

Basic Models, Problems and Countermeasures of Yunnan Junior Colleges' Cross-Border Cooperation with Southeast Asian Countries to Cultivate International Talents

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ABSTRACT. Under the background of “the Belt and Road” construction, Yunnan universities and colleges are actively cooperating with higher institutions and companies in Southeast Asia to train internationally qualified personnel. Through interview surveys and literature review, the study concludes five main modes of cross-border cooperation in cultivating talents in Yunnan junior colleges, which are “college-company”, “college-intermediate-company”, “college-college”, “college-intermediate-college” and “college-government-college”. The main problems of current cross-border cooperation are: universities need to improve the practical skills of talents and the international level of teachers; the government needs to strengthen the top-level design, to play full role of “intermediate”, to increase the financial support and to implement more flexible management measures to serve the international exchange and cooperation of higher institutions. For existing problems, the article puts forward specific suggestions from the perspective of colleges and governments.

KEYWORDS: Yunnan province, Junior colleges, International talents, Cross-border cooperation

1. Introduction

Yunnan Province is the geographical center of the Asian region. It is an important transportation hub connecting the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe from the east to the west as well as an international thoroughfare connecting trans-asian railway, an open gateway to Southeast Asia for our country, and plays an important role in the “the belt and road” construction.^[1] Under “the belt and road” construction, Yunnan will be built into China's radiation center facing Southeast Asia. The construction of “radiation center” cannot be separated from the support of qualified personnel. It is the duty of Yunnan colleges and universities to focus on training internationalized talents facing Southeast Asia and boosting the construction of “Southeast Asia Radiation Center”. It is also the demand for colleges and universities to actively adapt to the society and train talents needed by the society so as to greatly realize their self-development. It is difficult to achieve the training goal of internationalized talents only by the efforts of a single higher institution, because the quality standard of internationalized talents emphasize that international talents should have international prospect, be familiar with international rules and have the ability of cross-cultural communication, effective participation in international affairs and international competition. Therefore, it has become increasingly common for higher education to seek international cooperation in the training of internationalized talents with resources from all sides so as to implement cross-border cooperative training. Yunnan higher institutions are no exception, actively seeking cross-border cooperation in the training of internationalized talents. Limited by paper length, this study only discusses the cooperation between Yunnan junior colleges and neighboring countries to train international talents for Southeast Asia through cross-border cooperation.

2. Basic Models of Cross-Border Cooperation in Training International Talents in Yunnan Junior Colleges

Through field study and literature review, the study concludes that there are mainly two types of cooperation modes between Yunnan junior colleges and South Asian eastern countries in the cooperative training of international talents: one is the “college-company” model, that is, colleges and companies cooperate to jointly train the required higher technical talents; the second is the “college-college” model, that is, the colleges of both sides jointly train international talents. Furthermore, these two models can be divided into five types according to the specific forms of cooperation,

which are “college-company”, “college-intermediary-company”, “college-college”, “college-intermediate-college” and “college-government-college”.^[2]

3. The Problems of Cross-Border Cooperation in Training International Talents in Yunnan Junior Colleges

Due to various subjective and objective factors, there exist some problems in the process of cross-border cooperation for training international talents. An objective analysis of the existing problems would bring more high-quality and efficiency to Yunnan Junior Colleges’ cultivation of international talents.

3.1 Problems in Junior Colleges

First, the practical skills of talents need to be further improved, which is reflected in the example that the cooperation between Kunming Metallurgy College and Vinacomin Group is a direct cooperation between colleges and companies, but the talents trained by colleges are not capable of practical ability and still need pre-job training. This problem makes enterprises pay higher labor costs. The main reason for the shortage of practical skills lies in the general lack of double-qualified teachers and practical training facilities in junior colleges.

Second, junior colleges generally lack high-quality international teachers. The proportion of teachers with more than one year's overseas exchange background in junior colleges is significantly lower than that in undergraduate colleges, and even fewer teachers have the ability to use English or a certain foreign language for bilingual teaching. Teachers basically use Chinese to teach foreign students, which makes foreign students' learning inefficient.

3.2 Problems in Government

First, the top-level design is not in place. The general problems reflected by relevant personnel of colleges in interviews are as follows: at present, Yunnan Province lacks a general plan for the cooperative training of talents between junior colleges and foreign enterprises or higher institutions, and has no specific answers to the questions as how colleges should carry out international cooperation, what are the short-term and long-term specific goals of internationalization of Yunnan junior colleges, how to implement them, what are the tasks of these intermediate colleges, what support the government provides, etc.. It is difficult to form a set of standardized, reasonable and efficient cooperation programs among the colleges because of the lack of government leadership and operational suggestion. In seeking cross-border cooperation, junior colleges are basically in a state of working alone or even vicious competition, failing to cooperate together, which increases the cost of market expansion.

Second, the government has not played its role as a “middleman” in the cooperation and its due role in the construction of the cooperation platform very well. Southeast Asian countries expect to cooperate with Yunnan colleges, and similarly, Yunnan colleges are interested in cooperating with enterprises and other overseas higher institutions in scientific research, personnel training and teacher-student exchanges. However, all parties who are interested in cooperation are often in poor communication for the lack of platform and information. Generally speaking, Yunnan junior colleges have relatively low popularity, so it is difficult to rely on their own image and fame to take the initiative to attract partners in cooperation. They often need to rely on the introduction of “acquaintances” to build a cooperation framework. Without the government providing a platform or directly playing the role as a matchmaker, it is not easy for junior colleges to share their the advantage of talents and technology with enterprises.

Third, the government's financial support for junior colleges is insufficient. Junior colleges are in disadvantage in gaining the government's financial support. Benefits are unevenly distributed between junior colleges and undergraduate colleges and universities and the local government is more inclined to fund universities; special funding for junior colleges is deficient, junior colleges that are interested in cooperating with South Asian and Southeast Asian countries can only bear expenses by themselves or by their students.^[3]

Fourth, some government rules lack flexibility. For example, leaders above the department level of colleges need to submit for approval one year in advance to go abroad, which seriously hinders the overseas exchange of college teachers. Yunnan is a frontier province, which is close to Thailand and directly borders Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos. This special geographical location determines that the educational exchanges and cooperation between Yunnan colleges and neighboring countries are more frequent. Most of the time, some cooperation opportunities and projects are coming with chance and unpredictability. However, due to colleges failing to submit for approval in the “previous year”, they cannot go abroad to carry out negotiation activities. Undoubtedly, such regulations are too rigid to serve for educational exchanges and cooperation between junior colleges and neighboring countries.

4. Suggestions and Countermeasures

Both colleges and the government ought to make efforts to deal with the existing problems.

4.1 For Junior Colleges

Firstly, the cultivation of teaching staff should be strengthened.

All junior colleges in Yunnan Province urgently need to strengthen the cultivation of qualified teachers. One is the training of “double-qualified” teachers. In terms of students training objectives, junior colleges are more oriented to the training of skilled and operational personnel, so “double-qualified” teachers with both theoretical knowledge and practical experience are especially important. “Double-qualified” teachers are the fundamental condition to cultivate students' practical ability. The training of “double-qualified” teaching team in colleges can be obtained through teachers' going to enterprises to gain practical skills. Colleges can also attract excellent talents with professional and technical practical ability to enrich the teaching team. For example, the introduction of senior technical personnel and senior college management personnel with rich practical experience not only solves the problem of insufficient number of “double-qualified” teachers but also optimizes the structure of the teaching team. It can also strengthen the training of teachers with practical skills in schools, encourage teachers to actively carry out practical teaching and practice, and effectively improve the quality of students cultivation.^[4]

The second is the cultivation of international teachers. Colleges should make full use of the relevant policies of the nation and Yunnan Province and arrange teachers to receive training in overseas colleges and enterprises where they can learn new knowledge and contact new ideas. In this way, teachers with international vision and corresponding capabilities will be gradually cultivated. At the same time, efforts can be made to introduce teachers with overseas educational backgrounds.

Secondly, students' practical ability should be improved.

In addition to improving students' practical operation ability through the cultivation of “double-qualified” teachers, the school also needs to strengthen students' practical training courses, and improve students' practical operation ability. The construction of training bases can be flexibly resolved in the light of objective needs. Colleges and universities should build their own training bases if they would be used with high frequency, while for training bases with high cost and low utilization rate, Colleges can cooperate with relevant enterprises, send students to cooperative enterprises for training, and jointly train talents with enterprises. Or colleges can seek to jointly build and share training bases of similar majors in the construction of training bases.

4.2 For the Government

The first is to strengthen top-level design.

The government has the responsibility of overall planning, organization and coordination. It needs to do a good job in top-level design, and should lead all colleges, relevant departments and companies to work out a medium and long-term plan and specific implementation opinions for the internationalization of junior colleges in Yunnan Province on the basis of full investigation, argumentation and consultation. In addition, the government should guide colleges to formulate corresponding specific development goals and implementation plans according to their own advantages and educational resources. In policy formulation, there should be both directive policies and operational procedures, which enable colleges and universities to know how to seek help from the government in international exchanges and cooperation, and to know what help and services the government can provide, and what colleges themselves can “do” and “how to do”. Meanwhile, in the top-level design, the government should highlight the awareness of “service” . According to the actual situation in Yunnan Province, more flexible management rules should be designed and adopted so as to effectively serve the foreign exchange and cooperation of colleges.

The second is to strengthen the construction of cooperation platform.

The role of the government in matchmaking can be realized either directly as a “middleman” or through platform construction. The platform provides convenience for all parties to the cooperation to exchange information, exchange demands, get what they need and benefit each other. It greatly eliminates the closed development caused by poor information communication and promotes the exchange of information, materials and personnel between different systems and organizations. The platform includes real platform and virtual platform. The platform construction should be normalized and sustained, with emphasis on pertinence and effectiveness. In the light of the needs of colleges, the government can set up normalized platforms as “Southeast Asia School-Enterprise Cooperation Forum” and “South Asia and Southeast Asia Education Cooperation Presidents Forum” to promote information exchange among all parties. At the same time, the government should actively encourage junior colleges, enterprises and the public to build various tangible and digital platforms to provide “matchmaking” services for the cooperation between colleges and overseas organizations. To cultivate and guide the development of various educational services and intermediary institutions, the

government should offer supporting policies and funds.

The third is to enhance financial support for junior colleges.

The government should treat the junior colleges equally in terms of student funding and various preferential policies, and the funds and subsidies received by the junior colleges should not be lower than those received by the undergraduate universities. The training of talents in junior colleges is characterized by skills and practicality, and the training cost of talents is not lower than that of undergraduate colleges and universities. In addition, under the circumstance that the total education funds are limited in Yunnan provinces, the government's financial aid should be based on the idea of "wide ways and multiple channels" and formulate measures to encourage private individuals, enterprises, international non-profit organizations, etc. to donate and encourage junior colleges to generate diversified income.

5. Conclusion

In summary, under the background of "the belt and road", if the junior colleges want to improve the quality of training internationalized talents for Southeast Asia and play the due functions in training skilled international talents, they need to not only clarify their own problems and continuously improve themselves, but also need the government's guidance, services and support in policies, funds and platforms.

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