

# The Present Situation, Problems and Countermeasures Concerning Sino-Foreign Joint Education Programs in Higher Education in the New Era

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## Abstract

**In the new era, although Sino-Foreign joint education programs in higher education have witnessed fast development with constantly improved levels and increasingly diversified modes, their healthy development still face some problems. In this paper, these problems are analyzed upon summarization of present situation. According to the study, Sino-Foreign joint education programs in higher education should be improved from the aspects of their orientation, scientific appraisal and influence, thus giving full play to their positive role in promoting internationalization of higher education.**

## Keywords

**Higher Education; Sino-Foreign Joint Education Programs; Present Situation; Problems; Countermeasures.**

## 1. Introduction

The Sino-Foreign joint education programs in higher education refers to the education and teaching activities jointly held by Chinese and foreign educational institutions. As of June 2020, more than 1200 education institutions and programs had been held in accordance with law in the field of higher education, covering over 100 thousand teachers and students. With the continuous development of Sino-Foreign joint education programs, Chinese higher education is increasingly internationalized. The Sino-Foreign joint education programs in higher education are an important measure as well as an achievement of the vigorous reform and opening up in the field of higher education in China. As an important carrier of opening up of higher education in China, the Sino-Foreign joint education programs are facing a new situation with acceleration and expansion of opening up of higher education in China.

## 2. Present Situation of Sino-Foreign Joint Education Programs in Higher Education

### 2.1. Sino-Foreign Joint Educational Institutions as an Independent Legal Entity

The first category is joint educational institutions with the qualification as an independent legal entity. These institutions have independent civil capacity and legal person and may recruit students and issue diplomas independently. At present, there are 9 such educational institutions, whose distribution is shown in Figure 1. In Jiangsu Province, there are Duke Kunshan University and Xi'an Jiaotong-liverpool University. These educational institutions have the following characteristics: the both parties to the cooperation are famous universities with rich educational and faculty resources, which is favorable for integrating education resources and for improving higher education; there are a great variety of levels and majors, covering undergraduate, master, and doctoral programs as well as engineering courses, science and art, etc.; most institutions are located in east China and even if a cooperating university is

in central or west China, the cooperative university is located in east China. For instance, Xi'an Jiaotong-liverpool University is located in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province.

## 2.2. Sino-Foreign Joint Educational Institutions as a Non-independent Legal Entity

Such school running mode appeared much earlier than educational institutions with the qualification as an independent legal entity. Yanbian University of Science & Technology was established in as early as 1991. After more than 30 years' development, great progress has been achieved with this school running mode in the aspects of talent cultivation, number of recruited students and forms of education and teaching. As of June 2020, there were 61 such educational institutions, including NUIST Reading Academy. These educational institutions have the following characteristics: in terms of both Chinese and foreign cooperating parties, the foreign cooperating parties are from a wide range of countries, including not only U.S. and U.K. but also South Korea, Italy and Japan, etc.; the Chinese cooperating parties are not only "985", "211" or "double first class" universities, but also some ordinary local universities; in terms of the level of education, some only cover undergraduate program, while some cover complete undergraduate, master, and doctoral programs, etc.; the educational institutions are distributed in east and central China, and mostly in northwest and east China, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of Sino-Foreign joint educational institutions as a Non-independent legal entity

## 2.3. Sino-Foreign Joint Educational Programs

As of June 2020, there were a total of 931 qualified Sino-Foreign joint educational programs at the undergraduate level or above (including 197 terminated programs). Differing from the foregoing two educational institutions, Sino-Foreign joint educational programs in higher education are cooperation programs on a specific major or project between Chinese and foreign universities within a certain period.

The joint educational programs have the following characteristics: there are various types of Chinese participating universities, including "985", "211", "double first class" universities, as well as a large number of local ordinary universities; the universities at all levels intend to improve their influence by promoting educational internationalization and introducing advanced educational concept and management mode through the Sino-Foreign joint

educational programs; most cooperative programs are at the undergraduate level and focus on hot majors; the distribution of these programs is wider than that of joint educational institutions.

### **3. Analysis of the Problems with Sino-Foreign Joint Educational Programs in Higher Education**

#### **3.1. The Layout Reasonability is to be Improved**

Reasonable layout of Sino-Foreign joint educational programs will reduce regional imbalanced higher education in China, being an important aspect of the educational equality initiative in China. The layout of Sino-Foreign joint educational programs also includes the layout of major and levels and the countries or regions of the foreign cooperating parties. At present, the main problems with Sino-Foreign joint educational programs are as follows:

First, in terms of layout of disciplines and majors, the engineering and management science are of the highest proportion, accounting for about 63% of the total Sino-Foreign joint educational programs; the disciplines such as agriculture, science of law and history account for less than 2%. In some programs, the participating parties have an ill intention to “seek fast returns with less investment”, resulting in clustering disciplines and majors in layout. The layout of some majors is unreasonable and lacks a long-term planning, failing to satisfy the demand of fast Chinese economic development in the new era.

Second, in terms of the countries of foreign cooperating parties, the foreign cooperating parties are from 36 countries and regions, most of which are English-speaking countries. Furthermore, the traditional education import countries constitute a large part of the Sino-Foreign joint educational programs, where U.S., U.K. and Australia accounted for 54% of the total Sino-Foreign joint educational institutions and programs at the undergraduate level or above. Therefore, the introduced resources are relatively unitary, neglecting introduction of characteristic resources from other countries and in particular, the urgently needed disciplines, majors and other quality resources from Belt and Road countries (regions).

#### **3.2. The Assessment of Teaching Quality of Joint Educational Programs Favors the Forms Over Substantial Results**

The layout of majors in joint educational programs is imbalanced, where most are finance-related business majors and computer. Since most courses are implemented by teachers, the teaching quality of teachers has great influence on students. At the same time, students' rating of and feedback on teaching also affect the employment of and grant of title to teachers. In classroom teaching, students' attendance has been low in some majors. If no attendance scores are required, the attendance could be astonishingly low. Due to short-term of teaching, professional skills teachers lack understanding of students. Furthermore, as specialty teachers may teach specific students for only one semester or one academic year, they can hardly tailor teaching to specific learning characteristics and atmosphere of students. In the absence of adequate communication and exchange between students and teachers, students cannot rate teaching quality correctly in a totally objective and true manner merely based on classroom teaching.

At present, there are two types of teaching assessment in China: the traditional paper questionnaire survey and online evaluation and scoring. At present, the online evaluation is mostly a shift from paper questionnaire to the internet platforms, where the means are not diversified; furthermore, since the result is generally favored over the process in the appraisal, it cannot reflect the teachers' preparation for class and their reflection on teaching. In undergraduate education, while the importance is attached to “trace” management, there is lack

of mutual visits to classes among specialty teachers, teaching research and appraisal, resulting in lack of concrete achievement.

### **3.3. Unpowerful Influence of Joint Education Programs**

Although the Sino-Foreign joint educational programs in Chinese higher education have a history of over several decades, there aren't many truly influential programs. In terms of the level of education, the level of both Chinese and foreign cooperating universities varied greatly. Parents and students lack knowledge about these schools. Even worse, some "faked" universities also cooperate with Chinese universities. In term of influence of the educational programs, parents and students lack the channels to learn about them. In this aspect, the official website of the Ministry of Education provides a platform for inquiry of Sino-Foreign joint educational programs. In addition, the official websites of some universities also provide relevant information for reference. As often as not, some social intermediary agencies are passing fish eyes for pearls to mislead parents and students.

## **4. The Path for Optimization of the Mode of Sino-Foreign Joint Educational Programs**

### **4.1. Strengthen Top-level Design and Seize the Orientation**

From the angle of state, the competent educational authorities should prepare the overall planning for Sino-Foreign joint educational programs in a strategic manner, clarify the focuses of development at each stage, construct a mechanism to regulate the layout and structure of Sino-Foreign joint educational programs, and provide macro guidance on adjustment of distribution of Sino-Foreign educational programs, the cooperating countries (regions) and disciplines and majors. Furthermore, they should strengthen the Top-level design to guarantee the quality of Sino-Foreign joint educational programs, establish an index system for approval of educational institutions (programs), pre-establishment assessment and post-establishment assessment, prepare guidance opinions and mechanism on orderly exit and dynamic adjustment of educational programs. Finally, they should utilize the "two platforms" (the website for foreign-related education supervision and the website of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools) to release various information about quality domestic and foreign educational resources and provide dynamic information about Sino-Foreign joint educational programs.

### **4.2. Introducing Scientific Means of Teaching Quality Assessment**

By reference to the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) jointly developed by 12 universities in California, U.S., the scientific teaching quality appraisal may be divided into three parts: self-appraisal of teachers, students' appraisal and appraisal by other teachers. Where, the self-appraisal accounts for 10%; the students' appraisal accounts for 70%; and the appraisal by other teachers in the same specialty accounts for 20%. The scoring by three different groups will avoid the error caused by subjective opinions. At the same time, the focuses are given to "teaching capacity" of teachers, with clarification of appraisal philosophy and indexes and establishment of multiple assessment dimensions: 1. In the aspect of teaching plan, whether the teaching content conforms to the situation of students with highlighted difficult and important knowledge; 2. in the aspect of teaching guidance, whether there is engagement in students' learning and timely supervision and reply to their questions; 3. In the aspect of teaching students, where analysis and guidance are provided for excellent students and poor students; 4. In the aspect of teaching reflections, whether regular reflections are made to improve teaching plans; 5. In the aspect of teaching research, whether there is a requirement on minimum visits to classes and whether there are teaching exchanges among universities or among specialty teachers within a university.

### 4.3. Strengthen Quality Construction to Improve the Influence of Joint Educational Programs

With regard to Chinese school runners, they should strengthen quality construction from both university and the educational institutions (programs). The universities should play its principal role, stress the education quality and strengthen the characteristics, so as to enhance the school's influence and presence. The educational institutions (programs) should focus on introducing advanced mode of school running and management, teaching methods, courses and textbook system, education quality assessment standard and methods, etc. and give a play to the demonstrative and leading role of Sino-Foreign joint educational programs. Meanwhile, they should strengthen the concept of "academic credit system", shift the policies for stringent admission and elastic graduation to policies for elastic admission and stringent graduation and improve the quality of joint educational programs, thus guaranteeing the teaching quality.

## 5. Conclusion

Sino-Foreign joint educational programs are a systematic project which requires integrated effort from the governments, universities and the society to achieve all-around whole-process optimization. They should adhere to the national general education policies and the socialist education with Chinese characteristics, the practice of "bringing in" and "going out", make breakthroughs amidst the unfavorable factors and utilize all advantages to constantly improve the education quality of Sino-Foreign joint educational programs in Chinese higher education.

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