

Exploring the Problems and Countermeasures of Labour Education in Promoting the Integration of Hearing-Impaired and Ordinary Children

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Abstract

With the policy advancement of labour education and general and special integrated education, how to effectively promote the social integration and multidimensional growth of children with hearing impairment has become a focus of attention in the field of education. Based on the theory of social ecology, this study deeply analyzes the current situation and challenges of integrated education for children with hearing impairment, and proposes an innovative path to promote integrated education for children with hearing impairment and ordinary children through fun labour. It is found that children with hearing impairment face difficulties in adaptation and negative social evaluation in integrated education, while labour education can effectively promote their socialisation process. For this reason, this study constructs a practice system of integrated education with fun labour as the core, and proposes targeted solution strategies from the three dimensions of school, family and society. It provides a full range of support and protection for integrated education for children with hearing impairment, as well as experience and models that can be learnt from, with the aim of promoting the healthy development of integrated education and contributing to the building of a harmonious society.

Keywords

Labour Education, Hearing Impaired Children, Integrated Education, Problems and Countermeasures

1. Feasibility Analysis of Labour Education for Integrated Education

This study employs a narrative literature review method guided by social ecology

theory, systematically examining relevant research findings and practice cases. It aims to construct a theoretical and practical framework for promoting the integration of hearing-impaired and ordinary children through labour education. Major databases such as CNKI, Web of Science, and ERIC were searched for literature on keywords like “labour education”, “hearing-impaired children”, and the literature was analysed for connections and differences to extract key elements and provide theoretical and practical guidance for the study.

With the promulgation and implementation of the Compulsory Education Labour Curriculum (2022) and the continued promotion of the Outline of the Plan for the Construction of a Stronger Education State (2024-2035), labour education and general and special integrated education have become an important direction in China’s basic education reform.

Labour education is a planned process that cultivates students’ labour literacy and promotes overall development (Tan, 2019). Fun labour is an innovative form of labour education that combines labour tasks with enjoyable activities, aiming to promote interaction and cooperation between hearing-impaired and ordinary children, thereby advancing their social development (Li, 2023; Yuan, 2021).

Labour education has an important value in integrated education and can effectively contribute to the socialisation process of children, and the degree of integration of hearing-impaired children into the general population is often closely related to the degree of socialisation of both.

A review of the literature shows that a large number of scholars have put forward feasible opinions on this issue. Based on the perspective of social development, Yuan (2021) takes self, peer relationship and friendship, morality, pro-social behaviour, aggression, gender role behaviour and other aspects as the manifestations of social development of young children, and argues the important value of labour education for children’s social development and the related mechanism through investigation and research. According to Ding & Zhou (2023), labour education can positively affect children’s socio-emotional competence, thus enhancing children’s socio-emotional competence. And the frequency of educational labour has a significant positive effect on the development of children’s socio-emotional competence. Shah and other scholars (2019) found after their study that appropriate labour education can promote children’s social development and help them form good behavioural patterns.

The current literature in the field of “labour education” and “labour activities” mainly focuses on the dimensions of project-based labour curriculum development, cooperative labour curriculum and the social value of labour activities. The practical nature of project-based learning has also broadened the channels for the development of labour education, and has provided the possibility of learning styles for the penetration of labour education into other disciplines (Yang, 2021a). Among them, Li (2023), based on the cultivation goal of labour curriculum under the concept of educational equity, put forward the organization principle of project-based labour curriculum, and proposed the teaching implementation process,

teaching strategy and evaluation system for specific labour projects under the types of daily life labour, service labour and creative labour. Its research results were verified by experiments and showed outstanding benefits at the levels of early childhood development, teacher growth and home support. Based on the practice of primary school labour curriculum, Xu (2023) found that the independent-inquiry-cooperative primary school labour curriculum has an immeasurable value in nurturing people, and that in the process of cooperative inquiry, students are able to think and research deeply on their own, which enables them to exercise their brains fully and get enough self-affirmation. Wang (2020) found that primary and secondary school labour education courses can encourage students to change their thinking and establish scientific values in the process of experiencing labour, and on the other hand, it can also increase the attention of parents and the community to labour education, thus promoting the formation of civilized culture in the new era.

Based on the above, this study concludes that labour education plays an important role in the reform of basic education, and the positive impact of labour education on children's socialisation has been fully demonstrated by many scholars' studies on labour education, which in turn can be seen to play a key role in facilitating the integration of hearing-impaired children and ordinary children in integrated education. In addition, empirical cases of project-based teaching and labour education have further demonstrated its possibilities in practice. The feasibility of labour education in promoting inclusive education is thus high.

2. Analysis of the Problems of Labour Education for the Integration of Hearing-Impaired and Ordinary Children

Nowadays, although labour education has gained importance at the policy level, in practice it still faces the real dilemmas of ambiguous content of curriculum implementation, lack of evaluation system, insufficient teacher specialisation, etc., and schools and parents generally pay insufficient attention to it under the influence of examination-oriented thinking. At the same time, although integrated education has covered a large number of students with disabilities in the form of classroom education, the phenomenon of "returning" to classroom education is becoming more and more prominent (Deng & Zhao, 2019). Specific studies on integrated education and labour education have found that the difficulties in the development of integrated education for hearing-impaired children lie not only in the low social capacity of hearing-impaired children themselves, but also in the heavy burden brought by the social environment in which the hearing-impaired children live, and the two are closely related.

2.1. Difficulties with Integrated Education Itself

Inclusive education is an international educational trend that emerged in the 1990s. In China, the main goal of the current development of inclusive education is to make special education and general education merge into one system, provid-

ing a normalised rather than segregated environment for special needs students. Currently, relevant literature on the development of “integrated education” mainly focuses on the main subjects of universal and special teachers (Wang et al., 2018), universal and special parents (Su et al., 2014), and universal and special students (Ju, 2018), as well as on the social support system (Zheng & Xu, 2023; Deng & Zhao, 2019) and evaluation standards (Deng & Zhao, 2019), and the social support system (Zheng & Xu, 2023; Deng & Zhao, 2019) and evaluation criteria (Wang et al., 2024) dimensions.

In terms of integrated education, it is generally recognised in China that children with hearing and visual impairments are the targets of integrated education with earlier and better development (Wan, 2014). Hearing-impaired children account for a high proportion of special children (Sun et al., 2008), and due to the physical characteristics, emotional state, social concerns and other factors of hearing-impaired children, the number of existing studies with hearing-impaired children as the object of research is relatively large and has a certain research basis.

Existing research shows that there are currently outstanding problems in integrated education for children with hearing impairment, as follows:

Firstly, difficulties in adapting to integrated education for children with hearing impairments.

In China, due to the fact that the support system of integrated education for hearing impaired students is still not sound, and the quality of integrated education for hearing impaired students is unsatisfactory (Zheng & Xu, 2023), the proportion of hearing impaired students who are able to enter ordinary kindergartens or ordinary primary schools is relatively small in comparison with the large base of hearing impaired children, and some of the hearing impaired children who enter ordinary primary schools have the problem of not being able to adapt to the teaching environment of ordinary primary schools, and even the phenomenon of returning to ordinary primary schools. The phenomenon of return has even occurred.

In response to this reality, it is often recognised internationally that the key to the adaptation of students with hearing impairment to ordinary school life and their academic success lies in the development of communication skills. However, some studies have found that in the current practice of inclusive education, the loss of hearing brings about a lack of audible language, while the stigmatisation of sign language leads to the deprivation of opportunities for the natural acquisition of visual language, both of which together contribute to the difficulty of students with hearing impairment in mastering a natural language, in addition to the lack of communication skills and insufficient support from the school, which bring about barriers to their communication on campus (Zhang, 2024). On the basis of this theory, current domestic researcher Li Qun proposes sign language bilingual inclusive education as a way to realise the two-way development of sign language and spoken language for children with hearing impairment, to enhance the social communication ability of children with hearing impairment, and to solve the potential problem of low adaptability of children with hearing impairment in ordi-

nary schools (Li et al., 2023).

Secondly, the social evaluation of integrated education for children with hearing impairment is negative.

As far as their social evaluation is concerned, teachers, parents of children in general and children in general themselves mostly have a negative attitude towards the development of integrated education. Of the primary school teachers who placed autistic children in classrooms, 86.9 per cent believed that classroom education was not the best option for the educational placement of autistic children, and the majority of teachers generally favoured the construction of separate schools for autistic children, with a lack of relevant knowledge and educational capacity among the teachers being the greatest difficulty in carrying out classroom education. Most parents of ordinary children believe that under the system of integrated education, ordinary children will be adversely affected by children with hearing impairment, and therefore have a rejectionist attitude (Zheng & Xu, 2023), and most parents of children with hearing impairment do not have an optimistic attitude of acceptance, with varying degrees of cognitive biases and misunderstandings, and they believe that ordinary teachers lack the experience and qualifications of integrated education, and they have no confidence in their abilities, thus expressing doubts about the effectiveness and quality of integrated education. They are sceptical about the effectiveness and quality of integrated education, and have a conservative attitude towards the recruitment of children with special needs in their own classrooms (Zhao & Pan, 2023). In addition, parents of hearing impaired children have a low identification with integrated schools and are not inclined to send their children to study in integrated schools. Meanwhile, Ju Sihua used CATCH to measure that students in ordinary primary schools had neutral acceptance attitudes towards children with special needs in terms of outward attitudes, whereas implicit attitudes were more negative, and that negative implicit attitudes may more accurately reflect the actual acceptance attitudes towards children with special needs among ordinary primary school students (Ju, 2018).

Research data show that current integrated education in China has made more prominent progress, but also faces difficulties such as communication barriers on campus (Zhang, 2024), the phenomenon of “return”, and negative evaluations of integrated education by teachers, parents and ordinary students (Zhao & Pan, 2023). Based on this reality, domestic researchers have proposed teaching strategies such as sign language bilingual inclusive education (Li et al., 2023) and game-based teaching (Yang, 2021b) to improve the language ability of children with hearing impairment, promote “collective activities” in the playground, and embed the teaching content into daily activities and transformation of activities to increase their participation in classroom teaching. By improving the language ability of hearing impaired children, promoting “group activities” in the playground, embedding teaching content into daily activities and transforming activities, the positive effects of increasing their participation in classroom teaching and their interpersonal interaction ability can be improved, so as to solve the problem of low adaptability of hearing impaired children in ordinary schools.

2.2. Limitations in the Development of Labour Education

Labour education is an educational activity that promotes the overall development of students by enhancing their labour quality (Tan, 2019), according to the study, labour education is currently included in the implementation of the curriculum as a part of the content of comprehensive practical activities, but in the process of implementation of its curricular status does not match the tasks it undertakes (Li & Sun, 2021), and there are a lot of problems in the process of practice, the specific The problems are as follows:

First, the implementation of labour education is rigid in form and one-sided in content.

For a long time, exam-oriented education has separated actual education from labour, and students lack knowledge of labour, their labour literacy has not been fully formed, their understanding of the value behind labour is limited, and their attitudes are still developing. Parents do not attach enough importance to the value of labour, and they are more inclined to cooperate with their children in completing the formal labour tasks, which makes the phenomenon of “posing labour” common, and labour education is only a formality (Su, 2024). The phenomenon of “posing for labour” is common, and labour education has become a mere formality (Su, 2024). In addition, the current labour education is more often equated with simple manual work and daily life work, and its content is homogeneous (Zhang & Cheng, 2023), making it a “formalised and spectator-like labour education” (Dai & Cao, 2024).

Second, unequal distribution of resources for labour education and lack of professional guidance.

At present, although most schools have opened labour education schools, the curriculum lacks systematic arrangements and professional guidance, resulting in a lack of professional labour education teachers, and highly qualified teachers are more often located in urban areas with a high level of economic development, while rural areas lack professional teachers as well as professional training equipment (Luo & Wang, 2024).

2.3. Genuine Implementation Requires the Combined Efforts of All Parties

Social ecology builds an integrated framework for ecosystem analysis, which is able to view ecosystems, social systems, and economic systems as an interconnected whole, thus revealing the interactions between the various factors. In the field of education, social ecology is able to link individual students and schools, among other factors, to construct a multilevel ecosystem dimensional framework (Van Riper et al., 2018). In educational practice, this is often expressed in the collaborative implementation of educational projects by various experts in the education sector. In addition, social ecology also emphasises the interactivity between individuals and the environment, and in education emphasises educators' attention to students' individual differences and the creation of supportive learning

environments (Huang & Ge, 2003). In summary, social ecology theory provides profound insights and practical guidance for educational practice, especially for observing the integrated education of children with hearing impairment, providing an integrative perspective that can be learnt from.

Social ecology (Human Ecology) directly translated as “human ecology”, by sociologists Robert Ezra Park and Ernest Watson Burgess in the field of biology first put forward, with the development of social ecology, its application in various fields of research is increasingly and prosperous, mainly focusing on its practical significance in the field of education, criticism and application in the political field, in the cultural field of application and development, interpretation of resource issues and so on. With the development of social ecology, its applied research in various fields has been increasing and prospering, focusing mainly on its practical significance in the field of education, its criticism and application in the field of politics, its application and development in the field of culture, and its explanation of the resource problem, among other things.

In the specific research process, the theory of social ecology can be utilised as both a dimensional framework for the construction of multi-level ecosystems (Che et al., 2007) and understood as an overall pathway for optimising combinations and achieving benefits. This provides an integrative perspective from which to view inclusive education for children with hearing impairment.

3. Response of Labour Education to Promote the Integration of Hearing-Impaired and Ordinary Children

The integration mechanism of labour education from the perspective of social ecology is essentially to achieve ecological balance through the restructuring of system elements. Schools need to break through the limitations of a single educational field, families should activate the energy of micro-interaction, and society should undertake the function of environmental shaping. Through the continuous exchange of material, information and energy, the three will eventually form a virtuous cycle of “individual ability development-environmental support adaptation-system synergistic evolution”. The three, through the continuous exchange of materials, information and energy, will eventually form a virtuous cycle of “individual ability development-environmental support and adaptation-systematic synergistic evolution”.

3.1. Schools: Fun with Labour, Teaching for Inclusion

First, schools need to pay more attention to special integration and strengthen their awareness of promoting special integration through fun labour. This study proposes and builds a shared labour education curriculum system with the potential purpose of universal and special integration, which integrates general education and special education needs, takes the universal and special two-way integration clubs as the carrier, designs a curriculum that combines fun, practice and integration, promotes communication and cooperation between the two types of

students through shared labour, sets up roles to enhance understanding, and encourages special students to show their special skills in the curriculum. At the same time, teacher training is being strengthened, particularly in the area of special education knowledge and skills, and a mechanism for cross-school teacher exchanges between special schools is being set up to guide teachers towards positive interventions in the area of special integration.

Secondly, schools need to reconstruct the framework of labour education with a systematic mindset, so as to achieve ecological complementarity through the optimization of curriculum structure and the synergy of teachers' roles. Firstly, the design of labour curriculum should follow the principle of "adaptive stratification", and develop multimodal labour tasks according to the perceptual characteristics of hearing-impaired children, for example, transforming abstract labour knowledge into visual operation processes, so as to promote the fairness of cognitive participation; secondly, establish a mechanism for the integration of ordinary and special education teachers. Secondly, a "mechanism for the integration of ordinary and special education teachers" has been established to promote in-depth collaboration between ordinary teachers and special education teachers in curriculum development and teaching implementation, forming a symbiotic relationship of two-way competence transfer, a model that draws on the theory of "ecological niche differentiation" in social ecology and enhances the overall effectiveness of the system through the complementary use of resources.

Thirdly, schools should build a multilevel labour education system based on a socio-ecological perspective and develop "labour plus" thematic integrated curricula. Through the three types of activity carriers, namely, life skills training, service labour and creative labour, a chain of labour tasks with complementary roles should be designed. At the same time, a "dual-teacher coordination" mechanism is established, and special education teachers are provided with sign language assistance and adaptive guidance in the labour courses. Through regular activities such as the display of labour fruits and the integration of labour week, the "labour cognition-emotional resonance-social recognition" system is constructed. Through regular activities such as labour achievement display and integration labour week, the progressive integration path of "labour cognition-emotional resonance-social recognition" is constructed. In addition, it is recommended that sign language communication and differentiated teaching strategies be incorporated into the professional development system of teachers, and the project-based labour curriculum implementation process proposed by Li (2023) can be referred to for improvement.

3.2. The Family: Parental Guidance and Articulation of Parties

First, family labour education should focus on role reconstruction and resource integration. On the one hand, the labour values of family members should be reshaped through parental training, and children with hearing impairment should be positioned as "contributors" rather than "recipients", so as to eliminate the ob-

struction of integration caused by stereotypical perceptions; on the other hand, a family labour alliance should be set up based on the community, so as to build a cross-family collaborative network. On the other hand, family labour alliance is established based on the community to build a cross-family collaboration network, such as organizing Puter families to participate in community ecological maintenance projects, so as to reconstruct the social relationship network through equal collaboration in labour practice. This strategy is in line with the social ecology concept of “proximate environment optimisation”, which promotes the generation of internal motivation for integration by enhancing the direct connection between microsystems.

Secondly, at the family level, it is necessary to build a “three-stage” labour support network. At the basic level, parents’ schools teach the concept of integrated labour education, and use case videos and integrated family pairing to resolve cognitive biases; at the practical level, they design a list of family labour tasks, including cooking and home beautification projects to be completed by children with special needs; and at the expansion level, they set up weekend labour workshops in the community, organizing families with special needs to work together to renovate old objects, perform community service and other themed labour. The extension level relies on the community to set up “weekend labour workshops”, organizing Puter families to jointly carry out themed labour such as renovating old things and community service. It is recommended that a digital platform be developed for “family labour observation logs” to record key development indicators such as the quality of children’s interactions and problem solving in collaborative labour.

3.3. Society: Ecological Empowerment, Systemic Support

First, efforts need to be made in both the institutional design and cultural shaping dimensions. At the institutional level, the Guidelines for Labour Education in Primary, Secondary and University Schools (for Trial Implementation) should be formulated, so as to ensure the accessibility of resources through rigid indicators; at the cultural level, the discourse on the value of labour should be reconstructed through the use of media narratives, with a focus on the dissemination of the advantageous abilities of hearing-impaired children in creative labour, for example, the unique contribution of visual and spatial thinking to handcrafts, art design and other areas, so that the traditional cognition of “compensating for deficiencies” and the social consensus of “differentiated empowerment” are reversed. In this way, the traditional perception of “compensation for impairment” can be reversed, and a social consensus formed on “empowerment through difference”.

Second, there is a need to promote the synergistic development of policy, resources and culture. The policy dimension should accelerate the introduction of special documents and set up labour experience zones for universal and special integration in public places; the resource dimension can integrate enterprises and farms to establish labour practice bases and form a labour education integration

circle, such as the official launch of the special education section of the National Intelligent Education Platform for Primary and Secondary Schools in December 2024, which effectively promotes the integration of online resources for special education; and the cultural dimension can reshape social cognition through image exhibitions, the National Youth Labour Skills and Intelligent Design Competition, etc. to reshape social cognition and enhance social acceptance of general and special integrated education.

Training general and special education teachers for collaborative implementation presents specific challenges. Firstly, significant divergence in educational philosophies and methodologies exists: general teachers typically prioritize systematic knowledge delivery, while special educators focus on individualized support and skill development, potentially leading to conflicting objectives during joint curriculum design. Secondly, mutual knowledge gaps are evident; general teachers often lack expertise in special needs pedagogy, particularly regarding hearing impairment, whereas special educators may possess limited experience in general curriculum design and classroom management, hindering effective co-planning. Finally, logistical barriers, including heavy workloads and the absence of dedicated coordination platforms, severely impede the consistent communication necessary for successful collaboration and synergistic outcomes.

This study proposes a novel strategy that uniquely positions fun-oriented labor education as the central mechanism for fostering social integration between hearing-impaired children and their non-disabled peers. It fundamentally departs from prior integration models, which predominantly relied on didactic instruction or limited interactions, by establishing a shared labor education curriculum explicitly integrating enjoyment, practicality, and inclusivity. Through structured activity design, including chains of labor tasks and a dual-teacher coordination mechanism, the strategy facilitates sustained peer interaction and provides specialized support. Crucially, it transcends the mere transmission of labor knowledge, emphasizing instead the cultivation of collaborative abilities and social skills within authentic practice contexts, thereby promoting more effective integration (Li, 2023).

Furthermore, this study guided by social ecology theory and using a narrative literature review, explores labour education's role in integrating hearing-impaired and ordinary children. It reveals the root causes of integration difficulties and negative social evaluation. A practice system of fun labour is proposed, along with strategies from school, family, and societal perspectives, offering support and reference models for inclusive education. While empirical evidence shows labour education enhances the socialisation of hearing-impaired children, existing research mostly relies on secondary data. The study is set against China's unique policy context, particularly the "Compulsory Education Labour Curriculum Standards (2022)" and the "Education Power-Building Plan (2024-2035)", limiting its generalisability to other policy environments. Future research should involve longitudinal studies across different policy settings to compare the socialisation outcomes of hearing-impaired children, refining the inclusive education model.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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