

Innovative Models of Educational Cooperation Between China and Countries Along the Belt and Road Initiative

Linwei Shi*

Hebei Vocational University of Industry and Technology, Shijiazhuang 050091, Hebei, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

Copyright: © 2025 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: As a vital bridge for fostering mutual understanding among people, educational cooperation plays an irreplaceable role in serving national strategies and cultivating globally-oriented talents. While China has made positive strides in educational collaboration with Belt and Road countries, challenges persist, including inadequate coordination of cooperation mechanisms, insufficient innovation in cooperation models, and room for improvement in resource allocation and quality assurance systems. Building upon an analysis of the significance and practical challenges of educational cooperation, this paper proposes pathways for advancing model innovation through enhancing top-level design, innovating cooperation models, and optimizing resource allocation. These recommendations aim to provide insights for deepening educational collaboration between China and Belt and Road countries.

Keywords: Belt and Road; Educational cooperation; Model innovation; International student education; International education

Online publication: December 3, 2025

1. Introduction

Since its inception in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative has evolved into a vital practical platform for building a community with a shared future for mankind. As a key component of the Belt and Road framework, educational cooperation bears the important mission of fostering people-to-people bonds, cultivating globally-minded talent, and promoting exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. However, amid deepening regional integration and evolving international dynamics, educational cooperation continues to face challenges such as inefficient coordination mechanisms, limited cooperation models, and inadequate quality assurance systems. How to innovate educational cooperation models and build a closer educational community has become an urgent and critical issue. This paper aims to explore innovative pathways for educational cooperation between China and Belt and Road countries within the framework of the initiative, based on an analysis of the value and

challenges of such cooperation. It seeks to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for deepening and solidifying educational collaboration.

2. The significance of educational cooperation between China and Belt and Road countries

2.1. An essential requirement for serving the national strategy and building a community with a shared future for mankind

Educational cooperation has become a vital pillar of the Belt and Road Initiative, holding significant importance for serving China's overall diplomatic strategy and building a community with a shared future for mankind. From a national strategic perspective, the Belt and Road Initiative requires a large number of knowledgeable, internationally oriented talents who possess technical expertise, language proficiency, and cultural awareness. Through joint training programs, mutual recognition of academic qualifications, and faculty-student exchanges, educational cooperation delivers numerous high-caliber professionals to countries along the routes. This effectively supports the development of key areas such as infrastructure connectivity and economic-trade investment cooperation. From the perspective of building a community with a shared future for mankind, education inherently possesses the unique capacity to transcend borders and connect hearts. Through educational exchanges, young scholars from different nations deepen mutual understanding while pursuing knowledge, resolve misunderstandings and prejudices through civilizational dialogue, and forge consensus on development through win-win cooperation ^[1]. This fosters a solid foundation of public support and social roots for establishing a new type of international relations characterized by mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation.

2.2. Promoting shared educational resources and regional educational synergy

Educational development levels vary significantly among Belt and Road countries, with uneven distribution of educational resources. Deepening educational cooperation can break down resource barriers, enabling the rational circulation and allocation of high-quality educational resources within the region, thereby advancing coordinated regional educational development. On one hand, China provides educational assistance to developing countries along the Belt and Road through government scholarships, educational facility construction aid, and teacher volunteer programs. This helps improve their educational conditions and quality while introducing advanced educational concepts, curricula, and teaching methods to support the modernization of education in these countries. On the other hand, countries along the Belt and Road complement each other's strengths in educational cooperation ^[2]. China's higher education system holds advantages in scale and discipline development, while some partner nations possess distinctive features in vocational education and elite education.

2.3. Cultivating global talent and fostering people-to-people connections through cultural exchange

Educational cooperation plays an irreplaceable role in nurturing globally-minded talent with cross-cultural communication skills, promoting people-to-people bonds, and facilitating civilizational exchanges. Through student exchange programs, young people from Belt and Road countries can venture beyond their borders to pursue advanced studies abroad, experience diverse cultures, broaden their horizons, and emerge as a new

generation of talent with international competence. International student education not only imparts knowledge and skills but also fosters cultural exchange. Foreign students studying in China gain insights into Chinese history, cultural development, and governance experiences while learning the Chinese language and characters, becoming friendly ambassadors who amplify China's voice and tell its stories effectively ^[3]. Chinese students studying in Belt and Road countries deepen their understanding of local societies and cultures through firsthand experience, playing a vital role in fostering people-to-people bonds and enhancing bilateral friendship.

3. Current challenges in China-Belt and Road countries educational cooperation

3.1. Insufficient coordination in cooperation mechanisms and policy alignment

Current educational collaboration between China and Belt and Road countries faces significant shortcomings in mechanism construction and policy coordination, hindering deeper cooperation. Multilateral educational cooperation mechanisms remain underdeveloped. While bilateral educational partnerships exist between China and some partner countries, regional and multilateral educational cooperation platforms are scarce. Insufficient coordination in educational policies, planning, and development across regions prevents the formation of a unified regional educational cooperation force. Policy and institutional alignment are inefficient. Significant disparities exist among Belt and Road countries in academic credential recognition standards, educational quality evaluation systems, and teacher qualification requirements ^[4]. Loose policy integration increases the institutional costs of educational cooperation.

3.2. Insufficient innovation and sustainability in cooperation models

While China has adopted diverse forms of educational cooperation with Belt and Road countries, notable shortcomings persist in model innovation and long-term sustainability. Cooperation models remain relatively traditional and limited. Current educational collaboration is largely confined to conventional approaches such as student exchanges, teacher visits, and joint school establishment, with limited exploration in emerging fields like digital education, online learning, and distance training. Faced with educational transformations driven by rapid information technology advancements, there has been insufficient utilization of new technologies—including the internet, big data, and artificial intelligence—to expand cooperation opportunities and innovate collaboration methods. Some cooperative projects remain at a superficial exchange level, lacking substantive, deeply integrated cooperation, making it difficult to achieve lasting impact ^[5]. Sustainability issues arise as some educational cooperation projects rely excessively on government promotion and funding support, lacking market-oriented operational mechanisms and insufficient participation from social forces. These projects become vulnerable to discontinuation when policies change or funding ceases.

3.3. Educational resource allocation and quality assurance systems require improvement

High-quality educational resources, their rational allocation, and scientific quality assurance are essential for the healthy development of educational cooperation. However, both aspects face challenges. Resource distribution reveals significant imbalances in educational cooperation. Most high-quality educational resources are concentrated in economically developed regions and key universities, leaving vast central and western regions and ordinary institutions with few opportunities to participate in educational cooperation. Consequently, more students cannot benefit. Furthermore, the design of educational cooperation projects often fails to align with the actual needs of countries along the Belt and Road routes. Some projects experience “cultural incompatibility”,

resulting in poor returns on resource investments. The development of teaching staff has been relatively slow, with a relative shortage of high-quality educators possessing international educational backgrounds and cross-cultural communication skills. This shortage impacts the quality and level of educational cooperation ^[6].

4. Innovative pathways for educational cooperation between China and countries along the Belt and Road Initiative

4.1. Improving top-level design and establishing a multi-level educational cooperation mechanism system

To drive innovation in educational cooperation models, it is essential to strengthen top-level design and establish a multi-tiered, multidimensional educational cooperation mechanism system. This involves improving intergovernmental educational cooperation mechanisms, fully leveraging multilateral platforms such as the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the China-ASEAN Education Exchange Week. Efforts should focus on establishing regular consultation systems among education ministries of participating countries, enhancing dialogue on educational policies, aligning strategic planning, and conducting research to address major challenges arising in educational cooperation. Establish an information-sharing platform for educational cooperation to promptly publish national education policies, cooperative projects, and study abroad opportunities, ensuring unimpeded information exchange channels ^[7]. Create regional educational cooperation organizations, such as the Belt and Road Education Cooperation Alliance, to coordinate regional educational cooperation affairs and enhance the organizational level of such collaboration.

4.2. Innovate cooperation models and expand diverse implementation pathways for educational collaboration

Innovation serves as the driving force for educational cooperation development. Grounded in the realities of the new era and the actual conditions of countries along the Belt and Road, diverse and distinctive educational partnerships should be explored. Innovate joint education models to promote in-depth collaboration between Chinese universities and institutions in partner countries. This includes establishing specialized colleges, joint research centers, and collaborative innovation hubs, alongside implementing credit recognition, joint degree programs, or cooperative training initiatives. Promote the “Chinese Language + Vocational Skills” talent cultivation model, integrating Chinese language instruction with professional skills training to develop versatile professionals proficient in both Chinese and specialized competencies. Advance digital education cooperation by seizing the trend of educational digital transformation, focusing on building online education platforms, and intensifying efforts in developing high-quality digital educational resources and promoting new teaching methods such as MOOCs and micro-courses. This will enable teachers and students in countries along the Belt and Road to access China’s premium educational resources ^[8].

4.3. Optimize resource allocation to enhance quality assurance in educational cooperation

Improving the quality of educational cooperation is central to its sustainable development. This requires optimizing the distribution of educational resources and refining quality assurance systems to achieve high-quality development in educational collaboration. On one hand, strengthen resource allocation by increasing the number of government scholarships and optimizing the distribution of student sources by country/region and major. Prioritize developing countries along the Belt and Road and disciplines critical to Belt and

Road initiatives. Strengthen faculty development by implementing overseas training programs for teachers, dispatching key educators for academic exchanges at universities along the Belt and Road to enhance their international teaching capabilities, and recruiting high-level overseas talent to bolster the international education faculty^[9]. On the other hand, improve the quality assurance system by establishing quality standards for educational cooperation projects, defining requirements for institutional positioning, educational objectives, curriculum design, faculty allocation, and teaching management to standardize educational practices. Establish a third-party quality assessment mechanism by commissioning independent institutions to evaluate cooperative programs and the quality of international student education. Make assessment results publicly available to ensure accountability and oversight^[10].

5. Summary

The Belt and Road Initiative has opened up broad prospects for educational cooperation between China and countries along the routes. Deepening educational collaboration and innovating cooperation models are not only crucial measures to serve national strategies but also intrinsic requirements for building a community with a shared future for mankind. People must fully leverage education's unique role in fostering people-to-people bonds and promoting mutual learning among civilizations, making educational cooperation a shining emblem of Belt and Road development. At this new historical juncture, China stands ready to join hands with countries along the Belt and Road. With educational cooperation as the bond, talent cultivation as the foundation, and mutual benefit as the goal, people will jointly compose a new chapter in Belt and Road educational collaboration, contributing educational strength to building a community with a shared future for mankind and a better world.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Li N, Song SH, Lin XB, 2024, Spatiotemporal Evolution and Driving Mechanisms of China's Urban Innovation Capacity under the Belt and Road Context. *Regional Research and Development*, 43(5): 33–38.
- [2] Li BW, 2024, Structure, Potential, and Influencing Factors of Green Trade in the Belt and Road Initiative. *Economic Issues*, 2024(5): 61–66.
- [3] Liang C, Wang Y, 2023, Navigating the Belt and Road: Rationale, Challenges, and Pathways for Cultivating Vocational Education Students from Abroad. *Vocational Education Forum*, 39(9): 21–29.
- [4] Deng YJ, Zhang GX, 2023, Research on the Development Potential and Challenges of Agricultural Product Trade Between China and Uzbekistan. *Price Monthly*, 2023(4): 63–72.
- [5] Yan QM, Li NJ, Zhang H, 2023, Impact Effects of China's Outbound Investment on Host Countries' Value Chain Positioning Under the Belt and Road Initiative. *Nankai Economic Research*, 2023(3): 39–57.
- [6] Shi LF, 2025, How Can China Contribute Its Wisdom to Global Education Digital Transformation?—A Multi-level Analysis Based on China-UAE Education Digital Cooperation. *Global Education Outlook*, 54(5): 95–104.
- [7] Wang FF, Liu J, Xue R, 2023, Research on Synergistic and Reciprocal Scientific Cooperation Among Belt and

- Road Countries Based on Symbiosis Theory. *Research on Science and Technology Management*, 43(13): 28–38.
- [8] Qian YJ, Ding W, Li HM, et al., 2025, Reflections on Cross-border Joint Prevention and Control of Tropical Diseases Among Belt and Road Countries: System Construction and Implementation Pathways. *Chinese Journal of Schistosomiasis Control (Chinese and English)*, 37(1): 8–13.
- [9] Li YY, 2024, Teacher Education Cooperation in the Context of the China-Central Asia Community of Shared Future: What Can Be Done, What Is Difficult, and What Should Be Done. *Comparative Education Research*, 46(7): 22–29.
- [10] Liang Z, Wang N, 2023, Analysis of Graduation Decisions and Intentions to Remain in China Among International Students in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative. *Ideological Front*, 49(6): 146–159.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.