

Practical Exploration of the Labor Education Course in TCM Colleges and Universities in the Context of Five Aspects of Education: A Case Study of Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine

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Abstract Labor education is an important part of the "moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor education" system in the new era, and universities across the country are actively exploring specialized labor education courses. With the simultaneous development of five aspects of education, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine carries out labor education practice with traditional Chinese medicine characteristics, cultivates students' values of hard work and the spirit of down-to-earth practice, guides students to perceive China's traditional Chinese medicine culture and the Chinese nation's long-term pursuit of health during the practice, and provides a reference for the practice of labor education courses in colleges and universities of traditional Chinese medicine.

Key words Five aspects of education, Labor education practice, TCM colleges and universities

0 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 Universities, Middle Schools and Primary Schools in the New Era* (hereinafter referred to as the *Opinions*)^[1], elevating labor education to a new height. At the National Education Conference in 2018, Xi Jinping pointed out that it is necessary to "strive to develop an all-round education system covering morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor", and it is imperative to advocate the spirit of labor among students and guide them to understand the truth that labor is glorious, noble, great and beautiful^[2]. Labor education represents the Party's new requirement for education in the new era, is an essential component of the socialist education system with Chinese characteristics and a key part of the education system covering morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor, and shapes the work ethos, labor values and outlooks on life of socialist builders and successors. The simultaneous development of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor education should be implemented in every link of practical teaching. At present, the construction of labor education in colleges and universities nationwide remains imperfect. For most institutions, offering compulsory courses in labor education is a challenge starting from scratch and still under gradual exploration^[3]. Current research includes theoretical explorations on logical thinking^[4], the construction of labor education systems^[5], and focusing on "education" or on "labor"^[6]. Practical attempts have also been made to integrate labor education into university volunteer services^[7], medicinal

plant cultivation courses^[8-9], as well as innovation and entrepreneurship education^[10].

Based on the spirit and requirements of the *Opinions*, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine has formulated the *Interim Implementation Plan for the Labor Courses of College Students in Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine*, and revised the 2020 version of the undergraduate talent training program. It incorporates the Labor Education course as a compulsory subject into the teaching curriculum of talent training programs for all undergraduate majors. The Labor Education course has been offered to undergraduate students across all majors since the autumn semester of 2020. The exploration and practical experience of the university's labor education practice bases can provide a valuable reference for the development of the Labor Education course in traditional Chinese medicine universities nationwide.

1 Teaching objectives of Labor Education

Through the study and practical activities of the Labor Education course, students temper their willpower and cultivate moral character through hands-on practice and physical labor. It helps foster their labor values of hard work and the belief that labor is most glorious, as well as a positive outlook on life. Labor Education practice strengthens students' awareness and thinking of innovation. Physical labor improves their physical quality, builds up their fitness, and promotes their physical development. Furthermore, labor education enables students to enjoy the fruits of labor and internalize the aesthetic value of labor that laborers are the most beautiful.

2 Course content of Labor Education

In accordance with the requirements of the *Opinions*, institutions of higher education shall offer labor education as a formal course with no less than 32 class hours. The Labor Education course at Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine is designed for a total of 32 class hours, covering general labor education, theoretic-

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cal knowledge related to medicinal plant cultivation, and labor education practice. The course is delivered across four semesters, with 8 class hours arranged per semester. It is needed to integrate traditional Chinese medicine culture into labor practice, and the curriculum enables students to gain in-depth understanding of traditional Chinese medicine through the cultivation and management of medicinal plants. It also helps students recognize the Chinese nation's long-standing pursuit of health, as well as its profound insights into life and diseases. This course lays a solid foundation for cultivating application-oriented talents for the development of traditional Chinese medicine in China.

2.1 General labor education Upon enrollment, undergraduate freshmen shall first complete the coursework of General Labor Education. The curriculum focuses on the Marxist conception of labor, and the historical evolution and core connotations of the model worker spirit, labor spirit, and craftsman spirit. It aims to cultivate students' rational and sound labor values.

2.2 Theoretical learning of medicinal plant cultivation Students of traditional Chinese medicine universities are primarily enrolled in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and related disciplines. Nevertheless, most have not yet taken specialized courses such as Medicinal Botany, and therefore lack basic cognition of medicinal plants, as well as accurate identification and differentiation. According to disciplinary characteristics, students first learn the basic theoretical knowledge related to the cultivation of medicinal plants to lay a solid foundation for subsequent practical labor education. The core content covers the growth and development characteristics of medicinal plants, cropping systems and tillage practices, field management, harvesting and processing techniques, *etc.*

2.3 Practice of the Labor Education course The practice of the Labor Education course is primarily carried out at the Xianhu Campus of Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine. Students are divided into groups by class, and fixed plots are divided in the practice base of labor education for the cultivation of medicinal plants. Field work is regularly arranged every Tuesday afternoon, covering a full range of tasks including soil loosening, sowing, fertilizing, watering, weeding, pesticide spraying and harvesting. Under the guidance of instructors, students independently complete the entire planting process.

The Xianhu Medicinal Plant Garden of Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine consists of three parts: Xianhu Medicinal Garden, Yaoshi Mountain and Yaowang Valley, and covers an area of approximately 20 hm². Among them, "Yaoshi Mountain" is the main trunk of the entire garden. It has a rich variety of Chinese herbal and ethnic medicinal plants, and is a distinctive, comprehensive, regional-leading and specialized live plant specimen garden of Zhuang and Yao medicines (Chinese herbal medicine), integrating "teaching", "research" and "culture". Currently, Yaoshi Mountain has successfully introduced and cultivated over 1 000 species of commonly used medicinal plants in Guangxi, including Guangxi's local medicinal materials such as cinnamon (containing cassia twig), star anise, *Momordica grosvenori*, and so on. It is an important place for students to learn and understand

medicinal plants, and an important practical training and experimental base for cultivating Chinese medicine talents. Under the strong support of the school's academic affairs office and student affairs office, "Yaoshi Mountain" has been gradually developed into a practical base for the Labor Education course. Students can participate in the cultivation and management of medicinal plants on the mountain. It is the most important on-campus labor practice base for labor education at Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine. By combining Chinese medicine knowledge with labor education practice, students further understand the knowledge of Chinese medicine culture through the labor practice of cultivating and managing medicinal plants on "Yaoshi Mountain", and it has become one of the characteristic courses of Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine.

2.3.1 Exploring the practice course of labor education with characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine universities. Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine is a training base for professional talents in TCM in Guangxi. Based on the actual situation of the university, the practice course of labor education centered on the cultivation of Chinese herbal medicine (including Zhuang and Yao medicine) is set up, through which students can learn planting techniques and farming measures, field management and knowledge and techniques of harvesting and processing. It covers the origin, biological characteristics, morphological features, main components, pharmacological effects, cultivation management, pest and disease control, harvesting and processing technologies of medicinal plants. This integrates practicality and professionalism, enabling students to understand and master relevant knowledge of Chinese medicinal herbs and ethnic medicinal materials. By directly participating in tasks such as planting, weeding, fertilizing, harvesting, and processing, students can cultivate good labor qualities and acquire correct labor values.

Students learn about the knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine through labor practice, and experience the magic of traditional Chinese medicine with its long history and unique theoretical system in China. The renowned medical scientist of the Ming Dynasty, Li Shizhen, authored several classic medical books of TCM, such as *Pinhu Sphygmology* and *Study on the Eight Extra-meridians*. However, he also wrote a medical work called *Compendium of Materia Medica*, which Darwin referred to as "the encyclopedia of China in the 16th century". Therefore, during the process of planting medicinal plants, students can not only engage in labor, but also continuously recognize and learn about various medicinal plants on the mountain. If they encounter any medicinal plants they don't understand, they can have direct face-to-face communication with the teaching staff at the labor practice site to deepen their learning.

2.3.2 Cultivating the spirit of teamwork and collaboration in groups. Grouping of the on-campus practical course for labor education means that students in each class are grouped into N groups, and each group consists of about 20 students. Then, each group is further divided into 4 sub-groups, with each sub-group having about 5 students. To facilitate assessment and evaluation, students in each group conduct labor in a relatively fixed plot. On

Tuesday afternoons, the entire school conducts a centralized labor practice, and each labor session lasts for 4 class hours. The labor content includes land preparation, digging holes, sowing, transplanting, weeding, loosening soil, pruning, fertilizing, adding soil, and harvesting and processing of medicinal materials. The content varies with the type of medicinal materials, the season, and the plot. The entire planting process is completed independently by students under the guidance of teachers.

At present, we are in the new era of building a socialist powerful country and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The desire for the spirit of unity and collaboration is more important and urgent than at any other time. Success requires not only the perseverance to overcome difficulties but also the spirit of unity and collaboration. The on-campus labor practice course is conducted in groups, and students' sense of collective honor and the spirit of unity and collaboration are cultivated through the continuous labor of four groups of students on a fixed plot of land. In addition, according to the work needs of the base construction, labor transfers among groups are carried out in the base, and labor support is provided to other groups to cultivate the labor spirit of unity, friendship and mutual assistance among students.

2.3.3 Gradually standardizing the evaluation of labor education and achieving the effect of labor education. The assessment and evaluation methods for the practical course of Labor Education are still being gradually standardized. Through the practical course of Labor Education, students can understand the purpose and significance of the Labor Education course, integrate labor with the thinking of traditional Chinese medicine culture, initially understand the cultivation theory of Chinese medicinal materials, and simply master the basic field management skills for the cultivation of Chinese medicinal materials to meet the demands of the *Opinions*. Currently, the assessment method for the practical course of Labor Education is attendance. Attendance is a standardized assessment, but practical labor will be handled flexibly based on actual circumstances. For cases of physical discomfort, sick leave, and various emergencies, students are allowed to adjust their classes in accordance with regulations and make up the missed lessons later. This approach ensures their health and enhances their enthusiasm for participating in practical labor.

3 Conclusions

According to the requirements of the *Opinions*, in addition to the compulsory courses of Labor Education, all courses should integrate labor education content in a coherent manner based on the characteristics of the disciplines and majors. In traditional Chinese medicine colleges, labor practice can be based on professional characteristics. Based on the cultivation of medicinal plants, labor knowledge, labor concepts, and labor safety education can be integrated into core courses such as Pharmaceutical Botany and Chinese Herbal Identification. Through the integration of classroom teaching and experimental training during labor education, students are guided to master practical tools, consolidate professional skills, and establish a diligent and pragmatic spirit.

The knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine is integrated

with labor education. Through practical activities such as the cultivation and management of medicinal plants at "Yaoshi Mountain", students can not only enhance their cultural literacy in traditional Chinese medicine but also serve as a modern continuation of the cultural spirit in traditional Chinese medicine. Although there may be differences in professional fields among different institutions, the educational goals of labor education remain consistent. Labor practice serves as the carrier for course implementation, and the core lies in guiding college students to establish correct views on labor and cultivate their spirit of labor, so as to cultivate qualified talents for society.

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