

One Belt One Road Strategy Practice and Effect Evaluation in the Process of Internationalization of Higher Education

Dan Yang^{1,a,*}

¹*Institute of Policy Studies, Lingnan University, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong, 999077, China*

^a*blcu13yd@163.com*

^{*}*Corresponding author*

Keywords: One Belt One Road, Higher Education, Internationalization, High Quality Development

Abstract: Promoting the effective integration of higher education into the “One Belt One Road” (OBOR) system is conducive to accelerating the internationalization of China’s higher education and an important strategic measure to promote the development of China’s higher education. Under the “OBOR” initiative, if China wants to improve the internationalization level of China’s higher education, it needs to adhere to the quality orientation and implement the internationalization and connotation development strategy of higher education; it is necessary to fully tap into institutional advantages and strengthen the top-level design role of the government; China needs to update institutional mechanisms to ensure the leadership and creativity of universities in the field of internationalization, emphasize cluster effect, and explore “internationalization of higher education”. It is also necessary to expand the ability of external entities to participate in governance, improve the governance system, and enhance the effectiveness of international governance in higher education. In order to provide better suggestions for China’s high-quality development, this paper discussed the internationalization of higher education and the “OBOR” strategy, and expounded the relationship between the two, that is, internationalization of higher education is part of the “OBOR” strategy, and then evaluated the internationalization measures of higher education. Finally, this paper proposed the construction direction and governance of regional higher education internationalization under the “OBOR” initiative.

1. Preface

The “OBOR” initiative is an important project for China to actively build a people’s community in line with the general trend of world peace and development, which has provided a strong impetus for China’s socialist modernization drive. This measure not only requires comprehensive planning by the country based on the world situation and future trends, but also requires the active participation and intelligence of local communities. For local communities, participating in the “OBOR” initiative is also an important measure to implement the regional internationalization strategy and promote high-quality economic and social development.

For the “OBOR”, some scholars have already made relevant research. Sun N L studied the new geopolitical imagination of China’s “OBOR” and the evolution of the interdependence of hope and fear in geopolitics and geo economy based on the development since 2008 with the method of dialectical Materialism. OBOR became a policy in the material sense. It promoted China centered infrastructure growth model in manufacturing, finance and security. Sun N L called for exploring the interaction between geoeconomics and geopolitics by analyzing the emotional orientation of spatial stereotypes in different regions [1]. Based on the Optimum currency area theory, Sun J believed that China and OBOR had clear goals, calculated the OCA (Optimum Currency Area) ratio between them, and determined which partners had the best potential in monetary and financial compatibility, so as to determine costs and benefits. The results showed that in Southeast Asia, Malaysia had the highest compatibility and revenue potential, followed by Thailand and Vietnam. The potential for monetary cooperation was greatest in Eastern Europe, Poland, and Croatia, followed by the Czech Republic. Central Asia and the Middle East were currently considered to lack the conditions or potential for successful monetary and financial cooperation [2]. In the context of South and Southeast Asia, Mobley T believed that the regional cooperation initiative was a strategic effort aimed at enhancing China’s influence in the Asia Pacific region, thus overcoming the “Malacca dilemma”, and leading the region by acquiring and creating new ports with potential commercial and military uses. The report also pointed out the main sources of funding for the OBOR project to date and its possible future development. Finally, some lessons learned from OBOR partner countries and suggestions for the United States’ strategic approach to confronting China in the Asia Pacific region were proposed [3]. For the “OBOR” policy, there are naturally a large number of different views in the literature and specific measures proposed for the policy, but the research on the important module of internationalization of higher education supporting the “OBOR” superstructure is still rarely involved.

In the implementation process of internationalization strategy, the development of higher education is not only an important component of the strategic framework, but also an important driving mechanism for the process. Therefore, it is worth systematically studying how to promote the integration of higher education into the “OBOR” construction, so as to accelerate the process of internationalization and promote the connotative development of higher education. This is an important task worth systematically addressing. In this process, how to use the “OBOR” construction to effectively promote the internationalization of regional higher education needs special research. Based on this issue, this paper discussed the practice and effect evaluation of the OBOR strategy in the process of internationalization of higher education.

2. Internationalization of Higher Education and the OBOR Strategy

2.1 Internationalization of Higher Education

2.1.1 Intensive Development

The expansion of the connotation of international cooperation in higher education in China is mainly manifested in the more open and comprehensive development of higher education [4-5]. Chinese higher education institutions are strengthening their ties with cooperative institutions in countries and regions along the “OBOR” to expand interaction opportunities [6]. In addition, the advanced education and management concepts of these countries would also be introduced into China, enriching the content of higher education in China. Firstly, in order to promote internationalization, “openness” is undoubtedly a key prerequisite. The same is true of the inclusive spirit that conforms to the concept of the “OBOR”, that is, “jointly discuss, build and share” [7-8]. The spirit of inclusiveness is consistent with the concept of “common development and common

exchange” of the “OBOR”. Secondly, the development concept of higher education needs to be more innovative and inclusive. With the internationalization of higher education, China not only needs to continue to achieve modernization in educational forms, but also continuously improve the concept of higher education in China through information exchange and resource sharing [9]. In addition to developing innovative forms of vocational training, China should also focus on information exchange in higher education. When developing China’s educational philosophy, China should not blindly promote foreign educational concepts or underestimate itself. Instead, it should learn advanced educational concepts from the international community according to its own development needs, and promote the innovative development of China’s higher education [10].

2.1.2 Challenges

a. Challenges in educational resource elements

The scarcity of higher education resources has led to a slow and weak process of internationalization in China’s higher education. Good educational resources, such as teacher quality, teaching equipment, school facilities, and teaching concepts, are the most important prerequisite and basic condition for promoting the internationalization of higher education and the rapid development of internationalization. There are significant differences between the internationalization of higher education in universities and developed regions outside the region in terms of objective educational resources, such as teaching resources, faculty, teaching equipment, and subjective educational resources, such as teaching concepts and parental awareness, as shown in Figure 1. At the same time, in terms of internationalization of higher education, there is also great competition and resource inequality among Chinese universities. International exchange and cooperation are the fifth function of higher education institutions. However, in some places, the development level of primary education is relatively low, and the role played by the fifth function of higher education institutions is limited. Therefore, in terms of educational resources, universities face enormous challenges in promoting international education [11].

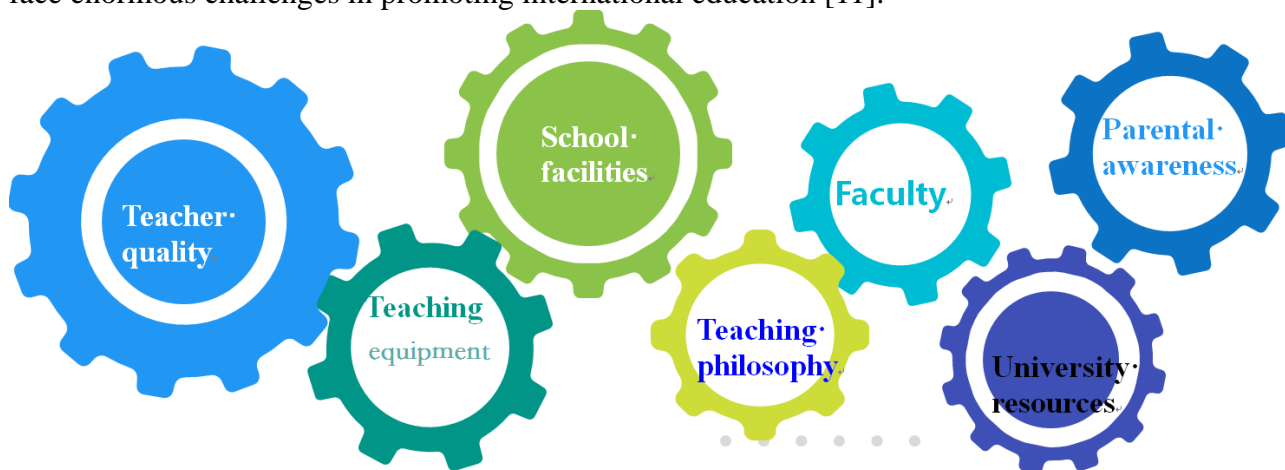


Figure 1: Challenges of internationalization of education

b. Challenge from external competitors

The competition for internationalization of higher education is manifested in many aspects, such as the efficiency of student mobility, the level of cooperation between universities, the degree of international academic cooperation, and the attraction of high-end talents. Overall, most universities have a short running time, a late start in international exchange and cooperation, and limited experience in international education. They find it difficult to compete with universities outside the region in terms of teaching, professional attractiveness, university policy support, and international

student scholarship systems. International university education is at the level of “win-win cooperation and competitive development”, with institutions both cooperating and competing for first-class students, high-quality professors and opportunities for international academic cooperation.

2.1.3 Evaluation of the Difficulties and Reasons Faced by the Cultivation of Cross Cultural Talents in Chinese Universities

a. The development of talent cultivation concept is relatively late.

The concept of talent cultivation plays a leading role in the process of talent cultivation, and the concept of keeping up with the times is the core of talent cultivation reform and the foundation for improving the quality of talent cultivation. Therefore, English teaching accounts for the largest proportion in foreign language teaching in China, and English culture has also become the most important foreign culture in China. This has led to the development of cross-cultural talents and abilities in one field. There are a large number of universities and students in China, but the communication channels with foreign universities are limited, and the opportunities and atmosphere for cross-cultural communication are very poor. In order to meet the needs of the current economic globalization, internationalization of higher education and the construction of the “OBOR”, it is necessary to strengthen the inter school cooperation between the university and foreign universities. The concept and status quo of school enterprise cooperation are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2: The concept and current situation of school enterprise cooperation

b. The structure of the teaching staff is relatively single.

The teaching staff is an important force in cultivating talents. However, currently, the international exchange experience, international perspective, cross-cultural ability, and international education philosophy of Chinese university teachers are not strong, and there is relatively little exposure and learning of modern and advanced international teaching methods and means. As the most important element of education and an important component of educational resources, the diversification of teacher structure is an inevitable trend in the context of internationalization. Universities should adopt the spirit of embracing all rivers and seas, advocate for a hundred schools of thought to argue and optimize their disciplinary structure.

c. The cross-cultural learning system is incomplete.

Since the 1980s, foreign language teaching in China has mainly focused on English, supplemented by Mandarin, especially for ordinary foreign language courses for non foreign language majors, with English as the main language. Therefore, the foreign culture that students are most exposed to is also the object of their learning, which is English culture.

2.2 One Belt One Road Strategy

2.2.1 Introduction

The “OBOR” is the acronym of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime

Silk Road” [12-13]. It is fully based on the existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms between China and relevant countries, and actively cooperates with countries along the “OBOR” through the established effective regional cooperation platform. On the basis of respecting the sovereignty of all countries, the “OBOR” strategy actively cooperates with neighboring countries to help them develop their economies while promoting China’s economic development [14-15].

2.2.2 Theoretical Basis

a. Behind every strategy is a reflection of the national or international economic environment.

The emergence of a new strategy means that the country would face new challenges [16]. The strategic vision of the OBOR is the inevitable result of China’s scientific assessment of the current world economic situation and the only way to realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. At present, the analysis focuses on the situation in China and summarizes the reasons why China proposed the “OBOR” [17].

b. The “OBOR” strategy is adopted to deal with the “China threat theory” and the spread of overseas trade protectionism.

China’s rapid development in recent years has led the world, especially the United States, to fear that China might threaten its global hegemony, while other countries have begun to worry about China’s growing power. Against this background, and in the context of the United States-led “anti-globalisation” trend, the development of “friendly cooperation” between China and the countries along the “OBOR” is conducive to enhancing China’s international image and realising its vision of “sharing a better future”. It is also conducive to promoting the development of OBOR [18]. In order to protect their industries, some countries have adopted protectionist trade practices, which have led to an increase in the price of imported goods and a decrease in Chinese consumption. As Figure 3 shows, good relations with neighbouring countries along the Eurasian route can help to reduce import tariffs, increase the variety and quantity of goods and improve the welfare of the population [19-20].

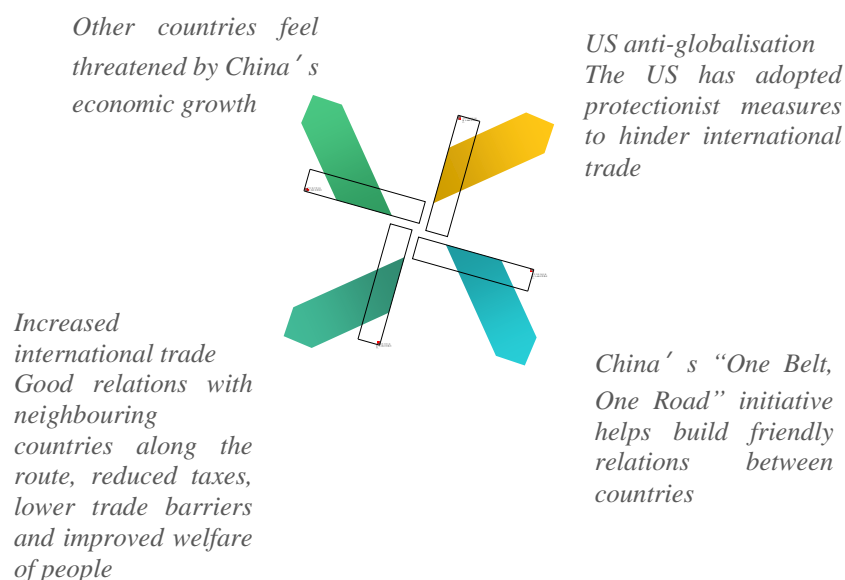


Figure 3: Process of OBOR policy in response to trade protectionism

c. At present, the slowdown in China’s economic development is mostly related to overcapacity.

Although China's economic development has made significant progress in recent years, its pace has slowed down compared to previous years. One of the main reasons is overcapacity. There is a serious overcapacity in China Steel's steel industry, which has led to the continuous decline of steel prices. However, most Chinese companies still tend to expand their production, which leads to many companies not being able to cover their production costs, thus leading to a break in their financial chains or even closure. The infrastructure in the countries along the OBOR is relatively poor. Chinese steel exports can partially alleviate China's steel surplus and help improve the infrastructure of countries along the OBOR. At the same time, China's traditional industries, such as coal and electrolytic aluminium, are experiencing serious overcapacity and this has led to a number of social problems, such as employment issues. The decline in production capacity has helped to reduce worker unemployment.

3. Construction Orientation and Governance of Regional Higher Education Internationalization under OBOR

3.1 Optimizing Policy Design and Building a Comprehensive Policy Execution System

When gaps in policy implementation are identified in the early stages of policy formulation and implementation, there is an urgent need to review the areas of policy deficiencies and fill these gaps. This requires combining different aspects of the designer's policy needs and conducting detailed research, taking policy actions to improve details, or separately listing policy actions to address detailed issues. The more comprehensive the policy system, the greater its contribution to achieving policy objectives.

3.2 Gradually Improving the Quality and Ability of the Target Group of Higher Education Internationalization Policies

1) Guiding changes in methods to adapt to the internationalization development trend of higher education

With the aging of China's population and the decline of population growth of new working age, there is an imbalance between the demand for industrial development and the supply of talent training. The "OBOR" should aim at the combination of international talent training and industrial development, establish an international education forum where schools and enterprises jointly build the "OBOR", share educational resources, innovate international student education, and provide an integrated international service chain for the development of local enterprises. The university's international cooperation resources are used to expand the discipline base, adjust academic management, and improve the discipline and professional structure to meet the requirements of the "OBOR" initiative. Universities should also expand transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary talent training. Experts from industries and enterprises should be invited to participate in the development and evaluation of disciplines and majors, create new teaching modules, and integrate industry, academia, and research.

2) Actively improving the conditions for serving the internationalization of higher education development

The OBOR is based on economic cooperation between countries, and talent is the key to cooperation and exchange between countries. Therefore, the internationalization of higher education can retain talent for the OBOR. Recruit students from countries and regions along the OBOR, take measures to improve the education quality of Chinese students, and make contributions to the economic development of the OBOR. The internationalization of higher education can help the economic construction along the "OBOR".

The Chinese government further supports the implementation of the “OBOR” and provides 61% scholarships to students from countries and regions along the “OBOR”. This shows that China’s higher education is increasing the pace of international education and exporting a large number of international talents through talent, intelligence, culture and other soft power to contribute to the implementation of the “OBOR”.

4. Positive Results Are Achieved in the Internationalization of Higher Education

Since the “OBOR” was put forward, it has received positive responses from countries and regions along the “OBOR”. Thailand is an important economic zone along the “OBOR”, and the cooperation in higher education between the two countries has an important foundation and great potential. In 2018, there were 28600 international students from Thailand, making it the second largest country in China with the highest number of Chinese volunteer teachers hired since the 21st century. The Thai government has actively responded to the “OBOR”, providing greater flexibility and broader development space for the cooperation and exchanges between China and Thailand in the field of higher education, which may have an impact on other countries in Southeast Asia. Due to geographical and historical factors, Serbia also plays an important role in the construction of the “OBOR”. In 2017, the University of Novi Sad of Serbia officially joined the Silk Road University Alliance.

The internationalization of higher education is a two-way interactive process that matches inputs and outputs through communication and mutual learning, as shown in Figure 4. In the process of internationalization of higher education, China is not only an importing country, but also an active exporting country, and needs to integrate its own experience into the practice of international cooperation and exchange. In order to accomplish this mission and enhance the internationalization level of higher education, universities must continuously improve the concept and management of higher education, introduce China’s culture, academic ideas, concepts, and educational experience to the international community, and contribute to enhancing the international influence and discourse power of China’s higher education.

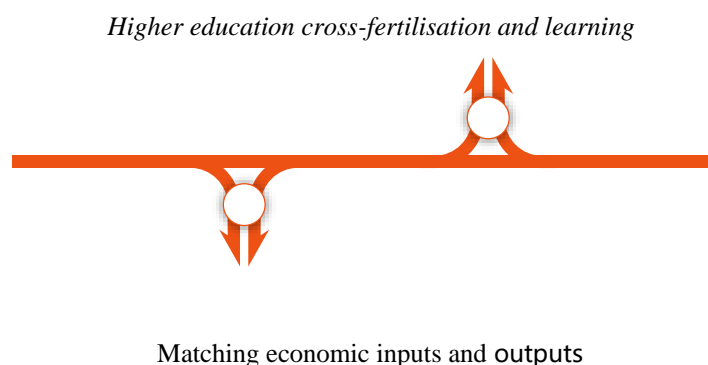


Figure 4: Bidirectional interaction process of internationalization of higher education

5. Conclusions

The internationalisation of higher education has become an important trend in the development of education in the modern world. With the globalisation of the economy, each country has its own characteristics. From the point of view of the internationalisation of higher education, it stimulates the development of higher education in all countries of the world. It is based on the trend towards the internationalisation of higher education, on access to national higher education resources, on the assumption of their compliance with national laws, regulations and policies, and on the

implementation of a system of cooperation in the field of education, educational resources and educational models. The internationalization of higher education is driven by various factors, such as political, cultural, academic, economic, and educational factors, with economic growth being the main driving force. In a word, economic development promotes education, and education also promotes economic development. It is through mutual promotion and integration of the two that the common development of socio-economic education is realized and comprehensive national power is enhanced.

References

- [1] Sum N L. *The intertwined geopolitics and geoeconomics of hopes/fears: China's triple economic bubbles and the 'One Belt One Road' imaginary*. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 2019, 7(4): 528-552.
- [2] Sun J, Hou J W. *Monetary and financial cooperation between China and the One Belt One Road countries*. *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, 2019, 55(11): 2609-2627.
- [3] Mobley T. *The belt and road initiative*. *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 2019, 13(3): 52-72.
- [4] Tight M. *Internationalisation of higher education beyond the West: challenges and opportunities—the research evidence*. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 2022, 27(3-4): 239-259.
- [5] Jooste N, Hagenmeier C. *Policy Framework for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa: A Compass for Comprehensive Internationalisation?*. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 2022, 26(4): 415-435.
- [6] Bamberger A, Morris P, Yemini M. *Neoliberalism, internationalisation and higher education: Connections, contradictions and alternatives*. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 2019, 40(2): 203-216.
- [7] Ledger S, Kawalilak C. *Conscientious internationalisation in higher education: contextual complexities and comparative tensions*. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 2020, 21(4): 653-665.
- [8] Liu W. *The Chinese definition of internationalisation in higher education*. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 2021, 43(2): 230-245.
- [9] Hauptman Komotar M. *Global university rankings and their impact on the internationalisation of higher education*. *European Journal of Education*, 2019, 54(2): 299-310.
- [10] Ndlovu-Gatsheni S J. *Internationalisation of higher education for pluriversity: A decolonial reflection*. *Journal of the British Academy*, 2021, 9(1): 77-98.
- [11] R'boul H. *Intercultural philosophy and internationalisation of higher education: epistemologies of the South, geopolitics of knowledge and epistemological polylogue*. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 2022, 46(8): 1149-1160.
- [12] Bashir M F, Ma B, Shahzad L. *China's quest for economic dominance and energy consumption: Can Asian economies provide natural resources for the success of One Belt One Road?*. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 2021, 42(3): 570-587.
- [13] Bartosiewicz A, Sztelik P. *Łódź's benefits from the One Belt One Road initiative*. *International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications*, 2019, 22(1): 47-63.
- [14] Li M. *The Belt and Road Initiative: geo-economics and Indo-Pacific security competition*. *International Affairs*, 2020, 96(1): 169-187.
- [15] Ba A D. *China's "Belt and Road" in Southeast Asia: Constructing the Strategic Narrative in Singapore*. *Asian Perspective*, 2019, 43(2): 249-272.
- [16] Jones L, Zeng J. *Understanding China's 'Belt and Road Initiative': beyond 'grand strategy' to a state transformation analysis*. *Third World Quarterly*, 2019, 40(8): 1415-1439.
- [17] Ramasamy B, Yeung M C H. *China's one belt one road initiative: The impact of trade facilitation versus physical infrastructure on exports*. *The World Economy*, 2019, 42(6): 1673-1694.
- [18] Lu Y, Abeysekera I. *Do investors and analysts value strategic corporate social responsibility disclosures? Evidence from China*. *Journal of International Financial Management & Accounting*, 2021, 32(2): 147-181.
- [19] Hosoya Y. *FOIP 2.0: The evolution of Japan's free and open Indo-Pacific strategy*. *Asia-Pacific Review*, 2019, 26(1): 18-28.
- [20] Davis S, Munger L A, Legacy H J. *Someone else's chain, someone else's road: US military strategy, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and island agency in the Pacific*. *Island Studies Journal*, 2020, 15(2): 13-35.