

Realistic Options for Strengthening Cultural Capital in Vocational Schools

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Abstract: Cultural capital is an important factor affecting students' academic achievement. Due to the difference between the cultural capital conveyed by the families of vocational school students in their early years and the families of students in ordinary schools, the phenomenon of cultural reproduction is caused, which requires vocational schools to strengthen the compensation of cultural capital to students. At present, the cultural capital construction of vocational schools in China suffers from the lack of culture in the school-based curriculum and important cultural activities, the obsolete and low utilization of school cultural goods, and the formality of the school reward system; it is necessary to promote the cultural capital construction of the school from the aspects of school construction, curriculum development, and students' parents, and then to improve the students' academic achievement.

1. Introduction

Numerous studies have shown that cultural capital has become an important influence on students' academic achievement, and those students from different classes and families often achieve different academic achievements due to differences in cultural capital; similarly, the cultural capital provided by the school is also an important factor in the achievement of students' high academic achievements. Vocational education, as an important part of China's education, is responsible for cultivating hundreds of millions of high-quality laborers, and is an important foundation for economic and social development. However, due to the differences in the delivery of innate cultural capital, students entering the vocational education system are more deficient in the possession of cultural capital than those in ordinary schools, so it is necessary to clarify the basis of the problem and put forward ideas for the construction of cultural capital and promote the improvement of academic achievement of students in vocational schools.

2. Theoretical foundations

2.1. Cultural capital

Cultural capital is a theoretical term coined by French cultural sociologist Bourdieu. This

concept is not only used to describe the relationship between culture and economic capital, but also to represent culture as a form of capital. According to Bourdieu's practical theory, capital has three forms: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. Economic capital is symbolized by money and institutionalized in the form of property rights; social capital is symbolized by social prestige and social titles and institutionalized in the form of social statutes; and cultural capital is symbolized by works, diplomas and academic titles and institutionalized in the form of degrees. Under certain conditions, different forms of capital can be transformed into each other, but the existence and movement of each type of capital has its relative autonomy^[1]. Among the three types of capital concepts, the concept of "cultural capital" is the most important, which constructs the theoretical system of Bourdieu's cultural sociology with "habitus" and "field".

"Cultural capital" refers to any tangible and intangible assets related to culture and cultural activities. Although it cannot be quantified in the same way as economic capital, it plays the same role as money and economic capital in everyday life. However, "cultural capital" is not a physical concept. It is a functional concept of what culture and its products can do. Since "cultural capital" is a very broad functional concept, Bourdieu divides it into three basic forms for the sake of research: (1) the embodied state, which is embodied in the form of mental and physical enduring disposition; (2) the objectified state, which is embodied in the form of cultural products; (3) the institutionalized state, which is embodied in the form of an objectified existence^[2].

2.1.1. The embodied state

Cultural capital in its embodied form refers to the form of long-term endowment that actors acquire through the family environment and schooling and become part of the mind and body, usually in the same way as the individual's general educational qualities, such as the individual's cultural products of knowledge, upbringing, skills, interests, and behaviours. They are different from commodities and cannot be acquired immediately by means of monetary purchases.

We can also think of embodied cultural capital as cultural competence, which, in Bourdieu's view, is acquired and socially generated by the individual in various arenas. First, the acquisition of cultural competence requires a time commitment and must be learned by the acquirer, where the principle of delegitimization is excluded. Secondly, the embodied cultural capital (cultural competence) can only be manifested through a specific individual; It can neither be executed by another person by proxy, nor can it be transmitted instantaneously in its complete form without any modification by way of transmission, exchange, or cession.

The process of materialization of cultural capital is necessarily accompanied by a significant consumption of time. Like any material wealth, materialized cultural capital acquired in this way can also be invested in various markets and receive a corresponding return. Moreover, such returns can range from material profits, such as money and social status, to "symbolic profits", such as the respect or praise of others^[3].

2.1.2. The objectified state

Specifically, Cultural capital in its objectified form is material cultural wealth in the form of books, paintings, antiques, props, tools and machinery, usually in the form of cultural goods. It can be materially appropriated as economic capital, with the same laws of transmission as economic capital, or symbolically appropriated. Bourdieu argues that the cultural product, as an objective form of cultural capital, has its own laws of existence, and cannot be reduced to the state of being appropriated by the subject, but it can only exist as an effective capital only when it is appropriated and involved in the struggle for cultural production as an investment and to obtain a certain percentage of material or symbolic profit.

In Bourdieu's conception, cultural capital in its objectified form is more meaningful than economic capital because it is not only a representation of a cultural entity, but in a deeper sense it represents the transmission and ownership of cultural symbols. Therefore, applying the objectified form of cultural capital to education, the possession and purchase of teaching equipment, hardware and software in schools is actually the hope of internalizing tangible cultural products into the students' concretized state of cultural capital^[4].

2.1.3. The institutionalized state

Institutionalized forms of cultural capital are those in which knowledge and skills acquired by actors are formally recognized in some form (usually in the form of an examination) and institutionalized through socially acceptable means such as the awarding of diplomas and certificates of accreditation to qualified individuals. Bourdieu argues that this is based on two main reasons: firstly, the capital of academics can be challenged at any time, and the cultural capital of brokers can make misdefined profits due to fluctuations in value in the marketplace, which is a marketplace of high social exchange; secondly, academically recognized cultural capital is formally independent of the individuals who bear it. And the ability to make misdefined profits from fluctuations in value; secondly, cultural capital that is academically recognized can be formally independent of the individual who bears the capital. Academic qualifications and certificates of cultural competence can confer on their holders a value that is culturally, conventionally, enduringly and legitimately secure. It is academic qualifications and educational credentials that make possible the comparison and substitution of the holders of these qualifications and credentials with one another^[5].

It is undoubtedly a way of transforming the concrete cultural capital at the individual level into objective forms of cultural capital at the collective level. In this sense, institutionalized cultural capital is an intermediate state between concretized and objectified cultural capital, and Bourdieu points out that the accumulation of qualification capital can only be achieved through investment in education at the economic level. Academic qualification is a typical way of transforming economic capital into cultural capital.

2.2. Cultural reproduction theory

How exactly do actors inherit and acquire these three types of cultural capital? What are the mechanisms through which cultural capital is reproduced from one generation to the next? Bourdieu describes two main ways of acquiring cultural capital^[6]: the first is "in full swing at a very early age, before people are even aware of it. It is acquired through family experience at an early age", and the second "begins at a later age, in the form of systematic, accelerated learning". The family is undoubtedly the initial and primary site of reproduction of cultural capital, and it is usually through the mode of inheritance. In addition to the family, the transmission of cultural capital often takes place in various public arenas. The most typical of these is the reproduction of qualifications in the education market. Bourdieu points out that schools are the most important site for the production of cultural capital apart from the family, but unlike the family, children can only be enrolled in school when they are of legal age. It means that if they do not meet the age requirement, they will not be able to receive schooling. In addition, unlike individualized family education, children receive a pre-designed and uniform collective education at school. The transmission of cultural capital usually takes place in a form of "reproduction"^[7]. "Reproduction" is neither a creative production from scratch, nor a purely mechanical repetition of the same production. In this process, the transmission of cultural capital will be constrained by three major factors: time, transformation and practical behavior. Moreover, cultural capital can be transformed into political and economic capital,

and schools legitimize social reproduction by rewarding the cultural capital of the dominant classes through various qualifying examinations that further consolidate their "success" at school^[8].

3. The significance of cultural capital in vocational school education

The amount of cultural capital affects an individual's life, growth and development; the richer the knowledge, the more progressive the concepts, and the more appropriate the behaviors, the better cultural capital he or she possesses, therefore, it can be considered as an asset and wealth of an individual, comparable to assets such as money and social status^[9]. In Bourdieu's view, educated people are not a "blank sheet of paper" before going to school to receive education, they all have their own cultural capital (from the family) to a greater or lesser extent, and the amount of cultural capital predicts the difference in their future educational achievements. Studies at home and abroad have found that cultural capital is affected by family background, and that the better the family background, the higher the education level of the parents, and the higher the family income, the richer the cultural capital the student possesses^[10].

Empirical studies have shown that there is a significant difference in family cultural capital between students in regular high schools and vocational high schools, and that the weakness of family cultural capital has caused most of the children from farmers' and workers' families to be eliminated from regular high school education and thus choose vocational education. The difference in family cultural capital between students in general high schools and students in vocational high schools makes the cultural capital conveyed by the families of vocational high school students in the early stage much less than that of the families of students in general high schools. Behind the difference is a phenomenon of cultural reproduction and replication. The lack of cultural capital in the families of vocational students makes them lag behind the families of students with better cultural capital in learning, and vocational education becomes their "natural" and "inevitable" choice^[11]. However, the influence of cultural capital on students' academic achievement is not only manifested in students' inheritance and utilization of family cultural capital, but also in whether the school can provide them with adequate and appropriate cultural capital, which also affects students' high academic achievement. The construction of school cultural capital is of great significance in improving their own quality and ability, and then in promoting students' effective development^[12].

4. Current situation and problems in building cultural capital in vocational schools

4.1. Cultural deficiencies in school-based curricula and important cultural activities

Schools develop curricula for the sake of developing curricula, without paying attention to the cultivation of students' cultural temperament (the forms and characteristics expressed through the body, including posture, gestures, behaviors, operating skills, etc.), the accumulation of students' culture, falling into the "common practice" of the established curricula development activities that place too much emphasis on knowledge and skills and techniques.

Secondly, knowledge is the vehicle of culture, but it is also enriched and developed through cultural activities. But the current school cultural capital construction often ignores the link between them and does not take the school cultural tradition as a cultural atmosphere or cultural environment to realize the cultural capital of the students to realize cultural capital in a subtle way. Schools do not make full use of the role of cultural capital and do not organically link students' multicultural practices through specific cultural activities, resulting in the formation of one-sided cultural knowledge rather than culturally rich knowledge.

4.2. Outdated and underutilized cultural items in schools

Cultural products have dual characteristics: firstly, they are a kind of resource that can promote cultural inheritance and development and provide a new source and impetus for cultural value-added; secondly, they are a kind of spiritual symbol, and some cultural objects are not only in a physical form, but also can feel a spiritual existence through this physical form. The objectification of school cultural capital is mainly manifested in school cultural equipments, such as school books, electronic materials and related information equipments, etc., and at the same time, it is also manifested in the utilization rate of these equipments in schools and the degree of help to students' learning. Although some schools have a large collection of books, they do not show a high frequency of reading, and many of the cultural books do not reflect the current development of new knowledge and are not closely related to the current learning of students, so they do not provide substantial help to students' learning. In addition, schools seldom make full use of books and other information facilities outside the school to assist teaching and learning, which also indirectly leads to a single source of school resources and low utilization rate, unable to provide students with good learning resources.

4.3. Formalization of the school reward system

Institutionalized cultural capital in schools is about differentiating students' academic achievement by rewarding cultural capital that is socially acceptable and valued by the school, and the level of institutionalized cultural capital that the school gives to its students lies in the ways and means it can provide to promote students' academic achievement, which centers on its ability to establish a system of rewards that promotes high motivation and aspirations among its students. First, many schools set up reward systems that are generally consistent and not school-specific. Reward systems can only be capitalized on to improve student achievement if they have a distinctive identity that reflects the school's philosophy. Second, reward systems are "siloed". Many school administrators do not realize the effective role of the reward system for student learning, resulting in although the school has a lot of incentives for students to achieve higher academic achievement, but these measures are not effectively linked to the school's characteristics of the activities, not cross and integrated use, resulting in the low effectiveness of the system. Once again, the form of reward is emphasized over the spiritual encouragement and motivation in the process. Material rewards have become the mainstream, and no appropriate spiritual rewards have been given in the process of activities, so that they can become an inexhaustible motivation for learning. This kind of emphasis on material rewards and neglect of the process of spiritual rewards is not conducive to the mental health and overall development of students.

5. Path choices for building cultural capital in vocational schools

With the enduring nature of its existence and influence, and its ability to multiply itself once it is formed in a way that is unmatched by capital in general, it is more difficult for disadvantaged vocational school students and their families to change and increase their family's cultural capital than it is to increase and reform capital in general. According to Bourdieu's hypothesis of cultural capital, the richer the cultural capital acquired by a student, the more likely he or she is to achieve higher levels of academic success. Therefore, it is necessary for us to propose path options for building cultural capital in vocational schools based on a deep understanding of the problems of building cultural capital in vocational schools^[13].

5.1. Increased attention to the continuing education of parents of vocational school students

As parents of vocational school students are limited by their level of knowledge, it is difficult for them to create a good learning atmosphere for their children in the context of the play of family embodied and institutionalized cultural capital. Therefore, the government should provide more platforms for adults (especially farmers and workers), give full play to the anti-poverty function of education, and further strengthen their continuing education on the basis of enhancing employment and increasing income, so that they can acquire a skill in vocational and technical education, improve the living standard of their families, especially the embodied cultural capital of farmers and workers. We should help them gradually get rid of the vicious circle of cultural capital inheritance due to their cultural low level of education, and create conditions for the development of their children.

5.2. Increased investment in education in vocational schools

Vocational school students and their parents live in a relatively poor living environment, where bad habits tend to accumulate, making it difficult for their family cultural capital to get the right opportunities for development. If the quality of the school education they receive is not guaranteed to a certain extent, the mainstream culture's care for the culture of poverty will easily lose ground, and it will be even more difficult to reform. This requires the Government not only to provide institutional guarantees for the development of vocational education, but also to give vocational schools a greater preference in the provision of teachers and teaching equipment, because vocational school students in a disadvantaged position in terms of cultural capital need more than anything else to be compensated for their education while receiving the same kind of treatment as ordinary education. This section must be in one column.

5.3. Vocational schools should be actively involved in transforming the cultural capital of students' families

The family cultural capital of vocational school students, as a kind of disadvantaged culture, is closely related to their general environment. Vocational schools should take the initiative to help students to transform the disadvantaged family cultural capital, in order to adapt to the requirements of the times, and truly reflect the care for students. On the one hand, they should amplify the positive factors in the family cultural capital of students, find the point of convergence with the mainstream culture, so that the students can feel the care of the heart and emotional comfort, and increase the interest in learning in school; on the other hand, the school should give more voice to the family cultural capital of the students, and through the establishment of the communication mechanism between the home and the school to improve their ability to express themselves and their behavioral ability, and to enhance the students' self-confidence, and try to cut off the disadvantageous family cultural capital at the school level to cut off the transmission chain of disadvantaged family cultural capital and lay the foundation for vocational education students to build advantageous cultural capital.

5.4. Focusing on school-based curricula and cultural activities to reflect the value of cultural capital

Schools should have a philosophy of education that is in line with their own development and the actual development of the local community and form a unique character, putting the needs of students as the first priority, so that there can be a "scarcity" of capital, a typical symbol that

distinguishes the school from other schools, and also to form a unique cultural model of the school and enhance the students' unique cultural capital.

Secondly, the intrinsic connection between school-based curricula and the national and local curricula should be strengthened. In view of the fact that our current assessment of students mainly takes the national curriculum as the main indicator of the examination form, only when the school-based curriculum becomes an important supplement to the national curriculum or an important part of the national curriculum will the school-based curriculum have a high value in terms of cultural capital.

Once again, the cultural content of school cultural activities should be strengthened. The construction of cultural activities for the school's cultural capital needs to start with raising awareness of cultural activities, recognizing the purpose of school cultural activities and their significance, developing them at a deeper level based on local cultural resources, and making them closely related to the cultural capital structure embedded in the curriculum, and then deepening and strengthening students' curricular learning by promoting the expansion of their knowledge horizons and other aspects. Through the creation of positive school activities, students are nurtured and purified bit by bit, thus changing negative perceptions and enhancing cultural confidence.

5.5. Expanding school cultural products and enhancing their utilization

The objectified cultural capital possessed by schools mainly includes books, computer equipment and related information equipment, and, at a deeper level, the various resources that schools can obtain from these information equipment that are conducive to the development of students. These cultural products of the school should be utilized more efficiently and used in all kinds of cultural activities that promote students' learning. Institutionalize the use of cultural products. The sustained value-added of cultural products cannot be relied upon by one principal alone, but should be treated as a long term cultural capital of the school, so that it does not become ineffective with the change of leadership, which necessitates the establishment of a whole set of systems on the utilization of cultural products, which will guide the construction and utilization of cultural products of the school through the system of norms and regulations, and thus increase the total cultural capital of the school.

6. Conclusion

In the new era, the promotion and realization of high-quality development of vocational education is the latest element of national strategic development. Practitioners of vocational education should uphold the concept of "fairness" and pay more attention to students from regions and families with a lack of cultural capital, giving them more compensation for their cultural capital, and more care and help to make up for their existing deficiencies and build up their confidence, so that every student in vocational schools can become a qualified builder of socialism in the new era.

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