WCES 2012

An analysis of the reasons on learning burnout of junior high school students from the perspective of cultural capital theory: a case study of Mengzhe Town in Xishuangbanna, China

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Abstract (50-100 words)

This paper took Mengzhe town in Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture as a case study to explore the problem of learning burnout in junior high school. Mengzhe town is a multicultural coexistence community composed mainly of Dai ethnic culture, showing the exchange between different cultures and integration trends. According to the survey, junior high school students with learning burnout are quite conspicuous, mainly through signs of studying depression, misconduct, low efficacy in learning. Based on this situation, this study analyzed the cultural capital in Buddhist temples to discuss the reproduction phenomenon, and found that learning burnout of junior high school students was produced by a variety of reasons in Mengzhe town. The fundamental reason is the school education versus the Buddhist temple education in pursuit of value. Both of them use their cultural capital with a certain amount of certain types of cultural resources of exclusive possession. For students in different fields of cultural capital, there will be an excessive burden on individuals, on learning produces a loss of feeling. After that, the influence of value conflicts in the long-term produced pressure and caused the student burnout symptoms, such as boredom, burnout, depression and frustration of the psychological experience, and avoidance of studying.

Keywords: Learning burnout, cultural capital, basic education, ethnic groups education

1. Introduction

Education in China has been greatly promoted during the last three decades. However, China has a vast territory, great differences exist between eastern and western regions, and educational developments show variations due to different regions. The government has gradually increased educational investment in the western regions. More specifically, the policies and measures to support education in rural areas have also been progressively implemented. Additionally, basic education has made considerable progress. However, for the western boundary areas in which the minority ethnics dwell, due to special historical background and unique cultural environment, local educational problems cannot be solved only by increased investment, and student learning burnout has become a serious problem in this situation.

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1877-0428 © 2012 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Selection and/or peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Uzunboylu
Open access under CC BY-NC-ND license. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.136
2. The status of learning burnout in junior high school in Mengzhe town

2.1. Depression Mood in the Study

Joseph Campos (1989) believes that mood is a psychological phenomenon between individuals and the environment on matters of significance to the person. Lazarus claims that the emotion is the organization of physiological and psychological response towards good or bad information in the processing environment, and it relies on short-term or long-term evaluations. These definitions all indicate the relationship between mood and people's needs and attitudes. Arnold and Raza Naples also point out emotion’s characteristics, such as experience, physical models, evaluation. The depressed students are lacking a passion for learning, and hold apathy and pessimism towards learning, and easily feel depressed, frustrated and helpless in the learning process. They cannot deal well with problems and requirements in learning, showing emotional characteristics such as frustration and lack of interest. In the random classroom investigations, it is discovered that the students have little enthusiasm, which can be demonstrated by a fraction of an English class in a middle school. Through the communication with an English teacher after class, it is learned that the enthusiasm of students for learning has always been low. The English teacher is also the most experienced teacher, so the quality of learning situation in the English classes is relatively good in comparison to other classes. Moreover, students could see that we were attending the lecture at the back of the classroom, so they performed better than usual, and several students answered the questions during the class. The enthusiasm of the students was lower, and they even might fall asleep during the class while other teachers were teaching.

2.2. Misconduct of Students

Students demonstrate behavior characteristics such as absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early, not listening to lectures, not handing in papers and others. In the survey, it is found that persistent truancy exists, and the absence rate is high. Students show no respect for teachers, and make excuses for their own poor learning performances. The monk students drift between the temples and the schools due to their special status. A teacher told me that he, the Dai people is very worried about the status of present temple education. He said that now the temple monks are giving little attention to the education of students. Moreover, family education has also lost some of its functions. The regulation on monk students is in a vacuum state. They just drift between the school, the temples and their home. In the junior high school of Mengzhe town, the attendance rate of students which are concluded after a week of investigation and calculation is shown as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Absent with excuse</th>
<th>Absent with no excuse</th>
<th>In total</th>
<th>Rate (Absent with no excuse)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be learned from the table that the truancy rate of each day during a week has been above 10%, and the highest percentage 17.9% emerges on Friday. Such a high absenteeism percentage reflects the burnout of the students. A teacher claimed that such statistics are normal and nothing to be surprised at.

People tend to attribute this to insufficient socio-economic support giving to the specific ethnic minority regions by “common sense”. Indeed, it is very convincing to analyze the education problems from an economic point of view, this. However, what is worth considering is whether there are other factors affecting the development of
education. And if so, how these factors exert influence on education. These factors may be diverse, and deep-level, such as the ethnic culture, political ecology, social environment, traditional religious beliefs and so on.

2.3. A Sense of Low Achievement

Research about a lack of personal accomplishment has been carried out at abroad. According to the corresponding results of this research, researchers namely learning burnout as "reduced personal accomplishment". It reflects the individual's change on the evaluation and attitude towards themselves: a self-affirming person may lose confidence and self-affirmation gradually due to some factors. In the learning process, students experience the feeling of reduced personal accomplishment. They feel that they cannot make progress, and obtain their efforts cannot be rewarded. Therefore, they complain about the school's boring curriculum, and feel that learning is useless. This is in correspondence with the research results got by Bandura and other researchers on self-efficacy. They believe that a major information source of self-efficacy is actually the past experience of success and failure. Their success in learning can enhance self-confidence, showing higher performance support. This result is consistent with the actual situation in the Mengzhe town – Students who are bored of learning show characteristics such as low academic achievement, weak motivation and reduced personal accomplishment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Chinese (Fullmark=120)</th>
<th>Maths (Fullmark=120)</th>
<th>English (Fullmark=120)</th>
<th>Politics (Fullmark=100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average score</td>
<td>38.45</td>
<td>40.38</td>
<td>44.76</td>
<td>55.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passed students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Passed students</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>14.55%</td>
<td>10.91%</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Score</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Score</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the table, the present situation does exist that students have a low academic achievement. In addition, the original academic transcript put politics as one of the top ranking subjects. The average point, pass rate, and excellence rate in politics subject are far higher than other subjects. It can be seen from that the importance attached to the teaching of politics subject in the school, reflects the reproduction of cultural capital on the curriculum setting.

3. An Analysis of the reasons on Learning Burnout of Junior High School Students

Bourdieu believes that the most important characteristic of contemporary society is that culture has priority and decisive significance in the whole of society. Contemporary society uses cultural practice and the continuous reproduction of it as the basic drive of the society. Cultural reproduction is the cultural practice to create and reproduce specific cultural products under certain historical conditions on one hand. On the other hand, it is the historical activities with general characteristics of practice which create human culture. Cultural capital is the exclusive occupation of cultural resources of a certain type and certain number. Bourdieu holds that cultural capital is more stubborn than economic capital. This point is particularly reflected in the accumulation of cultural capital.

3.1. Conflict in the Reproduction of Cultural Capital in the Field

Mengzhe town is a relatively affluent agricultural area in the boundary ethnic minority regions which is largely influenced by Theravada Buddhism. Its special history, geography, culture, customs and other backgrounds determines its own unique education. In the history, the temples are the only local institutions which play an important educational role of fostering local talents, maintaining social stability, inheriting culture and promoting local progress. It has continued playing this function till now.
In fact, the purpose of school education is trying to integrate in order to promote harmonious development of society rather than replicating the existing social structure. However, the angle of culture reproduction can cause some thinking. This study suggests that temple education and school education process cultural reproduction respectively. Both exert influences on students through the cultural capital. This is the key reason for learning burnout of the students in the high school of Mengzhe town. Bourdieu concerns about the culture reproduction embodied in the school education field. This study concerns about the culture reproduction in the temple education field in addition to that one. The process of cultural reproduction is the operation process of symbolic violence. Combined with Bourdieu's central theme – cultural reproduction, this study investigates the cultural reproduction issue in the Buddhist temple field from the angle of cultural capital. Both function on the students at the same time and lead to burnout problem. Cultural capital is the exclusive possession of cultural resources of certain number and certain types. It is not only a physical concept, but also a functional concept showing what functions culture and cultural product can perform.

3.2. Reproduction of Cultural Capital in the Buddhist Temple Field

Bourdieu holds that these commodities such as pictures, books, dictionaries, tools, machinery are specific representation of theories, the trace left by theories, or critique towards these theories and issues.

**Sutra**

The Sutra about Buddha's history and Buddha Bei Ye Sutra are important Buddhist sutra, which can be both found in the temple of Mengzhe town. In Manlv village temple, younger monks study ancient Dai language and Buddhist scriptures at a fixed time every day. The temples have special classrooms for younger monks to study. The ancient scriptures which written in Dai language are handed down generation by generation. The topics they discussed are ranging from religion, politics and history, law and orthodoxy, irrigation, astronomy, calendar, technology and medicine, linguistics and divinity. They are all manuscripts. In recent years, some books written in ancient Dai language have been published, such as: literacy book, drug books, dictionaries, and ancient Dai sutra. These are all cultural capital in the temple education.

**Trappings**

According to the requirements of Buddhism, every earthly man must live a monk life for some time. Because only by wearing a robe, shaving the hair, and obeying the disciplines of the temples can people get out of trouble and worry in the life, and become educated newcomers. Otherwise they will be subject to discrimination by the public. “Wearing robes after being a monk in the temple is an objective representation of the cultural capital. In the Theravada Buddhist areas, not only monks but also adherents at home give faith and reverence to three treasures: Buddha, dharma and monk. Scriptures are sacred in the minds of most people. The monks wearing brown robes have lofty social status.

I saw in a senior class in a high school in the Mengzhe town that all monk students are wearing robes around the shoulders. I asked a monk and he told me that the monks must wear neat settlements, which meant wearing robes from the head to toe, before entering the region where ordinary people live. Classroom is laity settlements, so the monk students should wear robes around shoulders. When showing respect to the Buddha and attendance, right shoulder must be exposed.

Monk students have occupied a larger cultural capital in the Buddhist temple Field rather than in the school field. In the Buddhist temple field, through the stories in the Buddhist scripture, temple murals, and wearing monk robe generally, the cultural capital has been reproduced.

4. Conclusion

Why do the junior high school students of Mengzhe town have learning burnout? It is rooted in the conflicts between the process of cultural capital reproduction in mainstream schools and Buddhist temples. To solve this problem, Buddhist temples and mainstream schools need to work together and cooperate actively step by step.
Acknowledgements

Support from grant sponsors, Key Research Institute of Humanities & Social Science in Chongqing-The
Research Institute for Education and Psychology of Southwestern Ethnic Groups, Southwest University, A study of
the primitive thought and the harmonious idea about educational inheritance in Chinese southwestern ethnic groups
(#08JWSK268), are gratefully acknowledged. We also would like to acknowledge and thank the kind participation
of the students, the parents, the monks, the teachers, and the schools involved in this research.

Note:

Monk students: the students who study in the mainstream schools, and learn Sutra at night in the Buddhist temple.
Bei Ye Sutra: a kind of sutra written on leaves of pattra palm tree.

References