Research on the Path of Improving University Students' Employment Competitiveness from the Perspective of Cultural Capital

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ABSTRACT

With the popularization of higher education and increasingly fierce employment competition, enhancing the employment competitiveness of university students has become highly significant. This article explores pathways to improve their employment competitiveness from the perspective of cultural capital, with a particular focus on its manifestations in language, literature, and the humanities. The study analyzes the theories of cultural capital and university students' employment competitiveness, revealing that cultural capital exists in three forms: embodied, objective, and institutionalized, each closely related to employment competitiveness. It finds that different forms of cultural capital distinctly influence various elements of university students' employment competitiveness. Embodied cultural capital enhances competitiveness through personal literacy and abilities such as language expression and aesthetic cultivation; objective cultural capital provides learning resources that strengthen professional skills, including literary and artistic materials; and institutionalized cultural capital serves as a credible signal of competence and gains recognition from employers. Based on these insights, this article proposes practical pathways to improve employment competitiveness through the accumulation of embodied cultural capital, optimization of objective cultural capital, and acquisition of institutionalized cultural capital, thereby offering clear and targeted conclusions for both theoretical and practical applications.

Keywords: *Cultural capital, University students, Employment competitiveness, Lifting path.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's society, higher education is becoming more and more popular, the scale of university students continues to expand, and the competition in the job market is becoming more and more fierce [1]. In this context, the promotion of university students' employment competitiveness has become the focus of extensive attention from all walks of life [2]. How to make university students stand out in the job market is not only related to individual career development and life planning, but also has a far-reaching impact on the rational allocation of social human resources and the stable development of the economy [3]. As an important form of capital, cultural capital has been deeply studied and widely used in many fields since prerre bourdaud put forward this concept [4]. Cultural capital includes three basic forms. The embodied cultural capital is manifested as the knowledge reserve, skill system and aesthetic cultivation internalized by individuals through long-term study and practice. The objective cultural capital is embodied in books, instruments and other material carriers that carry knowledge content. Institutionalized cultural capital is presented as cultural symbols that have obtained institutional certification, such as academic diplomas and professional qualification certificates. In the field of education and employment, the influence of cultural capital should not be underestimated [5]. From the perspective of education, cultural capital affects students' learning process and academic achievement. Students with rich cultural capital can often better understand and absorb knowledge and achieve better results in their studies [6]. In the employment field, cultural capital also plays a key role. It can reflect the ability and potential of job seekers to a certain extent, and affect the hiring decision of employers [7]. For university students, the accumulation of their

cultural capital largely determines their competitiveness in the job market.

Most of the existing studies focus on the promotion of university students' employment competitiveness. These studies generally focus on the cultivation path of professional skills. Researchers also pay attention to the overall improvement strategy of comprehensive quality. However, the in-depth discussion of cultural capital in academic circles is obviously insufficient [8]. Some scholars have noticed the relationship between cultural capital and employment, but most of these studies remain at the theoretical deduction level and have paid limited attention to specific disciplinary fields such as language and literature. The existing achievements have not yet systematically answered how to effectively utilize cultural capital, especially in forms closely related to humanities literacy, to enhance employment competitiveness, and practical programs with operability are still scarce [9].

In view of this, this article chooses cultural capital as the core analysis perspective, with a focus on its manifestations and impacts in areas such as language, literature, and the arts. The study will analyze the various forms of cultural capital one by one, examining their differentiated impacts on the employment competitiveness of university students, with particular attention to those majoring in humanities disciplines. On this basis, the article explores practical ways to improve competitiveness. This work is expected to expand the theoretical boundary of employment competitiveness research and enrich its disciplinary applicability. Accordingly, universities can optimize education and teaching reform plans with greater disciplinary pertinence; university students, especially those in humanities fields, can obtain more targeted self-development guidelines; and employers can also adjust the theoretical basis of recruitment strategies to better recognize and evaluate diverse forms of cultural capital. The research finally points to two goals: one is the full realization of individual value in the job market, with special consideration for students equipped with humanistic cultural capital; the second is the continuous improvement of the allocation efficiency of social human resources across different professional fields.

2. THEORIES ABOUT CULTURAL CAPITAL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT COMPETITIVENESS

The theory of cultural capital was founded by prerre bourdaud, which pointed out that cultural capital exists in three forms: objectification, objectification and institutionalization. The embodied cultural capital is rooted in the daily practice of individuals. This kind of capital requires learners to invest a long period of time. Individuals gradually internalize all kinds of knowledge through repeated training, and the proficiency of skills is often reflected in muscle memory, and aesthetic taste and behavior habits are quietly formed in this process. These qualities eventually precipitate into an inherent endowment that is difficult for individuals to peel off. Objective cultural capital chooses material form as the carrier of existence. Books, paintings and scientific instruments bear the crystallization of human civilization, and collectors can acquire knowledge resources by possessing these items. However, simple material possession is not the same as the acquisition of cultural ability, and users still need to pay mental labor of interpretation and transformation. This kind of capital thus presents the dual characteristics of transferability but reproduction. Institutionalized cultural capital depends on the authentication system of social authorities. Academic diplomas and vocational qualification certificates become their typical representations. The education system endows individuals with cultural identity through standardized assessment, and employers often regard these credentials as the basis for ability screening. This form of capital makes the cultural value obtain a comparable quantitative scale, which not only simplifies the talent evaluation process, but also reshapes the logic of social stratification [10]. University students' employment competitiveness refers to their ability to obtain and be competent in the job market by virtue of their own abilities and qualities. Its constituent elements are diverse, and professional knowledge and skills are the core, which can ensure that university students are engaged in related work in specific fields; Comprehensive qualities such as communication, cooperation and innovative thinking are also indispensable, which will help them better adapt to the workplace environment and cope with work challenges.

Various forms of cultural capital have different degrees of influence on the elements of university students' employment competitiveness. Physical cultural capital can improve university students' professional knowledge and comprehensive quality, while objective cultural capital provides them with learning resources to strengthen their professional skills, while institutionalized cultural capital is an intuitive proof of their ability and enhances their recognition and competitiveness in the job market.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL CAPITAL ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT COMPETITIVENESS

Different forms of cultural capital, namely, embodied cultural capital, objective cultural capital and institutionalized cultural capital, have various and differentiated influences on the employment competitiveness of university students.

The embodied cultural capital is mainly embodied in the inner qualities and abilities of university students. For example, the long-term accumulated knowledge system enables university students to learn from others in the interview, showing a profound professional background. Good communication and expression skills are also a manifestation of embodied cultural capital, which helps university students to clearly explain their own advantages and career planning in the process of job hunting [11]. As shown in Figure 1, university students with excellent communication skills have a higher pass rate in the initial interview than ordinary students, and the employment rate in teamwork positions has also improved significantly. This kind of embodied cultural capital is gradually accumulated in daily study, reading and participation in various practical activities, which subtly enhances the competitiveness of university students in the job market.

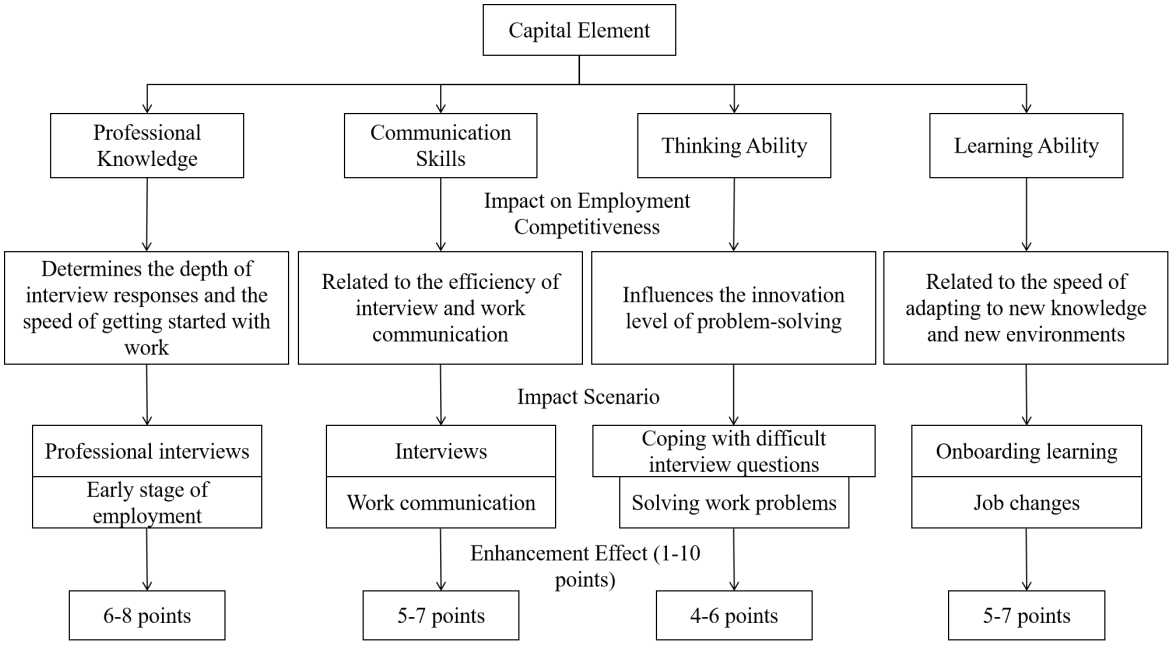


Figure 1 The Impact of Embodied Cultural Capital on Employment Competitiveness.

Objective cultural capital provides rich learning resources for university students. The massive collection of books and advanced laboratory equipment in university libraries belong to the category of objective cultural capital. By using these resources, university students can broaden their knowledge and deepen their professional skills. Taking science and engineering majors as an example, high-quality experimental equipment helps students to better carry out experimental operations and scientific research projects, improve their practical ability and scientific research level, and thus be more favored by enterprises when applying for jobs.

Institutionalized cultural capital has a significant signal function. Academic certificate represents the level and level of university students' education, and it is a stepping stone to enter many enterprises. Vocational qualification certificates show that university students have corresponding

professional abilities in specific fields. For example, the second-class computer certificate and certified public accountant qualification certificate are of great value in the recruitment of related industries. When enterprises screen resumes, they often make a preliminary evaluation of job seekers based on these institutionalized cultural capitals, so that university students with relevant certificates can occupy an advantageous position in the employment competition.

4. WAYS TO IMPROVE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT COMPETITIVENESS BASED ON CULTURAL CAPITAL

Different forms of cultural capital provide multiple paths for enhancing the employment competitiveness of university students. Through targeted strategies, university students can effectively accumulate and optimize all kinds of cultural capital and enhance their competitiveness in the job market.

For the accumulation of embodied cultural capital, university students can broaden their knowledge horizons and deepen their professional understanding by actively participating in academic lectures, seminars and other activities. University students can also participate in community activities, social practice, etc., and exercise their communication, cooperation and leadership skills. Taking joining a business simulation society as an example, students can improve their application ability of professional knowledge and cultivate their teamwork and decision-making ability in the process of simulating business operations. As shown in Figure 2, students who have participated in business simulation clubs for more than one year have an average score of 10 points higher than those who have not participated in the evaluation of teamwork ability, and their scores have increased by about 15 points in the evaluation of professional knowledge application ability. Self-study and reading are also important ways to accumulate physical cultural capital. By extensively dabbling in professional books and interdisciplinary knowledge, university students can enrich their knowledge reserves and improve their comprehensive quality.

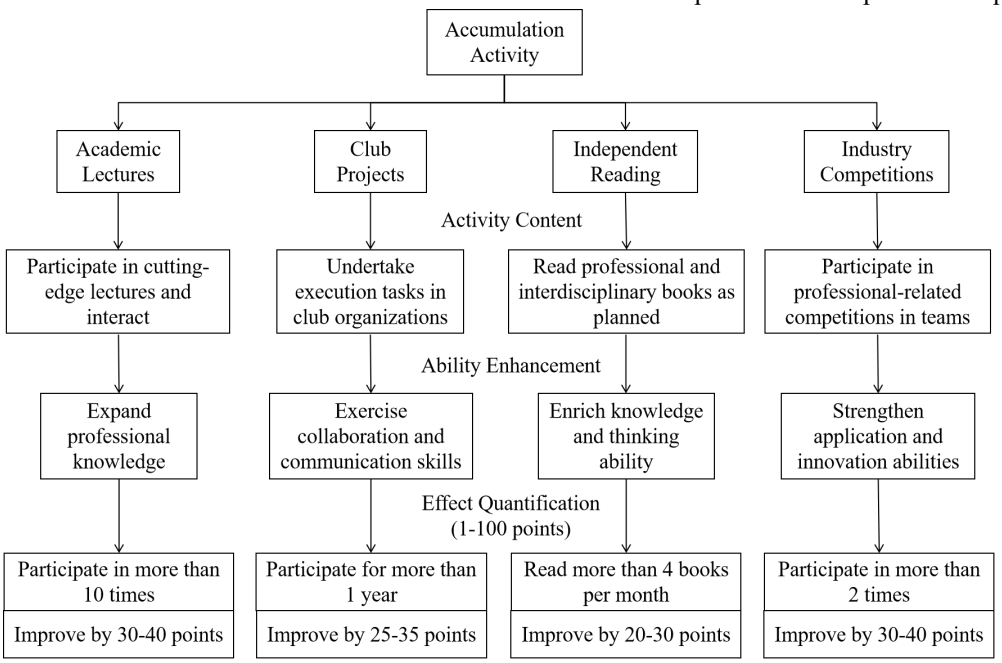


Figure 2 Activities for Accumulating Embodied Cultural Capital and Their Effects.

Universities should assume the main responsibility in optimizing objective cultural capital. Universities should continue to increase investment in the construction of library resources, systematically broaden the coverage of collection disciplines, and actively introduce cutting-edge professional works and interdisciplinary classics. At the same time, it is needed to regularly update the basic laboratory instruments and equipment, provide an experimental platform that meets the industry standards for science and engineering students, and support students to carry out original scientific research training by improving hardware conditions. In addition, universities should also

focus on upgrading the campus information infrastructure, independently develop an integrated online learning management system, integrate high-quality large-scale online open course resources, and build a digital academic knowledge base. These measures point to a common goal: to systematically enhance the support of objective cultural capital for the development of students' professional ability through resource integration, advanced equipment and digital platform.

The process of university students acquiring institutionalized cultural capital needs scientific career planning guidance. Students should first make clear the long-term direction of personal career development, and combine the access standard and post competency model of the target industry to choose the matching professional qualification certification project. For example, students who intend to enter the field of marketing can apply for the certification of digital marketer, and students who plan to join the financial industry should prepare for the qualification examination of securities or funds. The employment guidance center of universities should also take the initiative to intervene in the whole process of obtaining certificates: analyze the social recognition and gold content of various certificates by setting up special lectures, and organize mock exams to help students master test-taking strategies and time allocation skills. In addition, students need to carefully evaluate the marginal benefits of academic upgrading, and on this basis, choose to pursue a master's degree to deepen theoretical accumulation in professional fields, or participate in overseas exchange programs to expand their international academic horizons. The above paths together constitute a progressive system of "planning-selection-support-promotion", aiming at enhancing the signal transmission efficiency of individuals in the talent market, so as to build a closed loop for the acquisition of institutionalized cultural capital.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the perspective of cultural capital theory, this paper discusses the promotion path of university students' employment competitiveness. It is found that the theory of cultural capital provides a novel analytical framework for analyzing the formation mechanism of employment competitiveness. Cultural capital has three forms: objectification, objectification and institutionalization. There is a close interaction between them and the employment competitiveness of university students, and the influence mechanism is also different.

Embodied cultural capital affects the comprehensive performance of university students in the job market by shaping their professional knowledge depth, language expression and communication skills, innovative thinking and other internal qualities. As an important carrier of learning resources, objective cultural capital provides strong support for students to deepen their professional skills. Institutionalized cultural capital, with academic credentials and vocational qualification certificates as carriers, transmits the ability signal of university students to the job market, which directly affects the selection decision of employers.

Based on the above mechanism, this study puts forward three differentiated promotion paths: university students should actively participate in academic lectures, professional competitions and cultural and sports practice activities, and immerse themselves in accumulating embodied cultural capital; The management of universities should continue to increase the investment in books, materials, experimental equipment and other resources, and promote resource integration and platform upgrade; Individual students should combine career planning to enhance the reserve and signal effect of institutionalized cultural capital. These three paths complement each other in practice and jointly build a multi-dimensional employment competitiveness promotion system.

The main conclusions of this study are as follows: First, cultural capital is a significant explanatory variable influencing the employment competitiveness of university students, with its three forms functioning at the levels of intrinsic literacy, resource support, and institutional certification, respectively. Second, enhancing employment competitiveness requires a systematic pathway driven by the synergy of "individual–higher education institutions–institutions," as interventions at a single level yield limited effects. Third, this study introduces the explanatory dimension of cultural capital into the theory of employment competitiveness and provides actionable guidelines for university students, higher education institutions, and employers in practice.

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