

# Economics and Labor Education Integration: A New Perspective on Theoretical Courses in College Students' Labor Education

Yu Yu

Shandong University of Science and Technology, Jinan 250031, China

---

**Abstract:** In the context of the new era, the "Labor Education for College Students" course, as a core vehicle for cultivating students' labor literacy and shaping correct values toward labor, urgently needs to break through the limitations of traditional teaching frameworks. This paper explores the necessity and feasibility of integrating economics with labor education from an economic perspective. Focusing on incorporating economic knowledge into the "Labor Education for College Students" course for economics and management majors in higher education, it proposes specific integration pathways and supporting measures through three dimensions: curriculum content restructuring, innovative teaching methods, and improved evaluation systems. The aim is to provide new ideas and references for enhancing the scientific rigor, practicality, and contemporary relevance of this course.

**Keywords:** Labor Education for College Students, Economics, Curriculum Integration, Values Toward Labor, Teaching Innovation.

---

## 1. Introduction

The "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education in the New Era" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in 2020 clearly states that labor education is an important component of the socialist education system with Chinese characteristics, and it is necessary to build an education system that comprehensively cultivates moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor qualities.[1] The "Labor Education for College Students" course, as a key link in implementing labor education in higher education institutions, bears the important mission of guiding college students to understand the essence of labor, recognize its value, and establish correct labor concepts. Currently, the "Labor Education for College Students" courses in universities mostly focus on introducing labor skills and promoting the spirit of labor. When teaching students majoring in economics and management, integrating the course content with economics and adding in-depth interpretations of the economic laws behind labor, market logic, and value creation mechanisms can help college students understand the important role of labor in social and economic development from a macro perspective, effectively combining labor education with their career planning and economic life.

As a discipline that studies resource allocation, value creation, and economic operation principles, economics inherently connects with labor education. Labor remains a central element in economic research. From Adam Smith's "Labor Theory of Value"[2] in classical economics to modern theories like "Human Capital Theory" and "Labor Economics"[3], these frameworks provide robust theoretical support and analytical tools for labor education. Integrating economic knowledge into the "Labor Education for College Students" course not only enhances the curriculum's depth and breadth, helping students re-examine the value and significance of labor through an economic lens, but also

improves its practical relevance. This approach cultivates students' ability to apply economic thinking to solve real-world labor challenges, laying a solid foundation for their future engagement in economic activities and social integration.

## 2. The Necessity of Integrating Economics with the Theoretical Course of Labor Education for College Students

### 2.1. Meet the Practical Needs of Cultivating Labor Literacy of College Students in the New Era

The new era imposes higher demands on college students' labor literacy, requiring not only basic labor skills and work ethic but also economic thinking and market awareness. Under the market economy system, labor is no longer merely physical exertion but an economic activity closely tied to market demand, resource allocation, and value realization. For instance, when participating in part-time jobs, entrepreneurial practices, or volunteer services, students need to understand economic principles such as labor market supply-demand dynamics, mechanisms determining labor compensation, and cost-benefit analysis methods to make rational decisions and maximize labor value. Integrating economics into the theoretical course "Labor Education for College Students" helps them acquire essential economic knowledge and skills, enhancing the comprehensiveness and practicality of their labor literacy, thereby better adapting to the demands of socioeconomic development.

### 2.2. Enrich the Content System of the Theoretical Course "Labor Education for College Students"

The course "Labor Education for College Students" primarily focuses on labor history, labor spirit, and labor

regulations. By incorporating in-depth exploration of labor's economic attributes, it can stimulate students' learning interest.[4] Economics encompasses rich theoretical achievements such as labor value theory, human capital theory, division of labor, and market equilibrium theory, which provide new interpretive perspectives for labor education. For instance, through "labor value theory," students can understand that labor is the source of value creation and the roles of different forms of labor (physical, mental, and innovative) in value creation. Through "human capital theory," students are guided to recognize the importance of investments in education, training, and health for enhancing labor capacity and increasing labor income, which aligns closely with Schultz's view that "health and knowledge skills are core elements of human capital". Through "division of labor," students can grasp how labor division improves efficiency and promotes social productivity development. Integrating these economic theories into the course content significantly enriches the knowledge system of "Labor Education for College Students," making the curriculum more profound and comprehensive.

### **2.3. How to Improve the Integration of Theoretical Courses and Reality in "Labor Education for College Students"**

When course content becomes disconnected from college students' real-life experiences and career development needs, it can lead to low learning motivation and diminished educational outcomes.[5] Economics is a discipline deeply intertwined with daily life, where economic realities like labor market trends, employment policy changes, compensation systems, and innovation ecosystems are hot topics of interest for students. Integrating economics into the "Labor Education for College Students" curriculum bridges abstract theories with practical economic issues. By analyzing real-world labor cases - such as "protecting workers' rights in flexible employment," "AI's impact on labor markets," and "cost-benefit analysis of student entrepreneurship" - students gain tangible insights into the practical value of labor education. This approach enhances the course's appeal, improves its effectiveness, and ultimately boosts educational impact.

## **3. Existing Problems of Integrating Economics into the Course of Labor Education for College Students**

### **3.1. The Curriculum Content Lacks Systematic Integration from the Perspective of Economics**

The theoretical course "Labor Education for College Students" currently incorporates limited economic knowledge (such as compensation clauses in labor laws and market demand analysis in career guidance), though these elements remain fragmented. Integrating core economic theories - including labor value theory, human capital theory, and labor market theory - into the curriculum's objectives, content, and methodologies could significantly enhance its effectiveness. For instance, when explaining "labor value," educators should emphasize not only the social and spiritual dimensions but also its economic and market values. This approach helps students grasp labor's essence through value creation and resource allocation perspectives.

### **3.2. Teaching Methods are Difficult to Meet the Teaching Needs of Economic Knowledge**

The theoretical course "Labor Education for College Students" primarily employs lecture-based instruction, case analysis, and video viewing. However, given the inherently logical, theoretical, and abstract nature of economics, more interactive, thought-provoking, and practical teaching methods - such as group discussions, case simulations, and data analysis - are essential to help students better understand and master the subject. To address the teaching requirements of economics, the course could adopt the following interactive practices: organizing group debates on topics like "Labor Value and Market Allocation" to deepen understanding through idea exchange; designing scenarios such as "Corporate Cost Control" or "Labor Market Supply and Demand" where students role-play decision-makers to apply abstract theories; or using real-world data like employment rates and salary levels to guide students in analyzing labor market trends with statistical tools, thereby cultivating quantitative thinking. These "learning by doing" approaches stimulate initiative, helping students grasp the core logic of economics through concrete scenarios.

### **3.3. The Evaluation System Fails to Reflect the Assessment Requirements of Economic Literacy**

The course evaluation system serves as a crucial mechanism for guiding teaching direction and assessing instructional effectiveness. Currently, the assessment framework for the theoretical course "Labor Education for College Students" primarily focuses on knowledge-based evaluations (such as final exams and course papers) and process evaluations (including classroom participation and assignment completion). The assessment content mainly concentrates on traditional labor education knowledge (e.g., the essence of labor spirit, provisions of labor laws, key aspects of labor skills, etc.). However, incorporating students' economic literacy (such as their ability to analyze labor issues using economic thinking, understanding labor-related economic phenomena, and cost-benefit awareness in labor decision-making) into the evaluation scope could be beneficial. For economics and management majors, the assessment system could include modules like "Labor Economic Phenomenon Analysis," requiring students to apply economic tools such as supply-demand theory and opportunity cost to examine real-world issues like "the impact of gig economy on labor rights," thereby assessing their application of economic thinking. Alternatively, tasks such as "Labor Decision Simulation" could be designed - such as simulating corporate labor cost optimization or personal career choices - to evaluate students' economic decision-making awareness through cost-benefit analysis.

## **4. The Path of Integrating Economics with the Theoretical Course of Labor Education for College Students**

### **4.1. Curriculum Restructuring: Building an Integrated 'Labor + Economy' Content Framework**

Define the integration objective: With the core goal of

cultivating 'labor literacy + economic thinking' in business and management students, we will closely integrate economic knowledge with the core objectives of labor education (such as establishing correct work values, enhancing labor capabilities, and strengthening labor spirit). This ensures that the integrated content not only aligns with the disciplinary logic of economics but also serves the educational needs of labor education.

**Divide content modules:** The course content is divided into four core modules - "Labor Value and Economic Laws," "Labor Market and Career Guidance," "Labor Practice and Economic Decision-Making," and "Labor Rights and Economic Security," each incorporating relevant economic knowledge. For example, the "Labor Value and Economic Laws" module integrates theories such as the labor value theory, law of value, and marginal utility theory to help students understand the multifaceted nature of labor value. The "Labor Market and Career Guidance" module incorporates theories like labor market supply and demand, human capital investment, and employment policy analysis to guide students in scientifically planning their career development. The "Labor Practice and Economic Decision-Making" module includes knowledge on cost-benefit analysis, risk assessment, and resource allocation to enhance students' decision-making abilities in practical labor scenarios. The "Labor Rights and Economic Security" module integrates theories such as labor remuneration, social security systems, and labor law economics to strengthen students' awareness of labor rights protection.

**Case Study Selection:** For each content module, we curate representative labor economics cases such as "Huawei's Compensation Incentive Mechanism and Labor Efficiency Enhancement", "Live Streaming Agricultural Products on Pinduoduo Platform and Farmers' Labor Value Realization", and "Cost-Benefit Analysis of University Students' Shared Bike Startup Project". Through case-based teaching, we transform abstract theoretical knowledge into concrete real-world problems, enhancing the practicality and appeal of course content.

## **4.2. Innovative Teaching Methodology: Implementing an Interdisciplinary 'Theory + Practice' Approach**

**Case-based Teaching Method:** By selecting representative labor economics cases from domestic and international sources, this approach organizes group discussions and analyses for college students, guiding them to interpret labor-related phenomena and issues through economic theories. For instance, when explaining "labor market discrimination," educators can introduce the case of "gender pay gap in employment" to help students analyze the economic causes, impacts, and solutions of such discrimination, thereby cultivating their ability to apply economic thinking to analyze real-world problems.

**Simulation-Based Learning:** By creating simulated labor economy scenarios, this approach engages college students in hands-on practice. For example, the "Labor Market Recruitment Simulation" activity pairs students into employer-employee roles, guiding them through recruitment processes, interviews, and salary negotiations to understand supply-demand dynamics and compensation mechanisms. Another example is the "Entrepreneurship Project Planning Simulation," where students work in teams to design startup ventures, conduct market research, perform cost-benefit

analyses, and forecast returns - all while developing practical economic decision-making skills through real-world simulations.

**Data-Driven Exercises:** Introduce labor economics-related statistics (such as labor market data from the National Bureau of Statistics and employment quality reports from universities) to guide college students in using data analysis tools like Excel and SPSS. For example, analyze the relationship between employment rates, salary levels, and market demand across different majors. This approach enables students to intuitively perceive the dynamic changes in the labor market through data, thereby enhancing the scientific rigor and objectivity of the course.

**Interdisciplinary Lectures and Forums:** We invite experts in economics, HR professionals, labor law practitioners, and others to deliver interdisciplinary lectures and forums. These sessions will explore themes such as "Development Trends of the Labor Market in the New Era," "Challenges and Opportunities of AI in Employment," and "Economic and Legal Perspectives on Protecting College Students' Labor Rights." The event aims to broaden students' academic horizons and foster interdisciplinary knowledge integration.

## **4.3. Refining the Evaluation System: Establishing a Comprehensive Assessment Framework of 'Knowledge + Skills + Competencies'**

**Optimize assessment content:** Incorporate economic literacy into the scope of course assessments. The assessment content should not only include traditional labor education knowledge but also economic theory knowledge (such as the labor value theory and labor market theory), economic thinking ability (such as the ability to analyze labor issues using economic theories), and labor economic practice ability (such as cost-benefit analysis and data processing skills). For example, add case analysis questions in exams, requiring college students to apply economic theories to analyze real-world labor issues. In course papers, encourage students to choose labor economic-related topics, such as "The efficiency and fairness disputes of the economic compensation system under the Labor Contract Law" and "Skill upgrading of China's manufacturing workers under the restructuring of global value chains."

**Diversified Evaluation Framework:** This approach integrates process and summative assessments, quantitative and qualitative evaluations, as well as teacher and peer assessments. Process evaluations encompass classroom participation, simulation project outcomes, data analysis reports, and group project planning. Summative assessments include final exams, course papers, and practical reports. Additionally, a peer evaluation mechanism is implemented, where students assess each other's engagement, contributions, and application of economic knowledge during group activities, thereby enhancing the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the evaluation system.

**Enhancing Evaluation Feedback:** Establish and improve evaluation feedback mechanisms to promptly communicate assessment results to both students and faculty. For undergraduates, this helps them identify strengths and weaknesses in economic knowledge acquisition and labor competency development, clarifying their future learning directions. For educators, it provides actionable insights for adjusting teaching content and refining instructional methods, continuously optimizing the integration of economics and

labor education.

## 5. Conclusion and Perspectives

The integration of economics with the theoretical course "Labor Education for College Students" is particularly suitable for economics and management majors in higher education. For students from other disciplines, this approach also helps them better adapt to the evolving demands of socioeconomic development. By restructuring the integrated curriculum framework of "labor + economics", innovating the interdisciplinary teaching model of "theory + practice", and establishing a comprehensive evaluation mechanism that combines "knowledge + skills + literacy", the course expands its theoretical depth and practical breadth, thereby enhancing its educational effectiveness.

In the future, as socioeconomic development progresses and educational reforms deepen, the integration of economics and labor education will face new opportunities and challenges. Emerging economic forms such as the digital economy, platform economy, and artificial intelligence have profoundly impacted labor markets, work patterns, and labor value, while also providing fresh content and directions for the convergence of economics and labor education. Therefore, universities must continuously monitor socio-economic trends, update curriculum content and teaching methods, strengthen interdisciplinary research and collaboration, and

promote deeper integration between economics and the "Labor Education for College Students" course. This will enable greater contributions to cultivating well-rounded socialist builders and successors who develop holistically in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor aspects.

## References

- [1] The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council. Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education in the New Era [Z]. 2020.
- [2] Smith, A. An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations [M]. Guo Dali, Wang Yanan, trans. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2014: 25-38.
- [3] Schultz, T. W. Investment in Human Capital: The Role of Education and Research [M]. Jiang Bin, Zhang Heng, trans. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2001: 8.
- [4] Weng Weibin, Zhang Liang. A Value Examination and Practical Path of Labor Education in the New Era [J]. Journal of Southwest University (Social Sciences Edition), 2025 (4): 112-120.
- [5] Zhuang Jiqiao. A Study on Labor Education of College Students in the New Era: An Empirical Analysis Based on Post-00s College Students [M]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2024: 45-62.