

Review

Exploring the Path of Collaborative Development Between Labor Education and Ideological-Political Education in Vocational Undergraduate Universities in the New Era

Yingge Zhang^{1,*}
¹ Beijing Polytechnic University, Beijing, China

* Correspondence: Yingge Zhang, Beijing Polytechnic University, Beijing, China

Abstract: This review paper examines the evolving integration of labor education and ideological-political education within vocational undergraduate universities in the new era. It identifies a structural convergence where manual practice, technical competence, and ethical formation are no longer treated as parallel tracks but as interdependent dimensions of holistic student development. The analysis traces how institutional missions have shifted from skill transmission alone toward cultivating socially responsible professionals grounded in collective values, civic awareness, and practical integrity. Key drivers include national educational policy recalibrations, labor market transformations demanding both technical agility and moral resilience, and pedagogical innovations that embed value reflection within authentic work-based learning. The paper outlines two central thematic axes: first, the redefinition of labor as a formative social practice---rather than merely instrumental activity---and second, the reconceptualization of ideological-political education as experiential meaning-making rather than doctrinal instruction. Comparative analysis reveals persistent tensions: misalignment between curriculum design and implementation capacity, uneven faculty preparedness across disciplinary boundaries, and assessment frameworks ill-suited to measuring integrated outcomes. Future pathways emphasize co-designed curricula, cross-functional teaching teams, and longitudinal developmental metrics that track attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive growth simultaneously. The synthesis affirms that collaborative development is not an additive process but a systemic reorientation---one requiring sustained institutional will, pedagogical coherence, and epistemological humility.

Keywords: labor education; ideological education; vocational universities

1. Introduction

1.1. Contextual Imperatives of the New Era

Contemporary China's developmental trajectory is characterized by rapid industrial upgrading, deepening digital transformation, and intensified global competition, all of which recalibrate the competencies demanded of vocational talent [1]. Policy frameworks increasingly emphasize holistic cultivation---integrating technical mastery with ethical responsibility, social awareness, and value alignment [2]. Within this landscape, vocational undergraduate universities face mounting expectations to produce graduates who are not only adept in applied skills but also grounded in shared societal principles. Labor education and ideological-political education, once treated as discrete domains, now converge as complementary pedagogical pillars. Their synergistic development responds directly to systemic imperatives: fostering labor consciousness rooted in dignity and creativity while reinforcing normative frameworks that support sustainable national advancement [3, 4]. This integration constitutes a strategic response to evolving socio-economic realities [4].

1.2. Defining Collaborative Development

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Collaborative development denotes a purposeful, bidirectional synergy between labor education and ideological-political education, wherein neither subsumes nor replaces the other. It entails structured alignment of pedagogical objectives, co-designed experiential activities, and harmonized assessment frameworks that jointly advance holistic student formation [5]. This model rejects additive or parallel implementation in favor of deep integration---where labor practices become sites for ethical reflection and civic reasoning, while ideological-political education gains material grounding through authentic work contexts [6]. Reciprocal reinforcement occurs when labor competencies scaffold moral agency, and ideological clarity informs labor ethics and social responsibility. The process demands institutional coordination, faculty cross-training, and curriculum architecture that sustains disciplinary integrity while enabling mutual enrichment. Such collaboration is not incidental but systematically engineered to cultivate vocationally competent, ethically grounded, and socially engaged graduates.

1.3. Scope and Orientation of This Review

This review centers exclusively on vocational undergraduate universities, distinguishing them from both academic institutions and secondary vocational schools [4]. Its scope is defined by structural characteristics unique to this tier: applied, competency-oriented curricula; formalized industry partnerships that integrate workplace learning; and dual-mentor systems pairing academic faculty with industry practitioners. These features constitute the foundational architecture shaping feasible pathways for labor education and ideological-political education collaboration [2, 4]. The orientation prioritizes institutional mechanisms over individual pedagogical practices, foregrounding curriculum design, governance frameworks, and stakeholder coordination. It deliberately excludes K-12 contexts, graduate-level programs, and non-vocational higher education [6]. By anchoring analysis in these operational realities, the review identifies leverage points where labor competencies and ideological formation co-constitute rather than merely coexist.

2. Historical Overview

2.1. Evolution of Labor Education in Vocational Settings

Labor education in vocational settings has undergone a profound historical transformation, shifting from early models rooted in craft mastery, manual discipline, and apprenticeship-based transmission to contemporary paradigms that integrate creativity, ecological sustainability, and social responsibility into labor practice. Initially oriented toward technical proficiency and workplace conformity, curricular frameworks gradually incorporated reflective pedagogy, ethical reasoning, and community engagement [6]. The reconfiguration of labor as both material practice and civic act reflects broader socioeconomic transitions, including digitalization, green industrial policy, and evolving conceptions of skilled work [1]. This evolution signals a move beyond instrumental skill acquisition toward holistic formation---where labor processes serve as sites for cultivating critical consciousness, collaborative agency, and value-laden professional identity. Such developments position labor education not as ancillary training but as a constitutive dimension of ideological-political formation within vocational undergraduate contexts.

2.2. Trajectory of Ideological-Political Education Reform

Ideological-political education in vocational undergraduate universities has undergone a pronounced paradigm shift over the past decade [4]. Early models emphasized didactic, lecture-centered delivery with standardized curricula and uniform assessment protocols. Subsequent reform initiatives prioritized contextual relevance, integrating local industry practices, community engagement, and student life experiences into pedagogical design. Instructional strategies evolved toward dialogic learning, collaborative inquiry, and experiential scaffolding---foregrounding critical reflection alongside normative orientation [6]. Curriculum modernization frameworks institutionalized practice-anchored modules, service-learning components, and

interdisciplinary thematic units [2]. Assessment mechanisms diversified beyond summative examinations to include portfolio reviews, reflective journals, and participatory evaluations [4]. This trajectory reflects a systemic recalibration: from transmission-oriented instruction toward co-constructed meaning-making, where ideological formation occurs through situated action, iterative dialogue, and authentic social participation---aligning epistemic aims with vocational identity development and civic agency cultivation.

2.3. Converging Institutional Mandates

Policy frameworks and institutional charters increasingly frame labor education and ideological-political education not as parallel tracks but as mutually reinforcing dimensions of holistic student development. This convergence manifests in strategic documents that explicitly integrate manual practice, ethical formation, and civic consciousness within unified curricular architectures. Mission statements from vocational undergraduate institutions now routinely position skilled labor competence and value-oriented character cultivation as interdependent outcomes rather than discrete objectives [2]. Regulatory guidance emphasizes synergistic implementation across pedagogical design, faculty development, and assessment protocols. Such alignment reflects a systemic recalibration away from historical compartmentalization toward integrated educational paradigms [4]. Institutional mandates increasingly require cross-departmental coordination, shared learning outcomes, and co-designed experiential modules [4]. This structural integration signals a paradigmatic shift wherein labor processes become pedagogical sites for ideological reflection, and ideological frameworks inform the meaning-making embedded in technical training [3, 5].

3. Core Theme a: Labor as Ethical Formation

3.1. Beyond Skill Acquisition: Labor as Identity Construction

Labor education in vocational undergraduate universities functions not merely as technical training but as a sustained ethical practice through which students internalize normative frameworks of responsibility, dignity, and social obligation [2]. Repeated participation in socially embedded labor activities---such as community service projects, industry-integrated internships, and campus-based cooperative maintenance---generates iterative feedback loops between action and self-reflection. This process cultivates an embodied sense of agency, wherein students recognize their capacity to effect change within concrete institutional and communal contexts [4, 6]. Over time, such experiences coalesce into stable self-conceptions anchored in contribution rather than consumption, in stewardship rather than detachment. The affective resonance of collective labor---its rhythms, its interdependencies, its tangible outcomes---serves as the experiential foundation upon which ideological-political commitments are later articulated and sustained. Crucially, this formation occurs prior to formal doctrinal instruction, operating at the pre-cognitive level of habitus and disposition [6]. When labor is consistently framed as ethically significant and socially consequential, it becomes a primary site for identity consolidation, transforming abstract values into lived orientations. Such ethical sedimentation enables students to interpret curricular content and civic expectations not as external impositions but as extensions of their own developing moral subjectivity.

3.2. Workplace Ethics and Collective Responsibility

Internships, capstone projects, and community service modules constitute pedagogically dense sites where vocational undergraduate students enact ethical reasoning through concrete professional and civic engagements. Within these contexts, abstract ideological commitments to fairness, accountability, and solidarity are subjected to real-world constraints---such as hierarchical workplace structures, resource limitations, and divergent stakeholder interests---prompting iterative negotiation of moral responsibility. Students confront dilemmas concerning labor rights, equitable task distribution, and collective welfare not as theoretical propositions but as operational

challenges requiring situated judgment and collaborative resolution. Such experiences foster an embodied understanding of ethics as relational practice rather than static doctrine, reinforcing the inseparability of labor competence and moral agency. Through guided reflection and structured debriefing, learners articulate how procedural justice manifests in scheduling decisions, how transparency operates in team-based reporting, and how mutual aid functions during project setbacks. This translational process bridges ideological-political education with occupational identity formation, cultivating a disposition toward ethical vigilance and structural responsiveness [3, 6]. Consequently, labor education becomes not merely skill transmission but a sustained practice of character formation grounded in shared purpose and reciprocal obligation [4].

3.3. Material Practice and Value Internalization

Tactile, iterative labor---exemplified by prototyping, equipment maintenance, and agricultural production---serves as a primary conduit for ethical formation in vocational undergraduate education. Such activities demand sustained physical engagement, repeated calibration of action and outcome, and responsiveness to material constraints, thereby cultivating diligence as a habituated disposition rather than an abstract ideal. Precision emerges not through didactic instruction alone but via the embodied feedback loops inherent in machining tolerances, circuit diagnostics, or soil nutrient balancing. Respect for human systems is internalized through collaborative task division, role rotation, and accountability structures embedded in workshop or farm-based projects. Likewise, ecological respect develops concretely when students observe the consequences of irrigation scheduling on crop yield or energy consumption patterns in automated systems [4]. These practices instantiate value internalization as a somatic and relational process: learners do not merely acquire knowledge about labor ethics---they rehearse, refine, and stabilize them through recurrent, context-anchored action. The resulting ethical sensibility is neither doctrinal nor disembodied; it is materially grounded, socially mediated, and progressively stabilized across developmental time [2]. This alignment between labor pedagogy and ideological-political education rests on the premise that character formation occurs most robustly where cognition, affect, and motor intention converge in purposeful material practice.

4. Core Theme B: Ideological-Political Education as Experiential Grounding

4.1. From Didactic Instruction to Reflective Praxis

This section advances a paradigmatic shift from didactic instruction toward reflective praxis, positioning ideological-political education not as doctrinal transmission but as an interpretive scaffold for labor-based inquiry. Students engage with authentic workplace dilemmas---such as automation-induced role displacement, ethical tensions in algorithmic management, or equity challenges in skill certification pathways---and apply conceptual frameworks to diagnose structural conditions, interrogate power dynamics, and envision normative alternatives [6]. Pedagogical design emphasizes iterative cycles of action, observation, critical analysis, and re-engagement, wherein ideological categories emerge through situated reasoning rather than prescriptive assertion. Faculty facilitate dialogic sense-making across disciplinary boundaries, encouraging students to articulate values-in-practice, trace historical continuities in labor relations, and assess technological choices against collective well-being metrics [6]. Assessment privileges process-oriented artifacts---reflective portfolios, co-developed workplace policy briefs, and interprofessional deliberation records---over summative knowledge recall. Such grounding ensures ideological content remains dynamically responsive to evolving labor realities, fostering epistemic agency while reinforcing vocational identity as ethically constituted and socially embedded [2, 3]. This experiential orientation cultivates durable dispositions: critical discernment, collaborative responsibility, and principled adaptability within complex sociotechnical systems.

4.2. Narrative Integration in Technical Learning

Narrative integration transforms technical learning into a conduit for ideological-political reflection by embedding lived labor experience within curricular structures [6]. Case studies drawn from contemporary industrial practice foreground ethical dilemmas inherent in automation, sustainability transitions, and workplace governance, inviting students to interrogate developmental paradigms beyond instrumental efficiency [2]. Oral histories of skilled workers---captured through structured interviews and transcribed testimonies---anchor abstract principles of social equity and collective responsibility in tangible biographical trajectories, revealing intergenerational shifts in labor identity and dignity. Student-generated documentation, including reflective journals, process portfolios, and ethnographic field notes from internships or community projects, cultivates metacognitive awareness of how technical competence intersects with civic agency and historical consciousness. This tripartite narrative architecture enables learners to trace continuities between past struggles for fair labor conditions and present-day institutional responsibilities, fostering critical engagement with the sociotechnical dimensions of vocational formation [2]. Such integration does not subordinate technical rigor to ideological exposition; rather, it positions experiential storytelling as an epistemic modality through which ethical reasoning, historical literacy, and professional identity cohere within authentic practice contexts.

4.3. Mentorship as Ideological Mediation

Mentorship functions as a critical vector for ideological mediation within vocational undergraduate education, wherein industry mentors and faculty advisors jointly embody and transmit value-laden professional dispositions. Through sustained, dialogic engagement, mentors model ethical decision-making in authentic workplace contexts, transforming abstract ideological principles into observable practice [3]. They facilitate reflective discourse on moral ambiguities encountered during internships or project-based learning, enabling students to reconcile theoretical frameworks with situated professional dilemmas [4]. This dual-mentor structure---blending academic pedagogy with industrial pragmatism---creates a dialectical space where ideological concepts acquire experiential density and operational clarity [1]. Mentors do not merely instruct; they curate encounters that demand value judgment, thereby cultivating moral agency rather than passive reception. Their guidance scaffolds the internalization of collective responsibility, occupational integrity, and social commitment as constitutive elements of technical expertise. Crucially, this mediation operates not through didactic transmission but through co-constructed meaning-making across institutional boundaries. As such, mentorship becomes an epistemic bridge, translating classroom discourse into lived professional ethos while simultaneously feeding real-world complexity back into curricular reflection [5]. The relational dimension of mentoring thus constitutes a primary site for ideological sedimentation---where values are not imposed but negotiated, tested, and affirmed through shared labor and mutual accountability.

5. Comparison & Challenges

5.1. Curricular Alignment Gaps

Curricular alignment gaps persist between labor education and ideological-political education, undermining systemic integration in vocational undergraduate universities. Course sequencing often follows administrative convenience rather than pedagogical logic, resulting in disjointed delivery across semesters and disciplines. Credit allocation remains uneven: labor education modules frequently receive minimal credit weighting, relegating them to auxiliary status despite stated commitments to parity. Learning outcome mapping suffers from superficial articulation---objectives are listed side-by-side without specifying interdependent competencies or shared assessment criteria. Consequently, integration manifests as procedural compliance rather than curricular coherence, with faculty designing syllabi in silos and students experiencing fragmented learning trajectories [3]. Cross-disciplinary coordination mechanisms---such as joint curriculum committees or shared rubrics---are underdeveloped or inconsistently

implemented. This structural disjunction produces symbolic collaboration, where thematic overlap is acknowledged but not operationalized through scaffolded content progression, integrated assignments, or aligned evaluation frameworks. Without recalibrating sequencing logic, rebalancing credit distribution, and embedding mutual learning outcomes into course design documentation, substantive synergy remains elusive [5]. Institutional incentives and academic development support must be reoriented to prioritize vertical and horizontal alignment over isolated module delivery.

5.2. Faculty Capacity and Epistemological Boundaries

Faculty capacity constitutes a critical bottleneck in integrating labor education with ideological-political education. Technical instructors often possess deep domain expertise but exhibit reluctance toward value-laden discourse, perceiving it as extraneous to vocational pedagogy. Conversely, ideological educators frequently lack fluency in authentic labor contexts---such as workshop protocols, industry standards, or occupational skill taxonomies---limiting their ability to anchor abstract principles in concrete practice. This epistemological asymmetry is reinforced by divergent training pathways: technical faculty undergo discipline-specific certification emphasizing procedural competence, while ideological educators receive normative instruction centered on theoretical frameworks and textual analysis. Confidence deficits further compound the divide; many report discomfort facilitating dialogues where labor ethics intersect with workplace power dynamics or technological mediation. Institutional support remains fragmented, with professional development programs rarely addressing cross-domain epistemic translation. Without deliberate scaffolding---such as co-teaching modules, joint curriculum design workshops, and shared assessment rubrics---disciplinary silos persist, constraining pedagogical synergy [2]. Addressing these capacity gaps demands structural investment in transdisciplinary literacy, not merely additive training.

5.3. Assessment Limitations and Metric Fragmentation

Contemporary assessment frameworks in vocational undergraduate education remain bifurcated, prioritizing discrete measurement of technical proficiency and ideological knowledge while neglecting integrative labor-ethical competencies. This fragmentation impedes recognition of emergent qualities such as ethical judgment exercised within authentic labor contexts or perseverance sustained by ideological conviction. Standardized instruments often rely on decontextualized quizzes, skill checklists, or attitude surveys---formats incapable of capturing situated reasoning, value-laden decision-making, or the recursive interplay between labor practice and worldview formation. Consequently, evaluation outcomes misrepresent holistic development, reinforcing siloed curricular design and obscuring pedagogical synergies. Metric incoherence further manifests in inconsistent weighting across domains, absence of longitudinal tracking for virtue cultivation, and lack of validated rubrics for labor-character integration. Without unified assessment architectures that operationalize labor-ideological convergence---such as scenario-based performance assessments, reflective portfolio evaluations, or multi-stakeholder feedback loops---the field risks perpetuating epistemological disjunction rather than fostering integrated subject formation [2]. Addressing this demands reconceptualizing validity not as domain fidelity but as relational coherence across labor praxis, ethical agency, and ideological grounding.

6. Future Perspectives

6.1. Institutional Architecture for Sustained Integration

Sustained integration demands robust institutional architecture grounded in structural permanence rather than episodic collaboration [5]. Establishing dedicated curriculum design units---staffed jointly by labor education and ideological-political education specialists---ensures coherent, vertically aligned program development across academic years. Concurrently, joint faculty development programs must embed cross-

disciplinary pedagogical training, mentoring, and action research cycles to cultivate shared epistemic frameworks. Performance evaluation systems require recalibration: shared indicators---such as co-designed course outcomes, integrated assessment rubrics, and longitudinal student competency tracking---must replace siloed metrics. These mechanisms collectively incentivize strategic, multi-year planning over fragmented project-based initiatives. Governance structures should formalize interdepartmental steering committees with decision-making authority and resource allocation mandates. Such architecture transforms integration from an operational challenge into an embedded institutional logic, enabling systemic resilience and pedagogical continuity.

6.2. Pedagogical Innovation Pathways

Pedagogical innovation pathways must prioritize experiential coherence without demanding institutional restructuring. Labor-anchored seminars integrate theoretical frameworks with hands-on practice, enabling students to interrogate ideological concepts through material engagement. Reflective portfolio assessments shift evaluation from summative outcomes to longitudinal growth, capturing iterative development across labor and ideological domains. Cross-cohort mentor circles foster intergenerational knowledge transfer, where advanced students model integrative praxis for newcomers, reinforcing continuity in value formation [1]. These models scale efficiently across departments, require minimal curricular reconfiguration, and sustain pedagogical fidelity to both labor education's embodied epistemology and ideological-political education's normative aims. Their implementation hinges on faculty development rather than infrastructural investment, ensuring adaptability within resource-constrained vocational undergraduate contexts. Such approaches collectively advance a dialectical pedagogy wherein labor activity becomes the substrate for ideological reflection, and ideological grounding informs labor intentionality.

6.3. Longitudinal Developmental Tracking

Longitudinal developmental tracking constitutes a critical methodological pillar for evaluating the integration of labor education and ideological-political education. A multi-year cohort design enables systematic observation of behavioral consistency across academic, vocational, and community settings [5]. Key metrics include fidelity in value articulation---measured through reflective narratives, peer interactions, and situational responses---and adaptive reasoning when confronting labor-related ethical dilemmas, such as fairness in task allocation or integrity in skill demonstration. Tracking must incorporate both quantitative behavioral logs and qualitative contextual interviews to capture evolving cognitive frameworks. Temporal analysis should identify inflection points where pedagogical interventions yield measurable shifts in ethical agency or collaborative disposition. Such longitudinal rigor ensures that integration is not merely nominal but substantively internalized, thereby validating curricular coherence and institutional commitment to holistic student formation.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Synthesis of Interdependence

Labor education and ideological-political education in vocational undergraduate universities constitute a dialectical unity, not a hierarchical or instrumental relationship. Their synergy emerges only when labor pedagogy informs the experiential grounding of ideological formation, while ideological-political education provides normative orientation and ethical framing for labor practice. Neither domain may be reduced to a vehicle for the other's objectives; instrumentalization undermines epistemic integrity and pedagogical authenticity. Purpose, methodology, and assessment must co-evolve through mutual calibration---labor activities require ideologically reflective scaffolding, and ideological instruction demands embodied, socially embedded labor contexts. This interdependence is constitutive, not contingent: transformative learning occurs precisely at their conceptual and operational convergence, where praxis and consciousness

reciprocally shape one another within the vocational curriculum's distinctive socio-technical landscape.

7.2. Implications for Educational Governance

Effective collaboration between labor education and ideological-political education necessitates governance frameworks that deliberately dismantle siloed administrative structures. Shared budgeting mechanisms must allocate resources across disciplinary boundaries to incentivize joint curriculum design and faculty development. Co-tenure criteria should formally recognize integrative teaching, cross-disciplinary research, and service contributions that advance educational synergy. Leadership roles---such as integration coordinators or dual-department chairs---must be institutionally mandated with explicit authority and accountability for alignment outcomes. These structural interventions counteract departmental autonomy by embedding interdependence into core operational protocols. Governance efficacy hinges on consistent policy enforcement, transparent performance metrics, and iterative feedback loops involving frontline educators. Without such institutional scaffolding, collaborative aspirations remain rhetorical rather than operational. The transition from fragmented implementation to systemic coherence demands deliberate, sustained investment in governance architecture that prioritizes pedagogical unity over administrative convenience.

7.3. A Call for Epistemological Integration

The core challenge lies in epistemological integration: constructing unified knowledge systems where technical reasoning, ethical deliberation, and social analysis co-constitute understanding rather than occupying discrete, sequential domains. This demands rethinking curricular architecture, pedagogical epistemologies, and assessment paradigms to enable genuine co-production of meaning across labor education and ideological-political education.

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