

Prospects for Scientific and Innovative Interaction Between China and Kazakhstan Within the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract

The dynamic economic growth of China, the expansion of trade, the huge demographic potential, the development of innovations and the introduction of new technologies have attracted the attention of politicians and researchers from around the world. A new level of economic integration between Kazakhstan and China requires enhanced cooperation in not only the political, trade, financial sectors, but also, which is no less important, in the field of education and innovation. This is due to the fact that not only politicians, businessmen, but also ordinary people will join the system of relations in the process of economic integration of the two countries, with their help joint production and joint products will be created. Implementation of the Belt and Road initiative raises new challenges for Kazakhstan and China's cultural and educational spheres. The goal of the research is to examine the prospects of cooperation and innovation in the field of education within the context of the Belt and Road initiative, identify the main areas of educational cooperation and identify key areas of cooperation between Kazakhstan and China. This article contributes to the sense of the Belt and Road initiative to improve the theory and practice of international cooperation between China and Kazakhstan in the field of education and innovation.

The economic and political interaction between Kazakhstan and China is well studied in world Chinese studies, while cooperation in the field of education still requires research and systematization since this area makes a great contribution to the promotion of China's interests, values and the development of Chinese influence in the region. Thus, this article is intended to fill the gap in this area. This article contributes to the sense of the Belt and Road initiative to improve the theory and practice of international cooperation between China and Kazakhstan in the field of education.

Key words: cooperation, education, Belt and road initiative, Kazakhstan, China.

Introduction

The dynamic economic growth of China, the expansion of trade, the huge demographic potential, the development of innovations and the introduction of new technologies have attracted the attention of politicians and researchers from around the world.

The Belt and Road Initiative, launched by the President of PRC Xi Jinping in the first year after taking office on September 7, 2013, at Nazarbayev University, has attracted widespread attention both in China and in other countries include. In a speech entitled “Promote friendship between our peoples and work together to build a bright future”, he announced plans for China to create an economic belt to connect the Chinese market with Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe (Ma Feng, 2019). The Belt and Road strategic initiative is closely linked to China’s geographic location and history. From the economic development point of view and the growth of expansion of regional economic cooperation, this is the main motive for China's policy about all regions, in particular about its neighbors.

The Belt and Road initiative, according to the Chinese Government, has the same objectives as the Chinese Dream:

- Promoting comprehensive and sustainable security in Asia through mutually beneficial cooperation, peaceful settlement of disputes, and partnership growth, harmonious ties among countries.
- Introduction of cultural exchanges between countries, leading to the joint development of different civilizations. Cooperation and innovation in the field of education are an integral part of the cultural exchange between Kazakhstan and China.

A new level of economic integration between Kazakhstan and China requires enhanced cooperation not only in the political, trade, financial sectors, but also, which is no less important, in the field of education and innovation. This is due to the fact that not only politicians, businessmen, but also ordinary people will join the system of relations in the process of economic integration of the two countries, with their help joint production and joint products will be created.

Implementation of the Belt and Road initiative raises new challenges for Kazakhstan and China's cultural and educational spheres.

This means that economic integration at a new level will require the cultural and educational integration of the two countries. First of all, it is about solving problems related to intercultural communication between the two peoples. This communication should be based on the equality of the cultures included in the communication. Thus, in the framework of international cooperation, a lot of work is done in the field of education. The goal of the research is to examine the prospects of cooperation in the field of education within the context of the Belt and Road initiative, identify the main areas of educational cooperation and identify key areas of cooperation between Kazakhstan and China.

Methodology of Research

A systematic approach is defined as a methodological basis for the study, which allows exploring the integral properties of an object, its structure, and dynamics. Thus, cooperation in the field of education between China and Kazakhstan is studied as a system of interrelated areas that determine the degree of external cultural and educational interaction between the two countries. For a more detailed study of the problem, general scientific and special methods of historical research were employed. Among the general scientific methods, the following were applied: analysis and synthesis, with which the relationship between China and Kazakhstan was scientifically studied in the context of the topic and research issue.

Discussions and Results

There is an increasing interest in Chinese education among young people of Kazakhstan. Many young people study Chinese in order to study in China. Several Kazakhstani universities have partnerships with Chinese universities, in the framework of which students from Kazakhstan are trained. Considering statistics, over the past ten years, more and more students from Central Asia from Kazakhstan, receive education in China. According to researchers, the reason for this trend is the low quality of domestic higher and secondary education, as well as the high cost of education (Sadovskaya Y., 2013). Also, an important factor in this matter is the impressive economic development of China,

which many define as a “Chinese miracle”, contributing to the spread of the Chinese language throughout the world. A valuable tool for this proliferation is the Confucius institutions scattered around the world today. Through this, the Chinese language is becoming one of the world languages in the modern world and an important mean of global intercultural communication.

Chinese language is becoming increasingly popular among young people and other parts of the population along with English, and educational grants from the PRC government and Confucius Institutes also contribute to this. Thus, the Chinese language is becoming not only a means of obtaining education, but also helps in improving the professional level of specialists who are associated with the Chinese economy or other areas of China's activities. By learning the Chinese language, Kazakhstan people today are much better acquainted with China, people and culture.

Before moving on to the analysis of cooperation in the field of education between Kazakhstan and China within Belt and Road initiative, it is useful to focus briefly on the characteristics of the education system that currently exists in China.

Education in China has always been of great importance. The Institute of Education is traditionally perceived in Chinese society as one of the highest values, which is why it is not surprising that education was one of the key factors that ensured the existence of the Chinese “economic miracle”. Through the implementation of a long-term state program, the Chinese education system is currently one of the leading and most prestigious in the world.

This fact is determined by the following indicators:

Quantitative. Currently, in the PRC there are about a million educational institutions of various levels and profiles, in which more than 200 million people are studying (Baytemirov N.A., 2017).

An integrated approach to higher education. There are nine basic universities in the PRC, which are not only educational institutions, but also the largest research centers, each of which implements a certain specialization and cooperates with major companies. Thus, the necessary connection is achieved between education, science, and industrial activity, which, in turn, allows us to realize the key request of post-industrial development, which consists of turning science into the main productive force of society. The result of this

approach is the high place of the PRC among the world economies - leaders in the creation and implementation of various nanotechnological industries.

Performance indicators of higher education institutions. Over the past 20 years alone, 20 thousand Doctors of Sciences have received degrees in the country. Currently, 160 thousand postgraduate students are preparing doctoral thesis (Baytemirov N.A., 2017).

The implemented system of job placement for high school graduates including foreign citizens.

Thus, the perception of the development experience of the Chinese education system is essential for building an effective economy. Countries participating in integration projects implemented as part of the Belt and Road Initiative are given that opportunity.

It should be noted that for the economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, improving the educational system based on progressive standards of the PRC is of great importance, considering its negative characteristics. Among them, firstly, an objective reduction in the quality of the provision of education services due to the collapse of the USSR and the socio-economic structural crisis, Secondly, a major weakening of the link between the higher education system and applied science and development, and thirdly, the lack of the requisite teaching materials for the organization of the educational process relating to the study of advanced technologies characteristic of post-industrial economies.

China's position in the 21st-century international education market is better than Kazakhstan's, so cooperation is promising and important for Kazakhstan. 2003 represented a significant milestone in coordinating and sustaining bilateral cooperation in the field of education. On 3 June 2003, a specific regulatory act was signed in Astana between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, which sets out the strategic basis for bilateral cooperation in the field of education-the Education Cooperation Agreement. The signing of this document laid the foundation for the legal consolidation of cooperation in some areas (https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1039389). From 2003 to 2005, in order to increase the output of joint scientific research and to extend the exchange between the two countries in the field of education, this agreement identified the main areas of cooperation, including the exchange of information on the education system and reforms, the guidance of students from both countries on different exchange programmes, mutual cooperation in the study and propagation of the official languages

of both nations. This resolution marked the beginning of an agreement on the mutual recognition of educational documents.

At the current stage, relations between Kazakhstan and China have reached a high level. The legal framework of modern Kazakh-Chinese cooperation in the field of education is developing and improving. Since the early 2000s, the leadership of the two countries has been striving to improve and establish areas of cooperation in education such as student exchanges, as well as support for language study and dissemination

Kazakhstan's students are characterized by their high mobility in the world's academic circles, in which over thirty thousand young Kazakhstanis study abroad each year, and China, in effect, at this stage of development is one of the most popular destination for getting the education.

Unfortunately, there is no official statistics on the number of studying Kazakhstanis in China. According to the Kazakh ambassador, there were about 11, 2 thousand Kazakh students in Chinese universities in 2014 in China (Interview of the Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2014). About 700 Kazakhstani students have obtained diplomas from Chinese universities in 2013, he says. Among young Kazakhstanis, the most famous universities are in Beijing, Shanghai, and Urumqi. Students go to the PRC both through the state line, under the presidential program "Bolashak" to improve the education level of specialists in the republic and at their own expense (<https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa-beijing/activities/2111?lang=ru>). Most of them study Chinese language and related areas. Humanities are primarily in demand, as well as those related to the oil and gas industry and information technology. (Mukankyzyi M., 2014). In China, there are even several Kazakhstani student associations that bring together university students in 9 Chinese cities. Every year, the attractiveness of China to young Kazakhstanis is growing. This is explained primarily by the accessibility (Chinese universities teach foreigners with any degree of initial training), the relative cheapness of training (as compared to the US and Europe), the good quality of education in PRC (especially in the natural, technical sciences and, of course, in the Chinese language), as well as relative safety and geographical proximity.

Based on data from various Chinese and domestic information sources, it is apparent that, relative to universities in the United States or the Russian Federation, there has been a significant increase in Kazakh youth's preferences to join universities in the PRC in

recent years. And this applies both to school education, colleges and universities. There are many reasons that arouse the interest of Kazakhstan graduates in this area. The activity of China in the Kazakhstani education market is simply amazing. China, where only 2% of the adult population have higher education, positions education in their country as affordable, sometimes even free and most importantly corresponding to the highest world ratings (Foreign students learn Russian in Kazakhstan, 2014). Many scholarships are offered as well. Announced the possibility of admission without mandatory passing entrance exams as in Kazakhstan. Various discounts for accommodation and the possibility of receiving scholarships from the PRC Government are advertised.

Kazakhstan is also a relatively popular country among Chinese students, as Chinese university entrance exams at state universities in China are quite difficult, so Chinese students are trying to find options abroad, and Kazakhstan is one of them. Chinese students come to Kazakhstan mainly for learning the Russian language, as the Russian language is in high demand in the field of commerce, and the cost of training is lower than in Russia's big cities (1300 Chinese students study in Kazakhstan, 2017).

In Kazakhstan, the spread of the Chinese language is many times faster than Kazakh language in China. That depends on a lot of factors. The Chinese language is becoming increasingly popular in the world. China is gaining momentum, both economically and politically. The picture of a thriving Chinese society is gaining ground. China, with its rich history and far-reaching opportunities, is very attractive to Kazakhstanis, ranging from training to employment, so young Kazakhstanis play an important role in popularizing the language, as Chinese language literacy significantly increases labor market competitiveness (Guanmin Zhibao 2013).

Naturally, a huge number of theoretical and practical issues arise during the implementation of the Belt and Road initiative, which must be addressed in the first place. In author's opinion, these issues include, firstly, the construction of roads and the creation of infrastructure to ensure the normal operation of the Belt and Road initiative, secondly, the provision of this transport artery with a network of road maintenance and repair, the construction of gas stations and repair stations for servicing vehicles passing along this highway, thirdly, the construction of numerous hotels for recreation and maintenance of drivers, passengers and tourists, fourthly, information support for the

participants of Belt and road, fifthly, building a competent logistic connection of huge trade flows, sixth, medical and legal services.

All these issues in the context of the above tasks need scientific understanding and study and, accordingly, the development of scientifically based proposals and recommendations for resolving these issues. In our opinion, for representatives of university science and education, the issues of training the human resources and information support of the Belt and Road initiative are primarily important. There is no doubt that the implementation and maintenance of this initiative will require highly qualified specialists in both traditional and new fields, specialists in a new formation and competencies who are able to work and think at the level of requirements of this modern and large-scale initiative. Therefore, these tasks require coordination of efforts and resources of educational institutions to service this transport highway. We propose the bilateral cooperation between universities located on the Great Silk Road. For example, for institutions that train language specialists, it is primarily important to prepare all kinds of reference books and dictionaries on economics, trade, law, tourism, the service sector, customs and tax laws, guides, atlases, and encyclopedias. It is also quite obvious that the implementation of the Chinese initiative will require coordination of the activities of educational institutions of the countries along the Silk Road, scientifically, human resources, information and other support for this great initiative, affecting the fate of the peoples living in this transport corridor.

It is obvious that the Belt and road initiative will generate demand for research, primarily, for example, for the development of national logistics systems, which will significantly reduce intercontinental transport costs associated with the movement of resources. In addition, an infrastructure of ongoing consultations at the level of experts, scientists, corporate and public administration will have to be created during the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, ensuring the development and maintenance of mutual understanding and creating an institutional basis for close cooperation between countries.

In our opinion, the provision of educational, scientific and information services in terms of providing this transport artery with the necessary scientific recommendations and expert opinions is very important for universities and research centers of countries involved in the Chinese Belt and road initiative. For this, it is primarily important for

educational institutions, scientists, expert communities, within the framework of mutually beneficial cooperation, to coordinate and synchronize the training system, unite efforts to develop scientific problems to ensure the efficient operation of this transport highway, and give the scientific communities of these countries scientifically based expert opinions on the implementation of Belt and road initiative. Thus, the Belt and road initiative creates a great demand for science and education.

Previously Belt and Road initiative was considered as transport network for the economic development of the Silk Road countries, now the initiative is building up its humanitarian potential and the creation of a digital Silk Road. China is also experiencing the need for human resources in these areas. So, in mid-April 2017, a 10-year youth development plan for 2016-2025 was published in China, according to which millions of graduates of the PRC high school will be engaged in the development of new strategic sectors of Chinese industry. The latest revision of the list of these industries was published by the Chinese government in February 2017. In the first place - information technology, then - the production of high-tech equipment, new materials, biotechnology, new energy vehicles, new and renewable energy, energy-saving and environmentally friendly technologies, digital innovations (xinhuanet.com, 2017).

Conclusions

Significant progress in cooperation in the field of education was achieved between Kazakhstan and China. Fundamental international normative statutory actions have been concluded in the field of educational cooperation a system for student exchange was established and developed; a number of students are growing steadily. The research we conducted has shown that although bilateral relations between countries in the field of education are growing, Kazakhstan is losing China in this area with its modern education and language programmes.

During the implementation of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative, a huge number of theoretical and practical issues naturally arise that need to be addressed first. In our opinion, such issues include, firstly, the construction of roads and the creation of infrastructure to ensure the normal operation of the Belt and Road initiative, secondly, the provision of this transport artery with a network of road maintenance and repair, construction of gas stations and repair stations for servicing vehicles passing along this

highway, thirdly, the construction of numerous hotels for the recreation and maintenance of drivers, passengers and tourists, fourthly, information support for Belt and Road initiative participants, fifth, the logistics of building a competent communication huge trade flows, sixth, medical and legal services. All these issues in the context of the above tasks need scientific understanding and study and, accordingly, the development of scientifically based proposals and recommendations for resolving these issues.

For representatives of science and education field, the issues of training human resources and information support for the Belt and Road initiative are primarily important. There is no doubt that the implementation and maintenance of this initiative will require highly qualified specialists in both traditional and new fields, specialists in a new formation and competencies who are able to work and think at the level of requirements of this modern and large-scale Belt and Road initiative. Therefore, these tasks require coordination of efforts and resources of educational institutions to service this transport highway.

One of the main issues is the harmonization of Western and Eastern education systems, the synthesis of Eurasia's educational spaces. The following problems were identified during the course of study: the need to coordinate educational standards, the potential of joint scientific publications by scientists from China and Kazakhstan, which is still extremely poorly used.

Thus, the Belt and Road initiative creates a great demand for science and education. Whereas previously, Belt and Road initiative was considered a transport network for the economic development of the countries of the Silk Road, now the initiative is building up its humanitarian potential and creating a digital Silk Road. Therefore, Kazakhstan and China universities are faced with new challenges, to overcome which it will be necessary to pay special attention to the ways of innovation in the internationalization of education in training personnel in the new conditions for the implementation of the initiative and for the future for the further implementation and development of the initiative, universities will need to prepare specialists of a new formation with different competencies.

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