

## Research on Mode of China-Philippines Higher Education Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative

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**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative, The Philippines, Online education, Cooperation mode.

**Abstract:** With the development opportunity of Belt and Road Initiative, the cooperation between China and the Philippines in higher education has a broader prospect, and the ways of cooperation become more diverse. This article is mainly to analyze the necessity and possibility of online education cooperation between universities in China and the Philippines. It also puts forward a preliminary conception of the implementation approaches of cooperation mode of online education.

### 1. Introduction

There is a long history of friendly exchanges between the Chinese and Philippines. The educational cooperation between the two countries may trace back to ancient times. Nevertheless, the cooperation in higher education between the two countries was officially launched after the first China-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) round-table conference of education ministers in 2010. In this conference, the two countries signed a cooperation agreement with the theme of higher education. Since then, universities of the two countries have carried out inter-school exchanges, signed cooperation agreements on running schools, or jointly built cultural or educational cooperation and exchange projects.

In recent years, With the development strategy of the "Belt and Road Initiative", "China-ASEAN connectivity has been further accelerated. Being the important member of ASEAN and the participating country of Maritime Silk Road, the Philippines has become one of the 24 countries along the Belt and Road Initiative which have achieved mutual recognition of academic degrees with China. It is quite clear that the cooperation in higher education between the two sides has been promoted to a new height. Accordingly, it is particularly necessary to build a diversified, multichannel and multilevel mode of cooperation in higher education between China and the Philippines.

At present, with the increasingly mature and perfect online education technology, virtual distance education, MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) and other modes of online education mediated by new technologies are attracting more and more attention, which is bound to promote the cultural integration between China and the Philippines in a more convenient and efficient way. This article will focus on discussing the importance and existing basis of constructing the international cooperation mode of online education between Chinese and Philippine universities. It also tries to put forward a preliminary idea of the implementation path of the cooperation mode of online education.

### 2. The necessity of international cooperation in online education

#### 2.1. Meeting the ever-increasing demand for Chinese learning

Online education is not limited by time and space, and its flexibility, to a great extent, meets the learning needs of learners and improves their learning efficiency. As is known to all, one of the official languages of the Philippines is English, while China, as a non-English speaking country, has no advantage in attracting the Philippine students to study in China. However, with the continuous development of China-Philippines relations, the international status of Chinese has been

increasingly enhanced and established as a second foreign language by some universities in the Philippines. However, there are only four Confucius Institutes and three Confucius classrooms in the Philippines, which can no longer meet the growing demand of local students for Chinese learning.

As mentioned in Promoting the co-building of education in the Belt and Road Initiative issued by Ministry of Education of China, we need to study the coordination mechanism of language intercommunication, jointly develop open courses for language exchange, then gradually incorporate language courses from countries along the Belt and Road into domestic curriculum systems. Therefore, by virtue of online education, numerous Chinese universities can adopt various cooperative ways to set up Chinese online learning, training and tutoring courses which will benefit more Chinese learners.

## **2.2. Enhancing the level of international cooperation in running a university**

Compared with the traditional mode of international cooperation in higher education, online education has the obvious advantage of reaching a wide range of people. China has relatively fewer exchange programs with the Philippines compared with the other ASEAN countries. And the dominating forms of cooperation are still language training, while the joint projects of academic education are relatively less, which is not conducive to improving the level of international cooperation in running a university.

The official document, Promoting the co-building of education in the Belt and Road Initiative, also proposes the implementation of the cooperation plan named The Silk Road for running universities, encouraging qualified Chinese institutions of higher education to focus on advantageous disciplines and select suitable cooperation points to carry out running universities abroad. and advocating high-level education cooperation among countries along the Belt and Road.

Therefore, in order to grab the share of overseas students, our universities should also focus on the professional fields, such as transportation, construction, medicine, energy, environmental engineering, hydraulic engineering, biological science, ocean science, ecology protection, protection of cultural heritage, which are urgently needed by the countries along the Belt and Road. We should carry out exchanges and cooperation in these fields, share abundant educational resources and promote the internationalization of curriculum by virtue of online teaching so as to improve the the cooperation in academic education between China and the Philippines.

## **3. Foundation and conditions for international cooperation in online education**

### **3.1. Consensus on online education**

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### **3.2. Successful experience from developed countries**

With the innovation of modern educational technology, online education has gradually become one of the important ways to realize the internationalization of education. Its openness, autonomy and efficiency are widely welcomed and recognized. Universities in some developed countries take the lead in recruiting international students for degree courses by the way of online (distance) education. They accumulated rich experience in practicing the mode of mixed online teaching and face-to-face teaching.

In recent years, the UK has seized the opportunities to develop cross-border cooperation in higher education through online teaching. By constantly improving the online course system and training teachers, it has allowed more students to register online than in any other country. According to incomplete statistics in 2015, 43% of the students who participate in online learning of cross-border higher education in the UK are from Oxford Brookes University (OBU). 99% of these students are also enrolled in the courses of Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Accounting, jointly developed by the OBU and the Association of International Certified Public Accountants (ACCA). More than 280,000 people were enrolled in the programme in the 2014-15 academic year, accounting for nearly half of the total number of the overseas students in the UK in the same year.

### **3.3. Maturing technology of online education**

Compared with universities in some developed countries, Chinese universities started implementing online education relatively late, but has developed it rapidly in recent years. Since the emergence of MOOC, some well-known Chinese universities joined MOOC platforms such as Courser and edX in 2013. Subsequently, Tsinghua University took the lead in developing the MOOC platform named School Online. Then Shanghai Jiaotong University launched CNMOOC platform to achieve the inter-university learning and mutual recognition of credits among the universities. And there are some really influential online education platforms such as MOOCS in Chinese universities, Shanghai Curriculum Center, etc..

These platforms bring together the first-class curriculum resources of many universities Universities at home and abroad, and it has promoted the comprehensive spread of blended online and offline teaching in Chinese universities. Especially during the COVID-19 epidemic period this year, all the Chinese universities have carried out online teaching in an comprehensive way. Efficiently, the universities and their cooperative enterprises improved the infrastructure and platform construction of online teaching, created and accumulated a large number of digital teaching resources, and tested online teaching technology, which provide a guarantee for Chinese online education to move towards international cooperation.

## **4. Implementation approaches of cooperation mode of online education between Chinese and Philippine universities**

In order to promote the implementation of the cooperation mode of online education in China and the Philippines smoothly, three key aspects should be grasped, namely, education platform, course resources and mutual recognition of credits.

### **4.1. Building an online education platform**

In terms of worldwide online education platforms, language learning platforms have taken the lead. The International version App of global Chinese learning was launched in 2019. It is reported that the platform has covered 50 teaching institutions in 29 countries by April 28 this year, and the agency developing the platform has entered into a strategic partnership with an institution of online education in New Zealand. Both sides will promote the international version App to more universities in New Zealand, Australia and other countries. Hopefully, it is expected to be extended to countries including the Philippines along the Belt and Road soon.

Meanwhile, academic education or other training courses other than language learning should also be taken seriously. On the basis of the early-stage platform independently developed by China,

universities need to strengthen the cooperation with enterprises which have conducted overseas business, make full use of information technology, and build an international platform specially designed for learners in the Philippines or other countries along the Belt and Road.

The platform should support MOOCs, live classes, certificate courses, online degree courses and other forms of online education, focusing on first-class courses from Chinese universities and taking into account bringing in top-ranking courses from the world's top universities. It can not be neglected that the platform needs to develop more practical functions to meet the individual needs of different learners.

#### **4.2. Sharing online course resources**

Chinese universities can take advantage of their geographical advantages, dominant majors and national characteristics as well as take into account the current demand of popular majors in the Philippines, then actively carry out cooperation with Philippine universities in developing course resources, particularly the new online courses. Both sides should share out the work and help each other, handling properly the tasks like course module design, course preparation, course guidance, course evaluation and course resource management of online platform, etc. Besides, they need to discuss the operation mechanism of online cooperative courses and work out how to improve the adaptability of the courses to meet the individual needs of students.

In addition, Chinese universities may also make an attempt in the international cooperation of curriculum resources for academic education, adding existing curriculum modules into the Philippine academic education and providing them to students in Philippine universities as optional courses. Of course, such operation needs to consider localization of curriculum resources. Accordingly, curriculum implementation should conform to the students' learning habits, the syllabus and teaching objectives should be consistent with the standards in Philippine universities, and teaching content should be flexibly adjusted according to local needs. This localization mode can effectively balance the different teaching requirements between Chinese and Philippine universities so as to cultivate more competitive students.

#### **4.3. Improving mutual recognition of online credit**

Credit mutual recognition is an important part of international cooperation in online education. Mingjun Xu from the Open University of China once said, the future of online education must be supported by national policies, the most important of which is the recognition of credits. Without the support of the credit bank system, the future development of online education in China can only dream of a bright future, lacking substantive institutional soil.

Philippine Higher Education Commission and the Ministry of Education of China signed the "Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Higher Education between the Ministry of Education, PRC and the Higher Education Commission of the Republic of the Philippines" on August 29, 2019. The fifth item in the memorandum is Establishment of a credit transfer arrangements.

With the support of macro policies, Chinese and Philippine universities should strengthen the exchanges and communication as well as set systematic credit standards. Cooperative universities should fully respect the individual differences of students, adhere to the principle of equality and openness to ensure students can choose the courses they are interested in from the online course list shared by the platform, then obtain the corresponding credits successfully. Moreover, the cooperative universities should also introduce the relevant credit management system, and specify some operational details of mutual credit recognition so as to guarantee diversified forms of credit connection between Chinese and Philippine universities.

### **5. Conclusion**

Online education provides a new mode of knowledge dissemination and learning, which will lead to a major change in global higher education and exert a far-reaching impact on the international cooperation between universities. This article makes a preliminary analysis of the

feasibility of the international cooperation mode of online education between Chinese and Philippine universities under the Belt and Road. The follow-up research will mainly discuss how to guarantee the quality of online education cooperation, and explore the deep integration of course resources between Chinese and Philippine universities.

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