

Research on the Higher Education Cooperation Mode between China and Countries along the Belt and Road from the Perspective of Cooperative Subjects

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Abstract: The implementation of the Belt and Road initiative has brought closer exchanges and cooperation between China and countries along the line in higher education. Based on the analysis of the current situation of higher education exchanges and cooperation between China and countries along the Belt and Road, this paper explores the existing problems in the higher education cooperation between China and countries along the Belt and Road, and puts forward the possible cooperation modes of higher education between China and countries along the line from different perspectives of cooperative subjects: the model of “colleges & universities”, the model of “enterprise, university & scientific research institution”, and the mode of academic communications initiated by academic organizations or academic teams.

1. Introduction

The Belt and Road initiative is in line with human pursuit of a better future, and it also meets the strong desire and eager anticipation of people in the countries along the line who are eager to share development opportunities and create a better life together. Higher education exchanges and cooperation shoulder the important mission of bridging the communication bridge for the people in China and in countries along the Belt and Road and providing support for personnel training. It plays a fundamental and leading role in the joint construction of the Belt and Road. So, how's the current status of cooperation between China and countries along the Belt and Road in higher education? What problems exist in cooperation? What kind of cooperation mode should be chosen by cooperation subjects based on different purposes to carry out higher education cooperation and exchange is the problem that this paper tries to explore.

2. Current Status of Higher Education Cooperation between China and the Countries Along “the Belt and Road”

2.1 Policy Coordination

The smooth progress of exchanges and cooperation in higher education is inseparable from institutional arrangements, and effective institutional supply will provide a good foundation for international exchanges and cooperation in higher education^[1]. On the coordination of education policies, China has issued joint statements, signed action plans or memoranda with several countries along the Belt and Road to support international exchanges and cooperation in higher education since the implementation of the action on promoting the co-construction of the Belt and Road education in 2016. At present, China has already signed agreements on mutual recognition of higher education qualifications and degrees with 24 countries along the Belt and Road, helping to smooth the channels of education cooperation between China and the Belt and Road countries.

2.2 Cooperation in Talent Development

Since the implementation of the study in China program, the number of students studying in China has been increasing. In 2018, a total of 492,200 students from 196 countries and regions

studied in China, including 266,600 from 64 countries along the Belt and Road.

There are a large number of Chinese students studying abroad, but the largest destination for Chinese students studying abroad is still the developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The number of students going to the countries along the Belt and Road is relatively small, mainly concentrated in Southeast Asia and central and eastern Europe, among which the number of Chinese students going to Malaysia is the largest.

3. Problems in “the Belt and Road” Higher Education Exchange and Cooperation

3.1 Lack of Deep Cooperation Mechanism

At present, China has initially established bilateral and multilateral educational exchange and cooperation mechanisms with a number of countries and regions along the Belt and Road, and formed exchange platforms such as university alliances, education exhibitions, the conference of education ministers, etc. However, these communication platforms do not exist in all cooperative countries or regions. Only one or two communication platforms were established in most countries or regions. The form of cooperation is relatively simple, and it still stays at a shallow level of interaction, there is a lack of in-depth cooperation mechanisms with clear objectives, strong operability, and clear processes.

3.2 Lack of Two-Way Interaction

The countries along the Belt and Road cover developed countries, developing countries and underdeveloped countries, with the majority of them being underdeveloped countries. Whether it is cooperation with developed countries or less developed countries, it is mostly characterized by one-way interaction. In cooperation with undeveloped countries, the Chinese government strongly supports programs for studying abroad in China, and provides foreign student quotas, scholarships and other projects for cooperating countries, with the aim of providing talent and intellectual support for the economic and social development of countries along the Belt and Road. It can be seen that the development of exchanges and interactions between China and the cooperative countries in higher education is unbalanced, which is manifested in one-way absorption or one-way output dominates and lacks two-way interaction.

3.3 Obstacles to Linguistic Diversity

As many as 55 official languages are spoken by 64 countries along the Belt and Road, most of which are minor languages. The diversity of languages brings difficulties and challenges to communication and cooperation, and talents who are familiar with national languages of counties along the Belt and Road are urgently needed. Therefore, the establishment of a talented team with foreign language and excellent ability is an important guarantee for the normal and continuous exchange of higher education. How to ensure the stability and sustainable supply of language talents is the difficulty of exchanges and cooperation of higher education

4. Cooperation Model of Higher Education between China and Countries Along the Belt and Road

From the perspective of the cooperation subject of international exchange and cooperation in higher education, based on the interaction of different subjects, this paper holds that there are three modes in China's higher education exchanges and cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road: The model of “colleges & universities”, the model of “enterprise, university & scientific research institution”, and the mode of “academic communications”.

4.1 The Model of “Colleges & Universities”

The model of “colleges & universities” refers to two or more universities with the same goal through a certain mechanism to achieve the advantages of complementarity and resource sharing between universities to achieve common interests ^[2]. The university alliance helps to cultivate

high-quality and compound talents with international vision, and to a certain extent, strengthens the cross-border movement of talents, thereby realizing the exchange and sharing of high-quality talents. In addition, the talents jointly trained by Chinese and foreign universities usually play the role of peace envoys. In the process of training, they will imperceptibly promote the understanding of the Chinese culture, eliminate the wrong cultural cognition, deepen cultural mutual trust, and lay the foundation for long-term cooperation between China and countries along the Belt and Road^[3]. This paper holds that there are the following paths to construct the model of “colleges & universities”: First, to build up university unions. Such forms of cooperation are jointly organized by many universities at home and abroad to jointly organize exchanges and cooperation projects between universities. There is no entity in the university alliance, and the investment cost is relatively small compared to overseas schools. The members of the alliance gather through activities or projects, and the activities are flexible and diverse, which help to strengthen the openness and integration of Chinese and foreign higher education. The second way is to launch SINO-foreign joint education projects to cultivate talents. This form includes cooperation between Chinese and foreign universities to set up independent sponsoring institutions and cooperative education projects. The exchanges and cooperation are more in-depth, which is helpful for both or more parties to jointly cultivate special talents according to the needs of running schools, and lays a good foundation for sustained cooperation. The third way is the exchange of students or visiting scholars between universities. This form helps to expand the international vision, understand the culture of both sides, strengthen humanities exchanges, and promote people-to-people exchanges. Last but not least, to establish Confucius institutes or language training centers in the alliance countries to smooth communication between China and countries along the Belt and Road. Language interlinkages build bridges and remove language barriers for communication between China and foreign countries.

4.2 The Model of “Enterprise, University & Scientific Research Institution”

Industry-university-research cooperation is the cooperation between enterprises, universities and scientific research institutions based on common interests, and the three parties jointly invest resources and carry out technological innovations. The purpose is to strengthen the transformation of scientific and technological achievements and carry out technological innovations to achieve higher goals and benefits^[4]. This type of cooperation can give full play to the advantages of various subjects, make full use of the advantages of universities and scientific research institutions in personnel training and scientific and technological research, and give full play to the practical advantages of enterprises to provide practical talents for the construction and development of the Belt and Road Initiative. Industry-university-research cooperation can achieve goals that neither side can achieve alone. There are three ways of cooperation for reference: It is a commonly used method that universities combine with its own characteristic to cultivate practical talents for national industrial development along the Belt and Road. For example, according to the characteristics of the school and the characteristics of the economic and social development of the countries along the Belt and Road, China University of Petroleum has set up a special research institution to undertake scientific research projects such as oil and gas geological exploration and gathering, the results have been applied to oil and gas exploration and development in Central Asia and the Middle East and other countries, and great economic and social benefits have been obtained. Besides, running jointly schools by colleges and enterprises is conducive to cultivating the skilled talents needed by enterprises. Moreover, the special project of industry-university-research institute is an important form to promote industry-university-research cooperation. Generally speaking, there is a clear purpose for cooperation and the form of the project is flexible.

4.3 The Mode of “Academic Communications”

The dialogue between China and academic organizations or academic groups in countries along the Belt and Road can also be carried out to deepen cooperation. Academic exchanges, on the one hand, provide opportunities and platforms for the collision and communication between China and the different academic circles of the countries along the Belt and Road to promote scientific development. On the other hand, scholars who engage in higher education will recognize China's

determination to jointly develop higher education with other countries, and enhance the recognition of the Belt and Road initiative and achieve more long term exchanges and cooperation. This mode of corporation includes the academic conferences or forums organized by non-governmental academic organizations and academic exchange platforms established by government. Since the introduction of the Belt and Road Strategy, academic organizations in China and countries along the Belt and Road have initiated a number of spontaneous exchanges, such as the International Belt and Road Conference on Space Awareness held in 2015. In addition to the spontaneous academic exchange activities organized by the non-governmental academic organizations, the Ministry of education has also set up academic exchange platforms for experts and academic organizations in China and the countries along the Belt and Road, such as the Central African University Presidents Forum and the China-ASEAN Education Exchange Week. Experts, scholars, universities and relevant academic organizations should actively participate in the discussions on the Belt and Road through the various available official and non-governmental channels to make suggestions and proposals for the joint development of the Belt and Road.

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