

## **Sociology and pedagogy: two different perspectives of the essence theory of vocational education**

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**Keywords:** Sociology; pedagogy; vocational education

**Abstract:** Sociology and pedagogy discuss the essence of vocational education from different angles, showing completely different horizons. Sociology focuses on the role of vocational education in social structure and social mobility, and emphasizes the influence of social factors on career development. Pedagogy pays more attention to the educational process itself, teaching methods and learning results. These two different perspectives have their unique values, but there are also complementarities. To sum up, the nature of vocational education is complex and multidimensional. It is not only a tool to provide specific skills and knowledge, but also involves multi-level issues such as social mobility and economic growth. Integrating the viewpoints and research methods of sociology and pedagogy can better meet the needs of modern society for high-quality vocational education. This comprehensive approach is expected to provide more comprehensive guidance for formulating more effective vocational education policies and promoting social equity and economic prosperity. Therefore, the collaborative research and cooperation between sociology and pedagogy is of great significance in the field of vocational education, which is helpful to shape a more forward-looking education system to meet the evolving social needs.

### **1. Introduction**

Vocational education is an important form of education, and its essence covers many aspects, including cultivating vocational skills, improving employment opportunities and promoting personal and social development. Vocational education also emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning. Due to the constant changes in technology and market, professionals need to constantly update and upgrade their skills to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. Vocational education contributes to social and economic development [1]. By providing more choices for talent training, it can improve the quality of the labor force and promote innovation and economic growth. The essence of vocational education lies in providing students with practical skills, defining career orientation, meeting market demand and promoting social and economic development. It is an important part of the education system, which provides practical career opportunities for individuals and contributes to social progress and prosperity.

Vocational education has always been a hot research topic in the field of education. Sociology and pedagogy are two different but complementary disciplines, which provide different perspectives to explore the essence of vocational education [2]. Vocational education plays an important role in today's society, aiming at cultivating students' skills and knowledge needed in specific vocational fields. However, the nature of vocational education and how to best implement it have always been the research focus in the fields of sociology and pedagogy.

Sociology and pedagogy, as two important subject fields, respectively discuss the complexity of human society and education system. However, when they understand the nature of vocational education, they often present a completely different perspective. As a key branch of education, vocational education aims to provide students with skills and knowledge so that they can better integrate into the workplace and achieve career success. The different perspectives of sociology and pedagogy on vocational education reflect the research focus of the discipline itself and the key issues emphasized by researchers to some extent. This paper will explore these two different perspectives to help us understand the essence of vocational education and its importance in modern

society more comprehensively.

## **2. Sociological theory on the nature of vocational education**

Sociology's theory of the essence of vocational education is a branch of discipline that discusses the role and importance of vocational education in social structure and function. It focuses on how social background, culture, system and social changes have an impact on vocational education, and how vocational education plays a role in responding to social needs, shaping social structure and providing individual opportunities.

Sociological theory of the essence of vocational education emphasizes the close relationship between vocational education and social background. It studies the vocational education system in different social and cultural environments, such as differences in different countries, regions or social groups [3-4]. This includes the objectives, contents, organizational structure and ways of integrating into social development of vocational education. The essence of vocational education in sociology discusses the role of vocational education in social functions. Vocational education is not only to cultivate skills and knowledge, but also plays a role in social socialization, career development, social mobility and social order maintenance. This theory helps us understand how vocational education shapes the future of society.

The essence of vocational education in sociology also studies how social changes affect the evolution of vocational education. With the change of society and technology, the demand of professional field is changing constantly. Vocational education must constantly adapt to these changes to meet the needs of society. This includes technological innovation, globalization and demographic changes. The essence of vocational education in sociology pays attention to how vocational education affects social inequality [5]. It studies the differences of career opportunities among different social groups and whether the vocational education system helps to narrow or expand these gaps. This theory helps us to think about how to provide vocational education opportunities more fairly.

Finally, the essence of vocational education in sociology also pays attention to the influence of globalization on vocational education. With the strengthening of globalization, vocational education is no longer limited to national boundaries, but needs to consider international competition and cooperation. This theory helps us to understand how to link vocational education with global society and economy [6].

Generally speaking, the essence of vocational education in sociology emphasizes the complex relationship between vocational education and society. It provides a profound theoretical framework and helps us to better understand the importance of vocational education and how to shape and improve society through vocational education. The research in this field provides useful insights for policy makers, educators and social scientists to help them better meet the needs and challenges of society.

## **3. On the nature of vocational education in pedagogy**

Vocational education has always been a field of great concern in pedagogy, which focuses on how to cultivate students who adapt to a specific vocational field so that they can succeed in the workplace [7-8]. The essence of vocational education is an important branch of pedagogy, which focuses on the nature, objectives and principles of vocational education. Vocational education is a kind of education aimed at a specific vocational field, which aims to train students to master the necessary knowledge, skills and professionalism to be competent for a specific occupation or industry. It emphasizes not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical application and practical skills.

The essence of vocational education is to provide students with knowledge and skills closely related to their future careers, so that they can successfully enter and flourish in specific vocational fields. Essence theory emphasizes that the goal of vocational education is to cultivate talents with practical professional ability, not just to provide abstract theoretical knowledge. The main goal of

vocational education is to make students have professional quality, professional skills and professional ethics [9]. Students should be able to work independently in a specific professional environment, solve problems and constantly adapt to the development and changes of the industry.

The key point of essentialism lies in:

**Practice-oriented:** The essence theory of vocational education emphasizes practical application and practice, and holds that students need to accumulate experience in real professional environment to improve their professional ability.

**Adaptability and flexibility:** Essentialism points out that vocational education must flexibly adapt to the ever-changing vocational needs and technological progress to ensure that students have the latest skills after graduation.

**Professional ethics:** students should understand and abide by professional ethics and moral standards in order to maintain professional ethics and social responsibility.

The essence theory of vocational education emphasizes the importance of educational methods. This includes the integration of internship, tutor system, curriculum and educational resources to ensure that students get the most comprehensive vocational education. Vocational education plays an important role in social and economic development. It not only provides employment opportunities for individuals, but also contributes to the competitiveness of industries and countries. The essence theory of vocational education emphasizes its key role in shaping future professional talents and promoting social progress.

Generally speaking, the essence theory of vocational education plays an important guiding role in the field of pedagogy. It emphasizes the unique nature of vocational education, highlights the importance of practice and practical skills, and guides how to better train students to adapt to the changing professional environment. This theory helps vocational education institutions and educators to better meet the needs of students and society, thus promoting the further development and improvement of vocational education.

#### **4. The focus of differences between the two essentialism**

There are a series of important differences between the essence of vocational education in sociology and that in pedagogy. These differences are not only related to the objectives and methods of vocational education, but also related to how to cultivate professional strength to adapt to the changing social and economic environment.

##### **4.1. The goal of education**

The essence of vocational education in sociology emphasizes the cultivation of students' sense of social responsibility, critical thinking and social consciousness. They believe that vocational education is not only to cultivate technical and vocational skills, but also to train students to become active social citizens and have the ability to participate in society. In contrast, the essence of vocational education in pedagogy focuses more on providing students with practical vocational skills and knowledge to meet the market demand and employers' expectations. These two different goals reflect different philosophical orientations of education.

##### **4.2. Educational methods**

Sociological theory of the nature of vocational education emphasizes the socialization of education and the importance of education in order to shape students' social concepts and values. They advocate that education should provide a wider range of social science education to help students understand social problems and challenges. On the contrary, the essence of vocational education in pedagogy pays more attention to technical training and practical operation, emphasizing practicality and employment opportunities. These different methods have produced obvious differences in the design and implementation of education.

##### **4.3. Social change and professional needs**

Sociological theory of the nature of vocational education usually pays more attention to the

influence of social change and globalization on occupations, and emphasizes that students need to adapt to the ever-changing vocational environment. They stressed the importance of social problems and sustainable development. On the contrary, the essence of vocational education in pedagogy may pay more attention to technological change and market demand, and emphasize preparation for employment. These different focuses will affect the course design and the direction of career planning.

#### **4.4. Evaluation and quality of education**

Sociological nature theory of vocational education tends to emphasize the social impact of education and students' social participation, and they may prefer to use qualitative research methods to evaluate the quality of education [10]. In contrast, the essence of vocational education in pedagogy may focus more on the quantitative evaluation of skills and knowledge, and it is more likely to use quantitative research methods to evaluate the educational effect. This difference has caused controversy in the formulation of educational policies and quality standards.

In a word, there are many divergent focuses between the essence of vocational education in sociology and that in pedagogy, covering educational objectives, methods, social needs and quality evaluation. These differences reflect the research orientation and philosophical views of different disciplines, and also provide different perspectives and possibilities for the future of vocational education. Understanding these differences can help educational decision makers to better formulate vocational education policies and practices.

#### **5. Conclusions**

Sociology and pedagogy have completely different perspectives on the essence of vocational education, but this does not mean that they are antagonistic or uncoordinated. In fact, these two different perspectives can complement each other and help us to understand the essence of vocational education more comprehensively. Sociology emphasizes the role of vocational education in social structure and social mobility, and emphasizes the influence of social factors on career development. Pedagogy pays more attention to the educational process itself, focusing on teaching methods and learning results. These two perspectives have their unique value in understanding the role of vocational education. The research methods and viewpoints of sociology and pedagogy should be combined to better meet the needs of modern society for high-quality vocational education. This comprehensive approach will help to formulate more effective vocational education policies to ensure that students can succeed in the ever-changing professional environment, and also help to promote social equity and economic prosperity. Therefore, in the field of vocational education, the collaborative research and cooperation between sociology and pedagogy will bring greater benefits to the future education system.

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