

Session 1-3

Role and Function of Quality Assurance Agencies in Cross-border Education Quality Assurance-A Case Study of the Quality Assurance for Sino-foreign Cooperative Education

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Abstract

Cross-border higher education is undergoing rapid development across the world and in various forms. Meanwhile, problems arise and people's expectation for higher education quality grows, which imposes greater challenges for QA agencies. One of the major forms of cross-border education in China is Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools. These cooperatively-run programs are carried out in various forms and at different levels. In light of the differences, QA agencies have carried out different QA measures. The home countries and receiving countries are supposed to share the responsibilities and play adequate roles in the QA process. As the number of countries involved in these programs continues to increase, it is crucial that home country and receiving country QA agencies have close cooperation and promote continuous development of the programs.

1. Cross-border education quality assurance in the world

With the rapid development of global cross-border education, quality assurance becomes more complex, important and urgent. Due to different cultural backgrounds and evaluation concepts, it is crucial to understand the regulatory policy of the import country and its traditional quality assurance models. In our opinion, the present situation of cross-border education quality assurance in the world scope can be summarized as follows.

1.1 The role of cross-border education quality assurance

Strengthening the role of external quality assurance agencies is based on the concept that education institutions bear the prime responsibility of quality assurance. External quality assurance agencies have played an important role in dealing with fake diploma, and frauding cross-border education.

1.2 The platform of international quality assurance network

As a regional external quality assurance network in the Asia-Pacific region, APQN has provided an important platform for the exchange and cooperation between professional quality assurance agencies in the region, and the deepening of mutual understanding as well.

In 2007, INQAAHE set out Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance.

In 2005, UNESCO and OECD formulated the guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education, which proposes for government, higher education institutions and educators, students, quality assurance and accreditation agencies, and professional bodies to ensure the quality of cross-border higher education.

2. China puts cross-border education quality assurance into its national higher education management framework

Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools is an important part of China's cross-border education. With 30 years of development, Sino-foreign cooperative education has become an important way for Chinese citizens to accept foreign education resources.

2.1 Cross-border education quality assurance framework in China

In July 2010, the Chinese government issued the “National Outline of Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)” (hereinafter referred to as the “Outline”). The Outline takes “the improvement of quality” as the core task of education reform and development; it also emphasizes the establishment of national standards for the quality of education and the education quality assurance

system. As to cross-border education, the Outline aims to attract well-known overseas schools, education and scientific research institutes and enterprises, to set up good practices of Sino-foreign cooperative education projects, and to explore by multiple ways the use of foreign high-quality educational resources.

The objective of quality management and supervision is to introduce quality education resources, maintain the rights and interests of education receivers and the rights of educators as well. The management and supervision of Chinese cross-border education is based on the regulations of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools and the commitment of the cooperation parties.

2.2 Overview of Chinese-foreign cooperative education

2.2.1 Structure of cooperative education

By July 2012, the number of Sino-foreign cooperative education institution or programs approved by the government had amounted to 1765. Among them, there are 39 cooperative institutions and 669 programs offering bachelor’s degree or above. See figure 1 for the countries or regions of the main partners.

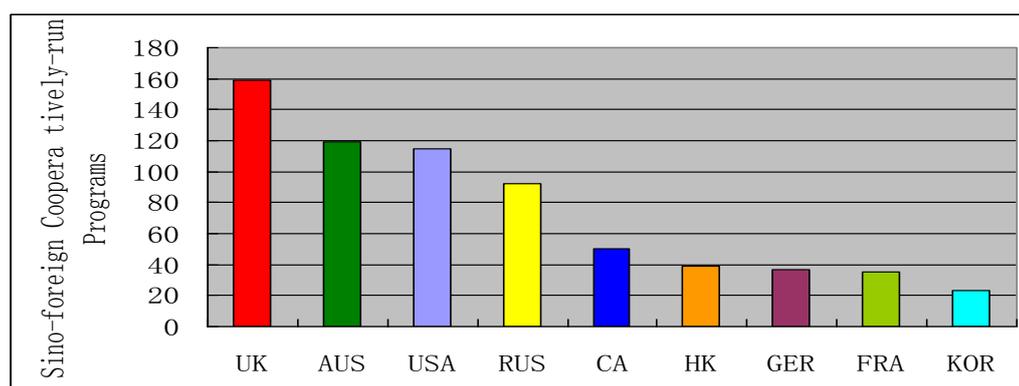


Figure 1 Countries or regions of the main partners

As shown in Figure 1, the partners involved 24 countries and regions, mainly in the United States, Britain, Australia, Russia, Canada, Germany, France, and the total number of cooperative education institution or project reached 645, accounting for 91.10% of the total national institutions and programs.

2.2.2 Problems

(1) The introduction of high quality educational resources is inadequate.

As shown in Table 1, among the 708 Sino-foreign cooperative education programs and institutions, only 35 out of the world's top 100 universities (according to Shanghai Jiaotong University world university rankings) are exporting education to China, with the high-quality resources proportion 4.94%; 71 of the top 200, high

quality resources reached 10.03%. The statistics according to “the Times” university ranking shows an even lower rate.

World ranking	Number of top 100	high-quality resources proportion	Number of top 200	high-quality resources proportion
Shanghai Jiaotong University world university ranking	35	4.94%	71	10.03%
The Times ranking	31	4.38%	68	9.63%

Table 1 The introduction of high-quality resources of 708 Sino-foreign cooperative education programs and institutions (July 2012)

(2) Many cross-border education exporting countries are offering similar programs in China.

As shown in Figure 2, cross-border education exporters offer programs mainly in 58 disciplines, especially in business administration, applied economics, computer science and technology, management science and engineering, mechanical engineering. The number of programs in the certain 5 subjects reached 336, accounted for 50%, and the other 53 subjects accounted for 50%.

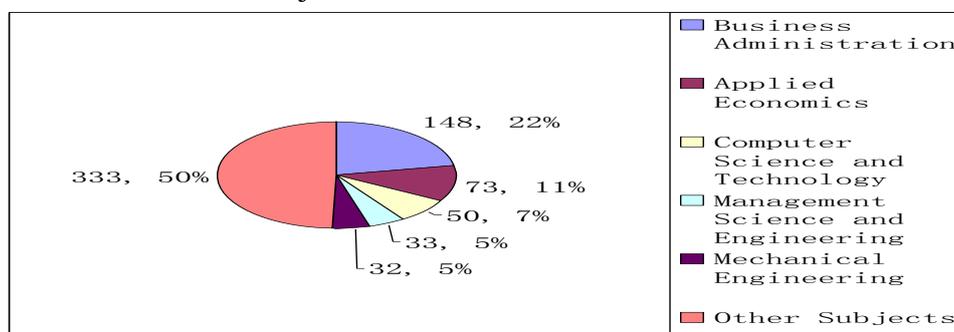


Figure 2 Major programs offered by foreign countries

In the 24 education exporters, some countries are offering similar projects. As shown in Figure 3, the United States, Britain, Australia, Russia, France, Canada, Germany are conducting the same programs in certain disciplines and subjects.

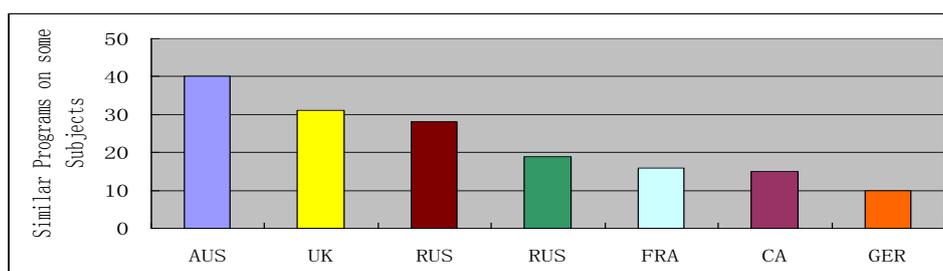


Figure 3 Countries that offer similar programs

- (3) Cross-border education exporters do not pay due attention to quality assurance. Some have not invested adequate teaching resources as stated in the contract.
- (4) Cross-border education exporters do not send enough quality teachers to cooperative programs.

2.3 New development of cross-border education quality assurance system in China

China's quality assurance and supervision system for cooperative programs is still in the developing stage. The quality assurance at this stage is mainly to promote sustainable development of cross-border education through quality assessment and drawing up the practices of other countries.

2.3.1 Strict access standards

Cooperative education aims at meeting the needs of national economic and social development, expanding supply of diversified education, promoting universities' academic disciplines, and introducing high quality education resources in order to strengthen the capability of universities.

2.3.2 Regular assessment system

Regular quality assessment of Chinese-foreign cooperative programs aims to protect the rights and interests of the educated and promote the healthy development of Sino-foreign cooperation. China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Center (CDGDC) is authorized by the Ministry of Education to undertake the assessment. On the basis of the 2010 pilot assessment, the evaluation of nearly 400 cooperative education institutions and programs involving 24 countries and regions was started at the end of 2012.

2.3.3 Accreditation by professional agencies

Quality accreditation is to ensure the quality of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools to reach a common standard, and promote its continuous improvement. Through peer assessment, CDGDC has recently launched the accreditation of Chinese-foreign cooperative MBA education in universities such as Tsinghua University and Fudan University. In some areas, China has carried out the exploration of quality accreditation of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools.

2.3.4 Self evaluation by HEIs

- (1) In 2011, Shanghai Jiao Tong University SJTU-UM Joint Institute invited an

evaluation team composed of Sino-US famous higher education experts to assess its program following the procedure of US higher education evaluation, including its teaching, research, academic staff, social services, etc, and to put forward proposals on further development.

- (2) Three global business and management education accreditation, namely, AACSB, EQUIS and AMBA have authorized their accreditation to 18 Chinese-foreign cooperative programs in seven well-known Chinese universities including Peking University.

2.4 The policy trends

2.4.1 Encouraging collaboration between top universities

A number of world-class universities are engaging in cooperative establishment of institutions such as Shanghai New York University, Kunshan Duke University, Sun Yat-sen University-Carnegie Mellon University Joint Institute of Engineering at Sun Yat-sen University, Shanghai Jiaotong University-Paris Tech Elite Institute of Technology at SJTU. Chinese government encourages such cooperation to meet the needs of local economic and social development and to promote demonstration schools.

2.4.2 Promoting intensive development

Under the background of mass education, the Ministry of Education has made a series of regulations on administrating Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools to improve the quality of education and to provide guidance for intensive development.

3. Challenges and proposals for quality assurance of cooperative education

Further development of cross-border education brings more challenges to the quality assurance agencies, and also an important opportunity for closer cooperation. Cross-border education quality assurance is an embodiment of multiple stakeholders, and also responsibility of both cross-border education providers and receivers. Meanwhile, the government, QA agencies and educational institutions take due responsibility of quality assurance.

Cooperative education in China involves a large number of foreign countries. CDGDC takes the opportunity of quality evaluation to further cooperate with overseas QA agencies, and to explore a quality assurance mechanism acceptable to both sides.

Case 1: Cooperative evaluation of programs offering only foreign degrees

Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools has different modes and levels. In regards to the degree conferred by HEIs, there are three types. Some programs confer only Chinese degrees, some confer only foreign partners' degrees, and some

confer both foreign and Chinese degrees. Different forms of degree granting reflect different attitudes of Chinese and foreign partners and different problems. QA agencies home and abroad should undertake the corresponding responsibility.

CDGDC is willing to deepen cooperation with foreign QA agencies through the signing of a memorandum of cooperation. For example, CDGDC and QAA from the UK evaluated the Sino-foreign cooperative institutions and programs under the MOU between the two agencies.

Case 2: Promoting accreditation of cooperative programs such as MBA accreditation.

At present China is carrying out pilot accreditation of advanced business education and also hopes to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with international counterparts.

Case 3: Constructing international exchange and cooperation platform for cross-border education.

Chinese-foreign cooperative education should be part of the cooperation mechanism of national quality assurance agencies. The establishment of national cross-border education platform for exporters and importers can be established on this basis.