

Community Social Capital and School Education Reform in China



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Currently, Social capital is a hot issue in the field of social sciences. Many subjects such as economics, sociology and political science, all conduct research on social capital from different angles. In the field of education, many scholars, such as Coleman, Putnam made fruitful research to social capital in education. This paper begins with Community social capital to discuss its significance and impact of school development and school reform.

The connotation of social capital

The study of social capital started from Gelanuowote, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacobs, and Claude • Moselun, Glenn Loury and others, and it has been further perfected by James Coleman, Ronald • Burt, Robert Putman, Potts and other scholars. There is a universal agreement that, first Bourdieu and Coleman stirred up the attention of the concept of social capital in academia, and the United States famous sociologist Putnam truly make social capital have a broad impact, then, there are the continue studies of other scholars. Research on social capital by the World Bank and OECD played a role in adding fuel to the flames. Regardless of the differences between the current scholars, but they all approve the following viewpoint: Social capital includes the resources which embedded in social relations and the social structure. They can be mobilized when actors hope to increase the possibility of success in actions with a purpose. Unlike human capital, it is an investment to the social relationship; it can obtain the resources through other actors. Social capital is such a resource: It is formed by the long-term communication between the human and the human, the human and the organization as well as the organization and the organization in a community, embedded in social relations and social structures. Exist with the form of attitude, confidence, customs, practices, rules, networks, system and so on. It can be obtained and used by actors in social structure (regardless of individual or organization), and can provide convenience resources to actors in their goal action. Social capital is divided into three forms: cognitive social capital, relations social capital and institutional (structure) social capital. In the Community level, Social capital is: communication between members in Community (including all kinds of informal contacts, formation of associations, etc.) and Community's participation to the development of the schools (including parents and other community members to participate in school affairs, the relationship between parents and teachers, the relations of community and schools, etc.).

The significance of Community's participation to the school reform

Although the function of schools become more and more powerful, they now responsible for much commitment which is originally undertakes by family and community, it will never be able to completely replace this "primitive social capital". Moreover, in the existing alternative process, it also has various defects. Corman explains his own views by the example of child socialization. In the traditional society, child's socialization mainly completes in the family and the neighborhood community. They have "primitiveness social capital", namely the intimate social relations between parents and other adult in neighborhood. This plays

important role in their socialization. But in modern society, with parents (in particular mother) working pressure increase and indifferent relationships in the neighborhood community, the primitiveness social capital for the child reduce day by day. “The legal actor” (kindergarten, school and so on) is unable to provide some development conditions which most affect to child’s socialization, such as the large number of interaction between children and adult, adult “continually pay attention to children” and so on. Therefore, Coleman comes to the conclusion that: “social change requires social theory to solve the problem about the replacement of primitiveness social capital, ignored these issues means not only separate from the community, and make all people and their children in a tragic way – only access to rich material resources, but lack the resources which are necessary to happy life.

The influence of the community member’s interaction to the school reform

The intimate interactions between members in community and good interpersonal relationships, not only help students improve their academic performance, but also promote the development of the school. Among the many reform attempts, the most noticeable is that Coleman’s efforts. Coleman thought the Catholicism schools are embedded in “functional Community” that around them. In these communities social capital was seen as the extra resources which can promote academic success of students. Therefore, there are differences in holding human capital and the cultural capital between families; moreover, there are differences in obtaining the social relations’ resources. According to Coleman’s research, the social capital exists in the Catholicism school has the close relation with community’s characteristic, its main characteristics are that social relations between the generations show a relatively dense network and have a close contact with the main value system of social structure. Whether the child is in school, learning or contacts with friends or participate in social activities, the social capital in the Community provided a convenient for parents to understand children. Because the homogeneous value system as well as the crowded network create a continuity and effective educational environment. This exceed the relation of parents’ direct control (such as parents’ friends and other adults who can well understand the child) and the role of schools. “These social interaction strengthened parents ability to instruct children outside the family space in community, and increased the opportunity to support for children and correct the children’s behavior. At the same time, these social resources in the Community also increased the chances of success in a school. They made up for children from poor families who lack of social resources, and also improve the educational opportunities of students from poor social class”. ”It means that schools play a function in the very intensive Community. Parents, school administrators, community members has cultivated this kind of relational as well as the share standard together (i.e. social capital), these are very important to the school education and the children’s success in academic”.*Dr. Bing Sheng is working at the Beijing Normal University in Beijing (China).*

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