

Study of the Reproduction of Educational Stratification

Henry Zhao

Phillips Academy Andover, Andover, MA, 01810, USA

Abstract. The reproduction of educational stratification, also known as the solidification of social stratification due to the uneven distribution of educational resources, is one of the current social ills. With the help of Bourdieu's educational stratification theory, the logical mechanism of the reproduction of educational stratification is analyzed from the logic of the process before entering the schooling system, during the schooling system, and after leaving the schooling system to provide countermeasures and references for breaking the solidification of educational resources stratification.

Keywords: Educational stratification; Reproduction; Cultural capital.

1. Problem formulation and literature review

Social stratification has numerous division criteria, such as Marx dividing different classes by whether they possess the means of production and how much they possess; Weber dividing social classes by the multiple dimensions of wealth, power, and prestige; Dürkheimtong arguing that the division of social labor leads to the creation of occupational stratification[1]; Bourdieu studying educational stratification from the perspective of cultural capital; Baudrillard understanding consumption stratification in terms of differentiated symbolic values etc[2]. This paper tends to understand social stratification from the perspective of education, which is an important way to achieve social mobility and also an important way to achieve social class reproduction. Unequal distribution of educational resources leads to unequal access to cultural capital among different groups of people, which in turn leads to class differences. A very real situation is that educational resources tend to gather in the upper strata of the class, which will intensify the solidification of social stratification, i.e., educational stratification is constantly reproduced. The cultural capital represented by school education is increasingly interconnected with economic capital and power capital, making education present the characteristics of elite education and commoner education, which is very common in Europe and America, while in Chinese educational practice, although not very typical of differentiation, it also gradually highlights the undesirable trend of educational stratification. This paper attempts to understand the logical mechanism of educational stratification reproduction systematically and deeply with the help of Bourdieu's theoretical perspective of educational stratification, so as to provide reference for breaking the class solidification caused by educational stratification.

2. Logical Analysis of Educational Stratification and Reproduction

In Bourdieu's theoretical paradigm, he divides capital into four types: economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu, different strata of society have different types and amounts of these four types of capital, so that different social strata can be distinguished according to the possession of these four types of capital, and at the same time, there are differences in the allocation of capital within the same stratum, showing a decreasing trend from top to bottom. This is the basic view of Bourdieu on social stratification. This paper explores Bourdieu's research on the relationship between education and social stratification. By the reproduction of social hierarchy, Bourdieu refers to the inherited transmission resulting from the different positions occupied by social actors (individuals or groups), in other words, the solidification of social stratification (structure). In Bourdieu's field theory, specific positions are defined precisely according to the amount of various capitals occupied by actors and their distribution structure, and the occupation of these positions also means the determination of objective relations between various positions, such as relations of domination, relations of subordination, etc. It cannot be ignored that

specific positions also contain specific capitals; at the same time, the occupation of certain capitals affects the distribution of individual positions. At the same time, occupying a certain amount of capital affects the distribution of individual positions, i.e., the relationship between a specific structural position and the capital possessed is a two-way street. Cultural capital, as an important capital, is unevenly distributed among students of different classes, geographic regions, and genders, and profoundly affects their educational choices[3], which further causes differences in educational attainment and ultimately affects the appropriation of cultural capital. The reproduction of social class is mediated by schooling. How is educational stratification reproduced? Why does educational stratification tend to solidify?

First, individuals have acquired different amounts and types of cultural capital through intergenerational transmission within the family before they enter the schooling system. The cultural capital here can be understood as different types of cultural norms, habits, and family customs that are embedded in the language and lifestyle of individuals, and it is through the unconscious and intimate transmission in the family environment that individuals already have a predisposition to share the characteristics of family cultural capital at the starting line before entering school. However, these families are limited in their vision of their children's education and the effect of their children's education varies from person to person; while the lower class groups are above and below the subsistence level and making a living is still the first priority. As a result, the attitude of children of different social groups towards education is deeply influenced by the family atmosphere, and there are already differences in the starting line. Different class groups possess different amounts and types of cultural capital, i.e., the inheritance of cultural capital corresponds to socioeconomic status. Differences in cultural capital have a very important impact on how individuals perform later when they enter the school system, and indirectly affect where students go after graduation.

Second, the uneven possession of economic capital by different classes affects the status of educational choices of their respective children. In Europe and the United States, education is divided into elite education and civilian education, and it is difficult for ordinary people to join elite high schools; family status, position, and wealth are highly correlated with children's access to elite schools. In China, although nine-year compulsory education is universal, access to institutions with high rates of advancement is still influenced by family economic strength or power capital, and many private high schools have higher tuition fees than undergraduate tuition, which can clearly exclude children from low-income groups from entering the ranks, or are influenced by personal connections and have the opportunity to enter these institutions with high rates of advancement through the back door, but this requires a solid family background. The choice of primary and secondary schools by children of different groups has a direct impact on their progression and trajectory. Furthermore, once enrolled in the same school, differences in family economic capital continue to influence children's educational choices - the choice of shadow education, or extracurricular tutoring, first proposed by Stephenson and Baker, is defined as occurring primarily outside of mainstream schools and is designed to improve students' academic performance in mainstream schools in order to help students get into the schools to which they aspire[4]. Shadow education is very common in East Asian societies, and in China, for example, extracurricular tuition has grown so rapidly in the last decade that it not only puts a very heavy burden on children in primary and secondary schools, but also imposes a significant financial burden on parents, while at the same time, it can even make the content of mainstream school education reserved, and make a commission from shadow education through profit linkages and other means. All these messy ideas have led the Chinese government to introduce a double reduction policy in recent years to reduce the burden of homework and training on students both inside and outside the classroom. The system was designed with the best of intentions to reduce the financial burden on the families behind it, while superficially yielding results, and thus reducing the differences in educational content and educational choices due to differences in family economic capital. However, the unintended consequence of the system is that many training institutions continue after-school tutoring through various hidden and disguised ways, bringing even a new round of heavier economic burden on families and academic burden on their children, due to the pre-layout of the education

industry chain and the inertia of the education system's consciousness. In short, hidden after-school tutoring is difficult to eradicate, and children from families with strong economic capital will still have easy access to additional educational resources that other children do not have access to.

Third, there is a two-way choice between the school culture and the cultural habits of individuals. The culture specific to the upper middle class, which is produced by both economic and cultural effects, is the culture required and rewarded by the elite schooling system, which requires students to have and accept the ability of this culture, but does not provide specific skills, but rather requires that individuals should have what it does not give, and thus it is more often the children of the upper class who enter higher education or elite education. For example, this is the form of the European and American college entrance exams, which are about a culture to which only the upper class is exposed, but which children from lower class families do not have the means to acquire, and are thus excluded from elite education. Based on the above analysis, Bourdieu emphasizes that the initial acquisition of cultural capital is recognized and perpetuated through its use and reinforcement in the schooling system, and thus the effectiveness and permanence of schooling is closely linked to the social origin and family background of the individual. However, even if there are individual children of lower classes who enter higher education for study, they are unable to integrate within the school for reasons rooted in social origin, culture and social capital, which eventually leads to self-elimination, which is the most hidden and specific function of the educational system, concealing the structural relationship between schooling and social class relations. Those students who have advantages, in the process of schooling, are further differentiated by differences in their innate cultural capital, and those who have upper class cultural capital and usually come from dominant families are able to quickly and effectively accumulate knowledge skills, lifestyles, etc. that are appreciated in school, thus reaching higher stages of education, receiving so-called high diplomas, and gaining equal or higher social status. School culture and individual cultural habits have a two-way selection effect, not only elite schools will mainly select children of the upper middle class, but also children of different groups will have different performances and outcomes in elite schools, children of the upper middle class will be more confident and comfortable to look at, while children of the lower class will be more inferior and difficult to integrate in this atmosphere.

Fourth, after entering undergraduate education, there is a class-related divergence in the pathways of children from different class groups. It is of concern that students from disadvantaged family backgrounds, even when they enter quality universities, still struggle to match the employment outcomes of groups from advantaged backgrounds. Given that higher education is the highest and final stage of the schooling system, the influence of family background should decay as one moves up the educational ladder, but this is not the case. The awareness and ability of actors to make rational calculations are not randomly distributed among the population, but are systematically skewed according to their resources and status, meaning that groups from different family backgrounds differ in setting goals and setting plans. According to Zheng Yajun's division method, college students are classified as self-driven, opportunists, lost and unattached, and value submissive [5], and the values, focus on learning, long-term life planning and career planning of different types of college students differ greatly. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds may enter college with nothing to do, with a sense of liberation of getting into college, and subconsciously think that getting into college is Only when they get close to graduation will they hastily start to think of a way out, but it will be too late, and if they want to find a very desirable job, they may lose their advantage because they miss the accumulation in the early stage. Children from advantaged backgrounds set their own value goals and long-term career plans at the beginning of college, which is related to their long-term exposure to a family with a rich "cultural toolbox". This is a structural internalization factor for self-planning and self-development, which allows these children to have a clear reflective purpose and to explore their future direction and prepare earlier, rather than rushing to the end near graduation. Getting into a prestigious university does not mean that the children of disadvantaged families have a direction and may simply be small-town problem makers who take exams for the sake of taking exams. They should not be fine-tuned only on the means and short-term goals and become so-called refined egoists, but

should plan more in the long run of life, which is the direction that higher education needs to think about guiding students to transform at present.

3. Conclusion and Implications

In summary, the initial inequality in cultural capital of individuals is transformed into differences in cultural capital through the selection and inculcation of educational resources in schools, and continues to guide the inheritors of a particular position in social space to a social position similar to that of their families, and to a series of social resources suitable for that position, thus achieving the solid production of social stratification, i.e. The reproduction of educational stratification. Education should be an important social mechanism to achieve social mobility and enhance social vitality, but if it is not properly guided, education can also become a stubborn stone that solidifies social stratification and hinders social progress. Therefore, based on the research of this paper, I believe that the education system should still be actively adjusted to break the solidification of educational resources, such as opening quality schools and quality educational resources to the public, combating shadow education and carrying out teaching inspectors, and carrying out effective career planning, in order to effectively break the solidification of educational stratification, so that children of ordinary families also have the opportunity to enjoy quality educational resources, acquire higher cultural capital, and achieve a wider range of social mobility. The purpose of this study is to effectively break down educational stratification, so that children from ordinary families also have the opportunity to enjoy quality educational resources, acquire higher cultural capital, achieve wider social mobility, and provide more impetus and possibilities for social progress and development.

References

- [1] Emile Dürkheim. The Theory of Social Division of Labor [M]. Shanghai: Life, Reading, New Knowledge, 2000. 1-167.
- [2] Jean Baudrillard. The Society of Consumption [M]. Beijing: China Social Science Press, 1970. 1-203.
- [3] Pierre Bourdieu. The National Elite [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2004. 1-402.
- [4] Pang Shengmin. Family background, shadow education, and "junior high school": A new perspective on understanding educational stratification in contemporary Chinese society[J]. Social Development Research, 2017,4(04):105-123+239.
- [5] Zheng Yajun. Pathway differentiation of prestigious students: a complementary explanation under the culture-action binary path model[J]. Journal of Sociology, 2018, 1(03):103-119.