

Topic-based Teaching Strategy in Cultivating Labor Values

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Abstract: The ideological and political curriculum in high schools as a fundamental course for the implementation of moral education plays an important role in cultivating students' labor values. However, the traditional and indoctrination teaching methods used by some teachers are not suitable to cultivate these values. This article proposes a new teaching method in high schools' ideological and political lessons to cultivate students' labor values in four aspects which are students' knowledge, feeling, meaning, and action. By setting topics to emphasize on labor values, circulating and discussing these topics to cultivate labor emotions, promote thinking for firm labor faith, and promote action in the practice of labor behaviors to cultivate students' labor values, improve their rational cognition and emotional identification of Marxist labor values, as well as internalize labor values in their minds and externalizing them in practice.

Keywords: Labor values; Ideological and political course; Senior high school; Topic-based teaching

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1. Introduction

On March 20, 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Colleges, Primary, and Secondary Schools in the New Era," which includes clarifying the overall goal of labor education. Through labor education, students may understand and form the Marxist view on labor, as well as firmly establish the concept that "work is the most glorious, the most noble, the greatest, and the most beautiful." This makes it clear that the goal of labor education is to cultivate students' labor values which comprises of the four "most" concept. At the same time, it also reflects the importance that the country attaches in cultivating students' labor values. Only when high school students truly have labor values, only then can they realize the value of labor, truly respect and advocate labor, as well as participate in the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

However, in the current labor education, there are some problems such as narrow perception of the concept of labor, relatively low recognition of labor emotions, lack of interest, and relatively poor labor skills. At the same time, in schools, many teachers have confusion in conducting labor education and cultivating labor values in regard to education methods and the development of curriculum resources. The traditional one-way and teacher-led teaching method is not suitable for the cultivation of students' labor values and does not allow students to truly realize the value of labor itself.

Topic-based teaching in "teaching rules of ideology and policies of ordinary universities" (version 2017) is a new teaching method and one of the important building activities in the curriculum in which topics are used as the lead while situations act as carriers during activities. It is subject knowledge-centered and conducive in emphasizing the principal role of students, hence bringing significant changes to teachers' teaching methods and students' learning methods in the ideological and political course education.

Therefore, the cultivation of students' labor values can be realized in four aspects which are labor cognition, labor emotions, labor will, and labor behaviors via the topic-based teaching in order for students to establish correct labor values and truly understand the value of labor.

2. Topic-based teaching in cultivating labor values

2.1. Deepening students' cognition of labor values through real life situations

Due to the influence of the traditional teaching concept, several teachers still implement the method of "unilateral instillation," which only emphasize on imparting knowledge. This reduces the effectiveness of labor education whereby students are not able to truly appreciate the value of labor education and establish proper labor concepts. On the other hand, topic-based teaching emphasizes students' subjectivity in which topics are set according to textbooks' contents in combination with students' actual life situations so that students may think and involve in discussion activities while exchanging and cooperatively exploring these situations and topics in order to promote the deep understanding of the relevant knowledge pertaining labor values. Through real situations, knowledge can be integrated with life's logic in the application of theoretical knowledge to real social situations. The representation of knowledge can be specific to one's lifestyle; hence in the same way, textbook knowledge should be integrated into the cognition of labor values so that students would fully understand and believe that "work is the most glorious, the most noble, the greatest and the most beautiful."

2.2. Strengthening students' emotional belief with value judgement

Traditional teaching methods blindly focus on imparting knowledge and stress on students' memory and recitation of knowledge, but they neglect students' emotions and beliefs of those knowledge. Compared to traditional teaching methods, topic-based teaching emphasizes more on openness, orientation, guiding students to make correct value judgments and choices, as well as developing students' scientific spiritual accomplishment. Through this method, with issues that are closely related to real life situations, value conflict situations may be created so that students would discuss, analyze, and finally decide on appropriate value judgments and choices in truly identifying and understanding labor values with firm faith.

2.3. Beneficial participation of students in labor via topical activities

The cultivation of students' labor values should not only include improving the cognition of labor values among students, but also to encourage students' participation in the practice of labor. Only in this way, students would be able to internalize labor values in their hearts and through their actions. Therefore, it is inevitable to introduce and develop more lively activities. In comparison to traditional teaching methods, topic-based teaching emphasizes students to constantly make use of the subject knowledge and their own experiences to think and analyze problems, solve them, and enhance their speculative spirit under the guidance of teachers. As an important starting point of more dynamic subject courses, this topic-based teaching uses activities as its main feature to promote the involvement of students in active practices through social investigations, debates, speeches, simulation practices, and other activities in the journey to deeply understand and identify with labor values thereby, improving labor skills.

3. Cultivation strategy of labor values by topic-based teaching

Cultivating labor values is a complicated process of psychological confirmation which includes clarifying the cognition of labor values, deepening the emotions toward these values, firmly believing in them, and consciously practicing these values. In order to cope with the complexity and long-term growth of such

psychological factors as well as to effectively embed labor values in the minds of students, appropriate lessons should be selected so that students can explore and learn in actual situations created by teachers and eventually enhance their understanding of labor values. The lesson, “Laborers in the New Era” is selected as an example in the exploration of basic links in the cultivation of labor values through topic-based teaching.

3.1. Setting topics in relation to the new era of labor value

In order to cultivate students’ labor values through topic-based teaching, the topics should first be goal-oriented and based on helping students establish teaching objectives of labor values. Secondly, these topics should be speculative, authentic, and guiding. It should be worth discussing so that students would be inspired to take the initiative in exploring, raising issues, and actively solving them. In addition to that, the topics set should be derived from students’ real-life situations. Only in this way, students would be able to cultivate their skills in recognizing and solving problems through exploring real situations. At the same time, the selection of topics should be guided where they should have a certain depth which reflect correct values and have clear direction in the cultivation of high school students’ labor values. With situational problem settings and their serialized activities, students would then understand labor values, enabling them to constantly think, distinguish, as well as to make value judgments and choices in the process of inquiry-based activities which would eventually, develop their thinking and generate labor values while communicating and sharing with their classmates.

In the example, the teaching contents of “new era laborer” should be analyzed first, then integrating the subject knowledge about labor values and logically write up the teaching materials. According to the teaching contents, teachers would determine the teaching objectives of labor values, and then through the integration of these two, the main topic in this case would be “How to become an excellent laborer in the new era?” Subtopics are subsequently selected around the main topic in combination with students’ life applications such as “Why should one be a laborer?” “Mental labor or manual labor; what do you think?” and “What is an excellent new era laborer?” It can be appreciated that the main and subtopics are related to the cultivation of students’ labor values. For example, in view of students’ narrow cognition of labor and the vague purpose of labor, the subtopic of “Why should one be a laborer?” is introduced so that students may understand the reasons for labor and understand the meaning of labor via the learning and discussions of this topic.

3.2. Discussing around the topic to cultivate labor emotions

After setting the topics, how then will they be discussed? In order to cultivate students’ labor emotions, there is a need for a certain “real” situation carrier during classroom teachings in terms of creating situations related to the topic and the arrangements of classroom activities. The situation carrier that is selected should integrate the concept of labor equality, labor glory, and labor greatness. For example, in facing students’ lack of enthusiasm for labor and low recognition of labor emotions, a sub-topic of “What is an excellent new era laborer?” can be introduced in addition to relevant situations created to enhance students’ strong emotional identification with laborers in the new era and deepen their feelings for labor.

The state advocates socialist competition as well as rewards model employees and advanced workers. “How then to compare model workers with advanced workers and what kind of employees are qualified as model workers or advanced workers?” Based on the situation presented, tasks are then given, and students are organized into groups to explore and discuss with each other. This benefits students in obtaining real knowledge through collision of thoughts, guides them to truly understand the characteristics of excellent workers in the new era, and internalize the concept of “labor creates value” and “occupational equality.”

3.3. Discussing to promote thinking for firm labor faith

Throughout discussion, teachers should encourage students to think and guide them to discern the truth in the process of cooperative exploration and self-reflection so that they are able to form a firm belief in labor values. The inadequacies in current labor education, cognitive biasness of students on labor, cultural diversities, wide internet information, and immature psychological development along with weak discernment among high school students may cause students to be affected by wrong values from the internet which eventually lead them toward wrong tendencies. In terms of career choice, they tend to choose professions with high social status over ordinary posts, and some even despise these ordinary posts. In addition to that, they also have the tendency to blindly pursue higher economic benefits and easy work while lacking ideological preparation for the hardships of work. Therefore, teachers can introduce value dilemma issues, guide students through the discussions with cooperative exploration and views, as well as encourage them to face conflicts in order to deepen the understanding of equality, actual labor value, and labor glory. In this way, students would be able to make appropriate value judgments and choices while having firm belief of labor and value orientation. The subtopic “Mental work or manual work, what do you think?” can be introduced. Then, corresponding debate activities can be organized so that students would think, communicate, and distinguish along with constant collision of views and collective influence of different individuals. Therefore, they would have firm and correct value orientation, namely, the understanding of labor equality, the necessity of all kinds of legitimate professions in the society, as well as the absence of discrimination between high and low status.

3.4. Thinking in order to promote actions and practicing labor behaviors

Discussing and thinking are not the ultimate goals in the topic-based teaching. The aim of this method is for students to apply their acquired knowledge, skills, emotions, and values through thinking and analyzing in class to real life practices. Therefore, labor values must be practiced in the combination of “ideological and political in small classes” and “social practice in big classes,” so that students will internalize labor values in their minds and externalizing them through actions.

For example, after the learning of “new era workers,” the students’ understanding of labor values would have leapt from perceptual knowledge to rational knowledge. At this point of time, it then needs to be tested in practice to realize the second leap of knowledge. With the understanding of labor values, feelings, and meaning, there is a need to consciously participate in labor practices and strive hard in the implementation of these values. Therefore, an interview activity can be assigned to students where they would interact with workers. In this way, students may learn of their excellent qualities, imitate their labor spirit, and enhance their labor emotions. In addition to that, students should be encouraged to integrate the acquired knowledge from their lessons into their personal life to form a career plan. Through this process, students would be able to analyze themselves and use the appropriate labor values as guidance to form a suitable career plan.

4. Conclusion

In general, as one of the classroom teaching methods which has been vigorously advocated since the new curriculum reform of ideological and political course, topic-based teaching has an important practical significance in promoting the cultivation of labor values in senior high school students. The cultivation of labor values is a long-term process and there are still many issues in the current teaching and practices. Futuristic speaking, the ideological and political education in senior high schools should continue to implement the guiding ideology of “Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Colleges, Primary, and Secondary Schools in the New Era” while actively explore ways to cultivate labor values in this education.

Disclosure statement

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