

Realization of High-quality Development of Higher Vocational Education-in Support of the Belt and Road Initiative

Haining Zhang¹, Jing Xia²

1. Nanjing University, Nanjing Institute of Industry Technology, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

2. Jiangsu Provincial Information Center of Water Conservancy, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative; higher vocational education; internationalization; quality of talent training

Abstract: With the launch of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the development of higher vocational education in China, facing emerging challenges and marvelous opportunities, is further internationalized. Therefore, higher vocational colleges must embrace the BRI properly, to adjust professional building and foster professional talents continuously in their development. In order to support the BRI and to improve their adaptability to social transformation, the colleges should, with their minds emancipated and the opportunities seized, reform the mode of education and explore new paths to development; encourage cooperation with companies according to industrial development; devise new training mechanism; promote foreign aid training and international cooperation in running schools; revise curriculum structure on the basis of cross-cultural understanding and trust; amend quality assurance policies so as to realize high-quality development of higher vocational education.

1. Introduction

The World has witnessed significant changes in political and economic systems after entering the 21st century. While economic globalization continues to expand, we must understand that high-quality development depends not only on domestic demands and dynamics, but also on bilateral or multilateral cooperation with foreign countries. Thus, it is necessary to have the complementary advantages of other countries in various fields and ways so as to foster high-quality common development. In March 2015, China promulgated *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road*, which emphasizes the cooperation priorities of the BRI - to realize policy coordination, facility connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bond. The document clearly proposes that China should facilitate the economic development of the countries along the Belt and Road by regional economic cooperation, and start cultural and academic cooperation with them for further talent exchange (Feng, 2016, p. 68).

“World-class level with Chinese characteristics” is not only the present aim of the vocational education in China, but also the goal of the higher vocational colleges. As the implementation of the BRI creates opportunities and conditions for a comprehensive reformation and continuous development of vocational education, the colleges must seize the chance. Taking the characteristics and competence of their own into consideration, the colleges should formulate relevant policies, accelerate educational reforms, reinforce international communication and cooperation strategies, and thus continue to internationalize for realizing high-quality development of the higher vocational education in China.

2. Policy support for high-quality development of higher vocational colleges in the context of the BRI

From the perspective of national macro policies, the promulgation of *Actions on Pushing Forward the Cooperation in Education Under the Belt and Road Initiative*, *Modern Vocational*

Education System Construction Plan (2014-2020), *Decision of the State Council on Accelerating Modern Vocational Education Development* and *Action Plan on the innovative development of Higher Vocational Education (2015-2018)* suggests that 6 directions of internationalization are essential for constructing a modern vocational education system which supports industrial upgrading, industrial transformation, as well as the “Made in China 2025” plan: (i) the modern vocational education of China should form standards and features of its own, which is the requirement of achieving “World-class level with Chinese Characteristics”; (ii) Graduates from higher vocational colleges should have international views and understand international rules; (iii) the colleges should “bring in” more high-quality resources from foreign countries for the development of discipline culture; (iv) in support of the BRI, the colleges should let high-quality domestic production capacity “go global”; (v) encouraging foreign visiting student project, the colleges can gradually found a China-friendly group so as to create an amiable international cultural environment; (vi) all the impending major programs such as the construction of high-quality higher vocational education, will be required to practically contribute to international communication and cooperation (Li, 2015).

From the aspect of cultural development of the colleges, internationalization is also such a significant orientation that international communication and cooperation has become a crucial approach to the improvement of college culture and quality. Supported by provincial-level programs, several higher vocational colleges have been dedicated to promote internationalization to date.

Effectively adapting to the global trends of education, the implementation of various guiding policies lays the groundwork for the internationalization of the colleges. Therefore, the colleges should seize the opportunity so as to start international cooperation and communication, as well as to open up possibilities for cooperation in the context of the BRI.

3. Influence of the BRI on high-quality development of higher vocational colleges

Corresponding with the common educational goals and interests of both the Chinese colleges and foreign schools or organizations, the international cooperation and communication of higher vocational education involves 5 continents and over 30 countries. Promoted by the power of national, provincial and local government, the cooperation and communication primarily includes policy dialogue, teacher-student interaction, cooperation in running schools, cooperative research, “going global” program with companies, etc.

After the launch of the BRI, it is predictable that China will increase the number of foreign visiting students, start international cooperation in running schools, carry out internationalism and open up new channels of talent exchange and cooperation with foreign colleges. This outlook suggests that the higher vocational education in China will fuse with foreign teaching philosophies, capital and techniques, launch experimental programs of internationalization, and thus new blood will be brought in. First, as many of the countries along the Belt and Road are emerging economies and developing countries, Chinese higher vocational education should, on the basis of understanding their educational fields, spread cutting-edge domestic teaching philosophies, systems and methods on the one hand, and attach importance to localization on the other hand. Second, as the BRI has led to increasing number of visiting students from countries along the Belt and Road as well as multiplicity ways of international cooperation, the higher vocational education in China can import and absorb advanced teaching philosophies, capital and techniques. Therefore, under the guidance of the BRI, the teaching philosophy of the higher vocational education in China is bound to reform, with the export and import of teaching resources and capital.

In the background of the BRI, China will realize facility connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration with adjacent countries (Bao, 2015), and promote the communication and cooperation with them on agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery, information technology, infrastructure construction, energy resource processing, etc. Thus, the college should launch “intelligence introduction” programs, establish relative foundations, compete actively for the support of national or provincial projects of intelligence introduction, as well as welcome high-quality foreign experts to work in the colleges and contribute to discipline construction. Specifically, the colleges can, on

the one hand, reinforce the management of foreign teachers, and hire foreign professionals with practical experience or foreign engineers from international corporations to participate in professional building; on the other hand, organize communication with overseas cooperative colleges, and conduct joint teaching. In this case, the demand of technical talents in every industry will significantly increase, so that the colleges need not only to produce more high-quality talents, but also to train faculties. For instance, the colleges can promote visiting teacher programs, strengthen the administration and training of teachers, encourage them to actively apply for national or provincial funding to study abroad, so as to gain for them experiences of learning and practice overseas, and to enhance their international views as well as the ability to teach bilingually.

The talents required by the BRI should not only master abundant knowledge and skills, but also have the ability to cultivate the creativity of students throughout the teaching process (Zhang & Wang, 2012). Therefore, according to their own situations and the features of overseas cooperation programs, the colleges should reform the traditional mode of teaching and training in the atmosphere of internationalization, and open up more career possibilities for students through clear positioning of innovative talents and scientific goals of vocational training.

4. Advice on high-quality development of higher vocational colleges in the context of the BRI

Under the guidance and coordination of the government, the colleges, together with relative companies, should facilitate the integration between teaching and producing, adjust discipline structure, establish professional teaching standard jointly, and train students as high-quality practical talents in the fields of engineering technology and financial trading who not only have basic professional and interdisciplinary knowledge, but also creative thoughts as well as the ability to solve problems independently (Jin, 2010).

The primary content of internationalizing higher vocational education is curriculum internationalization, which is also the essential assurance of attracting foreign visiting students. The curriculum internationalization focuses on technique training, and aims at teaching practical skills. Apart from this, the foundation of internationalizing higher vocational education is the orientation of “Language + Technique” practical courses (Xu & Huang, 2016, pp. 143-145). Thereby, when organizing curriculum, the colleges should properly classify the courses and set different goals for different subjects. Meanwhile, modern teaching methods and internationalized teaching materials should be applied to the courses.

The colleges should reform curriculum structure according to the demand for talents, and develop a course system relevant to the countries along the Belt and Road, including courses like *the History of Maritime Silk Road*, *ASEAN Economic Geography*, *ASEAN Business Practice*, *Cross-border E-commerce*, etc. Currently, researching organizations and universities are still comparatively weak at these studies (Chen, 2017, pp. 52-57).

Culture is a crucial part of a country’s soft power, and thus the BRI sets cultural communication as one of its key contents. The colleges should stimulate the teaching of subjects like *Chinese History*, *the Current Situation in China*, *Chinese people and Chinese Philosophy*, *Learning Chinese* and so on. In this way, the colleges can actively communicate with foreign visitors, and deepen their understanding of Chinese culture or value (Yue, 2017). Moreover, practical courses that contains Chinese elements, such as paper cut, Chinese martial arts, tea culture and calligraphy, should be offered to students for experiencing the beauty of traditional Chinese culture, so as to reinforce the basis of business and cultural communication.

High-quality teachers are required for training internationalized compound talents who corresponds with the BRI. It is important to have a professional and bilingual faculty team, which sets up the foundation of foreign visiting student program and international cooperation in running schools. To be specific, the colleges can encourage teachers to visit or study overseas, to understand the historical culture as well as educational traditions of relative countries, to participate in various high-level academic seminars or international academic conferences, and to establish exchange programs with the colleges in neighboring countries.

The launch of the BRI urges China to increase the number of foreign visiting students, for starting international cooperation in running schools as well as strengthen the talent communication and cooperation with foreign colleges. That is to say, higher vocational education in China will fuse with foreign teaching philosophies, capital and techniques, and thus new blood will be brought in. Meanwhile, the BRI demands numerous talents to conduct professional construction, which requires the countries along the Belt and Road to form people-to-people bond. Therefore, carrying out their missions according to the strategic demands, the colleges should devise relevant plans to teach foreign visitors, train compound professional talents with international views and high quality, enhance the understanding and friendship among young people, and improve the education of foreign students generally.

Facilitating the relationship and consensus of cooperation, the BRI comprehensively starts the bilateral and multi-lateral dialogues on vocational education policies, which is the prelude of the international development of the vocational education in China. The colleges must accelerate the development of the cooperation with companies, achieve the balance between “industry and education” as well as “company and college” in the context of the BRI, and provide ample talents for the companies “going global”.

In the context of the BRI, China will realize financial integration, facility connectivity and unimpeded trade with surrounding countries, and promote the communication and cooperation with them on infrastructure construction, agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery, information technology, energy resource processing and so on (Zhu, 2016, pp. 106-110).

Running schools is one of the essential mission of the colleges. Under the background of the BRI, the course of internationalizing higher vocational education requires the colleges to focus on running schools overseas in correspondence with the companies “going global”. The colleges should not only provide skill training and diploma education for the employees from the countries along the Belt and Road who work in Chinese companies, but also offer vocational education service for those companies “going global”. In this way, the higher vocational education serves the BRI and the international cooperation of production capacity (Yang, 2015).

The national teaching standard of vocational education is the fundamental standard and requirement of the country for education or teaching. The standard, taking up the leading and guiding position, notices the disparity among different regions and colleges, thereby it distinguishes some cases from the others. For example, famous schools in developed regions are encouraged to surpass the average level and establish their own characteristics. The colleges and local governments should integrate the national standard into the evaluating index system of teaching quality as the key part, and, in the teaching documents and implementation plans of various disciplines, courses, skills (Zhang, 2016, pp. 35-37), etc., develop teaching resources and the standard of core subjects so as to complement the national standard, to ensure the production of talents, and to benefit China and other countries along the Belt and Road (Xie, 2018).

References

- [1] Bao, Y. (2015). A Brief Analysis of the Reformation of the Mode of Innovative Talent Training in Undergraduate Marketing Study. *Time Education* (9).
- [2] Chen, H. Y. (2017). The Implementation of the Belt and Road Strategy and the Training of New Internationalized Talents. *China Higher Education Research* (6): 52-57.
- [3] Feng, B. J. (2016). The Philosophy and Path of Internationalizing the Vocational Education in China from the Perspective of the Belt and Road. *China Vocational Education* (23): 68.
- [4] Jin, X. M. (2010). The Illumination of the Foreign Mode of Practical Talent Training on Marketing Specialty in Independent Colleges. *Modern Enterprise Education* (5).
- [5] Li, S. R. (2015). The Chinese Vocational Technique Education Society Starts a Seminar on the BRI and Vocational Education. *China Vocational Technical Education* (25).

- [6] Xie, L. (2018). Promoting Vocational Education in the New Era, and Realize High-quality Development. *China Vocational Education Technology*.
- [7] Xu, H. & Huang, H. (2016). A Study of Higher Vocational Education Internationalization in the Strategic Context of the Belt and Road. *Jiangsu Higher Education* (4): 143-145.
- [8] Yang, S. (2015). Strategic Thoughts on Promoting the Communication and Cooperation of Education in the Context of the Belt and Road. *International and Comparative Education* (6).
- [9] Yue, X. H. (2017). The Belt and Road Facilitates International Cultural Communication. *People's Forum*.
- [10] Zhang, D. J. (2016). Thoughts on the Demand of Talents and How Higher Education Supports it under the Background of the Belt and Road. *China Adult Education* (21): 35-37.
- [11] Zhang, L. X. & Wang, Y. J. (2012). The Innovation of the Mode of Training Practical Professional Talents in Marketing in Universities. *Maritime Education Research* (2).
- [12] Zhu, L. (2016). A Study on the Innovation of Higher Vocational Colleges on Helping Companies "Go Global" in the Strategic Context of the Belt and Road. *Chinese Vocational and Technical Education* (33): 106-110.