

# *Theoretical Analysis of the Advocacy Coalition Framework of College English Education Policy*

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**Abstract:** In the collective life of the community, the means and tools for people to solve public problems are public policies. As time and circumstances change, so do policies. Over time, policy changes are inevitable. This research focuses on the introduction and analysis of the theory of Advocacy Coalition framework, and analyzes the changes in my China's college English education policy based on the Advocacy Coalition.

## 1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization, English, as an international language, plays an increasingly important role in transnational communication and cooperation. And English, as the most important international language, has now become a commonly used tool in communication, technology, culture and information exchange around the world. As a tentative exploration, this research analyzes and interprets the development and changes of the new format policy under the framework of the Advocacy Coalition in the field of college English education policy, and draws some meaningful research conclusions from it, including the analysis of the China's English in the framework of the Advocacy Coalition. The value orientation that education policies should adhere to, the measures to be taken, and the forecast of future trends, etc., also provide a new idea and new case for the Chinese application of the Advocacy Coalition framework. In the more complex context of the new era, policy discourse is constantly adjusted, and its semantics is subject to the construction of multidisciplinary discourse and the understanding of different interest groups, resulting in different discourse practices, and college English education has been reconstructed accordingly. Therefore, understanding the changing laws of college English education policy discourse, thinking about the orientation of college English education policy discourse and what kind of discourse order should be followed, has important guiding significance for guiding future college English education practice. In the reform of the university public English education system,

the following problems must be enough to attract experts and scholars in university public English teaching, and the education and training sector: how to take the essence of the modern English education policy and get rid of its slack, how to consolidate the current quality of university public English education and not go backwards, how to find problems, identify problems and solve them, how to make the university public English education system more in line with the learning characteristics of undergraduates and postgraduate students, and more in line with the new era requirements of building high-level talents in the future society, and how to achieve the reform of the old and bring forth the new.

Since policy learning between coalitions is empirical and instrumental, it is often adjusted around secondary aspects of the belief system, namely the effectiveness of policy instruments and causal assumptions among variables and achievement of Union Policy Objectives.

## **2. College English Education Policy under the Advocacy Coalition Framework**

### **2.1. The Theory of Advocacy Coalition Framework**

The Advocacy Coalition Framework(ACF) was created in the early 1980s by Paul Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith. [1] The earliest journal publications of the ACF began with Sabatier (1986), in which the ACF was described as a synthesis of top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation and then in Sabatier and Pelkey (1987) which described the ACF as an approach to understanding regulatory policymaking.[2] One theoretical approach that has endured over time is the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). With more than three decades of research and hundreds of applications that span the globe, the ACF is now one of the most established and widely applied approaches for studying policy processes.[3] The Advocacy Coalition framework, which is a theoretical model of "non-linear public policy change process". The Advocacy Coalition theory explores how different policy actors, who have different values, change from different ideological concepts and opposite policy interests to a shared belief system through learning and competition, so as to achieve the purpose of policy change. In order to explain the specific circumstances of the policy change process more clearly, the advocacy coalition framework needs to explain the policy change by looking at a ten-year or longer period . [4]

Advocacy Coalition refers to a group of policy actors or a policy community with a common belief system.[5] These policy communities can work together for a long time and deeply because they share a set of values and the cognitive system formed through these values.

Advocacy coalitions share common beliefs about basic ideas and cause-and-effect relationships, and often take concerted action. Generally speaking, there will be 2-5 advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem, divided into dominant coalitions and secondary coalitions.[6] The advocacy coalition framework (abbreviated as ACF) has developed into an important theoretical framework in the field of policy process research. The core concepts of policy subsystems, belief systems, and advocacy coalitions are familiar to policy researchers.[7] Early ACF only proposed two main reasons for policy changes: one is external subsystem events, including changes in the political and economic environment, shifts in public opinion, changes in governing coalitions, and changes in other policy subsystems. Changes in external factors lead to changes in the resources, power, and beliefs of alliances within the subsystem, which in turn lead to changes in policies; second, policy learning, experience learning and information updates bring about loosening of actors' minds or changes in action tendencies, which then lead to policy changes. The system is extremely difficult to change, and policy learning takes a long time to trigger policy change. The ACF in 2007 added two other important factors that constituted two new paths for policy change: one is internal

sub-system shocks; the other is consensus. [7]

According to the Advocacy Coalition Framework theory, when an important policy topic receives special attention, a policy subsystem on that topic is formed, in which there are multiple advocacy coalitions (usually 1 to 4), and the participation of the policy subsystem Actors (actors) belong to these different advocacy coalitions, each with its own core beliefs and ideologies of policy, which are the key to distinguishing different advocacy coalitions. That is, the strength of an integrated advocacy coalition is not interests but beliefs shared by its members, thus involving belief systems.[8]

## **2.2. Theoretical Analysis of Advocacy Coalition Framework**

Each policy subsystem exercises some degree of limited autonomy in an attempt to have maximum influence, while other policy subsystems make decisions and exert influence on their related policy subsystems. In general, these dynamic external variables are quite active, with great uncertainty and randomness, and in most cases are extremely influential, and can change the normative conditions and resource conditions of actors in the policy subsystem in the short term directly. It has a binding effect on the behavior of alliance members and the policy resources of the alliance, affects the alliance power ratio within the policy subsystem, and becomes the main external factor affecting the policy process, prompting major changes in government policies. The development of the national economy is inseparable from the development of the corresponding educational undertakings. The latter is an important part of the former. Therefore, changes in the economic context will inevitably determine the changes in educational discourse. In order to better disseminate the national ideology, the main body of the policy formulates foreign language education policy texts that meet the needs of economic development, so that it can better achieve the four modernization goals, and has positioned the development form of foreign language education in an appropriate real machine.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework analyzes the policy process in terms of policy belief systems rather than interests, because policy belief systems are more inclusive and can maximize the inclusion of various actors in the policy process into the policy subsystem. In the policy subsystem, in addition to the traditional "Iron Triangle", social organizations, research institutions, experts and scholars, and news media are all organic components of the policy subsystem. Narrow interests cannot cohere such a large and diverse set of policy actors, which can be achieved by belief systems. The scientificization of foreign language education policies in universities is reflected in the fairness of the foreign language education policy-making procedures, the rationalization of language planning, and the regularity and performance of curriculum settings in line with language development. Where possible, modern science and technology should be used in each link to ensure the normal operation and full play of each link. This is an education system based on the socialist planned economic system and social management model. In the early stage of large-scale economic construction, this strict government plan can better ensure that education conforms to economic and social development, so as to better realize education goals of public interest.

## **2.3. Analysis of College English Education Policy under the Advocacy Coalition Framework**

Over the past 40 years, public foreign language education in colleges and universities in my country has been fully restored and expanded. The development of science and technology, economic development, social development and higher education of the country has promoted the

development of college English foreign language education. It has created and experienced the development path from curriculum system reform to teaching mode, curriculum integration to technology integration and from scale to content enhancement. Professor Jigang Cai (2017) pointed out that the failure of my country's foreign language education policy is the failure of college English teaching orientation.[9] Qi Shen (2018) also believes that the fundamental drawback of the current college English teaching reform is that "the orientation and value orientation of college foreign language teaching are not clear".[10] Therefore, to measure the gains and losses of college English teaching reform, it is necessary to re-examine the value proposition of college foreign language teaching plans from the perspective of language plans and language policies. Actively innovate the curriculum system and follow the policy through the top-level design of the university language education plan.[11]

Public policy is the process of consciously planning activities that can regulate social relations among people, and maximize public interests through the distribution and adjustment of different interests. Educational policy is an action policy that the government adjusts various interests to adapt to social needs and changes in order to solve problems in the field of education in a certain period of time. Language policy refers to the laws, regulations, etc. formulated to enable human social groups to achieve expected language changes in the use of language communication. The reform of college English teaching policy needs to change the teaching activities from "teaching" to "learning", and form a teaching norm characterized by the guidance and inspiration of teachers and the active participation of students.

Focusing on the current situation and existing problems of college English education policy and its reform, and further deepening college English education policy, based on the perspective of public policy process theory, this research uses the theory of Advocacy Coalition Framework to study the changes of college English education policy in my country. First of all, based on the framework theory of advocacy alliance, through the analysis of policy texts, it first sorts out and divides the history of college English education policy changes, analyze the background and development of college English education policy and the reasons for its formation, and put forward corresponding policy suggestions. Then, based on the Advocacy Coalition Framework, it explores the dynamics of college English education policy changes, and finds that its changes are driven by external dynamics—relatively stable parameters and external events, and internal dynamics—internal shocks and policy learning. The reason is that the external driving force of policy change is hindered and cross-alliance learning encounters difficulties. Finally, using the Advocacy Coalition Framework to reform college English education policy, three suggestions are put forward to reduce the external resistance of policy changes, actively promote cross-alliance learning, and get rid of the dependence of policy changes, and put forward ideas and suggestions for effectively solving college English education policy problems in the future.

### 3. Conclusion

The essential purpose of English teaching is to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, improve English and cross-cultural communication skills, guide and promote learners to establish reasonable value orientations, and remove unreasonable value orientations. Collective action within advocacy coalitions and across advocacy coalitions is not only regulated by their respective policy belief systems, but also constrained by policy resources. Policy-oriented learning itself is the adjustment of ideological and behavioral intentions caused by experience or new information, and the result is naturally a change in policy goals or tools, that is, policy changes.

China's higher education is in a rising period of rapid development. How to train undergraduates to become talents to adapt to current and future overall development strategy is inseparable from the guidance of educational policies. It is of great practical significance to improve the college public English teaching syllabus and formulate a college public English education policy in line with the trend of the times.

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