

## Original Paper

# The Construction of Career Education in Senior High School under the Field Perspective

Hairong Ling<sup>1,2</sup>, Ruotong Cui<sup>1</sup>, Juntong Cui<sup>1</sup>, Jing Wu<sup>1,2</sup>, Chunze Song<sup>2,3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Education Science, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, China

<sup>2</sup> General Education Center, Communication University of China, Nanjing, China

<sup>3</sup> School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pinang, Malaysia

\* Corresponding Author: Chunze Song, School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pinang, 11800, Malaysia. E-mail: songcz666@gmail.com

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### Abstract

*In the deep-seated transformation of senior high school education catalysed by the reform of the college entrance examination, the function of career education in senior high school has garnered attention. This paper examines career education in senior high school through the lens of Bourdieu's theory of the field. It is not only significant for theoretical reconstruction but also for re-understanding of methodology. It highlights the necessity of viewing the propelling role of capital and power, particularly cultural capital, from a relational perspective within its structural context. In addition, the process is examined in terms of the significance of the distinct habits that shaped its construction and practical logic. The career field in senior high school emphasize 'value leadership' and 'personal growth', moulding field habits through the interplay of relationships within the field and interactions with other fields, such as the 'college field' and the 'workplace field'. This interaction contributes to the development of field behaviours and stimulates the psychological field's growth and transformation. It aids actors in generating their patterns of practice, thereby attaining the dual objectives of intellectual and social construction and development.*

### Keywords

*Career education, Senior high school, Field, Structural construction, Educational value*

## 1. Introduction

Since the late 1970s, the sociological theory of Bourdieu, a contemporary French theorist with international influence, has been introduced to China (Xu, 2003) and has had a significant impact on

education in China. Among them, field theory has garnered significant attention from academics. ‘Field’ is not only the central concept of Bourdieu's sociological theory but also one of the most influential concepts in the study of education. The ‘field’, which refers to ‘a network or configuration of objective relations between various positions’ (Bourdieu et al., 1998), is a crucial instrument for social research. Methodologically, it entails ‘thinking in terms of the field concept or relationships by’ (Bourdieu et al., 1998). Large and tiny social activity sectors exist depending on their location and relationships. As an element of human social activities education, like other social phenomena, is an objective form of practice, a relational existence or field. The same holds for secondary school career education. Since it is a ‘field’, it will reflect the characteristics of a field and be influenced by its methodology; therefore, it must be viewed through the lens of the concept of field. Discussing career education in senior high school from the perspective of field not only has the meaning of reconstructing theory but also has the meaning of reconceptualizing methodology.

## **2. The Value of Constructing Career Education in Senior High School on Field Perspective**

### *2.1 Presentation of the Career Education Field in Senior High School*

The role of career education in senior high school has garnered attention and become a popular topic as a result of the college entrance examination reform, which has led to profound changes in high school education. Numerous scholars have re-examined high school career education from the perspective of the background of college entrance examination reform, and have debated and constructed its top-level design, implementation path, and specific tasks. Liu and Wang (2016) discussed the dilemma of high school education under the college entrance examination reform and considered the implementation of high school career education as a solution. Fan and Qiao (2017) believed that the new college entrance examination reform has compelled high schools to strengthen career education. Gu and Wei (2019) constructed the system of high school career education based on the re-discussions of its practical significance and value demands after Liu had re-examined the objectives, tasks, and implementation ideas of high school career education (Liu, 2015). The reform of college entrance examinations has prompted a re-evaluation of career education in senior high school and a reorganization of the system. It is, in a sense, the presentation of career education in standard secondary schools. The field of power is a meta-field, according to Bourdieu, and the field of education is a limited, autonomous field that is constrained by the field of power and has a counter-effect on it (Jiang, 2002). The ‘power field’ behind the college entrance examination reform promotes changes in the ‘education field’ of high school, which in turn promotes changes in the ‘career education field’. Lastly, these alterations push the readjustment of the ‘power field’. For instance, the new college entrance examination reform program in Zhejiang Province (the ‘power field’) has brought about drastic changes in the educational field in the actual implementation process, which has led to the re-discussion of ‘career education in high school’ and provided references for other provinces. When programs in Jiangsu and other provinces were implemented, for instance, the decline in the number of students choosing physics courses had

been balanced.

In addition, the field of high school career education is reflected not only in the influence of the current change of the 'power field' on its field but also in the logic of the inner development of the 'field' and the object relationship between the 'field' and the 'field' as well as the influence of this object relationship on its development. Career education has been referred to as 'vocational guidance', 'vocational counselling', 'career planning guidance', and 'career development education' in various eras and various countries. The reason for the name change is not only the modification of career education's objectives and orientation but also the modification of the objective relationship between career education and other social disciplines. According to the American schooler Super, 'career, the direction and course of events in a person's life unites the various occupations and roles that a person plays throughout his or her life, and thus expresses the unique form of personal self-development' (Shen, 2000). In addition to the changes in its field, the interaction with other object relations has been internalized in the interrelationship of this self-development form as its inherent generative logic. Consequently, the career education field is objectively related not only to the educational field but also to other social fields (such as the professional field, the national field, the community field, etc.) and forms an internal 'generative structure' in the process.

## *2.2 Significance of the Career Education Field in Senior High School*

The location of the senior high school career education field is unique. In terms of the internal field of the individual, it is at a significant transitional point in space and time, and in terms of psychological level, it is at the exploration phase of career development, which requires consideration of both the objective physics of material structure and the constructive phenomenology of cognitive form. Senior high school marks the end of fundamental education and the commencement of higher education with other disciplines. It belongs to both the 'basic education field' and the 'higher education field'. At the same time, senior high school are confronted with the task of filling out volunteer applications and making life choices, and they will gradually become closely connected with other social fields, such as the corporate field and the professional field. In the actual sphere of education, specific issues such as 'dialogue', 'interaction', 'interpersonal relationship', 'test-taking', etc. present a complex sense of the problem and practice. The 'rules of the game' and 'field habits' (such as the logic of power) comprise a particular logic of practice. Consequently, career education in senior high school under the field perspective is not only education nor psychology, but also a synthesis of pedagogy, psychology, and sociology, and its inherent 'generative structure' may be more appropriate.

Currently, the importance of the career education field in senior high school is widely acknowledged, but there is little discussion of its inevitable objective relationship space and its logic, and even the exploration of its system focuses primarily on the design of 'high school career education' itself, without an understanding of 'relationship and relationship' in its position. The methodological approach often tends to lapse into individualism or holism. The 'field, the space of contestation', seeks to contest the dimensional order or modify the configuration of forces in the field. What are these

mysterious, active forces? What is their role in the field? How are relationships established? How does the field of senior high school career education's 'inner generative structure' form and function? How do the subfields within the larger field develop their own 'intrinsic generative structures' and interact with other subfields and the larger field? These questions compel us to consider career education in the context of senior high school so that we can use generative thinking to transcend limitations and reflect on ourselves, or to reflect on ourselves from the outside in. The use of relationism in methodology makes the career education research in senior high school without falling into dualistic choices and to concentrate on its formation, not only to discover its regularity and predictability but also to make it creative and transcendent.

### **3. The Emphasis on Career Education Field in Senior High School**

#### *3.1 Basic Explanation of the Discipline of Career Education Field in Senior High School*

Compared to other fields, the educational field has unique characteristics, and its relationship and power structures are also distinct. What is the educational field? Scholars from China also attempted to define the educational field. As Liu (2006) explains, 'the educational field refers to an objective network of relationships among educators, educated people and other educational participants, which is based on the production, transmission, dissemination and consumption of knowledge, and aims at the development, formation and enhancement of human beings.' According to Huang et al., 'the educational field is a network of relationships formed between participants of educational activities, with the transmission, transfer, production, and consumption of knowledge as its core and human development as its objective' (Huang & Wang, 2020). Although there have been few discussions on the concept of the educational field, it is clear that the educational field is more than just the scope of social field theory; it also includes the pedagogical position, and the interaction between different subjects in the cultural field of educational field is closely related to knowledge and culture. In addition, in many studies such as '\* \* \* in the \* \* \* educational field', the concept of the educational field is not discussed, but it is simple to see from its content that the 'educational field' has become a common-sense concept, and most of the default is the school itself. The field of education is a cultural field mediated by cultural capital, and its primary power is culture.

As a 'subfield' of education, career education in senior high school possesses both the substance of sociology of education and the function of career education. Based on 'career theory knowledge', it is a network of objective relations that promote students' self-awareness, external environment inquiry, and future-related career choices in practice. In this process, the world shapes individuals while individuals give the world meaning. It is simple to see that, unlike other disciplines of high school subject education, career education should focus not only on objectivist physics with its material structure, but also on constructivist phenomenology with its emphasis on cognitive forms. It must be logically consistent in epistemology and have universal applicability, but it must also have phenomenological analysis to embody the schema of both mind and body and to function as a symbolic paradigm

containing 'sub-fields'. Its knowledge consists not only of epistemological knowledge, but also of practical and symbolic significance, the unification of practice-knowledge-symbolic authority. The transmission of career-theoretical knowledge is not the ultimate educational objective; the growth and development of students' endogenous nature is, and 'happiness' and 'justice' should receive priority attention. Many scholars suggest that the reform of college entrance examination aims to give students more 'choice', and behind the 'choice' is the difference of 'possible life' and the possibility of happiness as the ultimate goal of human beings, but 'justice' is the background and guarantee of 'possible life'. The logic of educational practice based on 'relationship-schema-behaviour' should be utilized in terms of methodology. The logic of practice is more essential than the logic of knowledge in life education. In cognitive logic, knowledge is 'truth' and 'agreement'; however, in career education, knowledge is verified and enriched in practice not as 'absolute truth' but as 'relative truth.' It is 'relative truth' rather than 'absolute truth'. In this field, the relationship with other fields is especially essential and deserving of consideration, and the realistic issues arising from the interaction, such as power struggle, must also be approached with caution. To understand the career education field in senior high school, it is necessary to pay attention to the driving role of capital and power, primarily cultural capital, in its structural relationship, and to investigate the constructive meaning and practical logic of its distinctive habits. Each will be explained in the future.

### *3.2 Central Concerns of the Discipline of Career Education Field in Senior High School*

When considering the domain of career education in senior high school through a relational lens, this 'relationship' is the object relationship, which Marx defines as 'independent of individual consciousness and individual will' (Gao, 2012) and not the interaction between actors or the subjective connection between individuals. It is consistent with the concept of postmodern career education to put the career education field of senior high school in the relationship. Savickas et al. (1994) suggested that a more comprehensive and unified framework should be utilized to examine the laws governing individual career development to address the shortcomings of conventional career education, which place an excessive emphasis on personal factors and insufficient emphasis on environmental factors (Leong & Hartung, 2000), the disconnect between theory and practice (McMahon & Patton, 2018), the absence of correlation between theories, as well as the absence of interdisciplinary perspectives. To tackle these concerns, Pat and McMahon collaboratively introduced the Systems Theory Framework (STF). This construct entails individuals being nested in a multifaceted context as they construct the significance of their professional lives. The construct comprises process elements as well as content elements. The content elements comprise personal systems, interpersonal social systems, and environmental-social systems, and all three content systems undergo dynamic changes over time within the temporal context. These systems engage in perpetual internal and external interactions, both interpenetrating and accomplishing advances and changes cyclically. As they develop in their careers, individuals use narratives to establish connections between these ostensibly unrelated elements, identify their interrelationships, and construct meaning (HOU et al., 2014). While STF systems theory

does illustrate the components and origins of systematic individual construction of career meaning, it should also be noted that it is individual-centric and examines the micro-level about the meso and macro. As a result, it is unavoidable that one aspect may overshadow the other. ‘Open concepts must be introduced into a system to define these concepts,’ as Bourdieu noted. (Bourdieu et al., 1998). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1998) has been striving to liberate it from the constraints of conventional dualism by rejecting the strict differentiation between the internal and external, the conscious and unconscious, and corporeal language. Career education for senior high school is, in this sense, actually monistic, not only in terms of the relationship between subject and object but also in terms of the ‘ontological fit’ between the societally constructed principle of perception and judgment and the world that determines this principle and perception. This spatial relationship involves two crucial components: habitus and capital, from which the corresponding logic of practice derives.

Particular attention should be paid to the game and interaction between structure, capital, and power in the career education field of senior high school, especially the subjectivity of cultural capital (cultural power). Cultural capital, which consists of inherited cultural heritage, wisdom, disposition, and abilities, is a cultural product that must be preserved through a variety of educational initiatives (Bourdieu, 1986). What is cultural capital as it pertains to career education in secondary schools? How is it transmitted? How additional forms of capital—economic capital, social capital, and symbolic capital—are incorporated into the transmission process and alter the field's structure are all factors deserving of consideration. The prominence of high school career education has been elevated as a result of educational reforms, and numerous academicians contend that career education represents the most dependable approach to tackle and execute the urgent matter of students' autonomy in decision-making (Liu, 2015; Liu & Wang, 2016). Although this perspective is undeniably significant in advancing high school career education, the fact that there are still numerous contradictions and conflicts in the high school career education field cannot be overlooked. The power field (administrative field) significantly influences the significance of high school career education; however, the subjectivity of cultural power (cultural capital), the most influential medium in the educational field, is rarely emphasized. In the dominant power field (administrative field), the absence of cultural power (cultural capital) has obvious consequences, including misaligned subject selection, pragmatic major selection, an emphasis on ‘real economy’ implementation at the expense of ‘inner culture’ orientation, and an emphasis on present rewards at the expense of future considerations. These are typical examples. Although the field comprises ‘power relations and struggle relations,’ the organizational functions that are shared by all are merely surface-level. The underlying nature of the field is determined by competition and conflict (Bourdieu et al., 1998). Moreover, this competition and conflict are what imbue the field with vitality and perpetual motion. It is beneficial to shed light on the competition and discord in the field of senior high school career education and transform the discord into motivation to remain active.

The function of ‘habitus’ in career education within senior high school is scrutinized in terms of its

impact on internal relations, the competition between capital powers, and the ensuing logic of practice. 'Habitus is a sense of practice that sustainably equips the generative dynamics of planned improvisation and revitalizes the objectified meanings in the system... It is formed in a particular history, imposing its particular logic on the embodiment through which the actor subordinates himself to the objectified history of the institution' (Bourdieu & Jiang, 2003). A 'two-way ambiguous relationship' can be described as existing between habitus and field (Bourdieu et al., 1998). They are, on the one hand, cognitively constructed knowledge relationships in which the habitus imparts significance and worth to the field, and, on the other, mutually constraining relationships in which the field influences the habitus and the habitus embodies its inherent inevitable properties. In the context of career education in senior high school, what is habituation? What distinguishes inertia among various subfields? In what ways do these practices function as 'knowledge of knowledge' and as a means of observation and construction? The phenomenology of high school career education grounded in sociology necessitates the identification of variables and variables; examining these components is valuable for discerning commonalities and understanding the evolution of distinctions.

#### **4. Structure of Career Education Field in Senior High School**

Numerous scholars have indeed deliberated on the establishment of career education systems in secondary schools, which is crucial and potent for reestablishing a long-deficient career education field. However, the establishment of career education fields in secondary schools as a whole encompasses considerably more than that, and its fundamental nature has yet to be fully elucidated. The configuration of the career education field in senior high school is an object relationship with two possible outcomes. The allocation and utilization of diverse material resources, referred to by numerous scholars as primary objectivity, and the classification systems embodied in the dual schema of mind and body, referred to as secondary objectivity, are the other two aspects. Classification systems and schemas function as symbolic paradigms through diverse practical activities undertaken by actors in the respective field. Secondary objectivity is not solely examined within the context of career education psychology, as exemplified by the view of Shi and Xu that high school course selection reflects the subjectivity and independence of the individual (Shi & Xu, 2006). Rather, it also encompasses the practical logic of the symbolic paradigm's objectivity. The focal point of career education is the tangible aspects of professional knowledge. However, knowledge can also be obtained from the world and individuals themselves, as well as from the accomplishments and power dynamics among various classes or groups (e.g., families, schools, students, and society), as well as from the semantic connections that exist between them. This inevitably results in a 'double reading': one interpretation identifies each group as a material existence of the object, outlining its association through measurement, material observation, etc., and the other interprets the individual as possessing practical knowledge of the world and employing it in their daily lives, which is constructivist association. Exploration of the objective material world and deconstruction and reconstruction of the subjective

world are thus intertwined in the field of career education. This is not merely the accumulation of individual strategies and categorization behaviours but also the absolute true perception and investigation of knowledge. Career education is characterized by both ‘appearance and will’ (Schopenhauer) and objective structures. Furthermore, field theory prioritizes holistic and relational thinking, placing particular emphasis on culturally significant meanings, historical dynamics, and the practical experience of individuals. This approach serves as the methodological foundation for career education in secondary schools. The career education field of senior high school is significantly influenced by the multiple capital competitions centered around the ‘score.’ The multiple capital competition that underpins the ‘score,’ including the ‘second generation of officials,’ ‘second generation of rich,’ and ‘second generation of academics,’ among others, raises issues such as the distribution of interests among different social classes, the struggle for cultural capital power, and the problem of distinct regional ‘section fields’. These concerns necessitate the reproduction and conversion practices of various capitals, in addition to the issue of regional ‘section fields.’ This has significantly influenced the development of the discipline, sparking a discourse on the notions of equity and happiness with the influence of career education on personal decisions and future progress. Conversely, the influence of career education on high school decision-making and career choices has an ‘endogenous structure’ and a distinct set of practical logic concerning time and space. This endogenous logic of practice is heavily influenced by all types of capital, but cultural capital in particular, and is pertinent not only now but also in the future.

Regarding senior high school career education, ‘relationships’ are crucial. Being an integral component of society, it encompasses and is engaged in a wide variety of relationships. The development of ‘education’ and the growth of the ‘person’ are of greater concern to educationalists than they are to sociologists, who examine education solely in the context of social facts. Its most fundamental aspect is the question of ‘adulthood’ (Ye, 2008), and its central concern is the formation of individuals through the educational process (Shi, 1999). ‘Value leadership’ and ‘focus on human life growth’ are unquestionably the driving forces of contemporary pedagogy in the realm of vocation education. They attest to the renewal of human life and value, which in turn signifies the advancement of social civilization and culture. ‘Pedagogy is the study of mankind’ (Xiang, 2000) is the defining characteristic that distinguishes pedagogy from the social sciences chaos and grants it an irreplaceable legitimacy. With this value orientation serving as a guiding principle, the domain of career education, on the one hand, undertakes ‘the study of career education’, which entails examining the foundation, validity, and rationality of individuals’ endeavours to obtain career-related information and develop career concepts. Conversely, it is not merely a ‘user’ of career theoretical knowledge; rather, it is an indispensable component of the field of career knowledge creation, and in practice, it uncovers the latent educational potential of individual personality development. As Walcott stated, it is crucial, on the one hand, to adhere to the methodological essence of the ‘field’ when constructing the domain of career education, and on the other hand, to ‘use it and not be afraid of deforming it’ (Bourdieu et al., 1998). It is essential

to distinguish it from other disciplines, including the political, economic, and artistic spheres, among others, and to provide a fundamental definition of it. Career education, in a sense, directs attention toward how individuals can achieve self-actualized pleasure and thus experience greater happiness. The field power is generated through the practical activities of individuals, which also give rise to the 'conflict' of diverse values and objectives and the cohesion of the power of shared values. However, the existence of multiple values ultimately indicates the positive impact and transformative potential of career education. Inevitably, general high school career education will ultimately center on the formation of 'individuals' and investigate the consequences of personalized decisions on their future, given the nature of this field. Furthermore, it is not merely bound to be a subfield of the 'power field' meta field. In due course, the score-only evaluation system must be dismantled, and career education must incorporate values that are both personal and societal (Lin, 2016). Diverse educational values constitute, in a sense, a three-dimensional system of value forces within the field of career education.

Hence, the structure of career education in senior high school can be described as 'a spatial-temporal configuration or open relational structure shaped by practice' (Liu, 2018). The concept encompasses not solely the physical social space, which is influenced by natural space and becomes imbued with human behaviour and social connections, but also the metaphysical spiritual space, which is not tangible but comprises elements such as human civilization, language, symbols, psychology, and interaction (Wang, 2014). Human beings utilize 'practice' as an intermediary to establish communication between their consciousness, ideas, and thoughts and the natural environment in which they reside. The individual in the relationship is a 'true human being' in the sense that they embody both a social and collective 'subjectivation' and are a live individual. This spatio-temporal configuration is the intersection of individual tendencies and social collectivity, as well as the result of the coupling of human history and the present circumstance (Hu, 2013). 'Human reality' refers to the 'spatiality of human existence', which is the temporal and spatial unification of 'humanity, culture, and society'. Moreover, the fundamental purpose of career education is to generate and actualize value. It can be considered that the domain of career education during high school is the 'field' where the immediate and long-term potential for career advancement is formed and discharged. Its fundamental field force consists of 'leading by values' and 'concentrating on the development of human life'. Its focal point is the creation and renewal of human life and values, which will inevitably result in the advancement and revitalization of social civilization and culture. This educational value is established through the relationship configuration between a particular subject and its behaviour practice and is present in daily life. In the process of human personality development and refinement, educational significance is reflected in the formation of relational constructions, and historicity and spatiality are embedded in numerous visible and invisible forms of relations.

Furthermore, the career education field in senior high school is situated in a diversity of relational states or forms in daily life and practice. Education leads learning, which is fundamentally a continuous and methodical process. This procedure is founded upon experience, which may originate from the

interplay of various relationships (Hu, 2013). 'Learning experiences may arise from planned/unplanned learning, from formal or informal settings, from various types of learning sites, from interactions with a variety of people, and maybe for personal purposes or work purposes' (Barnes & Brown, 2016). The two are complementary in that they incorporate both 'experience-learning-education' in ordinary life and 'ends-means-education' in specific school contexts. The influence of education is ingrained in these connections through the individual's moral self-reflection, value formulation, and character development. Additionally, the career education field in high school places greater emphasis on the correlation between 'experience' and 'interaction' in various relationships, as opposed to the subject-specific education field. It examines the impact that 'educated' individuals' spontaneous learning, reasoning, and practice have on their professional development. Particular emphasis should be placed on the 'power of the psychological field' as a prerequisite for the implementation of high school career education and as one of the metrics by which its pedagogical worth is measured. Educational power, which stimulates the interaction between individuals and their surroundings and practices, contributes not only to a profound sense of history and active sense of practice, but also to the formation of an endogenous logical judgment of value, a sense of psychological belonging, cultural identity, and patriotism.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, The Bourdieu's field theory holds significant importance in the theoretical reconstruction and methodological re-evaluation of senior high school career education. Cultural capital, within the structural relationships, and unique habits each play distinctive roles in the construction and logic of this field. "Value leadership" and "personal growth" emerge as focal points in the general high school career field, shaping field habits through internal relationship structures and interactions with other fields such as the "college field" and the "workplace field." This interaction stimulates the growth and transformation of the psychological field, assisting actors in forming internally generated patterns of practice. Ultimately, this process achieves the dual goals of intellectual and social construction and development in knowledge and society.

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