Exploration and Consideration of the Development of Sino-foreign Cooperation of Higher Education—A Comparative Analysis Perspective Based on the Data of Municipal Universities of Wuhan, Hubei Province and China

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With the tide of economic globalization and the practice of “One Belt and One Road” Initiative, Sino-foreign cooperation has gradually become one of the effective ways to improve the quality of higher education. This paper based on the statistics and analysis of the data released by the Ministry of Education’s foreign-related supervision information platform, combining with the actual investigation and research on the situation of Sino-foreign cooperation of higher education in municipal universities of Wuhan, has found that the Sino-foreign cooperation programs commonly have problems of non-standardized enrollment of students, insufficient quality of teachers and teaching qualities, and lack of core competitiveness. Therefore, it is essential to upgrade the level of foreign cooperative institutions and the standards of students’ recruitment, optimize the curriculum, pay attention to the public welfare of education, improve the teaching model, improve the level of teachers, so as to truly realize the original intention of Sino-foreign cooperation in municipal universities of Wuhan.

Keywords: Sino-foreign cooperation of higher education, municipal universities of Wuhan, development and reform

Introduction

With the constant deepening of the Reform and Opening up Policy, after solving the problem of food and clothing, the Chinese people began to pay more and more attention to the rights related to various fields of social, people's livelihood, and education that is one of the core issues. In the wake of the continuous improvement of people’s demand for education level, there are a growing number of Chinese parents and students who begin to focus on studying abroad in order to obtain better foreign educational resources. At the same time, some families have to think twice or even give up the idea of studying abroad for financial reasons.

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Therefore, Sino-foreign cooperation of higher education arises at the historic moment, not only to meet the students’ needs of receiving high-level education abroad to a certain extent, but also to alleviate the pressure of family economy. Universities are the important base for cultivating high quality talents in China; with the tide of economic globalization and the practice of “One Belt and One Road” Proposal, Sino-foreign cooperation has gradually become one of the effective ways to improve the quality of higher education. However, currently Sino-foreign cooperation in China commonly has problems of lack of cooperation of top universities, top fields, and top talents. In the mean time, the settings of subjects are too monotonous and fail to achieve the goal of improving the overall level of higher education.

**Current Situation of the Development of Sino-foreign Cooperation of Higher Education in China**

Based on the statistics and analysis of information released by the Information Network of the Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China on Foreign-Related Supervision, as of January 2019, a total of 1,116 Sino-foreign cooperatively run institutions and projects (including Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan) approved and reviewed by the Ministry of Education, which covers 28 regions in China. Specifically, institutions passed review covers nine regions in China, and among them, Shanghai and Liaoning accounted for the highest (20%) respectively, following them are Chongqing and Shandong which accounted for 15% respectively. Projects passed review covers 20 regions in China. Among them, Heilongjiang accounted for the highest proportion, reaching 21.91% while Shanghai is the second top which accounted for 21.51%. According to the Regulations on Sino-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (hereinafter referred to as the Regulations) and the measures for its implementation, the institutions of Sino-foreign cooperatively covered 20 regions in China. Among them, Jiangsu and Zhejiang accounted for the highest (12%) respectively, after them are Shanghai and Guangdong which accounted for 10.67% respectively. The projects of Sino-foreign cooperatively approved in accordance with the Regulations covered 28 regions in China. The top three are Jiangsu, Henan, and Shandong.

A total of 872 Sino-foreign cooperatively run institutions and projects submitted to the Ministry of Education for the record after local examination and approval, which covers 27 regions in China. The institutions of Sino-foreign cooperatively submitted to the Ministry of Education for the record after local examination and approval cover 18 regions in China. Among them, Jiangsu accounted for the highest 18.92%; next are Zhejiang and Shandong which accounted for 13.51% respectively. The projects of Sino-foreign cooperatively submitted to the Ministry of Education for the record after local examination and approval cover 27 regions in China. Jiangsu also has the highest proportion which is 24.79%, and then is Zhejiang which accounted for 8.86%.

A total of 234 Sino-foreign cooperatively run institutions and projects have been approved to terminate at the undergraduate and above levels, which covers 21 regions in China. Among the terminated institutions, Beijing, Hebei, Henan, Shanxi, and Shanxi accounted for 20% respectively. Among the terminated projects, Heilongjiang, Beijing, and Shanghai are the top three regions with the largest number in turn.

A total of 308 Sino-foreign cooperatively run institutions and projects have been approved to terminate below the undergraduate level, which covers 21 regions in China. Among the terminated institutions, the top three are Shanghai, Liaoning, and Beijing successively. Among the terminated projects, Beijing accounted for 21.57%, followed by Shanghai for 14.51%.
Current Situation of the Development of Sino-foreign Cooperation of Higher Education in Hubei Province

As of January 2019, there is a Sino-foreign cooperative project in Hubei Province which has been reviewed by the Ministry of Education. Four Sino-foreign cooperatively run institutions and 58 projects have been established and organized with the approval of the Ministry of Education in accordance with the Regulations, only 28.81% of them came from universities outside Wuhan, which shows that Wuhan, as the capital of Hubei Province, still has advantages in educational resources of Sino-foreign cooperation of higher education. At the same time, except that two Sino-foreign cooperative projects of Wuhan Engineering University have been suspended, only two of the remaining 52 projects come from “985 Project” universities, accounting for only 3.85% of the total number projects in Hubei Province. There are only 13 universities from “211 Project”, too, accounting for 25% of the total number in Hubei Province. The total number of these two projects is less than 30%. While four of the Sino-foreign cooperatively institutions are from “211 Project” universities, which have obvious differences between them.

One Sino-foreign cooperatively institution and 54 Sino-foreign cooperatively projects submitted to the Ministry of Education for the record after examination and approval by the People’s Government of Hubei Province or the Ministry of Education of Hubei Province. The Sino-foreign cooperatively run institutions and projects submitted to the Ministry of Education for the record by the local authorities of Hubei Province are all Junior College Education, 70.37% of which are located in Wuhan. This shows that the educational resources of Wuhan, as the capital city of Hubei Province, are also ahead of other cities in the field of Junior College Education.

The Ministry of Education has approved the termination of seven Sino-foreign cooperative projects at the undergraduate level and above in Hubei Province, 42.86% of which are from “211 Project” universities. There are seven Sino-foreign cooperatively run institutions and projects that have been approved to terminate at the undergraduate level and below in Hubei Province, all of which are non-academic higher education projects. One of them comes from “985 Project” universities, one from provincial and ministerial co-construction universities, one from Wuhan municipal universities, and two from higher vocational colleges.

Current Situation of the Development of Sino-foreign Cooperation of Higher Education of Municipal Universities of Wuhan

At present, there are four municipal universities in Wuhan; they are Jianghan University, Wuhan Business College, Wuhan City Vocational College, and Wuhan Vocational College of Software and Engineering. From the information released by the Information Network of the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China on Foreign-Related Supervision of Education as of January 2019, now Jianghan University and Wuhan Business College each have a Sino-foreign cooperative project which belongs to the undergraduate Sino-foreign cooperative project approved and established in accordance with the Regulations and no officially recognized Sino-foreign cooperatively institution. Among the institutions and projects submitted to the Ministry of Education for the record by the local government for examination and approval at the undergraduate level and below, Wuhan Business College and Wuhan Software Engineering Vocational College have three and two items respectively, also no officially recognized Sino-foreign cooperatively institution.
Problems Existing in Sino-foreign Cooperation Education in Municipal Universities of Wuhan

The number of Sino-foreign cooperative projects approved by the Ministry of Education in municipal universities of Wuhan is obviously small. While municipal universities of Wuhan have been striving to have Sino-foreign cooperation communication, it has not reached a higher level at present due to the limitation of its own development. One of the important purposes of Sino-foreign cooperation in municipal universities is to rapidly improve their educational level by taking advantage of such an opportunity to communicate with first-class foreign universities, but none of the foreign cooperative universities is well-known first-class foreign universities, resulting in that the quality of foreign project teachers cannot be guaranteed. It is difficult for municipal universities of Wuhan to learn the educational experience of the top foreign universities through the project so as to promote their own educational ideas, teaching methods as well as the management system rapidly. The truly world’s top universities often prefer to run “strong and strong alliances” with equally excellent universities, which makes it difficult to cooperate with municipal universities and is also another dilemma of Sino-foreign cooperation in municipal universities of Wuhan.

There are also some problems in the concrete implementation of the Sino-foreign cooperation education in municipal universities of Wuhan. For example, the descriptions for the Sino-foreign projects of Wuhan Business School on its official website for attracting students are exactly the Ministry of Education clearly mentioned in its notice on further standardizing the order of Sino-foreign cooperation in higher education on its official website that does not belong to Sino-foreign cooperation in higher education and is not conducive to the improvement of teaching quality in colleges and universities. At the same time, for students enrolled in Sino-foreign cooperation projects, even if the school does not violate the policy to directly decrease the score line, it usually enrolls in accordance with the national minimum score line in the actual admission process which does not meet the national requirements. In fact, many of the students enrolled in Sino-foreign cooperation projects have lower admission scores than those enrolled in the same regular major. But due to the need for English teaching in many courses of Sino-foreign projects, the requirement for students’ learning ability is even higher than that of ordinary students; therefore, the huge gap between the project’s requirements for students and students’ actual abilities leads to the poor overall teaching quality and effect of Sino-foreign projects, which cannot meet the original intention of Sino-foreign cooperation. However, the more serious problem is that schools often have too low requirements for students in Sino-foreign cooperative projects for the sake of external factors, such as beautiful transcript for students going abroad in the future and continuing cooperation with foreign institutions, which leads to consequences that these students’ learning ability and academic performance are not as good as those of ordinary majors, but the transcripts reflect the unreasonable phenomenon of the opposite situation. This actually goes against the original intention of education and is not conducive to the sound development of Sino-foreign cooperation in higher education.

According to the explicit stipulations of the Ministry of Education on Some Issues Concerning the Current Sino-foreign Cooperation Education, foreign courses and core professional courses introduced by Sino-foreign cooperation projects shall account for more than one third of all courses and core courses in Sino-foreign cooperation projects. The number of courses and teaching hours of core professional courses undertaken by teachers from foreign educational institutions shall account for more than one third of all courses and teaching hours of Sino-foreign cooperation projects. However, such requirements are difficult to meet in reality. On the
one hand, Sino-foreign cooperative projects have higher requirements for students’ English proficiency, but the actual level of students is far from being achieved, thus it is necessary to add a large number of English learning courses to the students’ curriculum to meet the basic requirements of language proficiency in Sino-foreign cooperative education, occupying a large number of course hours of students. On the other hand, Ideological and Political Courses are public compulsory courses clearly stipulated by the government that the course hours cannot be reduced, which lead to the consequence that too little time is spent in the professional course so that the learning quality of professional knowledge of students has greatly reduced. What is more serious is that the course hours of foreign teachers fail to meet the required requirements, and foreign teachers always take the way of flying to China for a short period of time to concentrate on teaching and complete teaching tasks, this centralized teaching mode greatly reduces the learning effect. In addition, Chinese students are generally not good at communicating with teachers. As a result, many curricula become mere formalities and fail to achieve the real purpose of knowledge imparting.

In fact, the average annual tuition fee, book fee, and management fee of students participating in Sino-foreign cooperative projects are usually at least ¥15,000, higher than those of students majoring in regular subjects at the same stage in the same university; this is a heavy burden for many ordinary families and many excellent students who are interested in participating in Sino-foreign cooperative projects are therefore discouraged, which leads to many students in Sino-foreign cooperative projects are those who have poor learning ability and self-control ability, but have better family economic conditions and expect to “gold-plated”. Result shows that Sino-foreign cooperation projects no longer represents excellence but the waistcoat of “poor students changing clothes”, which is very frustrated.

Actually, the predicament of Sino-foreign cooperation education in municipal universities of Wuhan is far more than that. The Internet is highly developed at present, teaching videos of the world’s top universities are widely disseminated on the Internet, so that students can receive education at the world’s top universities without going out of the house and spending very little or no money. Distance teaching of overseas higher education and the number of educational and training institutions registered in China by foreign institutions are also increasing day by day, when these potential threats involved in the competition with the Sino-foreign cooperative projects of municipal universities of Wuhan. Whether the services and teaching quality that students and parents expect can meet the tuition fees they pay? Can municipal universities of Wuhan have their own resource advantages and uniqueness? From the current situation of Sino-foreign cooperative projects in municipal universities of Wuhan, the prospect is worrying.

**Conclusion**

**Research Conclusions**

(1) Sino-foreign cooperation of education is mere formality and fails to translate the essence of foreign education into actual teaching in China.

Chinese teachers and students are under the influence of “examination-oriented education” thinking for many years; in the course of Sino-foreign cooperative projects, the main goal is still to get good marks. Teachers “cramming” teaching, ignoring the essence of spirit of independence and the thought of freedom in learning Western educational ideas, makes Sino-foreign cooperation of higher education lose its original meaning.

(2) The quality of students and the level of foreign cooperative universities are not high enough to meet
the requirements of “High Starting Point, High Standard”.

Municipal universities of Wuhan originally should introduce foreign high-level educational resources through Sino-foreign cooperative projects so as to rapidly improve their own educational level, but in reality, on the one hand, the current situation of municipal universities of Wuhan makes the real top universities abroad lose their willingness to cooperate; on the other hand, because the fees of Sino-foreign cooperation projects are generally much higher than those of ordinary majors, a large number of Chinese and foreign educational institutions have seen the income-generating effect of Sino-foreign cooperation projects, thus “profit-seeking” recruits a large number of students whose learning abilities do not meet the standards. The effect of education is taken as a secondary factor through the extravagant accumulation of money and through the signboards of overseas institutions, which makes really good students not interested in it at all.

(3) The curriculum is not up to the standard and students cannot acquire real professional knowledge.

Due to the poor overall level of enrollment of students, currently the curricula offered in Sino-foreign projects are far from meeting the requirements of “three thirds” stipulated by the government. Foreign language courses are mostly language courses; foreign teachers also generally fly to China to teach in concentrated time, lack of time for students to absorb knowledge and communicate with students in accordance with teaching rules. Students are totally unable to reap the high-quality professional knowledge of foreign education and improve their abilities.

Policy Recommendations

(1) Promoting the level of foreign cooperative institutions and standards of student recruitment.

Universities should strive to upgrade the level of foreign education institutions chosen by Sino-foreign projects, instead of taking financial support and the ease of obtaining certificates as the key factors of choice, and should put the quality of education at the top of the list. More stringent adherence should be made to the government regulations in the recruitment of students, in order to make Sino-foreign cooperation projects truly become the cornerstone of training better talents for the country, rather than the new path of “curve salvation” for students with inadequate ability level.

(2) Optimizing the curriculum and emphasizing the public welfare of education.

In the mean time of enrolling students, it is of great importance of paying more attention to the public welfare of Sino-foreign cooperation education. Reducing fee rates appropriately and do not let economic problems become obstacles for truly excellent students to obtain high-level educational resources. At the same time, optimizing the curriculum, increasing the teaching time of professional courses of really excellent foreign teachers, and reducing the hours of foundational language courses can achieve the requirement of “three thirds” of Sino-foreign cooperative projects of the government.

(3) Improving the teaching model and promoting the teachers’ level.

The advantage of foreign teaching over Chinese teaching lies in its teaching concept and teaching mode, which enables students to truly understand knowledge and apply what they have learned. However, if China does not change the current commonly used “six-four” or even “seven-three” mode of teaching and examination, it is very difficult to really change the “dead circle” of exam-oriented education that students assault before examinations. Therefore, Chinese teachers should communicate teaching experience with foreign teachers in teaching, promote their own teaching level, at the same time, improve the teaching mode, let students pay more attention to their daily learning and application abilities, reduce the proportion of final exam
scores, and enable students really learn for knowledge rather than for scores.

References


