

# THE DISCUSSION OF EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND THE DANUBE REGION COUNTRIES ON THE BASIS OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES

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**Abstract.** In 2013, Chinese government announced that China would intensively strengthen the cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe countries (including Danube region countries) and raised “16+1” mechanism. It provided opportunities for China to have educational and cultural exchange with Danube region countries. Based on the platform of Confucius Institutes, the opportunity of exploring training mode of transnational talents, exploring the ways of educational and cultural exchange between China and The Danube Region Countries should be highly understood. The subject of cross-nation talents foster model could be achieved under the Confucius Institutes platform as well. The constructing and operating of Confucius Institutes should play an important role on strengthening educational communication between China and Danube Region Countries.

**Keywords:** Confucius Institutes platform, Danube region countries, China, Educational exchange

## 1. The background and opportunities of educational exchange between China and the Danube River nations

### 1.1. The Chinese government’s “Belt and Road” Initiative

In September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping had put forward with two grand strategies successively which were in line with the Eurasian Economic integration during his visit to Central Asia and Southeast Asia. One is Silk Road Economic Belt strategy and the other is 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road strategy, those two were combined as “Belt and Road” Initiative and attracted close attention from international community.

Silk Road Economic Belt strategy covered and combined with Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia’s economic integration, leading to Europe and forming the overall trend of Eurasian Economic integration. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road strategy linked with the Continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, thus forming a maritime and on-land closed loop with Silk Road Economic Belt strategy. Chinese government had been actively promoting the building of

the “Belt and Road”, enhancing communication and consultation, advancing practical cooperation with countries along the “Belt and Road” and introduced a series of policies and measures.

President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang had visited over 20 countries, attended the Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity Partnership and met with leaders of relevant countries to explain the rich content and positive implications of the Road Initiative, and their efforts had helped bring about broad consensus on the “Belt and Road” Initiative, signed MOUs of cooperation on regional cooperation and broader cooperation and mid-and long-term development plans for economic and trade cooperation with some neighboring countries.

### ***1.2. Chinese government raised “16+1” mechanism***

In 2013, Chinese government announced that China would intensively strengthen the cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries and raised “16+1” mechanism. China needed to enlarge the cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries (including Danube River) and expected the trade with Central and Eastern European countries (including Danube River) to double by 2018. Central and Eastern European countries is a geopolitical concept with 16 members including Poland, Czech, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Estonia, Lithuania and the Republic of Latvia.

Central and Eastern European countries (including Danube River) has got along well with China and they all faced with one task of economic transition and development. “16+1” cooperation mechanism offered a new platform Central and Eastern European countries and China to carry out extensive cooperation. Central and Eastern European countries had large cooperation potential with China in the areas of industry modernization, energy conservation and environment protection, transportation and logistics and infrastructure. They supported and were willing to actively participate into the “Belt and Road” construction. Also, exchange and cooperation could be strengthened in education and culture area.

### ***1.3. Educational communication opportunities under “Belt and Road” Initiative and “16+1” mechanism***

It provided opportunities for China to have educational and cultural exchange with countries and regional along the “Belt and Road” since China rose “Belt and Road” Initiative and “16+1” mechanism. A lot of practical actions had already been implemented.

On October 17<sup>th</sup> 2015, 46 national and regional universities and colleges along the “Belt and Road” published Dunhuang Consensus (敦煌共识) and decided to establish “Belt and Road” universities and colleges strategic alliances, including Fudan University, Beijing Normal University, Sichuan University, Tongji University, Lanzhou University, Ural State University and Pukyong National University. They decided to explore a new cross-country and cross-border elite mechanism and cultivate talent with international outlook. In line with the idea of “Interconnection, open and inclusive, collaborative and innovation, win-win and cooperation”, Dunhuang Consensus main content was to build “Belt and Road” higher education community, promote overall communication and cooperation among countries and regional universities along the “Belt and Road” in the aspects of education, technology, culture and others, serve the countries and regions’ economic and society development along the “Belt and Road”.

46 founding colleges joined “Belt and Road” universities and colleges strategic alliances were from China, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and other 8 countries. The alliance was composed of counties’ and regional universities along “Belt and Road” with cooperation will and non-legal entity set up by the extraterritorial universities with cooperation will. The alliance would provide education information sharing, resource sharing platform for academic exchanges and cooperation, explore the new mechanism of the transnational culture and the cross-border flow of talent training, and promote the two-way flow of students union between universities.

The alliance would declare collaborative innovation, international cooperation project of scientific research and carry out scientific research jointly. The alliance would work together to create “Belt and Road” the higher education community, promote overall communication and cooperation among countries and regional universities along the “Belt and Road” in the aspects of education, technology, culture and others, serve the countries and regions’ economic and society development along the “Belt and Road”.

## **2. Development of the Confucius Institutes in the world**

### ***2.1. Development of the Confucius Institutes in the world***

With the deep development of economic globalization and cultural diversity in the world, each country should focus on the cultivation of talents with international vision. Multinational cooperation in running schools, the internationalization of the curriculum, the internationalization of teaching staff, the internationalization of talent training, participation in international certification and other international institutions of higher education is widely used. On November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the first Confucius Institutes was listed in Seoul. There

had been 525 Confucius institutes and 1113 Confucius Classrooms worldwide by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. China had sent tens of thousands of teachers and volunteers to the world and cultivated 9.1 million students. Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms served as an important platform for the world to know China and learn English, playing an active role to promote civilization exchange between China and other countries in the rest of the world. The Confucius Institute had been developed rapidly in 10 years. The establishment of Confucius Institutes also promoted civilization exchange between China and other countries in the rest of the world.

## ***2.2. Confucius Institute's service mode***

According to the Confucius Institutes Charter, Confucius Institutes provided services including “Carry out the teaching of Chinese; train Chinese teacher; provide Chinese language teaching resources; carry out Chinese examination and certification of the Chinese language teachers; provide China's education, culture and information consultation and carry out foreign language and cultural exchange activities.” However, due to the own conditions and characteristics of host universities and different local background and existing resources in teaching Chinese, each Confucius Institutes had its own service mode and operation mechanism. As a result, each Confucius Institutes was unique. In general, Confucius Institutes could be divided into the following 4 service modes:

First service mode: Teaching leading type. To a large extent, the Confucius Institutes of teaching leading type had infiltrated the Chinese teaching of the host university and many aspects of its curriculum, which has become an organic component of the host university. In these Confucius Institutes, Chinese and the Chinese culture teaching were primary service content.

Second service mode: Community service type. Community service type mainly existed in developed countries and developing countries with good Chinese teaching basis. In view of the local media's ideology and politics to the Confucius Institutes, some of Confucius Institutes would be positioned to study Chinese and Chinese cultural services for the community. Some Confucius Institutes actively participated in local community activities, such as wine festival, International Food Festival, the local youth festival, etc. Confucius Institutes integrated into local culture as one of them and in order to promote mutual understanding.

This type of community service of the Confucius Institutes mostly provided HSK, Chinese Bridge Competition, Confucius New Sinology Plan, Study in China and scholarship programs. These were normal communication platforms between host universities and Chinese pairing universities, and became a com-

munity center to turn to local service, promote Chinese and Chinese culture and help the world to know about China.

Third mode: Academic and research mode. Some Confucius schools focused on the academic research, especially on Sinology, Orientalism and globalization etc. At the same time, they also hold various academic seminars, and even cultivate graduate students together, etc. Some Confucius Institutes positioned to be academic platforms to have cultural exchange and comparison between China and foreign countries. In addition to the conventional Chinese cultural activities, they also carried out academic exchanges between the joint world-renowned university and Chinese scholars.

Fourth mode: Integration type. In addition to position to be traditional spreading platform of local Chinese and Chinese culture, this kind of Confucius Institutes turned Chinese teaching into regular undergraduate courses. That is, Confucius Institutes had been integrated into the formal system of the university curriculum, into the school's formal teaching unit. Of course, there would be more stringent quality of teaching routine monitoring and control.

Of course, the above four models were not static. In accordance with their respective situations, the Confucius Institutes had continuously adjusted its service mode and focus, and the four modes might exist at the same time at the same Confucius Institutes. Some Confucius Institutes offered both Chinese and Chinese Culture credit courses, and actively integrated into the local community culture, while promoting domestic and foreign academic research and exchange, etc. Overall, the Confucius Institutes had strong adaptability, diverse and reciprocity in Chinese teaching, Chinese culture promotion, academic research, international cooperation and other aspects and had gradually integrated into the world unique social soil.

### ***2.3. Possibility of building Confucius Institutes***

Confucius Institutes were good for international education exchange. Schools in different countries could respectively use its own advantages in resources, such as funding for education, teaching project and the source of the students, to achieve international cooperation in the field of education. However, with only 11 years since establishment and rapid development of Confucius Institutes, there were few researchers in the system exploring and practicing (may also be exploring). Based on the platform of Confucius Institutes, the opportunity of exploring training mode of transnational talents, exploring the ways of educational and cultural exchange between China and The Danube Region Countries was gradually mature.

Confucius Institute for Sino-foreign educational cooperation had developed a high level, wide area and a full range of platforms. In 2013, the Confucius

Institute at the University of Pittsburgh united the other five Confucius Institute established the “Six Confucius Institutes Joint Advisory Group” and founded the inter university teaching and research cooperation projects, building a new platform for Chinese and American scholars research cooperation and exchanges. The Confucius Institute tie of the intercollegiate cooperation project had been highly recognized by the Confucius Institute Headquarters and many universities in the United States. It was gradually building into an important brand of transnational, trans-cultural and educational cooperation worldwide.

### **3. Cultural communication and cooperation with the Danube Region Countries based on the Confucius Institutes**

#### ***3.1. Advices on China's educational and cultural communication and cooperation with the Danube Region Countries***

The proposal of “Belt and Road” by China had gained active responses from related countries in Central and Eastern European countries (including Danube River), and it had also offered great opportunities for China's educational communication with Central and Eastern European countries (including Danube River). Exploration of the cross-national talents fostering model based on Confucius Institute would greatly boost educational communication. For example, in higher educational exchange, communication of higher education played an active part in fostering the educational work and promoting the education quality.

First, under the support of Confucius Institute, resource sharing of cultural and academic curriculum developments could be achieved among the cooperating universities. Cooperation in running schools was the most convenient and effective method in the integration of international educational resources and internationalization of education. The educational resources of Confucius Institute could encourage the communication among different universities and disciplines, as well as enhance the discipline construction level of both the international and Chinese universities. Cultural communications of the Confucius Institute should be expanded from language and culture to wider fields of Information Technology, Engineering, Economy, Management, International Trade, Accounting and Arts and others.

Second, build the cultural platform of Confucius Institute, train the bachelors according to different levels and categories. These would actively promote disciplinary setting, curriculum adjustments and teaching practices of Chinese universities. At the same time, reasonable career-oriented advice could be offered to students. Deeper cooperates could also be implemented in teaching and scientific research subjects.

Third, short and middle-term cross-national internships (or cross-nation united internships) could be offered to students by Confucius Institute, which covers not only specific internships but also language training and cultural explorations

Fourth, take the resource advantages of specific Confucius Institute to train the excellent bachelor with cross-cultural background in the long run. Subjects of languages, art design, engineering and geography can lead the try.

### ***3.2. Educational and cultural communication and cooperation practices between China and Danube Region Countries***

Educational and cultural communication between China and Danube Region Countries as well as the subject of cross-nation talents foster model could be achieved under the Confucius Institute. Following items could be taken into consideration in the item designing.

First, foster of specific language talents: Confucius Institute took the lead and set scholarships in Chinese universities. Chose several top language students and sent them aboard, especially to minority-language countries for 3 – 5 years to learn the certain language of a country. This plan could be combined with the Foster Plan of Excellent Bachelors.

Second, excellent youth summer camp: this item included specific internship, language training and cultural exploration. Items should be set to encourage students of related schools to go to the Confucius Institutes or Chinese and international universities for one to six months. A more effective platform of language learning, specific internship and cultural exploration would be constructed by the Confucius Institute.

Third, Understanding China talking seminar: according to the tastes and interests of students, invited the elite students and scholars from the countries that Confucius Institutes for visits from one week to one month. Set seminar and let the elites have deep communications with students and vice versa to promote the communication and cooperation.

Fourth, Cultural immersing and career orientation: offered cross-cultural influence and career-oriented advice to university graduates through the item of volunteer Chinese teacher from one year to two years by Confucius Institute. Through this subject, 5742 volunteers had been set abroad from high education institutes to Confucius Institutes by the end of 2014. This subject was available to universities graduates of all majors and studying masters, which was a great opportunity for university students.

#### 4. The epilogue

Like what was said by vice president Li Yuanchao on the African Confucius United Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup>, June, 2014, “the Confucius Institute is an important platform for the cultural communication and mutual emulate between China and foreign countries.” Spreading Chinese culture to the rest of the world and learning from other countries were the double tasks of Confucius Institute, as well as what it could exercise itself.

In the past eleven years, the Confucius Institute had gained a fast rapid development all around the world. There was still great space for further communication between China and Danube Region Countries based on Confucius Institutes. Meanwhile, challenges also existed within. One of the challenges was the differences of traditional thoughts between China and the west as well as the influences on the sustainability of cooperates brought by certain differences. Another challenge was the sustainable development of Confucius Institutes. This issue had a close relation with the smooth cooperate between China and the international universities, the working capacity and working model of Chinese and foreign presidents of Confucius Institutes. From this point, presidents of Confucius Institute had taken important positions. The constructing and operating of Confucius Institute was an important part of strengthening educational communication between China and Danube Region Countries.

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