

Article

Practical Challenges and Countermeasures of Labor Education for New Rural Sages

Jiawen Liu ^{1,*}, Mengqi Guo ¹ and Chen Yang ¹

¹ Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, Hubei, 430070, China

* Correspondence: Jiawen Liu, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, Hubei, 430070, China

Abstract: As an important talent resource in rural areas, new rural sages represent a crucial force in advancing the comprehensive revitalization of the countryside, making their cultivation an issue that cannot be overlooked. Labor education, as a universal form of education, holds significant importance for individual development and social progress. This article indicates that labor education for new rural sages plays a vital role in promoting their comprehensive development, leading new trends of labor in rural areas, and empowering rural governance and development. However, it faces practical challenges such as outdated perceptions, obsolete content and methods, and the absence of effective mechanisms. Accordingly, this article proposes reshaping perceptions, optimizing content and forms, and establishing effective mechanisms to address the difficulties in labor education for new rural sages in a targeted manner. The findings of this article provide valuable insights for refining strategies and enhancing the effectiveness of labor education for new rural sages.

Keywords: rural revitalization; new rural sages; labor education

1. Introduction

The Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China explicitly stated the need to "accelerate the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, and solidly advance the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas." New rural sages, are a vital force in promoting the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas, and their cultivation cannot be overlooked. The academic community has yet to reach a consensus on the definition of new rural sages. This article argues that new rural sages refer to all virtuous and capable individuals who are concerned about rural development and have made contributions to rural construction in modern society. According to embedding theory, new rural sages can effectively embed themselves into rural society, thereby facilitating rural revitalization [1]. Do new rural sages need to engage in labor? From a necessity perspective, labor is the fundamental distinction between humans and animals and the sole source of value. From an importance perspective, Comenius believed that labor holds indispensable value for individual growth [2]. Therefore, new rural sages evidently need to engage in labor. Do new rural sages require labor education? Current academic research on labor education primarily focuses on student groups. However, as a form of universal education, labor education should extend throughout life and cover all domains. Labor education primarily encompasses education on the labor view, cultivation of the work ethic, and practical labor training [3]. Currently, various ideological trends continue to clash, and erroneous notions such as "labor is useless" and "labor education is useless" are permeating rural areas, negatively impacting new rural sages' ability to establish a correct view of labor. From a practical perspective, labor education for new rural sages faces multiple challenges, including outdated perceptions,

Published: 15 December 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

obsolete content and forms, and the absence of effective mechanisms. Against this backdrop, correctly recognizing the positive role of labor education for new rural sages, deeply analyzing its practical challenges, and precisely grasping the corresponding strategies are of significant importance for enhancing the actual effectiveness of labor education for new rural sages and advancing the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas.

2. The Significant Role of Labor Education for New Rural Sages

2.1. Promoting the Comprehensive Development of New Rural Sages

As an important labor force in rural society, the fundamental objective of labor education for new rural sages lies in promoting their comprehensive development. Human comprehensive development encompasses two dimensions: the enhancement of personal qualities and the realization of self-worth. On the one hand, labor education serves as an inner requirement for improving the labor competencies of new rural sages. Education on the essence of labor-addressing "what labor is"-can deepen their understanding of the nature of labor. Cultivation of the value of labor-exploring "why we labor"-can guide new rural sages to connect personal development with societal progress. Education on labor practices-focusing on "how to labor"-can enhance their practical labor skills. On the other hand, labor education serves as an integral path to facilitating the unity of personal and social values among new rural sages. Labor is the source of value, and it is only through labor that individuals can create value. Labor education helps improve the labor competencies of new rural sages, further stimulating their enthusiasm for engaging in hands-on labor. It strengthens their sense of fulfillment and happiness in participating in rural revitalization, thereby promoting their free and well-rounded personal development through the integration of personal and societal values.

2.2. Leading New Trends of Labor in Rural Areas

Since ancient times, China's rural areas have nurtured an excellent cultural tradition of honoring labor. Carrying forward this outstanding rural culture and guiding a new ethos of labor in the countryside are integral to the revitalization of rural culture. Labor education for new rural sages serves as a key measure in leading this new labor ethos. Firstly, labor education for new rural sages is an important means to consolidate and expand the foundation for fostering a new rural labor ethos. For a long time, due to the imbalanced development between urban and rural areas, the large-scale outflow of rural labor has weakened the foundation for forming a positive labor ethos in the countryside. Labor education for new rural sages can promote their own development, showcase their exemplary deeds and positive image, and effectively inspire other groups. This will attract more talents to return to their hometowns to start businesses and pursue careers, thereby broadening the foundation for cultivating a new rural labor ethos. Secondly, labor education for new rural sages is an effective way to shape a new rural ethos that "respects, praises, engages in, and cherishes labor." As virtuous individuals in rural society, new rural sages serve as distinct role models in both character and achievements. Labor education for new rural sages can fully leverage their exemplary influence, guiding villagers to actively participate in rural construction and thereby fostering the formation of a new rural ethos that "respects, praises, engages in, and cherishes labor."

2.3. Empowering Rural Governance and Development

Rural governance and development are two critical dimensions of rural progress and must be effectively advanced as integral components of rural revitalization. Labor education for new rural sages serves as a vital engine empowering both rural governance and development. First, labor education for new rural sages contributes to enhancing the level of rural governance. Since the implementation of the grassroots self-governance system in China, the main actors in rural governance have long been limited to village

Party branches, village committees, and villagers, resulting in insufficient dynamism. As a new organic force in rural society, new rural sages, with their noble character and foresight, can infuse renewed vitality into rural governance. By cultivating a labor-oriented value system among new rural sages, labor education encourages their active participation in the governance of major rural affairs, thereby improving the quality of rural governance. Second, labor education for new rural sages helps strengthen the effectiveness of rural development. Various types of new rural sages, particularly entrepreneurial ones who have returned to their hometowns to start businesses, play a significant role in driving rural economic growth and promoting common prosperity. Labor education for new rural sages enhances their recognition of the value of labor and self-worth, boosts their proactive engagement in rural development, and motivates them to actively participate in rural construction. This, in turn, encourages villagers to pursue shared prosperity and amplifies the role of new rural sages in areas such as rural industrial development, cultural advancement, and talent revitalization, thereby continuously enhancing the outcomes of rural development.

3. Practical Challenges in Labor Education for New Rural Sages

3.1. Outdated Perceptions

Currently, the labor education for new rural sages faces multiple issues at the conceptual level. Firstly, there is a tendency toward "instrumental rationality" in society. Driven by the pursuit of short-term economic benefits, some grassroots organizations and cadres have a superficial understanding of labor education for new rural sages, viewing it merely as an accessory tool for attracting investment and developing industries. This overlooks its important role in shaping the values of new rural sages, stimulating their internal drive, and promoting their comprehensive development. Such utilitarian perceptions, which prioritize the economy over education and outcomes over process, result in insufficient investment and support for labor education for new rural sages. Secondly, new rural sages themselves exhibit deviations in role perception. Some new rural sages, especially those who have achieved success and returned to their hometowns, position themselves as "investors" or "managers" in rural areas. They believe that labor education is intended for students or ordinary villagers, not for themselves, and thus show little willingness to participate. Their understanding of labor education is narrow, equating it solely with labor skills training, and they fail to recognize its value in enhancing comprehensive qualities and strengthening rural identity. Thirdly, there are cognitive limitations at the implementation level. Labor education is simplistically equated with general labor skills training or policy advocacy, with excessive emphasis on labor education dominated by physical labor. This neglects comprehensive labor education, leading to a one-sided approach to educational goals and fragmented educational content.

3.2. Obsolete Content and Methods

Content and methods are two critical components of the implementation system for labor education for new rural sages. Currently, labor education for new rural sages faces prominent issues such as homogenized content, monotonous methods, and insufficient application of technology [4]. First, content is homogenized and lacks appeal. There is a lack of vivid, engaging, and distinctive content, resulting in a "one-size-fits-all" phenomenon. The content is often dull, obscure, and lacks narrative appeal, making it difficult to engage new rural sages and foster emotional identification with labor education. For example, focusing solely on theory without practice deviates from the true goal of labor education. Second, methods are monotonous and lack attractiveness. The approach remains predominantly one-way indoctrination, typically disseminating policy principles and labor theories to new rural sages through meetings or lectures. There is a lack of interactive dialogue, practical labor activities, and other engaging elements,

leading to weak interest, insufficient attention, and low participation among new rural sages. Third, there is insufficient application of technology, resulting in a lack of contemporary relevance. Labor education for new rural sages has not been deeply integrated with emerging technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence. Research and application of digital and intelligent innovative platforms are inadequate, leading to a lack of digital interaction and leaving labor education without technological support, making it difficult to meet the demands of contemporary development.

3.3. Absence of Effective Mechanisms

Labor education for new rural sages is a systematic project that requires interconnected, gradual, and progressive implementation. Institutional mechanisms serve as the "chain" linking the various components of labor education for new rural sages. Currently, labor education for new rural sages faces three major gaps in institutional mechanisms. First, there is a lack of collaborative and coordinated mechanisms. Responsibilities among different stakeholders are ambiguously defined, and there is a lack of unified coordination and insufficient cooperation and interaction. Resources are overly fragmented, making it difficult to form synergies and resulting in inefficiency. The educational process suffers from "fragmentation," lacking systematic and coherent progression. Scenarios are outdated and isolated, with insufficient effective connections. Second, resource coordination mechanisms are absent. Labor education for new rural sages requires support in the form of funding, policies, platforms, and teaching resources. However, due to differences in economic levels and policy priorities, some regions lack the necessary funding and policy investments. Some areas are also deficient in cultural resources, lacking local examples of virtuous rural figures, making it difficult to adapt labor education for new rural sages to local contexts. For instance, disparities in economic levels and cultural resources among different regions lead to uneven resource allocation for labor education for new rural sages. Third, evaluation and optimization mechanisms are lacking. Since the effectiveness of labor education for new rural sages is difficult to assess in explicit ways, evaluation mechanisms are underdeveloped, preventing the formation of a virtuous cycle of "implementation-evaluation-optimization." This hinders continuous improvement and, in the long run, constrains the enhancement of the quality of labor education for new rural sages. For example, some regions have not yet established a comprehensive evaluation index system for the effectiveness of labor education for new rural sages, leading to delayed feedback and making it difficult to improve educational strategies in a timely manner based on actual conditions. This affects the sustainability and effectiveness of educational efforts.

4. Countermeasures for Labor Education for New Rural Sages

4.1. Reshaping Perceptions

Perceptions guide actions. To address the practical challenges in labor education for new rural sages, the first step is to transform outdated perceptions and establish scientific perspectives. First, at the societal level, it is essential to resolutely reject erroneous notions such as "labor is useless" and "labor education is useless," and to deeply recognize the profound significance of labor education for the personal development of new rural sages, the construction of rural civilization, and the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas. Through media campaigns and recognition of exemplary models, efforts should be made to widely promote the positive social ethos that "labor is the most glorious, noble, great, and beautiful," fostering a societal atmosphere that respects labor, values skills, and cares for new rural sages. Second, at the individual level, it is necessary to shift the instrumental and utilitarian perceptions of labor education among new rural sages. Through theoretical education and value guidance, new rural sages should be helped to scientifically understand and accurately recognize the importance of labor for their comprehensive development and the unity of personal and social values, thereby stimulating their

internal motivation to participate in labor education. Finally, at the implementation level, it is crucial to thoroughly address tendencies such as "prioritizing skills over literacy" and "prioritizing form over substance." The concept of cultivating talent through "the integration of five domains of education" should be upheld, systematically integrating and unifying the cultivation of labor values, labor spirit, and labor skills. Following the principles of labor education, efforts should be made to cultivate new rural sages into "new-quality laborers" through labor education [5].

4.2. Optimizing Content and Methods

Innovating in content and form is an inevitable choice for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of labor education for new rural sages. First, it is essential to develop vibrant content that strengthens its inspirational impact. By "adopting the Marxist perspective on labor as the theoretical foundation", we should fully leverage rich and dynamic spiritual, cultural, and ideological resources-particularly labor-related ideas from China's excellent traditional culture, the labor theories of classical Marxist writers, the spirit of labor in the new era, and the labor stories of rural sages-to enhance the emotional resonance of labor education. Second, diverse forms should be explored to increase its appeal. Adopting interactive approaches, new rural sages should be guided to strengthen self-identity and achieve self-education through personal narratives, thereby shifting from being "spectators" to becoming "protagonists." Emphasizing the integration of explicit and implicit education, creative activities such as labor culture festivals, labor workshops, and salon gatherings should be organized to fully engage new rural sages and heighten their recognition of and interest in labor education. Third, digital and intelligent technologies should be utilized to enhance its contemporary relevance. By deeply applying emerging technologies such as cloud computing, big data, blockchain, and artificial intelligence, a matrix of digital and intelligent empowerment can be established to continually modernize labor education for new rural sages. For example, technologies like AR, VR, and MR can be employed to create virtual-physical blended labor scenarios, immersing new rural sages in authentic environments where they can experience labor processes firsthand, recognize the value of labor, and reinforce their sense of identity and responsibility.

4.3. Establishing Effective Mechanisms

Systematic and scientific mechanisms serve as crucial support for the effective advancement of labor education for new rural sages. To ensure such education, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive chain of mechanisms, thereby weaving a robust framework for long-term sustainability. First, we must strengthen the collaborative linkage mechanism. Labor education is a strategic measure for promoting rural revitalization [6]. Labor education for new rural sages requires coordinated efforts among all elements to pool powerful synergies. Therefore, it is essential to improve the collaborative linkage mechanism, promote the coordination of multiple elements such as stakeholders, processes, methods, and settings, leverage combined effects, and tangibly enhance educational outcomes. Second, we should establish a resource coordination mechanism. On the one hand, various available resources should be integrated and channeled into labor education for new rural sages to maximize resource efficiency. On the other hand, a platform for co-creation, co-development, and sharing of resources should be built to facilitate interregional resource coordination and flow, further narrow disparities in resource allocation, and promote balanced development of labor education for new rural sages across different regions. For instance, regions can leverage their unique endowments to develop shared networks for labor education resources, enabling complementary advantages. Finally, we need to improve the evaluation and optimization mechanism. By selecting scientifically accurate evaluation indicators and methods, evidence-based assessments of the entire process of labor education for new rural sages

should be conducted, leading to targeted improvement plans that foster continuous optimization and upgrading of the education system. Simultaneously, an incentive mechanism should be refined to appropriately honor and materially reward outstanding new rural sages, thereby boosting their enthusiasm and initiative. For example, relevant authorities may recognize exemplary new rural sages in labor education by conferring honorary titles such as "Star Laborer" or "Ten Outstanding Rural Sages," thereby enhancing their sense of honor and mission.

5. Conclusion

This article systematically examines the significant role, practical challenges, and corresponding strategies of labor education for the new rural sages. The study finds that labor education for this group plays an important role in promoting their comprehensive development, leading new trends of labor in rural areas, and empowering rural governance and development. However, it currently faces challenges such as outdated perceptions, obsolete content and methods, and insufficient effective mechanisms. The main contribution of this article lies in clarifying the multiple values of labor education for the new rural sages and proposing systematic strategies to reshape perceptions, optimize content and methods, and establish effective mechanisms. Nevertheless, this article has certain limitations, including a relative lack of empirical case studies and insufficient exploration of the differentiated educational needs among various types of new rural sages. Future research could further validate and refine the findings through field investigations.

Funding: This article is supported by "the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities" (Project No.2025-MKS-B1-03).

References

1. T. Tian, and H. Yan, "New Rural Community Governance: Analysis Framework and Comparative Case Study," *Local Administration Journal*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 239-254, 2022.
2. C. H. Dobinson, "Comenius and Contemporary Education," 1970.
3. J. Zhang, and J. Liu, "The Practical Path of Labor View in the New Era to Promote the Innovation of Labor and Education Curriculum," In 2021 9th International Conference on Information and Education Technology (ICIET), March, 2021, pp. 307-310. doi: 10.1109/iciet51873.2021.9419578
4. L. Wang, "On the Practical Path of College Labor Education in the New Period," 2021.
5. C. H. E. N. Renxing, "Labor Employment Policy Empowering the Development of New Quality Productive Forces: Logical Mechanism and Practical Pathways," *Journal of Jishou University (Social Sciences Edition)*, vol. 46, no. 1, p. 49, 2025.
6. S. Liu, and H. Ou, "Research on Labor Education in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization," . doi: 10.62517/jlsa.202407105

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of the publisher and/or the editor(s). The publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.