

## Research on the Education of International Students from ASEAN to China under the Perspective of “Belt and Road”

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**Abstract:** The continuous advancement of the “Belt and Road” and the deep integration of the “Diamond Decade” of China-ASEAN have brought historical opportunities to the educational cooperation between the two sides. At present, the development trend of ASEAN students studying in China is rapid, and problems and bottlenecks coexist. Through the investigation and study of Guangxi University, Guangxi University for Nationalities, Guangxi Medical University and Guangxi Normal University, this paper finds that ASEAN's study abroad in China is concentrated in science and engineering, and there are relatively few humanities and social science majors; the scale of study abroad is expanding year by year, but the Belt and Road Initiative has not been known about the study abroad education initiative. This paper proposes to expand the propaganda of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, strengthen the exchanges between Guangxi universities and ASEAN countries, strengthen the cooperation of science and engineering majors, enhance the quality of education services for international students, and optimize the teachers' strengths and cultivate their key disciplines. Efforts will be made to improve the quality of international student education services and attract more international students to come to China.

### 1. Introduction

The implementation of the “Belt and Road Initiative” provides an opportunity for China-ASEAN education cooperation. The internationalization of education has broad prospects for the integration and exchange of the two sides.

As an important link between China and ASEAN universities, the “Belt and Road” has injected new impetus into the educational cooperation between the two sides. Guangxi is connected with the ASEAN countries, and it has a unique relationship. There are many types of colleges and universities in Guangxi, among which universities such as Guangxi University, Guangxi University for Nationalities, Guangxi Medical University and Guangxi Normal University have always been the key choices for ASEAN students. The educational initiatives in Guangxi region may further influence the development trend of ASEAN's study abroad in China. Guangxi universities should give full play to their regional advantages and adopt flexible and diverse modes to carry out international cooperation with universities in ASEAN countries to promote the process of internationalization of their education. [1] This paper analyzes the hotspots and trends of ASEAN's study abroad in China, analyzes its causes, and proposes coping strategies and ideas to improve the quality of education for foreign students in Guangxi and attract more international students to study and communicate in China.

### 2. Literature Review

In the past ten years, many scholars have conducted an investigation and analysis of the development of ASEAN. In the early stage, domestic scholars put forward many constructive opinions on the status quo of the educational services of ASEAN students in China and various problems in their development. For example, Wang Yonghui, Guan Yifan (2014) found that China has different opinions on the mutual recognition system of credit degree in the education service trade of ASEAN, and the imperfect education internationalization funding system [2]; Fang Bao (2015) proposed Be wary of the “comparative advantage trap” of education service trade, actively

optimize the structure of study abroad education, and focus on cultivating several ASEAN study areas. [3] Because this stage is in the “Belt and Road” education initiative, the direction of academic research is relatively concentrated, and the topic selection angle is relatively simple, mostly based on the research and discussion of the status quo of overseas education.

With the further promotion of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, this year China has taken a number of measures to strengthen educational communication with countries along the Belt and Road. Scholars have gradually put the issue of ASEAN into the context of the “Belt and Road”, and the research on the practical problems of ASEAN’s study abroad education has become more and more related to the “Belt and Road” discussion. Zhou Guping and Luo Xian (2016) proposed that talents should be reserved to deepen the cooperation between China and ASEAN and stimulate economic development. [4] Zheng Gang, Ma Le (2016) According to the strategic characteristics of “One Belt, One Road”, it is necessary to promote the education of foreign students in the countries along the line, which requires both the government's macro level and the active participation of colleges and universities. [5] Ma Zanming (2017) examines the problems in China-ASEAN higher education through the “Belt and Road” and believes that it is necessary to coordinate and train elites and high-level technical talents in the industry and promote mutual recognition of academic degrees. [6] However, so far, comprehensive domestic literature, most of the relevant research is mainly based on the recommendations of China-ASEAN education development strategy and strategic thinking, and there are few empirical studies on actual interviews; At the theoretical level, there is a lack of in-depth research from the student level; research on the impact of the “Belt and Road” education initiative on ASEAN's hotspots and trends in studying in China is fragmented. The hotspots and trends of ASEAN students' education are in the “Belt and Road” education initiative. Research on changes before and after the introduction is even rarer. Zhou Hongyu and Hu Jiabin (2018) have directly stated: “The current research on higher education in the theme of 'Belt and Road' has insufficient depth and breadth of research, insufficient connection of research, and insufficient integration of microscopic research and macroscopic research. Higher education researchers are needed to further explore theoretical connotation and practical wisdom, and provide useful reference for decision makers and practitioners.” [7] It can be seen that based on the current new situation, through scientific and practical research methods and real and effective data analysis, help the implementation of reliable coping strategies in Guangxi universities is an important issue currently facing the field of education in Guangxi.

### **3. Investigation and Analysis of the Education Trend of ASEAN Students in China**

This paper uses the literature method, questionnaire survey method, field research method to conduct research. It mainly studies the impact of the “One Belt, One Road” initiative on the trend of ASEAN's study abroad education in China, and puts forward relevant suggestions after analysis. Specifically focus on the following three aspects: the distribution of nationality of international students, the number of international students, and the distribution of international students. Taking into account the research value and data representation, the research object is set at Guangxi University (hereinafter referred to as “Xida”), Guangxi University for Nationalities (hereinafter referred to as “National University”) and Guangxi Normal University (hereinafter referred to as “Teaching University”), Guangxi Medical University (hereinafter referred to as “Medical University”) is a four-year college in Guangxi that recruits thousands of ASEAN students. The above four universities in Guangxi basically cover various representative professional disciplines in Guangxi.

The questionnaire is available in both Chinese and English versions, and the paper questionnaire is distributed offline. All questionnaires are conducted anonymously. In order to be true and effective and representative of the data, the questionnaire was distributed mainly to select the ASEAN undergraduate international students, and try to choose different grades, different majors, different nationalities, different natures (long-term & short-term, self-funded & public) Foreign students do sample surveys.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the comprehensive questionnaires, official data and data provided by the schools, the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, which has been implemented in recent years, is having a multifaceted impact on the hot spots and trends of ASEAN’s study abroad in China. Taking Guangxi University, Guangxi University for Nationalities, Guangxi Medical University, and Guangxi Normal University as examples, it has different degrees of influence on the distribution of foreign countries and professional choices.

### 4.1 ASEAN International Students Are More Widely Distributed

From the data obtained from field trips, in the six years from 2012 to 2017, the main source countries of the four schools of ASEAN students were Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar. In addition, some ASEAN countries with a total of 0 foreign students, such as the Philippines and Singapore, have also successively entered international students in China, and the number of international students in China has shown an increasing trend. It can be seen that with the active advocacy and vigorous implementation of the “One Belt, One Road” education initiative, more and more ASEAN students will try to enter China and understand China in the future.

### 4.2 Colleges with Strong Professional Coverage Are Becoming More and More Popular, and The Number of Liberal Arts Colleges is Decreasing

According to the book “Concise Statistics for International Students in China” issued by the Department of International Cooperation and Exchange of the Ministry of Education, the total number of international students in these four universities has varying degrees of ups and downs during 2012-2016. First of all, the number of international students in Guangxi University has shown an increasing trend since 2013. The same is also the growth trend of Guangxi Medical University. In addition to the sharp decline in the number of international students in 2014, Guangxi Medical University has basically increased gradually. In contrast, Guangxi University for Nationalities and Guangxi Normal University In the two universities of the university, from the data of recent years, the number of international students in both universities has mostly decreased. This distinction is particularly evident after 2015: Guangxi University and Guangxi Medical University, which are relatively dominant in science and engineering classification and subject professionalism, have maintained an increase in the number of international students since 2015, while Guangxi University for Nationalities and Guangxi Normal University The number of liberal arts colleges and universities has continued to decrease.

Table 1 Total number of international students from four universities in Guangxi from 2012 to 2016<sup>1</sup> Unit: person

years	Guangxi University	Guangxi University for Nationalities	Guangxi Medical University	Guangxi Normal University
2012	1370	1546	1071	1828
2013	1249	1961	1091	1858
2014	1375	1303	210	1836
2015	1426	1243	1496	1545
2016	1608	1242	1503	1386

### 4.3 The Choice of Majors is Greatly Influenced by the Actual Situation of The Society, Mainly Biased towards the Trend of Science and Engineering

From the reasons of professional choice, about 62% of the students in the sample are influenced by the actual situation of their own country, and 26% of the international students regarding interest and hobbies as important reference factors for selecting majors. The most obvious sample of Xi Da

<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of International Cooperation and Exchange, Ministry of Education. Concise statistics of international students in China [M]. Department of International Cooperation and Exchange, Ministry of Education. 2012-2016.

and the National People's Congress. The remaining 10% are recommended by relatives and friends, and only 2% are professions chosen for other reasons. Therefore, the actual development of the state and society is an important basis for foreign students to choose a major.

Combining with the current development situation of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, the model of mutual cooperation between ASEAN countries and universities may greatly influence the consideration of foreign students in employment, which is reflected in the choice of professions - indirectly, there is a clear trend in the choice of foreign students. The situation in the development of science and engineering. With the increasing demand for technical talents in engineering, science, and agricultural sciences in the national society, young people in various countries want to seek better social status and economic interests for themselves. It is necessary to adapt to the needs of national social development.

As a comprehensive university, Guangxi University has a wide range of professional disciplines. In addition to basic liberal arts majors, science and engineering majors are also more complete, which makes it a favorite of many international students. It can be seen from Table 2 and Table 3 that in 2012, Guangxi University's ASEAN students mainly focused on the liberal arts in the selection of majors. Only a few international students chose science and engineering. After six years, the choice of majors was developed by a single development. Towards several disciplines tend to be parallel, and even more and more international students have begun to choose science and engineering majors. The distribution of international students has been dispersed from two or three science and engineering departments originally concentrated to multiple science and engineering departments. In addition, Guangxi Medical University, which also has the advantages of science and engineering, has maintained a higher number of ASEAN students in the period of 2012-2017 than similar institutions. All in all, the two schools have shown that although the liberal arts major is still popular with more international students, there have been some new changes in the situation. ASEAN students have begun to prefer highly specialized science and engineering colleges or comprehensive colleges. The focus is on science and engineering.

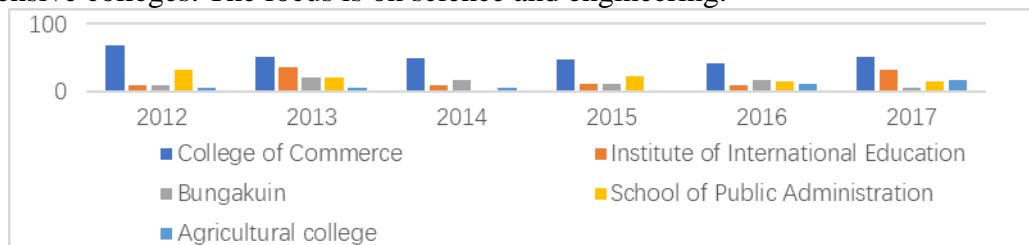


Fig.1 Distribution of popular majors of Guangxi International Students in Guangxi University from

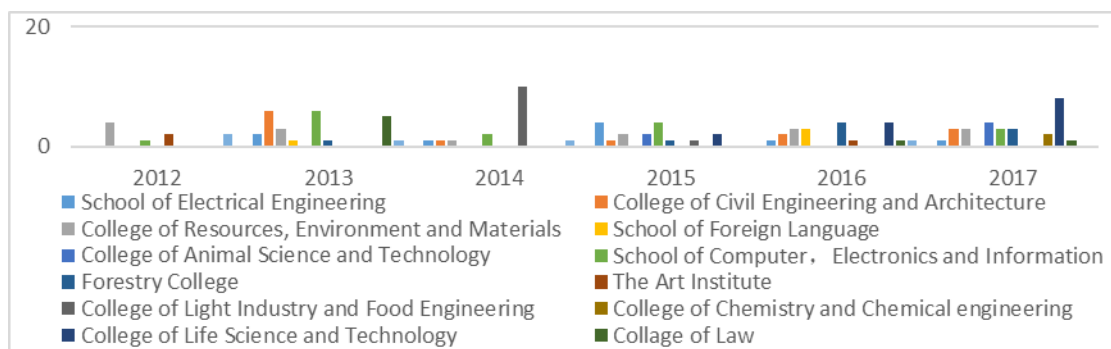


Fig.2 Distribution of foreign students of Guangxi University in Guangxi University in 2012-2017

#### 4.4 International Students Have Little Understanding of the “Belt and Road” Initiative, and the Initiative has not yet “be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people”

According to the questionnaire data, the reasons why ASEAN students choose to study in China mainly focus on three aspects: 57% interested in Chinese culture, 15% from their own country, and 12% affected by the preferential policies of the Chinese government.

The sample shows that some of the students indicated that they chose to study in China because

of the preferential policies of the Chinese government. However, in the sample survey of four universities, 67% of the students indicated that they only had a slight understanding of the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, and even 26% did not understand it at all. They thought that they only knew 7% of the “One Belt, One Road” initiative. According to the analysis of the reasons for choosing schools and studying in China, there are not a few foreign students who are affected by the “Belt and Road” initiative and receive the benefits of international students. It can be seen that the “One Belt, One Road” initiative has been implemented but not yet fully “Into the hearts of the people.”

## **5. Suggestions on Improving the Status Quo of Foreign Students' Education in Guangxi ASEAN at the University Level**

Based on the above data analysis and the results of the questionnaire survey, the current situation and problems of the education of foreign students from Guangxi to ASEAN in China, the author puts forward the following suggestions from the university level:

(1) Expand the Propaganda of the “Belt and Road Initiative” and Strengthen Exchanges between Universities in Guangxi and ASEAN Countries

Colleges and universities should actively respond to national initiatives, implement the “One Belt, One Road” series of measures, do a good job in publicity and education, and implement the welfare of foreign students. Guangxi colleges and universities should adhere to the combination of “bringing in” and “going out”, and actively build the complementary and effective allocation of the advantages of higher education resources between the education cooperation platform and the ASEAN universities. Promote overseas school-running projects, and learn from the colleges and universities with rich educational experience of ASEAN students to realize resource sharing.

(2) Strengthen the Cooperation of Science and Engineering Majors in Running Schools

Relevant colleges and universities should pay attention to the development of science and engineering majors, strive to improve the strength of science teaching, optimize the education system for studying abroad from the professional setting, and promote the high-level science and engineering majors of universities in Guangxi and ASEAN countries. From the perspective of long-term interests, the orientation of cooperation mode in Guangxi universities should pay more attention to the establishment of technical science and engineering courses and professional cooperation with well-known ASEAN universities to enhance the research and development of relevant technologies and fields in China and ASEAN countries.

(3) Enhance the Quality of International Student Education Services, and Each School Optimizes the Strength of Teachers and Develops Their Key Disciplines.

Colleges and universities should establish a people-oriented view of talents and regard ASEAN students as the evaluation subject of the quality of international students. On the one hand, it improves the dormitory environment and provides a good living environment for students; in addition, in the teaching, each university should optimize the faculty according to its own conditions, and solve the problem that some students have low levels of Chinese and English leading to difficult lectures. Finally, to enhance their own teaching strength, each school must explore the advantages of disciplines and cultivate their key disciplines.

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