

# Cooperation in Higher Vocational Education between China and the Philippines from the Perspective of "Belt and Road": Opportunities, Challenges and Community

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**Abstract:** *With the in-depth promotion of the "Belt and Road" initiative, the cooperation between China and the Philippines in the field of higher vocational education has shown important opportunities and challenges. At the same time, this cooperation also builds a bridge between the two countries to build a community of educational cooperation. Based on the perspective of "One Belt, One Road", we adopt a combination of theoretical and empirical research to deeply analyse the opportunities and challenges of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines, as well as the path to build a community. The opportunities for cooperation between higher vocational education in China and the Philippines mainly stem from the complementary advantages of the resources of both sides. Challenges in cooperation are mainly reflected in cultural differences, policy and system mismatches, etc. The construction of a cooperation community needs to focus on the balance of interests between the two sides, cultural integration, system docking and other aspects of efforts, which is of profound significance to deepen the cooperation community of higher vocational education between China and the Philippines and to promote the integrated development of regional education.*

**Keywords:** *Belt and Road, Cross-cultural perspective, Higher vocational education, Community*

## 1. Introduction

The "Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road", a global cooperation initiative put forward by China, aims to promote international cooperation and common prosperity, and to connect the countries along the route into a close-knit community of co-operation through infrastructure construction, trade co-operation and humanistic exchanges. This initiative has had a profound impact on the political, economic and cultural spheres of the participating countries, of which the field of higher education is no exception. "The Belt and Road Initiative creates important opportunities and challenges for cooperation between China and the Philippines in the field of higher vocational education, and also provides an opportunity for the two countries to build a community of cooperation in education. With the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, economic, cultural and personnel mobility exchanges between China and the Philippines have become more and more frequent, and the cooperation and exchanges in higher vocational education have also become increasingly close<sup>[1]</sup>. However, current research mainly focuses on the cooperation between higher education in China and the Philippines, and there is relatively little research on the cross-cultural perspective of cooperation between higher vocational education in China and the Philippines.

From a cross-cultural perspective, we explore the opportunities, challenges and paths to building a cooperative community in the cooperation between higher vocational education in China and the Philippines. Through a combination of theoretical and empirical research, the complementary advantages of both sides as well as the challenges they face will be analyzed, with a view to providing useful reflections on deepening the cooperation between higher vocational education in China and the Philippines and promoting the integrated development of regional education<sup>[2]</sup>.

The innovation of this study lies in the in-depth analysis of the opportunities and challenges of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines through a cross-cultural perspective, which has important policy implications for promoting higher vocational education cooperation between the two countries; on the other hand, based on the academic research and

combining with the results of the empirical research, it provides theoretical guidance and practical experience for the construction of a cooperation community for higher vocational education between China and the Philippines.

## **2. The Belt and Road Initiative and Higher Vocational Education from an Intercultural Perspective**

### ***2.1 Impact of the Belt and Road Initiative***

The cooperation between China's higher vocational education and the Philippines has been profoundly affected by the Belt and Road Initiative, and the impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on the cooperation between China and the Philippines in higher vocational education is discussed from a cross-cultural perspective.

The close economic ties between China and the Philippines provide opportunities for educational cooperation. As an important node of the "Belt and Road" initiative, the Philippines is located in Southeast Asia, which is not only geographically important, but also rich in natural resources and human resources, and China, as the world's second-largest economy, has resource and technological advantages that make the two countries have a great deal of room for cooperation in the field of higher vocational education. For example, China can introduce its advanced experience in technical equipment, teaching materials and curriculum design to the Philippines to meet the country's needs in vocational education. At the same time, the young population and market potential of the Philippines also provide a broad space for the development of higher vocational education in China, promoting opportunities for cooperation<sup>[3]</sup>.

Cultural differences face challenges in China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation. Different languages, religions, values and other multicultural factors between the two countries may affect the smooth progress of educational cooperation. In the process of cooperation, Filipino students and teachers need to adapt to China's education system and academic environment, while understanding and respecting Chinese culture, so as to promote exchanges and cooperation between the two sides. In this process, cultural communion, exchange and understanding are very important<sup>[4]</sup>. In addition, the differences in policy systems between China and the Philippines also constrain the in-depth development of co-operation, as the two countries differ in terms of policy systems, management modes and education quality accreditation of higher vocational education. For example, the curriculum and teaching methods of higher vocational education in China may not fully match the Philippine education system, which may lead to difficulties and problems in the process of cooperation. In order to build a community of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines, both sides need to strengthen policy communication and institutional docking to provide a favourable policy environment and institutional guarantee for cooperation.

China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation needs to focus on balancing the interests of both sides. In the process of cooperation, China should respect the needs and interests of the Philippines, provide truly valuable cooperation projects, and encourage and support the Philippines to participate in the design and evaluation of cooperation projects. At the same time, the Philippines should take the initiative to understand the development trend and needs of China's higher vocational education, and actively participate in the implementation and promotion of cooperation projects. Cultural integration is also an important aspect. The two sides should strengthen exchanges and mutual visits between teachers and students to enhance mutual knowledge and understanding, and eliminate obstacles caused by cultural differences. In addition, in terms of institutional docking, both sides should strengthen policy dialogue, accelerate the reform and improvement of the policy system, and build a good platform for cooperation.

### ***2.2 The need for and importance of higher vocational education***

Higher vocational education is an indispensable part of modern education, which undertakes the important task of cultivating and conveying various kinds of professional and technical talents, and is of great significance to social and economic development. From a cross-cultural perspective, the "Belt and Road" initiative has created a broad development space for cooperation between China and the Philippines in higher vocational education, and made the demand and importance of higher vocational education more widely noticed and recognized.

Firstly, the demand for higher vocational education is growing. With the development of economic globalization, the economy, trade and movement of people between different countries are becoming more and more frequent, and the demand for all kinds of professional and technical talents is also increasing day by day. Between China and the Philippines, cooperation in higher vocational education helps to meet the demand for talents in the fields of economy, trade and culture. As the second largest economy in the world, China's technological and resource advantages are of great significance to a country like the Philippines, which has great potential for economic growth. The Philippines, on the other hand, has a young population structure and an urgent need for vocational education, while China's vocational education system is more mature than the Philippines in terms of technology and management. Therefore, the development of China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation meets the needs of both countries.

Secondly, higher vocational education is of great significance in promoting economic development and enhancing national competitiveness. While traditional higher education mainly focuses on academic research and theoretical education, higher vocational education pays more attention to the cultivation of practical and vocational skills. In cross-cultural co-operation, China-Philippine higher vocational education co-operation can help achieve the sharing of technology and experience and enhance the industrial competitiveness of both countries. By cultivating more technical and skilled talents, China and the Philippines can jointly meet the challenges of professional competition in the context of globalization. At the same time, the development of higher vocational education will also help promote the misapplication and transformation and upgrading of the economic structure of the two countries. The Philippines can learn from China's experience in manufacturing, information technology and other fields to promote the adjustment and upgrading of its own industrial structure and achieve sustainable economic development.

In addition, higher vocational education plays an important role in promoting social equity and rational allocation of human resources. There is a difference in the allocation of educational resources between China and the Philippines, which can be bridged through cooperation in higher vocational education. The main feature of higher vocational education is that it pays more attention to the cultivation of vocational skills and the enhancement of employ-ability, which helps to solve the employment problem and improve the quality of labour force in both countries. Especially in the Philippines, a country with a large young population and relatively limited employment opportunities, cooperation in higher vocational education can provide more employment opportunities and development space for young people.

The need and importance of higher vocational education in cross-cultural cooperation cannot be ignored. As key participants in the Belt and Road Initiative, cooperation in higher vocational education between China and the Philippines is of great significance to the economic development, talent cultivation and social equity of the two countries. By strengthening cooperation, the two countries can make use of their respective advantages and resources to achieve common economic prosperity and common development of talents<sup>[4]</sup>. To this end, China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation needs to further develop specific strategies and promotion paths based on the recognition of the needs and importance of the cooperation, in order to achieve a more in-depth and comprehensive win-win cooperation.

### ***2.3 Educational co-operation in an intercultural perspective***

Under the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative, cooperation between China and the Philippines in the field of higher vocational education has become possible, and educational cooperation under the cross-cultural perspective provides an important theoretical framework and methodology. From the cross-cultural perspective, we combine theoretical and empirical research methods to explore the opportunities, challenges, and paths to build a community for higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines.

The opportunities for higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines mainly stem from the complementary advantages of both sides. China has rich resources and advanced technology advantages, while the Philippines has broad market demand. With the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative, China and the Philippines can realize the organic combination of resources and demand, and promote each other and develop together in education cooperation. In terms of opportunities, the current situation of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines is analyzed, including the types, scales, and areas of cooperation between the two sides, as well as the results achieved by the two sides in the cooperation.

In order to build a good cooperation community, the two sides need to strive to achieve a balance of interests, cultural cohesion and institutional docking. China and the Philippines will explore these elements in depth and propose corresponding paths. Achieving a balance of interests is the basis of cooperation, and the two sides need to work together to find points of mutual benefit in cooperation and ensure the fairness and sustainability of cooperation<sup>[5]</sup>. Cultural communion is the key to building a community. The two countries have differences in cultural traditions, educational concepts and other aspects, and need to promote cultural communion through mutual respect, learning and tolerance. Finally, institutional docking is an important link to guarantee the effectiveness of cooperation. The policy systems of the two countries in the field of education need to be communicated and negotiated, and a framework and mechanism for cooperation should be established.

### **3. Status and Opportunities of Higher Vocational Education Co-operation between China and the Philippines**

#### ***3.1 Current situation of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines***

As part of the "Belt and Road" initiative, China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation has made positive progress. Cooperation in higher vocational education between China and the Philippines has become an important area that has received widespread attention and importance. This study aims to analyse the current situation of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines, as well as the opportunities and challenges of such cooperation through a cross-cultural perspective.

At present, the current situation of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines exhibits the following characteristics. The first is that the two sides have established a wide range of exchange and cooperation mechanisms in the field of higher vocational education. For example, cooperation agreements have been signed between higher education institutions of the two countries, and staff exchange and training programmes have been carried out. The second is that the two sides have also cooperated in the design of vocational education curricula, the sharing of teaching resources and teacher training. Such co-operation not only promotes the learning and exchange of students from both sides, but also enriches the teaching concepts and methods of the two countries. Despite a series of positive achievements in the cooperation of higher vocational education between China and the Philippines, there are also some challenges.

One of the most significant challenges is cultural differences. China and the Philippines have different cultural backgrounds, including differences in language, values, and education systems, which may lead to communication difficulties and differences in understanding in the co-operation. In addition, the mismatch of policies and systems is another challenge in co-operation. There are differences in the policy systems of the two countries in the field of higher vocational education, which may bring a certain degree of difficulty in the promotion and management of cooperation<sup>[6]</sup>. Therefore, in terms of the challenges faced, this study will conduct in-depth research on cultural differences and policy system mismatch, and put forward targeted countermeasures and recommendations.

#### ***3.2 Opportunities for higher vocational education cooperation***

As one of the ways of cooperation in the field of education between China and the Philippines, higher vocational education co-operation has vast opportunities for development. From a cross-cultural perspective, the opportunities of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines are explored by combining theoretical and empirical research.

Cooperation in higher vocational education between China and the Philippines can take advantage of the complementary strengths of both sides. China has rich resources and advanced technology in the field of higher education, while the Philippines has an increasing demand for higher education along with rapid economic development. Therefore, in the cooperation, China can provide educational resources and technical support to meet the demand for higher vocational education in the Philippines, so as to realise the complementary advantages and promote the common development of education in the two countries.

China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation can also strengthen educational exchanges and cooperation through the co-operation in building vocational education institutions. The two sides can jointly set up vocational education colleges, research centred and other institutions, and

through the mode of joint construction and sharing, achieve resource sharing, mutual assignment of teachers, student exchanges and other aspects of cooperation. In this way, it can deepen cultural exchanges and understanding between the two countries, promote the deep integration of higher vocational education between the two countries, and provide talent guarantee for the economic and social development of the two countries.

China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation can also make use of the "Belt and Road" initiative and regional cooperation platform to provide opportunities for cooperation. As a country along the "Belt and Road", the Philippines and China have an advantage in geographic location, and the cooperation between the two countries can not only strengthen the economic and trade ties between the two sides, but also provide more opportunities and platforms for cooperation in higher vocational education between China and the Philippines. For example, the two sides can expand the scale and depth of educational exchanges and promote the development of cooperation in higher vocational education between the two countries by building a platform for sharing educational resources and organizing educational exhibitions and forums.

Cooperation in higher vocational education between China and the Philippines has important opportunities. The cooperation and development of higher vocational education between China and the Philippines can be promoted by taking advantage of the complementary strengths of the two sides, jointly building vocational education institutions, and making use of the "One Belt, One Road" and regional cooperation platforms. However, the cooperation also faces challenges such as cultural differences and mismatched policies and systems. Only by focusing on the balance of interests and common development of both sides, and strengthening cooperative dialogue and communication, can the long-term sustainable development of China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation be achieved. This is of great significance for deepening China-Philippines education cooperation and promoting regional education integration.

### ***3.3 Challenges of China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation***

China and the Philippines higher vocational education cooperation challenges, these challenges are mainly reflected in the cultural differences and policy system mismatch two aspects.

Firstly, cultural differences. China and the Philippines have significant differences in cultural backgrounds, values, and education systems. Such cultural differences may lead to misunderstanding, lack of trust and communication difficulties between the two sides in the process of cooperation. For example, in communication, language differences, differences in social etiquette, and different educational philosophies may lead to deviations in the transmission of information between the two parties, affecting their effective cooperation.

Mismatch of policies and systems. There are big differences between the two countries in the development status of higher vocational education, especially in policies and regulations and institutional mechanisms. The Philippine education system is relatively decentralize, the government's investment in vocational education is relatively small, and the functional division of education management agencies is unclear. China, on the other hand, has a relatively well-developed system and policy support for higher vocational education, and the government's investment in vocational education is relatively large. This policy and institutional mismatch may lead to institutional interaction problems, regulatory inconsistencies, and other challenges faced by both partners in the process of co-operation<sup>[7]</sup>.

To address these challenges, this study proposes some strategies and countermeasures. First, there is a need to strengthen cross-cultural communication and understanding of higher vocational education co-operation between China and the Philippines. By enhancing cultural exchanges between teachers and students, it promotes mutual understanding of each other's values and educational practices. In addition, it is necessary to establish a multifaceted cooperation model for higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines, and deepen the cooperation between the two sides through inter-school exchanges and mutual recognition of credits. In addition, the governments of both sides are required to formulate corresponding policies and regulations to ensure the matching of policies and systems. Higher vocational education co-operation between China and the Philippines faces the challenges of cultural differences and policy and institutional mismatches. In order to overcome these challenges, the two co-operating parties should strengthen cross-cultural communication and understanding, establish a diversified mode of co-operation, and at the same time enhance co-ordination and matching at the policy and institutional levels. This will bring more opportunities for cooperation between the two sides and provide strong support for building a

China-Philippines education cooperation community.

#### **4. Countermeasures for China-Philippines Higher Vocational Education Cooperation Community**

##### ***4.1 Implementation of personnel training and exchange programmer***

In order to deal with the problem of cultural differences in China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation, we can develop and implement personnel training and exchange programmer. Firstly, we can organize mutual visits and exchanges between education experts and teachers from China and the Philippines so that they can learn from each other and learn from each other in terms of teaching methods, teaching resources and curriculum design. Through such exchanges, both sides can gain a deeper understanding of each other's education systems and teaching philosophies, which will help to establish a suitable mode of educational co-operation. At the same time, we can also carry out cross-border training programmer, inviting teachers from the Philippines to China for training to help them improve their teaching skills and education management capabilities.

##### ***4.2 Promote policy and system docking***

In China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation, there are differences between the policies and systems of different countries, which may become a major challenge for cooperation. Therefore, we need to actively promote the docking of policies and systems in order to create a favourable environment for cooperation. On the one hand, we should formulate corresponding policies and regulations to provide legal safeguards and policy support for co-operation and promote mutually beneficial co-operation between the two sides. On the other hand, we also need to strengthen inter-governmental communication and co-ordination, and set up special bodies or committees responsible for co-originating co-operation matters and providing policy guidance and professional support. Only through the docking of policies and systems can we better promote the development of higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines.

##### ***4.3 Strengthening cultural cohesion and interdisciplinary research***

China and the Philippines have different histories, cultures and educational traditions, which is one of the important challenges in China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation. Therefore, in order to better promote cooperation, we need to strengthen cultural integration and interdisciplinary research. On the one hand, we can carry out cultural exchange activities, such as mutual visits of Chinese and Filipino students, cultural and artistic exchanges, etc., to enhance mutual understanding and friendship. On the other hand, we can also integrate cross-cultural education into our teaching to cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness and ability. In addition, we can carry out cross-disciplinary research to explore innovative modes and areas of co-operation in higher vocational education between China and the Philippines, so as to provide more possibilities for co-operation.

##### ***4.4 Establishing a mechanism of complementary resources and win-win cooperation***

China-Philippines higher vocational education cooperation needs to make full use of the educational resources of both sides to achieve resource sharing and complementary. On the one hand, China can help the Philippines improve the quality and level of education by providing teaching materials, teaching resources and teacher training. On the other hand, the Philippines can provide more learning and employment opportunities for Chinese students by providing practical opportunities and employment channels. By sharing and complementing resources, both sides can achieve complementary advantages and improve the sustainability and depth of cooperation.

Sino-Philippine higher vocational education cooperation needs to establish a win-win cooperation mechanism in order to achieve long-term and stable cooperation and development. First of all, we should establish a co-operation mechanism to clarify the objectives, contents and modes of co-operation to ensure that both sides can achieve common interests in co-operation. At the same time, we also need to establish a liaison mechanism to strengthen communication and cooperation between the two sides and solve problems and difficulties arising from the cooperation in a timely manner. In addition, we can explore the establishment of an industry-university-research co-operation platform to strengthen the in-depth integration of industry-university-research and provide a better practical

environment and opportunities for vocational education training<sup>[8]</sup>.

The Belt and Road Initiative provides important opportunities and challenges for higher vocational education cooperation between China and the Philippines, and it is the common vision and goal of both sides to build a community of education cooperation. Through in-depth analysis of the opportunities and challenges of cooperation, corresponding countermeasures and suggestions are put forward. In the future, the cooperation between China and the Philippines in higher vocational education in terms of scientific research innovation, vocational skills enhancement, and educational resources sharing, etc., while combining with practice, co-cultivate more specific suggestions and feasible models, so as to promote the development of regional education integration.

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