

U.S.' Recognition, Evaluation of China-U.S. Educational Cooperation and Its Enlightenment to China—Analysis Based on the Survey Reports by U.S.' Policy Elites

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Abstract: Educational cooperation is one of the key factors to embody humanistic exchanges and promote the development of international relations. Through the analysis of four survey reports on China- U.S. educational cooperation, it is found that American policy elites generally attach importance to the distribution of power, the application of law, mutual benefit between the two countries in educational cooperation, and pay attention to the potential motivation and influence of China. China should rationally refer to the views and suggestions, strengthen the effectiveness of dialogue mechanism, enhance the credibility of international discourse, and at the same time encourage the negotiation and governance among cooperative universities, so as to promote the stable and sustainable development of education cooperation.

Keywords: China - U.S. relations; Educational Cooperation; Policy Elites; Confucius Institute; American Cultural Center

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1 Introduction

The global public health crisis in 2020 puts China - U.S. relationship at an important juncture. As one of the three pillars of China - U.S. relationship, humanistic exchanges. play a key role in the development of bilateral relations. However, many counter cooperation

waves have been set off in the United States, which poses a great challenge to China - U.S. educational cooperation and humanistic exchanges. It is an important reference index to accurately analyze and judge the cognition and evaluation of American policy elites' education cooperation with China to grasp the preference of American educational cooperation policy-making and predict the trend of China - U.S. humanistic exchanges.

2 The core concerns of American policy elites in educational cooperation with China

Since 2017, policy elites represented by American Thinker, Congress and their subordinate agencies have held a continuous and open discussion on China - U.S. educational cooperation for the first time, and the National Association of schools (NAS), Government Accountability Office (GAO) and United States Senate permanent Sub Committee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs (PSI) has issued four investigation reports respectively: *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*^[1], *Agreements Establishing Confucius Institutes at U.S. Universities Are Similar, but Institute Operations Vary*^[2], *Observations on Confucius Institutes in the United States and U.S. Universities in China*^[3], *China's Impact on the U.S. Education System*^[4]. Through the content analysis of the four reports, it is found that the American policy elites pay great attention to the power distribution, the application of laws and rules, and the reciprocity of interests in the China - U.S. educational

cooperation.

2.1 Power distribution in educational cooperation

In the educational cooperation between China and the United States, the distribution of power among actors is the primary concern of policy elites. Under the cognitive background of “capital is power”, the basic assumption of American policy elites on educational cooperation is that the fund supplier has absolute or relative power over educational organizations or projects, and influences and dominates the goals, forms and effects of educational organization operation or educational project implementation.

When investigating and comparing the funding sources of American Cultural Centers and Confucius Institutes, policy elites pointed out that the U.S. cultural centers are funded by the State Council in a one-time way, while Confucius Institutes are funded annually by the Ministry of education and its subordinate departments. The difference in resource allocation between China and the United States means that China may enjoy more power and control over its daily operation, curriculum and activities. China implements “centralization of power” in education cooperation, while the United States implements “decentralization of power”.

2.2 Application of laws and rules in educational cooperation

Policy elites pay more attention to the applicability and coordination of legal systems, local policies and cooperative institutions’ norms among countries. First, the transparency of educational cooperation agreements between the two countries. Policy elites claim that the United States has made relatively strict legislative provisions on the information disclosure obligations of government agencies and other organizations, but China failed to embody this spirit in the process of educational cooperation. Therefore, it is necessary to remove restrictions on access to Confucius Institute agreements and personnel employment information, and fully disclose the relevant contents to the society. Second, whether the contents of educational cooperation between the two countries involving national interests have conflict of laws or not. Policy elites point out that the rules on the application of law in cooperation agreements are not sufficient, and lack of fairness and equality. There is no specific explanation and handling method in the relevant articles of association and signed agreement for the possible conflicts and conflicts

between the two laws. On the other hand, Chinese teachers have signed agreements and contracts with Chinese dispatched units to safeguard national interests, which may damage the interests of the United States when there is a conflict between Chinese and American laws.

However, other policy elites hold different views. They pointed out that the relevant agreements of Confucius Institute can be publicly inquired or applied for on the university website, and the content of the agreement is consistent with the rules and regulations of the cooperative institutions of the United States. Secondly, the public agreements investigated by GAO have clear provisions on the application of laws and regulations of Confucius Institute. The U.S. legal rules are the primary consideration for relevant courses and activities when there is a conflict between Chinese and American laws or cultural customs.

2.3 Reciprocity of benefits in educational cooperation

The American Cultural Centers is a language and cultural exchange organization similar to Confucius Institute. American policy elites pointed out that although their functions and role are similar, American Cultural Centers do not enjoy the same environmental support and policy dividend as Confucius Institutes in the U.S.. China has not given reciprocal access to American Cultural Centers, nor has China and the United States formed an equal and mutually beneficial relationship of interests. The activities or projects organized by American Cultural Centers cannot be supported by Chinese cooperative universities or approved by higher authorities, which results in the lack of freedom of American Cultural Centers in China, and the growth and influence of American Cultural Centers has failed to meet the domestic expectations of the United States. Some American Cultural Centers funded by the State Department could not be established due to the lack of communication, coordination and approval from China in time. Policy elites believe that China does not have the tradition of “reciprocity” in international cooperation in the process of educational cooperation. When the United States provides privileges and freedom to the construction and development of Confucius Institutes in China, China does not give equal feedback.

3 The Cognition and Evaluation of American Educational Cooperation with China

3.1 Judgment on China's motivation of educational cooperation

First, China is trying to enhance its soft power through a new type of public diplomacy. Soft power is a concepts related to economic, military and other hard power. It refers to the ability to obtain what a country wants through persuasion or attraction. National culture, political values and foreign policy play an important role in gain soft power. Some policy elites believes that China has obvious political and strategic intention in participating in educational cooperation, especially in the process of Confucius Institute construction and expansion around the world^[5]. The Chinese government is trying to use new forms of public diplomacy to change the perception and image of China as an economic and security threat to the United States and the whole world. However, some policy elites pointed out that all countries are promoting the construction of soft power in different forms, so there is no difference between China and other countries. Under the premise of encouraging cooperation, a country can enhance and use its soft power continuously and permanently, which is a choice that any country in the world will make.

Second, China should establish and promote the characteristic mode of educational cooperation to realize China's rights and interests in the formulation of international educational rules. In the existing international education evaluation system, the United States is in the leading position in global education, and has a high degree of participation and international influence in the formulation of explicit and implicit education rules. In contrast, China's education governance and education level are in a rising development period, and the breadth and depth of participation in international education rule-making and global education governance are relatively weak. However, China's construction and development of Confucius Institutes on the basis of cooperation between Chinese and other countries' universities has contributed to China's program for global education cooperation. Some American policy elites are worried that China is trying to establish and promote a new mode of educational cooperation and has the right to formulate relevant education rules.

3.2 Assessment of the impact of educational cooperation

There are two distinct attitudes towards the impact of China's education cooperation showed by American

policy elites. The positive view is that China can effectively meet the educational needs of the two countries and promote humanistic exchanges by optimizing the allocation of resources through cooperation. In the process of educational cooperation, China has provided a series of resources, such as funds, teachers, teaching materials, etc., to support teaching activities, which has saved corresponding costs of American Cooperative colleges and universities. On the other hand, China provided opportunities for American universities and society to contact and understand China, which helped the United States obtain valuable educational and cultural resources. At the same time, some universities jointly established by China and the United States enjoy the physical resources support of Chinese partner institutions or the Chinese government. With their help, the universities have established new independent campuses, providing a relaxed and free academic atmosphere for the students, and actively and effectively promoting the educational cooperation and cultural exchanges between China and the United States.

The negative view is that the excessive participation and direct or indirect intervention of Chinese government departments in educational cooperation increases the risk of damaging academic freedom. For example, the selection of teaching and activity content of Confucius Institute avoids controversial political topics. American Cultural Centers and China - U.S. cooperative universities in China also have similar problems. American universities in China may not be able to obtain the information needed for academic research due to network restrictions. American policy elites worry that China's additional benefits in educational cooperation exceed their own, or may damage the interests of the United States.

4 Conclusion

For China and the United States, educational cooperation and humanistic exchanges are not only an important part of reflecting the current situation of China - U.S. relations, but also a key force to promote the change and development of China - U.S. relations. The outbreak of global public health crisis in 2020 makes global cooperation encounter a strong counter current, and China - U.S. relations are facing the most serious challenges since the establishment of diplomatic relations. In the field of education cooperation, China should respond from three aspects: cognition, decision-

making and discourse.

From the perspective of cognition, We should rationally and objectively examine the focus of American policy elites and the reasonable content of cognitive evaluation, and refer to relevant suggestions to adjust and improve the practical problems in educational cooperation. The first one is, we should distinguish the negative judgments under the influence of cognitive congruence and induced stereotype mechanism, especially the conclusions drawn by American policy elites on educational cooperation based on their existing cognition, political environment and national interest position. The next one is, it refines the practical problems and relevant suggestions based on case investigation and rational analysis, so as to provide reference for the improvement of China's foreign education cooperation.

From the perspective of decision-making, We should strengthen the effectiveness of the China - U.S. dialogue mechanism, carefully consider and design programme of cooperation based on the development prospects of China - U.S. relations, and put forward proposals to safeguard both China's fundamental interests and the reasonable concerns of the United States. First of all, the domestic design should establish and improve the basic guarantee system of education cooperation, so as to cope with the dynamic changes of American education policy towards China. Secondly, we should strengthen targeted exchanges in the field of education cooperation between China and the United States, make full use of the consultation mechanism and dialogue mechanism, take the relevant national education departments as the main character, and regularly discuss issues such as cooperation interests, risk prevention and management, so as to deepen and expand the understanding of the important issues.

From the perspective of discourse, actively and positively set up topics to express the voice of China. In order to avoid the "information asymmetry" in the process of international understanding caused by the unilateral expression of the United States, China needs to change its passive response mode, enhance the expression of international discourse,

set public opinion topics, and set the core discourse of educational cooperation on such related issues as "meeting educational needs" and "realizing mutual benefit and sharing", so as to strengthen its friendship with the United States and the international community to enhance the credibility and appeal of international discourse.

For a long time, American policy elites and general public have different views on some foreign relations and foreign policies^[6]. The improvement of China - U.S. educational cooperation relationship should take the direct participants and beneficiaries as the breakthrough point, so that the cooperative universities, students and the public can truly feel the real interests and positive values of educational cooperation, encourage the identity and role of the main body of educational cooperation in the collaborative governance, and at the same time, enhance the understanding and cognition of the American public, obtain their recognition and trust, and build a favorable policy environment and public opinion environment of cooperation.

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