Conflict and Harmony of Teaching Standards in Chinese-foreign Cooperative Education

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Abstract. This paper consists of three sections. First section of this paper introduces the conflicts of teaching standards on Chinese-foreign cooperative education programs, including teaching language, courses setting, evaluating system, and so on. Second section, author tries to analyze the reasons of the conflicts by attributing them to different culture of the countries, different purpose of cooperative parties, different circumstance, and so on. Third section, author suggests that harmony of both teaching standards is the best way to eliminate the conflicts, and summarize the principles should be followed when harmonizing the teaching standards.

Introduction

With the opening of Chinese education, more and more Chinese educational institutions create cooperative education programs with foreign colleagues. Chinese-Foreign cooperative education forms a component of China’s educational cause. [1]

Teaching standards refer to regulations and standards that should be followed by both teachers and students in teaching process. Formation of a set of teaching standards is a long-term process; it is effect by a lot of factors, involving ideas and purposes of teaching, quality of teachers and students, circumstances and equipments of teaching, supervision and management level, and so on. [2] The above factors are quite different between China and other countries which cause the differences in their teaching standards.

When Chinese educational institutes begin to cooperate with foreign colleagues, they will find there are a lot of conflicts about teaching standards between them. Here comes a question that how to harmonize the teaching standards in Chinese-foreign cooperative educational programs.

Conflicts between Chinese and Foreign Teaching Standards

Teaching standards involve a lot of aspects of education. For a specialty courses, teaching standards involve training program, curriculum provision, teaching management, and so on. For a single course, teaching standards involve teaching contents, teaching progress, teaching assessment, and so on. [3] Generally, there are several main conflicts exist in Chinese-foreign cooperative educational programs.

Curriculum Provision

Even through in the same specialty courses, the curriculum provision is different between Chinese and foreign educational institute. Generally, Chinese institutes set up a lot of courses including a mass of general education courses, which have same important position as discipline major courses. On contrast, foreign institutes set few general courses, and pay more attention to discipline core and major courses. For example, when we compare the curriculum provisions of Bachelor for Marketing in my university [4] with the same courses held by RMIT University, Australia, [5] we can find a lot of differences between them. First difference is the duration of study. Full-time students in my university need 4 years to get the degree, while RMIT students only need 3 years. Second difference is the number of courses. The comparison result is 45 vs. 24, big gap. Third difference is structure of courses. In my university, there are about 1/3 credits belong to
general education, while it is 0 in RMIT; percentage of elective subjects is 15% in my university, while it is 33% in RMIT.

**Teaching Language and Textbooks**

Language different is the most obvious conflict in Chinese-foreign cooperative program. Generally, the vast majority of students of Chinese-foreign cooperative program are Chinese students, and some of teachers are Chinese too. It is obvious that the best language for their teaching and studying is Chinese. However, teaching in Chinese language is impossible for foreign teachers who take important part in the cooperative programs, and it is not conform to the purpose of cooperative education that is internationalization. On the other hand, using English as teaching language increase the difficulty of study for the students. Same situation exist in the choice of the textbooks. Textbook in English is too difficult for Chinese students, but it is useful to develop English of the students and more suitable for the students to deal with courses’ assessments which are held mainly in English.

**Teaching Assessment**

Regulations of teaching assessment are different even in any two Chinese institutions. The differences are more distinct between Chinese and foreign institutions. To summarize, the differences reflected in following two points. Firstly, the passing score is different. Most of foreign institution set 50% as passing score, while it is 60% in China. Secondly, the components of assessment are different. For example, in order to increase the strictness of assessment, a lot of Chinese institutes set maximum proportion of continuous assessment, emphasis on the importance of final examination. It is rare in foreign institutions. These two differences seem to be simple, but they cause a lot of trouble in teaching practice. For example, the teachers have to exchange a final mark into two different versions to fit the needs of two management systems adapted by two cooperating institutions.

**Student Status Management**

Chinese higher education always follow an unwritten principle called “strictly in, easy out”. It means that it is hard for students to be enrolled by universities; but once they be enrolled, it is easy to graduate. This principle shows that Chinese educational institutions are very “kind” to their students, while foreign educational institutions are much stricter. For example, according to the students management regulations of Ngee Ann Polytechnic Singapore, a student must repeat if he failed pass a course; and he will be dismissed from the program if he failed pass the repeat course again. However, in China, same using my university as example, a student has a chance to re-test if he failed pass a course; only if he failed in re-test again, he has to repeat the course; and he theoretically has countless chances to repeat the course without any penalty. The different in this aspect may cause an embarrassing situation in some Chinese-foreign cooperative program that a student was dismissed by foreign institution already while he still be a student of Chinese institution.

**Teaching Content**

Even in a same course, the teaching content are different between Chinese and foreign institutions. For example, Contract Law is a compulsory course for business students all over the world, but it has different content between China and foreign counties. The reason is that the content of this course must base on a country’s legal provisions, which have a lot of differences between China and foreign countries.

**Teaching Methods and Class Management**

Compare with traditional Chinese education, teaching methods are abundant in foreign institutions. In teaching classrooms of foreign institutions, students may doing teamwork activities, team discussing, project presentation, and so on. However, in Chinese classroom, the teaching methods are relatively scarce. Although it has some improve, teachers’ lecture still is the most common teaching methods in Chinese classroom.
Abundant teaching methods may make the classroom a little disorder, which is intolerable by a lot of Chinese teachers. Chinese teachers used to emphasis on discipline in classroom, they like to have lectures in a quiet, perfect order circumstance, and wish students can listen their lectures carefully. Foreign classrooms are more energetic, teachers prefer mutual communicate with students, and students play a more active role in classroom.

**Reasons of the Conflicts**

Actually, not only in educational field, similar conflicts are common in most Chinese-foreign cooperative programs, such as joint ventures. The reasons can be conclude into several points.

**Culture Different**

Cultures, which origin from geography and history of a country, are different from each other. When different cultures begin to cooperate, conflicts are unavoidable.

Language is a core element of culture. Different language causes a lot of troubles in teaching practice of Chinese-foreign cooperative programs. In most of occasion, different language is a barrier between teachers and students. Chinese students can’t understand fully in a foreign teachers lecture, and they can’t ask questions about knowledge because of their poor English. For some Chinese teachers, they can’t express their opinions or ideas accurately when they having the class in English. In some degree, it may cause unfair for the students to study and be tested in a foreign language. Actually, Chinese government has published a law called “Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools” in 2003 to standardize Chinese-foreign cooperative education. Article 31 of the law shows cooperative schools “shall use the standard Chinese language and standard Chinese characters as the basic teaching language”. However, this article always be ignored by a lot of foreign institutions and cooperative programs on the excuse of “ensuring the quality of teaching”.

Traditional custom is another cultural aspect. China has a lot of unique festivals or customs which may cause conflict on teaching time. For example, Chinese spring festival always one or two months later than western Christmas. It cause the time of winter holidays is different. Foreign teacher may begin their holiday already while Chinese students still study without teachers.

In Chinese traditional culture, the position of teachers is very high; teachers are regarded as important as parents. This position establishes the authority of teacher. Students used to follow the instruction of teachers, seldom suspect the correctness of their teachers. And a lot of Chinese teachers enjoy this situation, and like to emphasis on discipline to increase their authority. This kind of vanity makes scarce teaching methods and lacking of communication between teachers and students.

Belief different also make some argue in cooperative programs. Some behaviors or opinions which are common in foreign countries are not accepted in China. Foreign teachers and students should avoid this situation as far as possible.

**Different Purposes of Cooperative Parties**

The law we mentioned above can reflect the attitude of Chinese government on cooperative education. “The state encourages … high-quality foreign educational resources are introduced” and “… make efforts to train all kinds of talents for China’s socialist construction” show that the purpose of Chinese side is getting high-quality educational resources from foreign educational institutions and training internationalized talents work for China. For foreign side, nominally, their purposes are helping the development of Chinese education. But they care more about economic benefits in some degree by attracting more outstanding Chinese students to having further education in their institutions so that they can get high tuition for international students. Other possible purposes of foreign side are broadcasting their culture, increasing the influence of their countries and attracting more Chinese talents work for their countries. When cooperative parties have different purpose, conflicts are certain to occur.
Different Educational Ideas and Students’ Abilities

Chinese traditional higher educational idea is training universal talents who can satisfy the requirements of different work, so that the trained talents can be used as more as possible. So the training mode of Chinese higher education can be concluded as “wide majors, well adaptation”, students have to study more courses concern wide range so that they can work independently in the future. On contrast, foreign education is more close to actual practice; focus on discipline major knowledge and teamwork, so that the students can adapt to actual work quickly and integrate into work teams. This kind training mode can be concluded as “narrow major, strong expertise”. Both of the modes have their characteristics and advantages, but when they cooperate together, conflicts will occur.

Furthermore, different compulsory education makes different acquired knowledge and learning methods of the students. Chinese students have some advantages on calculate and recite, while foreign students take advantages on knowledge application and practical ability. In face to different students, an experienced teacher should adjust his teaching content and teaching methods.

Political and Law Requirement

Political system of China is quite different from most western counties, and they always criticize each other. Chinese educational institutions are very pay attention to the ideological and political education of the students. In the law mentioned above, article 30 states that “a Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run school shall offer courses on the constitution, laws, ethics of citizens and basic facts about China”. The article decides the curriculum provisions of cooperative programs must be unusual.

Same situation occurred in legal field too. As we discuss before, Chinese legal system has too many different from foreign countries. Some Chinese laws about education are foundation of cooperation, maybe they are not accordant to foreign relevant laws, must be followed by all educational institutions running in China including cooperative programs. For example, article 8 of “Education Law of the People's Republic of China” states “The State separates education from religion”. This article of law forbid any religion concerned content appear in education, may cause content cutting or changing of some courses.

Harmony and the Principles Need to Follow

According to the analysis above, we can find that most conflicts come from unchangeable external circumstance. So it is impossible for both Chinese and foreign parties to insist on their own teaching standards. Harmony and negotiating for mutual-agreed teaching standards is the only way to resolve the conflicts.

The modes of Chinese-foreign educational cooperation are different from each other, so we cannot uniform teaching standards for all kinds of cooperative programs. However, for Chinese institutions, when negotiating for cooperative teaching standards, some principles must be followed.

Teaching Standards must be Students-oriented

Students are the objection of education, teaching standards must meet the needs of students. In one hand, teaching standards must fully consider the pre-existing knowledge, living style, study custom, future development, etc. of students, so that students can adapt to courses quickly; in another hand, teaching standards must emphasis on foreign requirements of the program, so that students can improve their abilities comprehensively. Since most students are Chinese students in cooperative programs, Chinese side should take leading place in making teaching standards.

Cooperative programs should set teaching standards base on the Chinese standards, and absorb some strict or high requirements of foreign universities to make the program “strictly in, strictly out”, train graduates with strong points for both sides. For example, Chinese university put a lot of general education courses, some of which are not close related to major courses; it should be kept in harmonized cooperative teaching standards because it is benefit for students to study more...
knowledge. In another hand, foreign side has more strict students’ status management; it should be absorbed into cooperative standards because it can ensure the quality of students. In one word, the teaching standards of cooperative programs should be “high standards, strict requirements”, in order to train integrity talents.

**Take Law and Regulations as the Criterion**

Cooperative teaching standards must follow the law of China. Maybe some foreigners have different opinions about Chinese laws, but since Chinese-foreign cooperative educational programs are held in China, then they must obey the laws, especially the laws about education, of China.

Chinese government and ministry of education have published a lot of laws and regulations about education. The purpose is ensuring to train high-quality talents who conform to promoting the socialist progress. So the teaching standards should forbid any disharmonious foreign value, view of life, ethical idea appear in classrooms, and should enhance the supervision and review about it.

**Indigenization High-quality Foreign Teaching Resources is Core**

For Chinese institutions, it is necessary to understand what high-quality teaching resources are. Not everything of foreign education can be regard as high-quality resources; selective adoption is correct method for Chinese institution. Only some resources fit to the features of Chinese education, benefit to students, promote teaching level of teachers can be regarded as high-quality resources, which are the core demand of Chinese cooperative education. When negotiate with foreign institution for teaching standards, Chinese institutions should rather loss in other aspects than missing high-quality resources of foreign education. Furthermore, bring in is the first step, indigenization is more important for Chinese institutions. Although foreign high-quality teaching resources are important for Chinese institutions, how to adjust and apply the resources to fit Chinese teaching circumstance are more important. Indigenization and application of foreign high-quality resources should be reflected in cooperative teaching standards.

**Summary**

From the beginning of first Chinese-foreign cooperative educational program, the conflicts in teaching standards exist, and they will exist in long future. Conflicts are not horrible, they come from different cultures, and they will be ended by the integration of human society in the future. Nowadays, for Chinese institutions, taking own as main body, finding, bringing in, absorbing, indigenization of foreign high-quality teaching resources are right way to improve the China’s educational causes.

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**References**


