools could host the “Poetic Warmth for Double Ninth” event at community senior care centers, fostering social responsibility through helping others.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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