

Research on the Theoretical Basis and Practical Models of Stratified and Categorized Talent Cultivation in Vocational Education

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Abstract: Stratified and categorized talent cultivation is a core pathway that aligns with the typological attributes of vocational education and adapts to students' individual development differences and the diversified talent needs of industries. It is also a key measure for promoting the high-quality development of vocational education and overcoming the homogenization problem in talent cultivation. This paper explains the core connotation of stratified and categorized talent cultivation in vocational education, sorts out its theoretical basis, analyzes the current dilemmas in aspects such as goal orientation, implementation process, and collaborative support in China's vocational education stratified and categorized talent cultivation. Combining practical explorations in vocational education, it constructs a precise, diversified, and synergistic practical model, aiming to provide theoretical reference and practical pathways for vocational education to optimize its talent cultivation structure, enhance talent cultivation quality, and better serve industrial development.

Keywords: Vocational Education; Stratification and Categorization; Talent Cultivation; Theoretical Basis; Practical Model

0. Introduction

As vocational education enters a new stage of typological development, industrial upgrading has led to diversified and differentiated demands for technical and skilled talents. These demands include the need for frontline operational skilled workers as well as for technical R&D-oriented and management-oriented skilled personnel. Simultaneously, students in vocational colleges exhibit significant individual differences in knowledge base, skill aptitude, and career planning. The traditional "one-size-fits-all" talent cultivation model can no longer adequately adapt to industrial needs and student development aspirations.

Stratified and categorized talent cultivation is based on the educational philosophy of "teaching students according to their aptitude." It balances the diversity of industrial needs and the differences in student development. Through precise positioning of cultivation objectives, optimization of cultivation programs, and innovation of cultivation pathways, it achieves accurate alignment between talent cultivation, job requirements, and student aspirations. Currently, preliminary practices of stratified and categorized talent cultivation have been carried out in China's vocational education, but challenges remain, such as ineffective translation of theory into practice, vague categorization criteria, and imprecise stratified implementation. In-depth research into its theoretical basis and practical models holds significant theoretical and practical importance for promoting the reform of talent cultivation in vocational education and manifesting its typological value.

1. Core Connotation and Theoretical Basis of Stratified and Categorized Talent Cultivation in Vocational Education

1.1 Core Connotation

Stratified and categorized talent cultivation in vocational education is an organic integration of "stratified cultivation" and "categorized cultivation." The two complement and synergize with each other. Stratified cultivation focuses on individual student differences. Based on

students' knowledge base, skill level, learning ability, etc., it divides cultivation objectives and requirements into different levels and implements differentiated teaching content and methods to meet students' personalized development needs. Categorized cultivation is grounded in differences in industrial positions. Based on industrial sectors, job types, career development paths, etc., it divides cultivation into different categories/directions, constructing targeted curriculum systems and practical models to achieve precise alignment between talent cultivation and industrial job requirements. The core goal of both is to break down the barriers of homogenized cultivation, realize that "everyone can become a talent, and everyone can fully develop their talents," and cultivate diversified technical and skilled talents that meet industrial needs.

1.2 Theoretical Basis

1.2.1 Theory of Teaching Students According to Their Aptitude

As the core of traditional educational theory, teaching students according to their aptitude emphasizes formulating differentiated educational plans based on students' individual differences, focusing on leveraging strengths and avoiding weaknesses to stimulate student potential. Stratified and categorized talent cultivation in vocational education is a concrete practice of this theory. It pays attention to both differences in student knowledge and skills (stratification) and differences in student career development aspirations (categorization), aligning with the core demand for personalized education in vocational education. This provides fundamental educational theoretical support for stratified and categorized cultivation.

1.2.2 Human Capital Theory

Schultz's Human Capital Theory posits that human capital is the core driver of economic growth, and education is a crucial pathway for human capital accumulation. Stratified and categorized talent cultivation in vocational education achieves precise human capital accumulation by accurately connecting to the human capital needs of different industrial positions and implementing differentiated cultivation for talents at different levels and of different types. This enhances students' employability while also providing suitable talent support for industrial development, aligning with the core logic of optimizing human capital allocation.

1.2.3 Educational Classification Theory

Educational classification theory emphasizes that education should be categorized based on differences in cultivation objectives and target groups, forming a diversified education system. As an independent educational type, vocational education itself also has needs for talent cultivation at different levels and in different fields. Stratified and categorized cultivation is an extension of educational classification theory within the field of vocational education. It both highlights the typological characteristics of vocational education and improves the internal talent cultivation system of vocational education, achieving precise matching between educational supply and industrial demand.

1.2.4 Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences points out that humans possess various intelligences such as linguistic, logical-mathematical, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences, and the combination of these intelligences varies among individuals. Stratified and categorized talent cultivation in vocational education respects students' differences in intelligence. It formulates differentiated cultivation plans for students with different intelligence types. For example, it emphasizes operational skill cultivation for students with prominent bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and focuses on technical R&D talent cultivation for students with strong logical-mathematical intelligence, fully stimulating students' intellectual potential.

2. Current Practical Status and Existing Dilemmas of Stratified and Categorized Talent Cultivation in Vocational Education

2.1 Current Practical Status

In recent years, with the advancement of talent cultivation reform in vocational education, vocational colleges across various regions have gradually explored stratified and categorized talent cultivation models, forming diversified practical exploration pathways. In terms of stratified cultivation, most colleges divide students into basic, intermediate, and advanced levels based on entrance scores and skill test results, implementing differentiated teaching. The basic level focuses on cultivating foundational skills, while the advanced level emphasizes innovation capability and comprehensive literacy. In terms of categorized cultivation, colleges, considering industrial needs, divide cultivation into categories such as operational, technical, and managerial types, optimizing program directions and curriculum systems to align with different job types. Simultaneously, some colleges collaborate with enterprises to conduct stratified and categorized cultivation, relying on enterprise job standards to formulate cultivation programs and enhance the job adaptability of talent cultivation. However, overall, stratified and categorized cultivation is still in its early stages, and a standardized, normalized practical model has yet to be formed.

2.2 Existing Dilemmas

Currently, stratified and categorized approaches in many colleges lack unified and scientific standards. Stratification often relies solely on scores, neglecting core factors such as students' skill aptitude and career plans. Categorization is mostly based on traditional program divisions, failing to closely align with the latest demands of industrial positions and career development paths. This results in a lack of targeted stratification and categorization, making it difficult to adapt to student development and industrial needs. Although some colleges have proposed the concept of stratified and categorized cultivation, their cultivation programs have not undergone substantial optimization. The curriculum system and teaching methods still follow a uniform model, with only simple adjustments in class hours or assignment difficulty, lacking personalized courses and practical content tailored to students of different levels and categories. Consequently, stratified and categorized cultivation often becomes a mere formality.

3. Construction of Practical Models for Stratified and Categorized Talent Cultivation in Vocational Education

3.1 Formulate Scientific Standards to Solidify the Foundation for Stratification and Categorization

Construct a standard system for stratification and categorization characterized by "multiple dimensions and dynamic adjustment." For stratification, based on multiple indicators such as students' entrance scores, skill tests, vocational interests, and learning abilities, establish levels: Basic (focusing on mastering foundational skills), Intermediate (focusing on improving job-specific skills), and Advanced (focusing on innovation capability and comprehensive literacy). Implement a dynamic adjustment mechanism to change levels according to students' academic performance and skill improvement. For categorization, collaborate with industry associations and enterprises to analyze industrial job types and career development paths. Divide cultivation into categories such as operational, technical, managerial, and innovative types. Align with the competency requirements of different job categories to clarify cultivation objectives and core literacies.

3.2 Optimize Cultivation Programs and Implement Differentiated Teaching

Based on the standards for stratification and categorization, construct personalized, differentiated cultivation programs. For the curriculum system, establish a three-tier system comprising public foundation courses, professional core courses, and personalized elective courses. Public foundation courses address the basic needs of all students; professional core courses are optimized in content according to category differences; and personalized elective courses are set based on

level differences and student interests. Regarding teaching methods, for the Basic level, adopt a “theory + foundational practical training” teaching model, emphasizing the consolidation of basic knowledge and skills. For the Advanced level and technical categories, employ project-based and case-based teaching, introducing real industrial projects to enhance students’ practical and innovative abilities. Simultaneously, implement modular teaching, flexibly adjusting teaching modules and pace according to job requirements and student development aspirations.

3.3 Deepen School–Enterprise Collaboration to Build a Collaborative Cultivation Mechanism

Promote the deep participation of schools and enterprises in stratified and categorized cultivation, constructing a practical model of “school–enterprise co-construction and collaborative cultivation.” First, establish a school–enterprise collaborative decision-making mechanism, inviting enterprises to participate in formulating stratification/categorization standards and optimizing cultivation programs to ensure precise alignment between cultivation objectives and job needs. Second, implement school–enterprise joint teaching, where skilled enterprise technicians participate in the practical teaching of students at different levels and in different categories, explaining cutting-edge technologies and operational standards in their fields. Third, establish differentiated practical training platforms. Provide frontline training positions for operational-type students and create R&D training platforms for technical and innovative-type students, achieving precise matching between “position training and capability cultivation.”

3.4 Improve Evaluation and Support Systems to Facilitate Effective Implementation of the Model

Construct a diversified evaluation and support system that adapts to stratified and categorized cultivation. For the evaluation system, establish a “stratified, categorized, diversified, and comprehensive” evaluation mechanism. Implement differentiated evaluation based on indicators such as students’ learning performance, skill level, job adaptability, and innovative achievements. Emphasize the combination of formative and summative evaluation, and introduce third-party evaluators such as enterprises and industry associations. For the support system, optimize faculty allocation by forming teaching teams dedicated to stratified and categorized cultivation, enhancing teachers’ capabilities in differentiated teaching and industrial literacy. Balance the allocation of practical training resources to meet the cultivation needs of students at different levels and in different categories, increasing resource investment for the Basic level and operational categories. Improve incentive mechanisms to stimulate students’ learning motivation and teachers’ enthusiasm for teaching innovation.

4. Conclusion

Stratified and categorized talent cultivation in vocational education is a crucial initiative that aligns with the philosophy of teaching students according to their aptitude and adapts to the diversified needs of industries and the personalized development of students. Its effective implementation relies on solid theoretical support and scientific practical models. Currently, stratified and categorized talent cultivation still faces dilemmas such as vague standards, homogenized programs, and insufficient school–enterprise collaboration, which constrain the full realization of its educational effectiveness. In the future, it is necessary to base efforts on the typological positioning of vocational education, guided by theory, to improve scientific standards for stratification and categorization, optimize differentiated cultivation programs, deepen school–enterprise collaborative cultivation, and improve diversified evaluation and support systems. This will promote the standardized and normalized development of stratified and categorized talent cultivation models, break down the barriers of homogenized cultivation, enhance talent cultivation quality, cultivate more diversified technical and skilled talents suited to industrial development, and provide solid support for the high-quality development of vocational education and the construction of a skilled society.

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