Study on the Path of Internationalization Development of Center for Civic Education

Yong-rui SHU\textsuperscript{1,a,*} and Qiu-mei HU\textsuperscript{1,b}

\textsuperscript{1}School of Marxism, China University of Geo Sciences (Wuhan), Wuhan, Hubei, China
\textsuperscript{a}125228940@qq.com, \textsuperscript{b}1164788217@qq.com
*Corresponding author

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Abstract. Center for Civic Education (CCE) is one of the most internationally influential think tanks in the field of civic education. It mainly realizes its international development by carrying out international academic exchanges and cooperation, implementing international projects and disseminating international products. The study on the path of the internationalization development of the Center for Civic Education can provide enlightenment for the internationalization development of the new educational think tank with Chinese characteristics.

1. Introduction

Center for Civic Education (CCE) is one of the most influential think tanks in the field of civic education. With its international development starting early and fast, the institution has accumulated rich experience. Through historical analysis and literature analysis methods, this article studies the development history of CCE, hoping to provide enlightenment for the international development of the Chinese educational think tanks.

2. The Main Path of the International Development of CCE

2.1. The Establishment of CCE’s International Development Mission

Center for Civic Education is headquartered in California. Its predecessor was the Committee on Civic Education at the University of California at Los Angeles, which was established in 1965, and was renamed “Center for Civic Education” in 1981. After more than 50 years of development, it has grown from a local academic group to one of the most influential think tanks in the field of civic education in the world. In the 1980s, the institution established its mission as “to cultivate enlightened and responsible American citizens, to enhance citizens’ identification with the basic principles of American democracy, and to encourage citizens to participate in a wide range of democratic practices”. Focusing on this mission, it has set a series of civic education policy agendas for the US government, and has put forward and strived to promote the US Congress’s approval of a few relevant civic education bills. Since the mid-1990s, along with economic globalization, CCE has rapidly expanded internationally in the field of civic education. Correspondingly, the agency has set its mission as “to cultivate open, responsible citizens who actively participate in democratic practices in the United States and the world”,\textsuperscript{[1]} reflecting a clear international vision. In the 21st century, driven by this mission, CCE has carried out various forms of transnational civic education activities internationally. The establishment of a mission with an international vision provides the impetus for the international development of CCE.

2.2. Three Paths of the International Development of CCE

Through the investigation of the main activities of CCE’s international development, it is not difficult to find that the main path of the institution’s international development includes conducting international academic exchanges and cooperation, implementing international projects, and disseminating international products.
2.2.1. Implementation of International Academic Exchanges and Cooperation

Carrying out international academic exchanges in civic education and close cooperation between transnational countries is the basic path for the international development of CCE. CCE’s international academic exchanges and cooperation began in 1969, taking the conduction of international academic conferences on civic education as the main form. The most influential one is the series of annual conferences co-hosted with Die Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. CCE had also held “World Congress” eight times in eight different countries from 2003 to 2010, and each meeting discussed a different civic education theme. “World Congress” has had a very wide-ranging influence on a global scale. [2] CCE has also organized various international conferences. Through the holding of international conferences, CCE and representatives of various countries conducted discussions on a wide range of topics in the theory and practice of civic education, not only to understand the situation of civic education in various countries in the world, but also to spread its educational concepts and practical experience to other countries.

CCE also actively promotes cross-border visits and exchanges among civic education practitioners. The institution takes the initiative to invite delegations and individuals from all over the world to visit and exchange in the organization every year. At the same time, institutions and individuals from various countries are also organized to participate in international exchange activities conducted by other civic education institutions in the United States. It actively undertakes part of the work of cooperation projects between the US government and foreign countries. For example, it once took on part of the second phase of the project called “Cultivation of Active and Responsible Citizen Leader” that the US government worked on with the governments of Kazakhstan and India. At the same time, CCE initiatively promotes domestic institutions and individuals to participate in activities in countries and regions outside the United States. By facilitating the mutual visits and exchanges of international civic education personnel in various ways, CCE not only effectively spreads the concept of democracy, but also enhances its influence in cooperation and exchanges of international civic education.

2.2.2. Implementation of International Projects

The implementation of the international civic education project is an important path for the international development of CCE. In the mid-1990s, with the trend of globalization strengthened and the international development of American think tanks entering an explosive period, old and well-established think tanks such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Brookings Institution, and the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace began to enter the global market. CCE also launched the Civitas Civic Education International Project during this period, aiming to connect education practitioners, government personnel, and organization leaders from all countries, provide countries with matched course materials and standards, and build project evaluation systems. [3]

The Civitas was first implemented in the Czech Republic. In 1995, CCE held the “Civitas @Prague” with the theme of “Democratic Politics” in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. During the conference, Worldwide Online Civic Education Community (CIVNET) went online for the first time. CCE invited civic education leaders, government officials, experts and scholars, teachers, and NGO leaders from all over the world to join the online community. CIVNET has become an important channel for the center to expand its international influence. In the following year, CCE quickly launched the “Civitas @Bosnia and Herzegovina” project, which has affected nearly a million students in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Subsequently, the center has successively implemented a series of civic education projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and other regions, and has established cooperative relations with more than 80 countries around the world. Its international projects have affected more than 400,000 teachers worldwide and nearly 12 million students. [4] In order to ensure the implementation effect of the international civic education project, CCE also provides professional international project training, which provides a guarantee for the efficient implementation of CCE’s international projects.
2.2.3. Dissemination of International Products

The development and promotion of international civic education “products” is the key path for CCE’s international development. The most representative international “product” is The International Framework for Democracy Education compiled in 1998. The preparation of the framework is jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Information Agency. In order to ensure that the framework has international standards and global guidance, Charles Quigley, Director of CCE, who was personally responsible for the development and writing of the framework, invited a number of international experts from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas to form an advisory committee to make suggestions on the framework. The content system design of the framework was developed based on the international democratic education, including seven themes, namely, the connotation of democracy, the participants and managers of democracy, the reasons for choosing democracy, the premise of achieving democracy, the mechanism of democratic operation, and the path to achieving democracy, and the relationship between democracy and the world. Each theme is closely connected with and complemented each other, constituting a complete system of international democratic education. The successful preparation of The International Framework for Democracy Education is a milestone event in the internationalization of CCE’s products, which has effectively strengthened the international influence of CCE.

The internationalization of CCE’s “products” is also reflected in its dissemination. There are three types of “products” widely spread by CCE internationally: the first type is school curriculum textbooks at the basic education stage; the second type is reference materials for curriculum designers and teachers; the third type is materials jointly developed with countries. CCE attaches great importance to the use of the Internet to improve the effectiveness of its “product” dissemination. For example, with the help of CIVNET, its civic education “products” are widely disseminated and promoted to the world. CCE also uses its official website to spread its civic education products to the world, and conducts a large number of public opinions’ publicities through social platforms and international network media to create momentum for the internationalization of its “products”.

3. Conclusion

CCE is one of the most influential think tanks in the field of civic education. The institution has realized its own international development through three ways: international academic exchanges and cooperation, implementation of international projects and dissemination of international products. The new educational think tank with Chinese characteristics should learn from the successful experience of CCE’s international development. First, actively participate in relevant international academic organizations and international forums to enhance mutual understanding through dialogue. Second, take the initiative to set up international education topics, host relevant international conferences, build an international exchange platform, and invite relevant people from developed and developing countries to visit it and make exchanges, so as to reinforce international exchanges and cooperation. Finally, actively participate in the international market competition of education think tanks, design, and implement relevant international education projects and products, and contribute “Chinese wisdom” and “Chinese solutions” to solve related education issues in other countries.

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References

[1] https://www.civiced.org/about