

# Status, Problems and Countermeasures of Higher Education Cooperation Between Yunnan Province and South and Southeast Asian Countries\*

Jianhui Yun

Science and Technology Management Department  
Yunnan Agricultural University  
Kunming, China

Wei Long

College of Economics and Management  
Yunnan Agricultural University  
Kunming, China

Hao Yang\*\*

College of Foreign Languages  
Yunnan Agricultural University  
Kunming, China

\*\*Corresponding Author

**Abstract**—This paper analyzes the status of international cooperation in higher education with Southeast Asia and Southeast Asia through the following five aspects: the perspectives of higher education cooperation platform, the education of international student, the international promotion of Chinese as a foreign language, the Sino-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, and training of non-general languages talents. And this paper will propose some targeted countermeasures and recommendations for the problems.

**Keywords**—higher education cooperation; problems and countermeasures; Yunnan; South and Southeast Asian countries

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, relying on geographical advantages and high-quality educational resources, Yunnan Province has taken the "idealism, introduction, cooperation and win-win" as the guiding ideology, and has actively explored and achieved certain results in the international cooperation in higher education with South and Southeast Asian Countries. The disadvantaged position of higher education in Yunnan Province has greatly been changed. This cooperation has also expanded the space and tension of higher education development of Yunnan, and has promoted the new level of higher education in Yunnan Province. The development has entered a new era, and Yunnan has become an important educational center for South Asia and Southeast Asia, the talent training base and important destination for overseas students,

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and also has become China's new highland for education in South Asia and Southeast Asia. This paper analyzes the status of international cooperation in higher education with Southeast Asia and Southeast Asia through the following five aspects: the perspectives of higher education cooperation platform, the education of international student, the international promotion of Chinese as a foreign language, the Sino-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, and training of non-general languages talents. And this paper will propose some targeted countermeasures and recommendations for the problems.

## II. ANALYSIS OF THE STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG YUNNAN PROVINCE, SOUTH ASIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

### A. Platforms of Cooperation in Higher Education

Yunnan Province has actively established platforms for international education exchange and cooperation, and has maintained long-term good relations with more than 4,000 colleges and educational institutions in more than 40 countries. On the one hand, it relies on the "Yunnan-Thailand Education Exchange and Cooperation Conference", "Exhibition of Yunnan International Education", "South Asia and Southeast Asia Cooperation of Education Forum", "South Asian and Southeast Asian University Presidents Union", "The Lancang-Mekong College Students' Goodwill Games", "The Alliance of Lancang-Mekong Professional Education", "The Red River Basin University Presidents Forum" and so on. These platforms have carried out various forms of higher education cultural exchanges with South and Southeast Asian Countries. On the other hand, it relies on the three "China-ASEAN Education and Training Centers" established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education in Yunnan Agricultural University, Yunnan University, and Yunnan Minzu University, and five Overseas Work Office in Laos,

Myanmar and other ASEAN countries established by Yunnan Education International Exchange Associations provide Chinese teachers, training of agricultural technology, tourism, cooking, high-level educational exchanges, and make donation of teaching instruments and equipment for South Asian Southeast Asian countries.

#### *B. Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages*

With the Confucius Institute as the carrier, Yunnan Province has carried out wide-ranging and all-round educational activities to deepen the educational and cultural exchanges with Southeast Asian countries. Many Confucius Institutes have been established in nine countries around the world. By the end of 2017, Yunnan has established 15 Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms abroad, and 4 national-level Chinese international promotion bases. In 2016, Yunnan had successfully held the 11th Confucius Institute Conference. Yunnan University, Yunnan Normal University and Yunnan College of Traditional Chinese Medicine were awarded as the “Chinese International Promotion Base of One Belt and One Road for South Asian and Southeast Asian”, “The Teachers’ Training Base for Promotion of Chinese(Kunming)”, “The Base for Promotion of Chinese and Chinese Traditional Medicine”, three national-level international base for promotion of Chinese. Teaching Chinese language and culture carried out by the Confucius Institute has increased the international popularity and influence of universities in Yunnan, and has a positive effect on expanding the enrollment of international students, improving the level of enrollment, and regional cooperation.

#### *C. Education of International Students*

Before 2004, the number of international students in Yunnan Province was only a thousand. In order to courage South Asian and Southeast Asian students to study in China, Yunnan Province has established scholarships to attract students from Southeast Asian and Southeast Asian countries. On the one hand, the international students can apply for Chinese government scholarships, Confucius Institute scholarships, and Silk Road scholarships. On the other hand, the government encourages universities to cooperate with enterprises to establish School-enterprise joint scholarships in order to develop education of international students in Yunnan Province. The number of students from South Asian and Southeast Asian countries in Yunnan is basically increasing. In 2015, the total number of students from South and Southeast Asian Countries reached 11,489 which has a increase of 74.58% compared with the situation in 2006. The students come from South and Southeast Asian Countries accounted for 86.42% of the total number of international students studying in Yunnan, and the annual percentage of these students is over 65%. Now Yunnan Province has become an important destination for students from South and Southeast Asian Countries to study in China.

#### *D. Sino-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools*

Except to take measures to “bring in”, colleges and universities in Yunnan Province have gradually become more standardized in “going out” overseas to search for cooperation.

By the end of 2017, Yunnan Province has established 12 overseas cooperative educational institutions and 3 overseas cooperative projects of education in South and Southeast Asian Countries. In 2010, Honghe College cooperated with Taiyuan University in Vietnam to host an overseas cooperative project of education. The Bangkok Business School co-established by Yunnan University of Finance and Economics and Rangsit University of Thailand in 2014, was one of the four overseas cooperative institutions in Thailand, with a total of 110 undergraduate students. In 2016, Yunnan Jiaotong College established a Branch School in Thailand, and started the specialties such as rail transit and automobile application technology. In 2017, China-Myanmar Vocational and Technical College was listed, and the Yunhua Vocational College in Myanmar and Thailand began to enroll students. Phnom Penh International College of Dali University in Cambodia whose training model will be profession + language, one school and six countries are now been actively prepared for construction.

#### *E. Talent Training of Non-generic Languages*

In order to speed up the training of the international high-level talents that adapt to the national “Belt and Road” construction and the construction of the radiation center to South Asia and Southeast Asia in Yunnan, the government has intensified the training of “language(Southeast Asian and South Asian) + profession” composite talents. Since 2007, the Yunnan Provincial Government has earmarked a special subsidy of 5 million yuan per year for the provincial finance, which is specially used for the cultivation of talents in colleges and universities. The number of college students in Yunnan who study non-generic languages has increased from 1,634 in 2006 to nearly 60,000 in 2015. As of 2016, there are 43 colleges and universities in Yunnan have established 62 non-generic languages majors, and 24 undergraduate colleges have established 30 majors, including languages of Southeast Asian countries. In 2018, College of South Asian of Yunnan Minzu University established undergraduate majors in 7 non-universal languages: Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Sinhalese, Pashto, Bengali. Since then, universities of Yunnan have established majors that cover almost all languages in South and Southeast Asian Countries. Nearly 30 textbooks have been prepared to write or have been edited, and 25 non-generic languages courses are under construction.

### III. ANALYSIS ON THE PROBLEMS IN THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG YUNNAN PROVINCE, SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

In recent years, Yunnan has carried out international promotion of Chinese language, has built a number of Confucius Institutes, developed education for foreign students in China, encouraged public and private study abroad, and also has carried out exchanges between school-level students, teachers, and Sino-foreign cooperation, and explored overseas cooperation in Southeast Asian countries. Schools and other institutions have established close exchanges and cooperation with the governments, the departments of education and schools of all levels in Southeast Asia. However, in the process of cooperation and exchanges of higher education with

Southeast Asian countries, there are also many problems and difficulties.

#### A. Construction of Platform

1) *The level of platform is not high enough:* In recent years, although the educational exchanges between Yunnan and South-East Asian countries have become more frequent, the content of cooperation is too specific, the level of cooperation is not high enough, and the randomness of cooperation is large, which is difficult to have a greater impact. Although several cooperation mechanisms have been established at present, most of them are short-lived, or they have not promoted substantive cooperation projects, and have failed to achieve normalization of cooperation mechanisms.

2) *The platform of communication is relatively narrow:* Among South and Southeast Asian Countries, the current cooperation and exchanges with Yunnan on higher education are most in Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, and there are relatively few cooperation and exchanges with other Southeast Asian and South Asian countries. The government of Yunnan has never signed a cooperation framework agreement with South Asian Southeast Asian countries in the field of higher education. It is limited to the cooperation organized spontaneously by universities, and the platform of cooperation established by the government is relatively limited.

#### B. Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages

1) *The ability to dispatch Chinese teachers is limited:* The scale of development of overseas Confucius Institutes is subject to the ability to dispatch Chinese teachers. At present, Yunnan's colleges and universities have organized 4 Confucius Institutes and 3 Confucius Classrooms in Southeast Asian countries. Because these Confucius Institutes are located in South and Southeast Asian Countries, the conditions are tough, the social situation is unstable, and these countries use English or their own language to teach, teachers in other provinces and regions in China rarely choose to teach in South Asia or Southeast Asia. The Chinese teachers required to build the Confucius Institute mainly rely on universities in Yunnan to send out. From the situation of job demand and organization declaration in recent years, the ability to dispatch Chinese language teachers and volunteers from universities in Yunnan has been difficult to meet the developing needs of overseas Confucius Institutes.

2) *The teaching system for students from Southeast Asia and Southeast Asia is immature:* In the past several years, due to the rapid growth in the demand for Chinese language learning in various countries around the world, the scale of the Confucius Institute has experienced a rapid development. With the promotion of the 'One Belt and One Road', foreign-funded colleges and universities will have greater demand for Chinese language teaching than before, and will pay more attention to improve the quality and to develop characteristics and will make higher demands in teachers' level, quality of teaching materials and teaching methods. Just like the

development of the Confucius Institutes around the world, the Confucius Institutes in South-East Asian countries are also in such situation.

#### C. Education of International Students in Yunnan Province

1) *Low level of economic development and relatively insufficient funding:* The economic development of a region is closely related to the development of education for foreign students. The more developed the economy, the more foreign exchanges and projects, and the more attractive the introduction of foreign resources and talents. Although universities in Yunnan Province have the advantage of expanding the student source market in Southeast Asia and South Asia, it's still a 'economically weak provinces'. Although the economy of Yunnan Province has achieved great development in recent years, the level is still relatively low. Therefore, the government's investment in education, the provincial scholarships for foreign students are still relatively insufficient, which restricts the development of foreign students' education.

2) *The overall level of education is low:* The proportion of academic education for foreign students from Southeast Asia and South Asia in Yunnan Province has shown an upward trend, but at present it is still at a relatively low level. Universities that are eligible to enroll and grant bachelor's degrees have become popular, while universities that are eligible to enroll and grant master's and doctoral degrees are only Yunnan University, Kunming University of Science and Technology, Yunnan University of Finance and Economics, Yunnan Normal University, Yunnan Agricultural University, Kunming Medical University and several key universities. Therefore, it is imperative to give full play to the superior educational resources of Yunnan Province and to improve the educational level of international students in Yunnan.

#### D. Cooperation in Higher Education with South and Southeast Asian Countries

1) *Not enough understanding about the status of higher education in South and Southeast Asian countries:* Domestic scholars have relatively old research results in the field of higher education in South and Southeast Asian Countries. The research results are scattered, not systematic, and the results have been less in recent years. The basic situation of higher education is much summarized, and the latest research results are insufficiently absorbed. The failure to fully grasp the characteristics of universities and the superior disciplines in South and Southeast Asian Countries has affected the introduction and export of educational resources, which has limited the development of cooperative education. In particular, the operation mechanism and procedures of higher education in South Asia are still an unfamiliar area for China.

2) *Cooperation in running schools is still in infancy:* The overseas cooperative education of colleges and universities in our province has been at the forefront of the country, 12 overseas cooperative educational institutions and three overseas cooperative education projects have been held.

Except one overseas cooperation institution and one project are approved by the Ministry of Education, other colleges and universities actively explore overseas cooperation mode according to actual conditions, in this process there are many problems to be solved. The overseas campus is not clearly defined. Colleges and universities bear high financial risks. And there is a lack of guarantee of quality for overseas cooperation.

#### *E. Training of Non-generic Languages Talents*

1) *The quality of talent training need to be further improved:* Many graduates are hard to be competent for translation work very soon. There are few high-level translators who have truly mastered the professional knowledge about conference negotiations, economic, commerce, agriculture, forestry, minerals, machinery and equipment etc.. In addition, the certificate obtained by college students in the second major is not recognized enough when applying for jobs or further education, which makes it difficult to promote the reform of teaching for non-generic languages talents, and the students' enthusiasm for learning is not high.

2) *The shortage of high-level teachers:* There are fewer teachers with high professional titles and high academic qualifications universities in Yunnan. And there are few teachers with rich teaching experience. The proportion of young teachers is high. The quality of teachers in different universities is not balanced. There are only 1or2 professional language teachers in some majors. There are few candidates with master's degree or above, and some professionals are not even employed. At the same time, the promotion of professional titles for the teachers in Southeast Asian and South Asian languages is difficult, and the structure of teacher's titles needs to be improved.

### IV. COUNTERMEASURE ON HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION AMONG YUNNAN PROVINCE, SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

#### *A. Construction of Cooperation Platform*

1) *Establishment of China-South Asia and Southeast Asia University Alliance:* University alliance is the main form of the international cooperation for higher education, and it is also a well-functioning mechanism. It is of great significance to improve the quality of scientific research and teaching for alliance members. At the South Asian and Southeast Asian University Presidents Forum organized by Yunnan University in November 2017, Yunnan University proposed to establish the China-South Asian and Southeast Asian University Alliance. It is hoped that through this alliance, the mutual understanding among China, South Asia and Southeast Asia will be enhanced, and a platform for regional higher education exchanges and cooperation will be established, cooperative research in regional priority development areas will be promoted.

2) *Increasing investment in higher education of Yunnan province and adopting preferential policies:* Compared with

other province in China, the cooperation with higher education in South-East Asian countries in Yunnan has an irreplaceable advantage. However, due to natural and historical reasons, the overall level of higher education in Yunnan is not high, and the competitiveness of participating in international cooperation is not strong, and affects to Southeast Asian and South Asian countries are not enough. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the funding for higher education in Yunnan from the national level to improve the conditions for running colleges and universities in Yunnan, and to enhance the overall strength of universities in Yunnan.

#### *B. Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages*

1) *Improving the capabilities of management and service of the Chinese international promotion base:* In line with the construction and development of Confucius Institutes abroad, it is recommended that the government of Yunnan province should rely on three national-level Chinese international promotion bases, and continue to strive for greater support on the basis of the current state financial support, and to promote the Chinese to Southeast Asia and Southeast Asia. At same time the government need to take advantages of disciplines in Yunnan's universities, strengthen the construction of provincial-level Chinese International Promotion Bases, and build a group of Chinese International Promotion Bases in primary and secondary schools to encourage the participation of some border surrounding areas in the international education and promotion of Chinese.

2) *Multi-channel training of international Chinese teachers:* The Confucius Institutes established by universities of Yunnan have achieved good results in the past few years. In the future, the focus of work should be gradually shifted to improving quality and concise features. The development of Confucius Institutes abroad must meet the needs of local Chinese language learning situation, as well as the domestic supply of resources. Yunnan's colleges and universities should strengthen the planning and guidance for the development of Confucius Institutes. They should expand ways, and flexibly adjust their working methods, within the scope permitted by the policy to maximize the resources of the school and satisfy the request of teachers in the Confucius Institute.

3) *Developing Chinese textbooks and teaching resources that suitable for the national conditions of South and Southeast Asian countries:* In the next few years, the first recommendation is to increase support for Chinese textbooks, to improve the relevance of textbooks, and enhance the practicality and interest of content. The second is to strengthen the construction of Chinese international education and teaching resources. The third is to hold the Chinese International Promotion Achievements Exhibition in Yunnan Province. Through video and monographs to show the promotion of Chinese and the development of Confucius Institutes in universities in Yunnan, and to introduce Chinese teaching experience, and finally to create a good atmosphere



in learning Chinese characters and speaking Chinese in the world.

### C. Education of International Students in Yunnan Province

1) *Increasing fund for education of international students in Yunnan*: It is recommended that the government should give full play to the advantages of universities in Yunnan, and hand over the management of national scholarship for teachers and students from South Asia and Southeast Asia to universities of Yunnan. And also recommended government of Yunnan to set up a special fund for international students, and to organize education exhibitions in Southeast Asian countries, expand the scale of scholarships for overseas students, build model bases for education of international students, and establish a youth exchange college for South Asia and Southeast Asia. The improvement of studying and living conditions of international students will enhance the attraction and competitiveness of Yunnan's universities, and can make Yunnan become the preferred destination for students from South Asian and South-East Asian countries to study and exchange in China.

2) *Encouraging China's large-scale export-oriented enterprises to participate in the education of international students*: It is recommended that the government of Yunnan province could sign an agreement with Yunnan Urban Construction Investment Group Co., Ltd., Yunnan Energy Investment Group Co., Ltd., Yunnan Construction Investment Group Co., Ltd., Yuntianhua Group Co., Ltd., Hongyun Honghe Group and other enterprises to cooperate with the scholarships for international students, and to make these scholarships in a provincial level. The International Student Scholarship Program was upgraded to a provincial level project. In this way, the international visibility of these group can be enhanced, and can encourage them to set up more scholarships and funds.

3) *Giving full play to the main role of colleges and universities in the education of international students*: There are several recommends for the universities: First of all, establish and improve the management system for international students as soon as possible; secondly, make supportive policies to enhance the "self-hematopoietic function" of international students' education, such as carrying out overseas admissions work, attracting excellent teachers, improving logistics conditions, establishing a data management information system, conducting cultural activities for foreign students, setting up school-level scholarships, etc. Thirdly improving the foreign language level of the teachers in the major disciplines; fourthly, attaching importance to the construction of the team of teachers in faculty studying.

### D. Sino-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools

1) *Initiating a survey on the development of higher education in South and Southeast Asian countries as soon as possible*: It can strengthen the investigation and study of the development of higher education in South and Southeast

Asian Countries, and set up evaluation indicators with universities in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asia according to the general school-running level, discipline's construction level, quality of personnel training, and scientific research level. And to make comparative analysis of higher education level in Yunnan in order to provide a basis for the long-term education planning and the realization of Yunnan's university development goals, and to provide a reference for cooperation among universities in Yunnan, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

2) *Encouraging universities in Yunnan province to carry out Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools with universities in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asia*: It is recommended to support the production and education integration service organization to use market cooperation and industrial division of labor to provide professional services, and to build a community of school-enterprise interests, form a stable and mutually beneficial cooperation mechanism, to promote the close connection between schools and enterprises. It is also recommended to encourage universities and vocational schools to participate in the national construction of 'One Belt and One Road' and international capacity cooperation. Encourage universities and vocational schools to introduce overseas high-level talents and high-quality educational resources, develop school-enterprise cooperation and collaborative innovation models in line with the provincial conditions.

### E. Talent Training in Non-generic Languages

1) *Strengthening government's planning and formulate supporting policies*: The colleges can adhere to scientific planning, create an institutional environment conducive to the cultivation of talents, form an environment that respects knowledge and talents, and from which talents can stand out; strengthen the cultivation of professional and technical person. Give full play to academic leaders, encourage teachers to participate in teaching research and teaching reform projects, in order to improve teachers' professional research ability and teaching skills; give policy inclinations in the promotion of non-generic languages teachers in evaluation of job title and overseas study. Through policy and financial support, young teachers in colleges and universities can be encouraged to go abroad to study for master's, doctoral degree or for short-term study visits. And these measures can improve the academic structure of non-generic languages teachers in colleges and universities in a short period of time.

2) *Increasing capital investment and reform teaching mode*: It can establish special funds, give full play to the Yunnan Provincial Local Scholarship Fund for the special projects for talent training in the western region; expand the source of funds, adhere to the combination of government funding and market operations, and absorb social capital to participate in the training of non-generic languages talents in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper puts forward some countermeasures and suggestions to strengthen higher education cooperation between Yunnan and South and Southeast Asian Countries from the aspects of cooperation platform construction, teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages, education of international students, Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools, talent training of non-generic languages. With its unique geographical and cultural advantages, Yunnan should seize the historical opportunity brought by the "the Belt and Road" initiative, recognize its own gap and face challenges, and actively integrate into the nation's international cooperation strategy of higher education and take the initiative to participate in the construction of the international cooperation mechanism of higher education between China and South and Southeast Asian Countries. In this way, Yunnan can not only lay a solid foundation for promoting higher education cooperation between China and South and Southeast Asian Countries, and further promoting the realization of the nation's surrounding strategies, but also create more favorable conditions for the upgrading of Yunnan's higher education development level and the construction of South and Southeast Asian Radiation Center.

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