

Gender perspective on education process quality: meaning and construction

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Abstract: Theories related to the education process quality have shifted from focusing on “abstract people” to “concrete individuals”, and “gender” as the ontological and social characteristics of “concrete individuals” have begun to attract attention. There are gender differences in the process of students' learning and development, so the quality of direct education process is regulated by gender. The impact of college environment on the development of male and female students is also differentiated, leading to the fact that the quality of indirect education process is also regulated by gender. Therefore, gender perspective is of great significance to the quality of education process. To construct the gender perspective on education process quality, we need to follow these rules. First, pay attention to the gender characteristics of quality subjects and changing students' cognition, including their cognition of selves and the opposite gender and teachers' cognition of students' subjectivity; Second, gender issue should be included in the setting of quality evaluation standards, the degree of attention to gender issue should be taken as an important quality evaluation standard.

1. Introduction

The quality of process education emphasizes judging the quality of education through the education process. Discussions on the education process generally agrees on its decisive role in the quality of education, believing that the process of education determines the realization of educational goals ^[1] domestically and abroad. However, there is little research on the quality of the education process itself. In the higher education massification stage, the quality of education service becomes the leading educational quality concept, the direct experiencer of educational service, the students, become the subjects of education quality, and the quality of education process, especially, the experience, becomes the key indicator for students to judge the quality of

education. The characteristics of process or service subject should be paid attention to by theory, policy and practice, among which the "gender" factor which affects the quality of process education is an important variable. Some scholars believe that there is a puzzling trend in China's higher education at the present stage: education is an indispensable means to improve women's self-reliance spirit, but women who have received higher education may not choose the road of self-reliance.^[2] Generally speaking, the explanation of this phenomenon is mainly attributed to factors such as labor market discrimination and differences in the quality of education outcomes. However, the unequal treatment of both genders in the education process and the neglect of the differences between the genders are the main causes of the weakness of women or men. The reason why gender equality is repeatedly mentioned in policy texts, but the phenomenon of inequity or the aggravation of inequality in practice is that we do not go deep into the education process itself to interpret gender issues, that is to say, we pay too much attention to "solving the problem" rather than "determining what the problem is"^[3].

Although the development of higher education in a certain extent, makes the male and the female college students more equal on education expectation, career planning, attitudes and values^[4], but a variety of potential and subtle gender differences still exist in the process of higher education, and in some areas, the influence of gender differences cannot be ignored, and the causes of these gender differences is multifaceted. Under the influence of feminism, scholars pay more and more attention to gender equity in the education process. Most of the existing studies are based on women's perspective and are devoted to revealing the disadvantages of women in education^[5]. However, the development of any group should not be gained at the sacrifice of the other groups. The ultimate pursuit of gender equality is the common development and improvement of mankind. This paper tries to discuss the quality of education process from the perspective of gender and pay attention to the development of male and female students in the education process.

2. The development trend of theories on education process quality: paying attention to gender

China has been implementing a gender neutral education, hoping to promote common development through equal treatment of both genders. However, some scholars think that gender neutral education "not only ignored the students' biological natural sex differences, but also ignores the social gender differences during their growth, as a result, the defiance against gender discrimination in education and the pursuit of education process equality, become, a process to make gender discrimination in education practice^[6]. Dominated by traditional pedagogy, the process of education at all levels in China is a process of teachers' teaching and students' learning, which is

abstracted into the process of preaching and receiving. With the explosive growth of knowledge and the introduction of western pedagogy theories, especially the spread of social learning theory and Dewey's "learning by doing" thoughts, Chinese educational researchers gradually pay attention to the generative nature of education process and realize the important value of education process to students' development. Moreover, the establishment of service quality view in the massfication stage means that students become the direct education service subject, rather than the educational product. attach importance to the education process and meet the diverse and personalized needs of students become the focus to improve education process quality. The focus on education process quality began to shift to specific students' learning experience and development, and began to emphasize the study of education quality from the individual development. Especially in the field of higher education, there are many investigations and researches on students' individual characteristics, education experience, school environment satisfaction, activity participation and so on. People gradually realize that people in the education process are specific, different and special. Therefore, contemporary educational theoretical research should realize "the transformation from 'abstract person' to 'concrete individual'" ^[7].

2.1. Gender as the ontological characteristic of "concrete individual"

To discuss gender in the biological sense belongs to the perspective of gender ontology, one proposition is that the inherent sex differences decide the gender gap on all aspects of development, such as the classical theory of human development, Freud, Piaget and Kohlberg, the traditional androcentrist all assume the linear development of a simple path in their theories: gradually get rid of the family, into the society, autonomy, independence and individuation are the inevitable stages of human development. ^[8] These theories merely affirm the possibility of male development, characterizing women as "inferior" and "different" from men, setting the standard for men and seeing women as deviants from that standard. Another proposition is that the differences between men and women objectively exist and that we should make full use of the fact that there are gender differences. It points out that the previous ontological perspective ignores the existence of women, replaces the overall human experience with male experience, and obliterates the female experience and interests on the excuse of gender neutrality. Women scholars, Gilligan, Belenky and Magda, etc. advocated that we should listen to the "different voices" of women in the development process beyond gender ontology. ^[9] They went beyond the development theory of male centrism, and focused on gender factors, listening to women's experience.

2.2. Gender as social characteristics constructed on "concrete individuals"

The representative figure of the radical constructivism, contemporary feminist Judith Butler fundamentally denied the authenticity of gender ontology, saying that biological sex and social gender is the product of social, political, and cultural construction, "sex is a kind of action (rather than a noun), construct the identity it means" ^[10]. Similarly, anthropologist Margaret Mead falsified the gender mechanism of biological determinism through research on the Samoan girls in puberty, thinking that "if temperamental differences between men and women are biological constitution structural differences, so, no matter in which culture, human should have the same temperament with men and women in Western Europe society ". ^[11] The different gender temperament between Samoan girls and European girls provides empirical data for Mead 's Gender Cultural Determinism. Bourdieu and Holland are also representative figures of "gender" constructivism. However, different from Butler and Mead, they discuss the social environment on gender construction on the basis of affirming the innate biological sex differences. Bourdieu used "symbolic violence" and "gender domination" to explain the social mechanism of gender difference formation in his book *Male Domination*, and believed that men promoted "women to learn the negative morality of restraint, obedience and silence through positive or negative "collective expectation" ^[12], and by putting women in a permanent state of physical insecurity——rely on others and live for others. ^[13] Correspondingly, the development of male and female students' thinking is also undergoing implicit "reproduction" in school education, so that female's thinking development is affected by gender roles in school environment. Holland criticizes the mechanical component of Bourdieu's "reproduction" theory, she points that Bourdieu's theory sees women (or men) as passive objects, passively accepting the expectations society places on them. Drawing on Willis's "production theory" ^[14], she argues that students have tried to create their own culture to resist "authority" or "traditional gender culture" in the process of receiving school education ^[15]. However, she found that in the two schools she studied, women defined themselves in romantic relationships, and unlike men, whose popularity depended on sports, grades and so on, their popularity depended solely on their attractiveness to men. And since this cultural expectation comes from their peer interactions, it is difficult for them to agree on whom to fight against and to form solidarity within the group. In line with Willis's "lads" , who eventually volunteered for their parents' jobs, Holland found that most women also ended up in low-paying, family-oriented jobs. This "reproduction" theory with "production" liberates the

possibility of the liberation of oppressed groups and adds strong evidence to the gender social construction theory.

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that gender is an unquestioned attribute of human beings and the basic characteristics of specific individuals. No matter from the perspective of ontology or constructivism, contempt or respect for gender differences, the theories are carried out on the basis of acknowledging gender differences. This means that the gender issue has become an unavoidable topic in the research on education process quality.

3. The significance of gender perspective on the quality of education process

Process-based education quality can be divided into direct education process quality and indirect education process quality, the former focuses on the degree of students' learning and development status in line with the law of education, the later focus on the degree of school education and teaching activities, student management activities and extracurricular activities in supporting students' learning and development.^[16] Direct educational process quality mainly focuses on students' internal development, while indirect process quality examines the impact of external factors on students' knowledge construction. Therefore, this study mainly discusses the importance of gender perspective in the educational process from these two aspects, students' learning and development process and the influencing factors of institutions.

3.1 The quality of direct education process is regulated by gender factors: there are gender differences in students' learning and development process

For a long time, the development process theory of college students rarely considers the concept of gender, the representatives of traditional theories, Kohlberg^[17], Erickson^[18] and Perry^[19], hold that human development is the development of individuals from one stage to another, showing more complex intelligence and sense of autonomy in the higher stage. Their theories have been criticized by many scholars because of the lack of women sample, and paying no attention to gender differences. After 1970s, the development of feminism, like Gilligan, in her book, *In a Different Voice*, criticizes the traditional moral development theory by regarding women as a deviation from the "standard", and the "standard" just based on the development of males, when women don't comply with people's psychological expected standards, they will be seen as a problem. Gilligan

found that women's development depends on a sense of connection, responsibility and care, rather than on traditional theories based on male norms such as gaining autonomy. ^[20]

Based on the research of Perry and Gilligan, Belenky identifies women's five "epistemological perspectives" perceiving and seeing the world according to women's view of fact, truth, knowledge and authority—— silence, acceptance, subjectivity, procedure and construction. She found their perceptions of selves and cognitive styles are intertwined ^[21], and proved that connection is the core of the intellectual, moral and identity development. Baxter, Magda has made great contributions to the cognitive development theories by including both male and female students in her research. , on the basis of Perry, Gilligan and Belenky's researches, she comprehensively explored male and female college students' cognitive development process. She found that during the period of studying in university, the biggest changes of college students' epistemology development is a decrease in the absolute cognition and an enhancement of independent cognition and situated cognition, they mainly experienced the following stages: absolute knowing, transitional knowing, independent knowing and contextual knowing ^[22]. According to the emergence and development of student voice and their changes in relationship with the authority and the peer groups, she constructed the "gender related" Epistemology Reflection Model, considering that there are two different cognitive reasoning ways, respectively, acceptance or mastery model, interpersonal and impersonal, inter-individual and individual within the model, because of the existence of gender differences in the process of cognitive development. That is, although learning is a "relational activity" for both genders, interpersonal interaction, cooperation and negotiation play a greater role in women's development than men's. ^[23]

The above theoretical models are consistent with each other, and all of them have confirmed that college students' cognition of knowledge and the knowledge of knowing process is staged, which is a process of continuous evolution from simple to complex ^[24]. The findings of Belenky and Magda validate and develop Gilligan's point of view, discovered the differences between the cognitive development process of men and women. Therefore, gender factors directly affect the learning process of students.

3.2 Indirect education process quality is regulated by gender factors: gender differences exist in the impact of colleges on students' development

The quality of process education focuses on the degree to which school educational and teaching activities, student management activities and extracurricular activities support student learning and development, that is,

the impact of school support on student development is an indirect educational process. Researches on the influence of school environment on students' development has excluded their personal background factors, such as gender, for quite a long time, which have been criticized by many empirical and theoretical researchers. As Pascarella and Terenzini, pointed out, a lot of research on the impacts of colleges and universities are based on such a premise, that the students are all homogeneous, the degree and direction of colleges and universities influence on all the students group are by default consistent.^[25] But it is misleading to just focus on the total effect, because it covers the experience of different types of students and the different effects of the same intervention^[26]. In the 1990s, the experts began to reach a consensus, if education research excludes the investigation of shaping effect of students' social cultural background factors, such as gender, the study of students' development process will mean little^[27], that is, student's heterogeneity is non-negligible when research on the college impact. The most important subjects in students' learning process are teachers and peer groups, and the influence of college support on students' learning and cognitive development process mainly comes from the interaction with the above subjects, so the gender difference of college influence mainly lies in the teacher-student interaction and the student-student interaction.

The interaction between students and teachers can be divided into in-class and out-class interaction according to the place the interactions occur. The effect of teacher-student interaction in class depends on the extent to which teachers can mobilize students in class, increasing student participation requires teachers to provide appropriate classroom schedule or learning atmosphere. Research shows that compared with those learning styles that require logical thinking, the ones that require experience and feel can stimulate women's intimacy and engagement better^[28]. But in our classroom, seriousness, logic characteristics are obvious. In addition, teachers unconsciously convey gender discrimination in the course of teaching process, such as the masculine hero image in textbooks and the lack of female role models, and teachers will interact with boys more and set some male characteristics as the struggle standard for girls. Relatively speaking, the extracurricular interaction between teachers and students is more diverse in form and effect. Some studies have found that the time spent in extracurricular interaction with teachers will strengthen students' traditional gender roles, negatively affect girls' learning confidence in traditional male subjects^[29], and hinder girls' but promote boys' pursuit of higher education^[30]. When talking about girls, teachers are less likely to think that effort is an important element of success, while this situation is less likely to happen to men^[31] and^[32]. In conclusion, it can be found that the interaction with teachers in and out of class has different influences on male and female students.

Peer interaction in schools has a positive impact on the development of students^[33]. Peer groups are an important situation for the development of children and adolescents, playing the role of models and norms, encouraging students in the same situation to form similar values and learning attitudes, and promoting each other's academic progress^[34]. Some researchers think that the interactions between peers can meet girls' relationship demands, so the positive impact on women's cognitive development may be greater than men^[35]. But more empirical researches think that gender domination phenomenon exist in the process of peer interaction, in some traditional male field, men have the tendency to scorn and debase the girl contribution, makes women often feel disappointed and self undervalued in coed cooperation projects^[36], which negatively affect women's work and learning performance.^[37]^[38].

4.The construction of gender perspective of education process quality

It is the key to improve the quality of education process to pay attention to the gender characteristics of important quality subjects and adopt different and suitable teaching strategies. The improvement of education quality is inseparable from the joint efforts of teachers and scholars.^[39] Therefore, to improve the quality of the education process, we need to follow these suggestions:

4.1 Pay attention to the "gender" characteristics of quality subjects

First, change students' perceptions, including male and female perceptions of themselves and the opposite sex. Studies have found that each gender cognition will have an impact on the realization of gender equity in the education process. There is an interactive relationship between students' self-perception and the cognition of the opposite sex, which influences the realization of gender equity in the education process.^[40] According to Bourdieu's "gender domination", men's prejudice on women will make them become restrained, submissive and silent. Meanwhile, women often define their own existence through men's perception, leading themselves to a relational, and objective existence, the heteronomy and dependency are consistent with what Holland have found, "women define their own prestige by attracting men in the charming romantic relationships"^[41]. And it's not just women who are repressed by this heteronomy, but also men, they need to be macho on all occasions, thus male privilege in substance gained in the form of long period of stress and tension, in which they are prisoners and victims of their domination appearances.

To sum up, changing traditional social gender concepts is not a "revolution" of "male", but a change of gender expectations imposed by the society on male and female from the perspective of gender, guiding them to have insight and change, so as to promote the common development of both genders. Specifically, in the process of education, both genders need to improve gender sensitivity, abandon the traditional expectations imposed on themselves and the opposite sex by gender, respect and learn from each other cooperatively.

Second, to change teachers' cognition, teachers need to respect students' subjectivity, especially the gender difference of subjects. In Chinese society and culture, teachers and teachers' knowledge have always been regarded as authority, and students have been regarded as educational products in a long period of educational history, existing as objects of universalization, and passively receiving teachers' indoctrination. Therefore, respecting students' learning experience and paying attention to students' needs is an important link of respecting students' subjectivity. At the same time, "gender" is the characteristics of students as specific individuals, and gender equity in the education process emphasizes whether they are treated properly or fairly. ^[42] Some scholars believe that teachers are the initiator of unfair educational process, for example, teachers tend to reinforce traditional gender inequality through curriculum materials, teaching language and interaction. In the meanwhile, they are also direct practitioners of educational process equity. ^[43] "The very negative status of women and girls around the world can be traced back to the different expectations of men and women." ^[44] Therefore, the traditional gender expectation from teachers may be more influential and harmful due to the tradition of respecting teachers and valuing education. The first step to change teachers' cognition is to change teachers' gender stereotypes, and to teach students in accordance with their aptitude according to different preferences of both genders.

4.2 To incorporate "gender" into the formulation of education process quality evaluation standards

First, put the degree of emphasis on gender as an important quality evaluation standard. Quality evaluation standards have a guiding effect on educational practice, and the inclusion of "gender" indicators in educational quality evaluation standards can help educational practitioners enhance their sensitivity. Specifically, setting the indicators of "attention to gender" in the process of teachers' curriculum evaluation and teaching, evaluating whether teachers have made contributions to promoting gender equity in the process of education through the evaluation of whether students of different genders are "treated equally" or "taught according to sex" by teachers. Similarly, the evaluation of the youth league committee, the student union and other relevant administrative

departments should also involve their attention to gender issues, such as whether various competitions and extracurricular activities held by the school give consideration to the strengths and interests of male and female students, and whether there is gender discrimination in the process of competitions or activities.

Second, concern the education process evaluation criteria quality of students of different genders. As important quality subjects, the male and female students do not have the same understanding of "quality" education. Studies have proved that there are gender differences in the influence of teacher-student interaction, peer interaction and extracurricular activities on the development of male and female students.^[45] This means that, students experience gender differences even in the same learning environment. By observing and investigating the real feelings of male and female students and grasping their different evaluation standards for the quality of education process, it is beneficial to improve the educational experience of both genders and to provide satisfactory education for all students.

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