

The Characteristics, Paths and Challenges of China Participating in Global Vocational Education Governance

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Abstract

China's participation in global vocational education governance (VET) addresses post-pandemic economic crises and youth unemployment. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Education Platform, Luban Workshops, and China-Africa/ASEAN VET collaborations, China promotes regional cooperation via resource sharing, teacher-student exchanges, academic credential recognition, and curriculum connectivity. These efforts foster an education community along the Belt and Road, enhancing vocational training and mutual learning. Amid shifting global dynamics, China advocates a "community with a shared future for mankind" framework to innovate governance models, ensuring equitable access to quality VET and sustainable development through multilateral partnerships.

Keywords

International education
Belt and Road
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Characteristics

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1. Introduction

Global vocational education governance is a more complex and challenging field. It is also important for China to participate in global vocational education governance issues to develop cultural and educational exchanges, and make due contributions to global education.

The concept of "global governance of education" has gradually emerged as a significant analytical concept and framework, which aids in unveiling the intricacies of contemporary governance models and surmounting

methodological limitations^[1]. Global education governance refers to the activities of stakeholders in the international community, in order to achieve their own interests and global common interests, to respond to and solve global education problems through various formal and informal mechanisms, as well as various interactive methods such as initiatives, negotiations, consultations, cooperation, and games, to enhance their own or others' education governance capabilities and influence, and to promote the development and exchange of education in various countries. In summary, global education

governance pertains to the phenomenon wherein diverse social entities engage in the process of educational development and contribute to the advancement of global education.

2. China's active participation in global vocational education governance

2.1. At the national policy level

In the context of global education governance, with the Belt and Road Initiative, global education governance has become a core issue in China's education field. The *Several Opinions on Doing a Good Job in the Opening up of Education in the New Era* issued by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council clearly states “significantly improving the ability to participate in international rulemaking in the field of education” as the work goal, emphasizing the need to “actively participate in global education governance”^[2].

China places significant emphasis on global education governance. The *Several Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Sino foreign Cultural Exchange Work* clearly states that we should actively participate in global governance in the field of humanities, and share our experience and practices in poverty alleviation, education, health, and other fields. *The Several Opinions on Doing a Good Job in Opening up Education to the Outside World in the New Era* emphasize the need to enhance the voice and representation of developing countries in global education governance, improve the education cooperation mechanism of BRICS countries, expand the education cooperation space of relevant international organizations, and actively participate in global education governance.

2.2. The rapid development of vocational education

Vocational education constitutes a crucial element within China's educational and talent cultivation system. Commencing from 2012, the Chinese government has accorded high priority to vocational education in its economic development and educational reform agendas, thereby establishing a distinctive modernization model for vocational education^[3]. China's latest push to promote

the high-quality development of vocational education will help shore up its manufacturing base and meet surging demand for the upgrading of its industries.

With the promotion of China's the Belt and Road initiative, China's influence is increasing in global education governance through multilateral cooperation. Chinese enterprises have accelerated their “going global” pace. According to the survey, by 2020, 11000 enterprises have been set up in countries along the Belt and Road, and the number of foreign employees has accounted for 60% of the total number of employees. In this context, it has become an inevitable choice for China's vocational education to go global, and carry out mutual learning and integration with the vocational education of countries along the Belt and Road to enhance the influence and attraction of China's vocational education in the international community, and to take part in global vocational education governance.

3. The characteristics of China's participation

Vocational and technical education and training are one of the important areas in which UNESCO participates in global education governance. China has forged partnerships with more than 70 countries and international organizations to expand bilateral cooperation in vocational education. Since the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's international education exchanges and cooperation have demonstrated remarkable characteristics, including being guided by top - level design, concentrating on the countries along the Belt and Road, with schools taking the initiative, and featuring school - enterprise cooperation. The support and guarantee for China's participation in global education governance enable China to engage in negotiations and participate in global education governance on the international education stage, shifting from the “periphery” to the “core”.

3.1. Targeted country: with ASEAN, South Asia, and Russia as the main targets

According to the data from Quality Annual Report, it is found that the current vocational education standards for “going global” mainly target ASEAN countries such

as Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, and South Asian countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, And Russia among the CIS countries. Only a very small number of vocational colleges have exported vocational education standards to countries along the East Asia, West Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and other CIS countries. That means the target countries need to be expanded.

3.2. Schools take the initiative: active exploration by vocational college

As the core entities of vocational education, vocational colleges actively contribute to the national Belt and Road Initiative. Participating in global education governance to enhance the international influence of vocational education is an inherent developmental necessity for vocational education and also the responsibility of vocational colleges.

In the process of “going global”, vocational colleges have participated in international production capacity cooperation, promoted the implementation of professional standards, cultivated a group of technical and skilled talents that meet the development needs of Chinese enterprises, objectively improved the international perspective of domestic college teachers, and promoted the internationalization of vocational education.

3.3. School–Enterprise cooperation: a new model for cross-border vocational cooperation

School enterprise collaboration is a new model of “going global” for school enterprise collaboration, serving the high-quality development of overseas enterprises.

Within the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, industrial enterprises have demonstrated heightened enthusiasm for engaging in school - enterprise cooperation. They have collaborated with countries along the Belt and Road and Chinese higher vocational colleges to establish “overseas vocational and technical training bases” with the aim of training and cultivating a cohort of local technical and skilled talents as well as enterprise management talents. The most important is to provide vocational training or academic education to the people of the host country, especially workers employed by Chinese enterprise overseas.

4. The paths of China’s participation in global vocational education governance

With the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative and the deepening of China’s education opening to the outside world, it is not only an important measure to explore the development model of vocational education with Chinese characteristics, but also an important measure to provide Chinese solutions for the world’s vocational education.

According to data statistics, during the 13th Five Year Plan period, vocational colleges in China actively responded to the call to go global and establish academic programs, including Tianjin Luban Workshop, Zhejiang Silk Road College, Jiangsu Zhenghe Plan, Sichuan Panda College, Gansu Qihuang College, Jiangxi Tiangong College, Dayu College of water conservancy and hydropower universities, and the “World Economy International College” of the Ministry of Education’s “Humanities Exchange and World Economy Project” The “Chinese+TVET” of the Chinese and Foreign Language Exchange and Cooperation Center of the Ministry of Education, as well as various educational brands such as the “Yanzhao College”, “Zuchongzhi College”, and “Six Arts College” established by the university, are flourishing. The types, levels, and professional fields of education continue to expand, and the achievements of education continue to highlight, providing strong educational service support for Chinese enterprises going global, and becoming an important level for international education in vocational colleges.

4.1. Luban Workshop

Luban Workshop is a well-known brand for cultural exchange between China and foreign countries, originally created and first practiced in Tianjin. Based on Luban’s image as a “great craftsman”, it is a significant innovative achievement in the internationalization of China’s vocational education.

Luban Workshop is not just a unilateral education provider, but involves two-way exchanges such as student exchange and mutual recognition of academic qualifications. Over 400 vocational colleges have received a total of 17,000 international students, set up 20 “Lu Ban Workshops” (with Lu Ban being a great craftsman and inventor in ancient China) providing technical training in 19 countries, and offered “Chinese

language plus vocational education” programs in more than 40 countries, introducing replicable and successful Chinese practices to BRI countries^[4].

Zhejiang Province is building Silk Road Colleges overseas, Jiangsu is building Zhenghe College, to promote the implementation of projects such as talent cultivation, skill training, country research, policy consultation, and cultural exchange. Vocational colleges across the country are going abroad and collaborating with foreign educational institutions to run schools, so as to take part in global education governance^[5].

4.2. Chinese+Vocational Skills

Implementing “Chinese+Vocational Skills” education is an important practice of China’s Education Governance.”Chinese language+vocational skills” education, is not only a necessary part of China’s education opening-up to the outside world, but also an important practice to improve the abilities of global education governance.

For example, Beijing Institute of Technology and the Sino Foreign Language Exchange and Cooperation Center of the Ministry of Education have jointly established a “Chinese+Vocational Skills” educational practice and research base, attracting active participation from relevant institutions such as government, schools, businesses, and enterprises. Changchun Automotive Industry College will rely on overseas training to carry out international curriculum and textbook construction, jointly research and share training standards and curriculum standards.

Based on factors such as skill categories, applicable populations, and regional characteristics, various and rich “Chinese+” characteristic courses have been offered globally, including skills training, tourism, elector-mechanical, agriculture, high-speed rail, aviation, and other fields. Some courses are carried out through the Sino-foreign joint training, theoretical learning, and enterprise practical training. In November 2020, the first national “Chinese+Vocational Skills” international promotion base was listed, mainly focusing on solving bottleneck issues such as professional standards, teaching resources, and internationalization of teacher training.

4.3. Regional vocational education internationalization alliances

The third is to explore regional vocational education

internationalization alliances. Chinese vocational schools have gathered high-quality vocational education resources at home and abroad, and established the World Alliance for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education, the China Africa Vocational Education Cooperation Alliance, the Asia Europe Vocational Education Alliance, the Belt and Road Vocational Education Alliance, the China CEE Vocational School Industry and Education Alliance, the China ASEAN Transport Vocational Education Alliance, the BRICS Vocational Education Alliance, and the Zhejiang Western Australia Vocational Education Alliance, have built a broad platform for China’s vocational schools to expand exchanges and cooperation with the world’s vocational education industry. The World Alliance for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education is recruiting member units for global universities, enterprises, and industry organizations. The first batch of selected members are 93 universities from 32 countries such as China, Egypt, Ireland, Australia, Germany, France, and 28 enterprises and 12 industry organizations worldwide.

5. Challenges of China Participating in Global Vocational Education Governance

5.1. Make full use of the digital teaching resources

Digitization enables further development of education, accelerate economic development, empowers international cooperation and exchange in vocational education, and cultivate vocational talents with digital skills and international perspectives.

A platform for cross-cultural exchange should be provided, including digital tools and online social platforms for sharing teaching resources and experiences; Students can communicate and collaborate with peers from different countries through online courses, virtual practice environments, and other means to jointly carry out research and teaching activities, and cultivate cross-cultural communication and cooperation abilities. Teachers and students’ professional literacy should be enhanced. Digital technology can help teachers improve their teaching level and professional literacy through

international communication and training activities; It can help students improve their project management, innovative thinking, and problem-solving abilities through online collaboration tools and virtual project practices, laying a solid foundation for career development.

5.2. Improve the abilities of educational governance for higher vocational education

The core of vocational education going overseas is to have more space for future development. In the long run, the success of overseas education mainly depends on the quality, which directly determines whether China's vocational education can do well in vocational education governance.

China has set a quality benchmark for Luban Workshop under different construction goals. As an “international model”, it has gradually become a consensus among cooperating countries. Luban Workshop has provided the best practical path for vocational education governance. The biggest and most lasting contribution of vocational education to global education governance lies in its own development and rapid progress in internationalization. In the new era, vocational education still needs to continuously strengthen the international community's recognition of Chinese education, and strive to play a more active role in global education governance.

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Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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