

## Research on the Selecting Model of Confucius Institute

### Scholarships

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**Abstract:** Through research on the selecting model of Confucius Institute scholarships, it is found that there are three types: Decision Type of the Confucius Institute Headquarters, Decision Type of Confucius Institute, and Decision Type of Hosting University. Confucius Institute scholarships include two categories: scholarships for degrees and scholarships not for degrees. In the first category, the Hosting University plays a leading role, while the Confucius Institute Headquarters and Confucius Institutes play a supporting role. In the second category, the Confucius Institute headquarters plays a leading role, while the Confucius Institute and Hosting University play a supporting role. In order to better achieve the goals and objectives of the Confucius Institute Scholarships, we must combine the strengths of the three selection models, not just one model.

**Keywords:** Confucius Institute; scholarships; selecting model

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

As a Chinese language and culture communication agency, Confucius Institute teaches Chinese language and culture, and promotes cultural exchanges to the world. It is not only an important platform for Chinese cultural exchanges, but also an important window for people from all over the world to understand Chinese culture. While implementing the "going out" of Chinese language and culture, Confucius Institute also introduces foreign students through scholarship policies. Confucius Institute Scholarships, which have played an irreplaceable role for foreign students to get to know and understand China at a close distance, lay a solid foundation for foreign students to become participants and practitioners of introducing and promoting China after returning to their

own countries. Since Confucius Institute scholarships play an extremely important role in the spread of Chinese language teaching and Chinese culture internationally, thus how to select scholarship students becomes the first and foremost issue to be resolved.

## 2. CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIPS

Since the first Confucius Institute was settled in Korea in 2004, Confucius Institutes have sprung up around the world. With the rapid development of Confucius Institutes around the world, on one hand, Most Confucius Institutes have encountered some problems such as the lack of local teachers, cultural differences between China and foreign countries, and obstacles to language communication. On the other hand, many students in Confucius Institutes have an urgent desire to pay a visit to China to learn Chinese language and get the knowledge of Chinese culture. In order to train local teachers, solve cultural differences, and meet the strong demands of Confucius Institute students to study in China, the Confucius Institute Headquarters established Confucius Institute Scholarships in 2009, whose purpose is to support foreign students, educators, and researchers to further their studies in China, to train qualified local teachers and other Chinese talents, and ultimately to promote the widespread dissemination of Chinese language and culture around the world .

The categories of Confucius Institute scholarships are becoming more and more diverse, meeting the needs of Chinese language and culture learners at different levels. As of April 2020, Confucius Institute scholarships are mainly divided into two major categories. One is the scholarships for degrees, which includes degrees for bachelors, masters and doctors in teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages, and degrees for bachelors and masters in "Chinese + vocational training". The other is the scholarships not for degrees, which includes scholarship for one-academic-Year study, scholarship for one-semester study, scholarship for four-week study, and cooperative scholarships. These four scholarships not for degrees can be divided into different kinds according to the training contents. In the first category of scholarships, the Confucius Institute

Headquarters has not only established a complete scholarship system from bachelor to doctor degrees, but also innovatively launched a "Chinese + vocational training" program to cultivate compound talents who understand both Chinese and technology. In the second category, the training contents cover Chinese language and literature, Chinese medicine and Tai Chi culture, Chinese history and philosophy, which provide a multi-faceted perspective for scholarship students to master Chinese language and understand Chinese culture.

The selecting process of the Confucius Institute Scholarships is divided into four stages: the applicant logs on the International Chinese Language Teachers (Confucius Institute) Scholarship application website ([cis.chinese.cn](http://cis.chinese.cn)) and submits materials required, the applicant is recommended by Confucius Institute where the applicant is located, Hosting University reviews the qualification of applicants and decides whether to pre-admit, the Confucius Institute headquarters decides whether to award scholarship or not. In these four stages, the Confucius Institute is responsible for verifying whether materials submitted by the applicant are qualified. If qualified, the Confucius Institute will recommend.

The authority of Hosting University varies depending on the categories of scholarships. As far as scholarships not for degrees are concerned, Hosting University only reviews in form, that is, to check whether the materials submitted by the applicant are qualified. If qualified, the applicant meets the requirements of admission; While with regard to scholarships for degrees, Hosting University, as training units, needs to make a comprehensive assessment about his or her language level, background knowledge, academic interest, and research ability, then makes a judgment as to whether he or she is suitable for bachelor, master or doctor degree. The Confucius Institute Headquarters conducts a substantive review of the applicant and has the final decision. Even if applicants are recommended by Confucius Institutes and also approved by Hosting University, it does not mean that the applicant has obtained the qualification. The Confucius Institute Headquarters will decide whether to grant him or her scholarship based on the total number of scholarships and applicants.

### **3. CLASSIFICATION AND COMPARISON OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIPS SELECTING MODEL**

From the four stages of the selection of Confucius Institute scholarships, it can be seen that Confucius Institute, Hosting University, and the Confucius Institute Headquarters each assume and play different roles. According to the different roles and functions of the three parties, the author thinks that they can be roughly divided into three types: Decision Type of the Confucius Institute headquarters, Decision Type of Confucius Institute, and Decision Type of Hosting University.

#### **3.1 Decision Type of the Confucius Institute Headquarters**

The Decision Type of the Confucius Institute Headquarters means that the Confucius Institute Headquarters plays a decisive role in the selecting process of Confucius Institute scholarships and has the final decision. This is the current approach adopted by the Confucius Institute headquarters. In the actual operation process, the Confucius Institute headquarters generally looks at two numbers, one is the total number of students applying for scholarships at each Confucius Institute, and the other is the applicant's scores of HSK test and HSKK test. Based on the number of applicants in each Confucius Institute, the Confucius Institute Headquarters determines the specific quota of Confucius Institute each year. Then, in terms of the determined quota, the Confucius Institute Headquarters selects scholarship holders from high to low according to the score of HSK test or HSKK test, until the quota runs out. The role of Confucius Institute and Hosting University is limited to the formal examination of materials submitted by applicants, that is, to check whether materials are qualified according to requirements listed by the Confucius Institute Headquarters.

The advantages of this type are: First, fairness and justice are guaranteed. It is undoubtedly reasonable to use scores of HSK test or HSKK test as the sole criterion for

deciding whether to grant scholarship or not. To a great extent, the scores of HSK test or HSKK test reflect the language level of students. As is known to all, scholarships have dual effects of honorary and economic incentives. The higher the honorary value and economic value, the more attractive they are to applicants, and the greater the guidance and incentive effect.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is easy to be questioned and criticized if there are no convincing criteria when deciding whether to grant scholarship to an applicant. Everyone is equal before the test scores. Adhering to this rule can eliminate abuse of power and rent-seeking power, and help building an image of fairness and justice. Second, applicants are motivated to study Chinese. When the scores of HSK test or HSKK test become the sole criteria, which has a strong guiding effect on applicants' behavior,<sup>2</sup> applicants will devote themselves to Chinese learning in accordance with the scope of HSK test or HSKK test. Once their goals are clear, applicants' enthusiasm for learning Chinese will increase, which will promote Chinese to a certain extent.

The disadvantages are: Firstly, the test scores do not reflect the students' real language level. Taking the scores of HSK test or HSKK test as the sole criteria is the embodiment of "Score First". It is true that the scores of HSK test or HSKK test generally reflect the students' language level and ability to use language. As everyone knows, the test scores have a certain contingency, because they are affected by factors such as the test form, content, environment, and performance of test takers, so they cannot accurately reflect the true language level of test takers.<sup>3</sup> HSK test mainly tests students' ability to communicate in Chinese in their daily life, study and work. HSKK test mainly tests students' oral Chinese. The focuses of these two tests are different, thus the students' abilities reflected in test scores are different too.

In addition, students have different levels of Chinese due to differences in personality, characteristics and language endowments. For example, some students are good at spoken

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<sup>1</sup>. Liu Jia, "The Criteria of National Scholarship for Doctoral Students — From the Perspective of the Academic Behavior," *Shanghai Journal of Educational Evaluation*6(2019):72.

<sup>2</sup>. Liu Jia, "The Criteria of National Scholarship for Doctoral Students — From the Perspective of the Academic Behavior," *Shanghai Journal of Educational Evaluation*3(2019):73.

<sup>3</sup>. Wen Dongmao, "The College Entrance Examination Reform Plan Promotes Transcendence of the Scores-obsessed Theory," *China Higher Education Research*10(2014):5.

language, some are good at written language, and others do well in both aspects, etc. Secondly, "Score First" will encourage students' utilitarian ideas. Since test scores decide everything, then it is not necessary for students to positively participate in the activities of Confucius Institute. What they only need to do is to prepare for tests and get high scores. When Confucius Institute writes recommendation letters to applicants, it usually does for all, because the number of applicants determines the number of scholarships. Reducing the number of referees means decreasing the number of scholarships of Confucius Institute, which brings Confucius Institute to an embarrassing situation or dilemma. Under the negative effect of test scores, students will become utilitarian. What they care most is test scores, not their behaviors and performances in Confucius Institute. To some extent, this phenomenon is very common. "Score First" will not only promote utilitarianism among students, but it is also unfair to those who truly love Chinese culture, actively participate in activities of Confucius Institute, and enthusiastically do favor to Confucius Institute and teachers. They are the real cultural ambassadors and bridges of friendship, who are what the Confucius Institute really needs to cultivate.

### **3.2 Decision Type of Confucius Institute**

The Decision Type of Confucius Institute means that Confucius Institute plays a decisive role in the selection of scholarships. The reason why Confucius Institute plays a decisive role is that it has close contacts and is very familiar with applicants. Undoubtedly, applicants are closest to Confucius Institute, because they are studying there and have face-to-face communications with teachers.

Its advantages are as follows: First, it will help to select applicants who really love Chinese culture and are enthusiastic about activities held by Confucius Institute. Confucius Institute has a better understanding of applicants' moral characteristics, personalities, daily performances, and language levels. Therefore, it can largely guarantee that applicants recommended by it are truly love Chinese culture and positively participate in various activities. The Decision Type of the Confucius Institute

Headquarters is incomparable to it, because test scores are just the results of an exam, and they cannot reflect applicant's moral characteristics, personalities, daily performances, and language levels. Second, it helps to guide students to actively participate in the activities of Confucius Institute.

If active involvement and being forward to help Confucius Institute, are two major factors for recommending, there is no doubt that it will encourage students to participate in the activities of Confucius Institute, and do favors to Confucius Institute when needed. It will create a good atmosphere for Confucius Institute to promote Chinese language and culture in foreign countries, and get adjusted to the locals. This is exactly what Confucius Institute hopes to happen.

Here are disadvantages: Confucius Institute may abuse its power when deciding whether to grant scholarships. If Confucius Institute places too much emphasis on applicants' daily performances and contributions, and pays less attention to the scores of HSK test and HSKK test, deliberate acts and abuses of power are prone to happen. As you know, the standards of applicants' performances and contributions are often based on subjective judgments and have certain flexibilities, which will give Confucius Institute the opportunity for abuse of power, and damage the fairness and justice of selecting scholarships. Like mentioned above, the purpose of scholarships is to train local teachers and help students to study in China. In the selection, the applicant's ability of language learning and understanding should be taken into consideration. The stronger the language learning and understanding, the faster the mastering speed. This will dramatically shorten the time that qualified local teachers are trained.

### **3.3 Decision Type of Hosting University**

The Decision Type of Hosting University means that Hosting University plays a decisive role in the selection of Confucius Institute scholarships. Hosting University, as the ultimate training unit for scholarship holders, is very concerned about applicants' knowledge background, language level, studying potential and so on. These factors are very important, because they are essential to applicants in finishing their studies or getting



degrees in Hosting University. Indeed, it is irresponsible and arbitrary to applicants if Hosting University has no say in the decision-making of granting scholarships, especially to those who want to gain a degree there.

Under normal circumstances, when deciding to choose scholarship holders, Hosting University will set up an assessment team, whose members are composed of professors in relevant fields to ensure the impartiality and authority of the selecting. As professionals, the assessment team members can make more professional judgments on whether the applicant has the potential to complete their studies. Especially for an applicant applying for a master degree or a doctor degree, the conclusion can only be reached by a special assessment team after the comprehensive evaluation of the applicant's academic background, research potential, etc. It should not be left to laymen to make a decision.

However, should all categories of scholarships be decided by Hosting University? It depends on the category of scholarship. In regard to scholarships for degrees, applicants are required to get a bachelor degree, master degree, or doctor degree. After several years of study or research, if their level of education or research in a certain subject has reached the requirements prescribed by the state, Hosting University must grant them the corresponding degree. Because the degree is an honorary title awarded to the student by Hosting University on behalf of the country, Hosting University must get a clear understanding of each applicant's knowledge structure, language ability, subject background and research potential when deciding whether to grant him or her scholarship. If the applicant meets the requirements, then he or she gets it, and vice versa.

It is hard to imagine that other departments not Hosting University make a decision in this aspect, it will inevitably result in the embarrassment that qualified applicants cannot be selected or that the selected are not qualified. This is undoubtedly a huge waste of resources both for applicants and the Confucius Institute headquarters. As far as scholarships not for degrees are concerned, the purpose of applicants is not for obtaining a degree, but for an opportunity to study Chinese in China and get close contact with Chinese culture. Furthermore, the time of their study is always not long, basically within one year. In comparison with scholarships for degrees, this kind is less important. For this



kind of short-term scholarships, it is not necessary for Hosting University to form a special assessment team to make a decision, it can be left to the Confucius Institute headquarters or Confucius Institute where the applicant is located to judge.

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIPS SELECTING MODELS**

The three selecting models discussed above have their own advantages and disadvantages. Only using one selecting model, the advantages of the three parties cannot be brought into play to select qualified scholarship holders. Different selecting models should be adopted depending on the category of scholarships. Firstly, as to scholarships for degrees, Hosting Universities with no doubt should play a key role. The Confucius Institute Headquarters and Confucius Institute where the applicant is located play a supporting role. As mentioned above, Hosting University is capable of making professional judgments on applicants' studies or research potentials. Neither the Confucius Institute Headquarters nor Confucius Institute can do this. Nevertheless, the Confucius Institute Headquarters can review the authenticity of applicants' scores of HSK test and HSKK test, make an overall allocation of scholarships for all Confucius Institutes; Confucius Institute will pay attention to applicants' language levels, loves of Chinese culture, behaviors and performances, and then decide whether to recommend.

The specific process is that the applicant submits materials on the International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarship application website, including the recommendation letter issued by Confucius Institute and the applicant's certificates of HSK test and HSKK test. Hosting University sets up an assessment team to make judgments on applicants. If they pass the assessment, Hosting University will log on the above website and submit a certificate of acceptance. The Confucius Institute Headquarters verifies the scores of HSK test and HSKK test, and conducts formal examination of other materials before passing.

Secondly, with regard to scholarships not for degrees, the Confucius Institute

Headquarters and Confucius Institute where the applicant is located should play a core role, and Hosting University plays a supporting role. Here is a question needed to be answered, does the Confucius Institute Headquarters play a central role or Confucius Institute? The authors believe that the Confucius Institute Headquarters should play a central role, but the recommendation letter and recommended list of Confucius Institute must be taken into consideration by the Confucius Institute Headquarters.

The specific approach is that the applicant submits the application materials on website. After Confucius Institute conducts a formal review of all applicants' materials including the recommendation letter, it then submits a recommended list according to each applicant's behavior and performance at Confucius Institute. When deciding whether to grant scholarships or not, the Confucius Institute Headquarters has to select them based on the list submitted by the Confucius Institute and the prescribed number of scholarships. If it thinks that the list recommended by Confucius Institute is unfair, it has the right to adjust the list when communicating with Confucius Institute. After the Confucius Institute Headquarters has decided to grant an applicant the scholarship, Hosting University will conduct subsequent review to make sure that all the materials are qualified.

The core role of the Confucius Institute Headquarters can overcome the abuse of power of Confucius Institute, avoid the occurrence of unfairness and injustice, and create a healthy and good selecting environment. Allowing Confucius Institute to submit a recommended list, not only can enhance the good image and credibility of Confucius Institute to students, but also can attract many more students actively participate in all kinds of activities.

In the near future, when selecting scholarship holders, the Confucius Institute Headquarters can optimize the selecting model, and make a combination of the advantages of three models. According to different categories of scholarships, different methods can be used in order to select qualified applicants to better achieve the goals and objectives of scholarships, attract more and more foreign students to study in China. When finishing their studies, they know China better and love China more. After they go back to their own countries, they will become participants, practitioners, and witnesses of

cultural exchanges between China and their countries. They will make a large contribution to the friendship of people both in China and their countries.