



TEMPLE GROVE ACADEMY

CULTURAL CAPITAL POLICY

Approved by governors September 2019
Review September 2020

Our school code of conduct is:

“Try, Grow, Achieve”

Where did the term cultural capital come from?

In the 1970s Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, developed the idea of cultural capital as a way to explain how power in society was transferred and social classes maintained. Karl Marx believed economic capital (money and assets) dictated your position in a social order. Bourdieu believed that cultural capital played an important, and subtle role. For both Marx and Bourdieu, the more capital you have, the more powerful you are.

Bourdieu defined cultural capital as ‘familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society’; what we might call ‘high culture’. He saw families passing on cultural capital to their children by introducing them to dance and music, taking them to theatres, galleries and historic sites, and by talking about literature and art over the dinner table.

Since its publication in English in 1984 Bourdieu’s book, *Distinction*, has had a significant and lasting impact on academic discourse about class in the UK.

Defining cultural capital today

Bourdieu identified three sources of cultural capital: objective, embodied and institutionalised.

1. Objective: cultural goods, books, works of art
2. Embodied: language, mannerisms, preferences
3. Institutionalised: qualifications, education credentials

More recent work on the idea of cultural capital by a range of academics has added technical, emotional, national and subcultural forms of cultural capital to this list.

Technical: marketable skills, e.g. IT

Emotional: empathy, sympathy (things businesses might look for in employees in management positions)

National: ‘operates on the assumption of the existence of traditions, in both high and popular culture, which generate and justify a sense of belonging and an occupancy of a governing national position ... It is a form with limited exchange value because it is not rare ... in operation, to lack it acts as a handicap, rather more than its possession supplying a route to profit and preferment.’ Bennett et al (2009) p258

Subcultural: Groups built around cultural specifics, where individuals need particular cultural knowledge and behaviours to belong to the sub-set.

Cultural consumption and notions of ‘high art’ have changed over time. Today’s prominent academic researchers have coined the term ‘cultural omnivore’ (Peterson 1992, Peterson & Kern 1996): someone who mixes interests in a wide range of forms of culture, both those seen as historically ‘legitimate’ by society, and emerging forms – such as Grime music.

‘Cultural capital’ in this new sense is embodied by an individual who is knowledgeable about a wide range of culture and is comfortable discussing its value and merits. It is characterised by the experience and skill to be able to deploy the appropriate knowledge in any given situation: a job interview, a conversation with a neighbour, building a work network and so on.

The benefits of cultural capital

Evidence suggests that the cultural capital passed on through families helps children to do better in school. The education system values the knowledge and ways of thinking developed by acquiring cultural capital, both abstract and formal. As adults, cultural capital helps individuals to network with other adults who have a similar body of knowledge and experiences, and who in turn control access to high-paying professions and prestigious leadership roles, for example in government.

In their 2009 book *Culture, Class, Distinction* Bennet et al, describe this system of privilege: 'This is the reproduction circuit associated with schooling and formal education. Those parents equipped with cultural capital are able to drill their children in the cultural forms that predispose them to perform well in the educational system through their ability to handle "abstract" and "formal" categories. These children are able to turn their cultural capital into credentials, which can then be used to acquire advantaged positions themselves.'

Evidence of the power of cultural capital

Studies by organisations such as the Sutton Trust have probed this issue of how types of education and family background confer advantages on some children. The report *Parent Power* shows how wealthy parents buy in extra schooling (including in arts subjects) to push their children ahead of their peers in exams and to secure entry to more prestigious schools and universities. Projects such as [The Class Ceiling](#) have shown how recruitment into top professions, including banking and law, is made easier by the level of cultural capital of the applicants.

The paradox of cultural capital and schools

Our understanding of 'knowledge and cultural capital' is derived from the following wording in the national curriculum:

'It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.'

Cultural capital at Temple Grove

Our aim is to enrich every child's school experience and create an environment where they are encouraged to succeed and be the best they can be.

Cultural capital is about preparing children with the knowledge and skills for what comes next. We realise the exploration of new skills and experiences helps to nurture resilience, curiosity and creativity. Ultimately, this leads to the growth of new forms of cultural capital that makes a difference in individual mindsets and shapes the future.

The intent of our IMPACT enrichment programme and additional curriculum initiatives is to help our children experience the awe and wonder of the world in which they live. This is so important here at Temple Grove because what children learn in their formative years with us will stay with them forever.

In every year group knowledge and skills are given to the children to extend their experiences to enable all children to be better prepared for the next steps of their learning, life and adulthood.