

Cooperative Strategies of Higher Education between Beijing and Thailand under the Ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”

Weiyong Ou

School of Asian Studies, Beijing International Studies University, China

Jiraporn Supising*

Educational Administration Program, Graduate School, Western University, Thailand

Yongyouth Yaboonthong

Educational Administration Program, Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Choocheep Puthaprasert

Educational Administration Program, Graduate School, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, Thailand

Winyoo Santipapwiwatana

Deputy Regional Education Officer, Regional Education 8, Chonburi, Thailand

Ning Qiu

Former First Secretary of the Education Section of the Chinese Embassy in Thailand, China

E-mail: ouweiyong@hotmail.com, supising.jiraporn@gmail.com*, yongyouth.y@cmu.ac.th, choocheep.phu@cmru.ac.th, you2550@gmail.com and qnqq2013@qq.com

*Corresponding author

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Abstract

Beijing was usually greatly respected in Thailand and ensured the alliance of both countries. Thailand is one of the biggest promoters of Chinese language education in Southeast Asia. The objectives of this quality research were 1) to investigate the current situations and problems for the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”; 2) to analyze factors supporting the success of the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”; and 3) to develop the cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”. The instruments used in this research were a semi-structured interview form, agenda questions for focus group discussion, and analysis issues for connoisseurship. Data were analyzed by content analysis, summarizing, and descriptive analysis. The results of the research revealed as follows: 1) The current situations and problems for the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” consisted of nine issues as follows: 1.1) policy and government support; 1.2) cultural exchange and understanding; 1.3) academic collaboration and research; 1.4) student mobility and exchange programs; 1.5) quality assurance; 1.6) academic communication; 1.7) academic communication, and 1.8) sustainability of educational partnerships. 2) The factors supporting the success of the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” consisted of four important agendas. 3) The cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” consisted of one vision, five missions, one goal, and five strategies with twenty-two measures.

Keywords: Cooperative strategies, Higher education, Belt and road initiative

Introduction

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping announced it in 2013, the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), Lim (2022) from Asia Research Institute, has drawn a lot of attention from academics who have studied it from a variety of angles, including economics and geopolitics, formerly known as One Belt, One Road, this expansive development initiative consists of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and the Silk Road Economic Belt. Through extensive plans for land and maritime infrastructure development, the goal of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) seeks to advance “peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutual benefit” among nations in several regions, including Thailand.

According to Times Higher Education (2024), with more than 21 million residents in Beijing in 2022, and as the nation's capital, Beijing's contemporary structures, like the Capital Museum, China World Trade Headquarters, and China Media Group Headquarters, are equally striking. In addition, there are 91 universities in the city, giving potential students a wide range of options. It is currently more advantageous than ever to think about studying in Beijing because the Chinese government has made significant investments in the higher education industry to attract foreign students.

The comparison to the ASEM Education Secretariat (2023), Thailand is home to 27 universities. One of the most important choices is where to pursue a degree in Thailand. There are 82 public universities, 72 private universities and colleges, and one community college under the Ministry of Education's jurisdiction. Other specialized institutions that are overseen by other ministries and agencies also exist.

The People's Government of Beijing Municipality (2023) reported on September 29, 2017, the ‘Beijing Master Plan (2016-2035)’ was publicly released, which clearly stated that all work in Beijing must adhere to the city's strategic positioning as the national political center, cultural center, international exchange center, and scientific and technological innovation center, and fulfill its basic duties of serving the work of the central party, government, and military leadership organs, serving the country's international exchanges, serving the development of science and technology and education, and improving the lives of the people.

Beijing is positioned as the national political, cultural, and international exchange center, and scientific and technical innovation centers in terms of urban strategy. This strategic positioning not only reflects Beijing's core role in national development but also points out the direction and focus of Beijing's future development. Specifically, Beijing is an important window for international exchanges. It has hosted many international conferences and activities and has extensive political, economic, cultural, and other exchanges with countries around the world. Furthermore, Beijing plays an important role in scientific and technological innovation. It has many scientific research institutions and high-tech enterprises and is committed to original research and scientific and technological innovation to promote national scientific and technological progress and social development.

As the findings of Chen (2019, p.146), illustrated on Chinese education in Thailand in the context of “one belt and one road,” it was found that some problems exist in Chinese education in Thailand. Currently, Chinese education in Thailand was developing at a good momentum. Most of the Chinese teachers engaged in Chinese language education in Thailand were volunteer teachers dispatched by Hanban and teachers of inter-university cooperation. Generally speaking, such teachers teach for 1-2 years. If the teacher turnover was too high, the teaching process would be inconsistent, thus affecting the teaching effect. Students receiving Chinese education in Thailand hope that learning Chinese well will help their future career development. However, based on the analysis of the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) and the Maritime Silk Road Confucius Institute, Sakulphetaram & Samerchure (2021, p. 11-12) indicated that two institutions supported the teaching of Chinese language and culture. It was the dissemination of culture that was passed along through social activities, Ideas, and cultures to be able to more easily achieve the goals of the One Belt One Road policy.

As a research team, the higher education cooperation between Beijing and Thailand is driven by various factors, including economic and strategic interests, cultural exchange, and educational quality improvement. It aligns with the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, promoting cultural heritage and strengthening diplomatic ties. It also enhances educational quality through joint research projects, faculty exchanges, and student mobility programs. It also expands opportunities for students, addresses global challenges, and strengthens regional integration. This strategic importance of higher education cooperation

is a priority for governments and educational institutions. However, challenges include cultural and linguistic differences, educational system variations, administrative and regulatory issues, financial and resource allocation disparities, quality assurance and standards, and geopolitical factors. Successful collaboration requires strategic planning, mutual understanding, and ongoing dialogue.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the current situations and problems for the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”.
2. To analyze factors supporting the success of the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”.
3. To develop the cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”.

Methodology

The research process was divided into three phases as follows:

Phase 1: Investigate the current situations and problems for the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Key informants selected by purposive sampling were two educators related to educational policies and two stakeholders in educational policies, two officials from the Ministry of Education, and eight lecturers who conduct research on educational policies, both from Thailand and Peijing, for a total of fourteen informants. The instrument used was a semi-structured interview form. Data were analyzed by classifying them into issues.

Phase 2: Analyze the factors supporting the success of the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Key informants consisted of nine experts who were educators, supervisors, provincial educational officers, and stakeholders both from Thailand and Peijing. The instrument used was a record form participating in focus group discussions via Ding Talk through a translator. The research team defined guidelines to ensure that the discussions were within the framework and to obtain the information that we needed. It was divided into four important agendas: 1) encourage participants to think about policy, institutional commitment, cultural understanding, and academic quality; 2) identify the most significant barriers and solutions; 3) focus on actionable steps that can be implemented by universities and governments; and 4) prioritize the recommendations based on their potential impact and feasibility. The data were analyzed by descriptive analysis.

Phase 3: Develop the cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Key informants of eleven experts were selected by purposive sampling who were school administrators, educational administrators who graduated doctoral degree, and faculty lecturers who have conducted research strategies. The instrument used was a draft of strategies. The data were analyzed by content summarizing.

The research framework is shown in Figure 1.

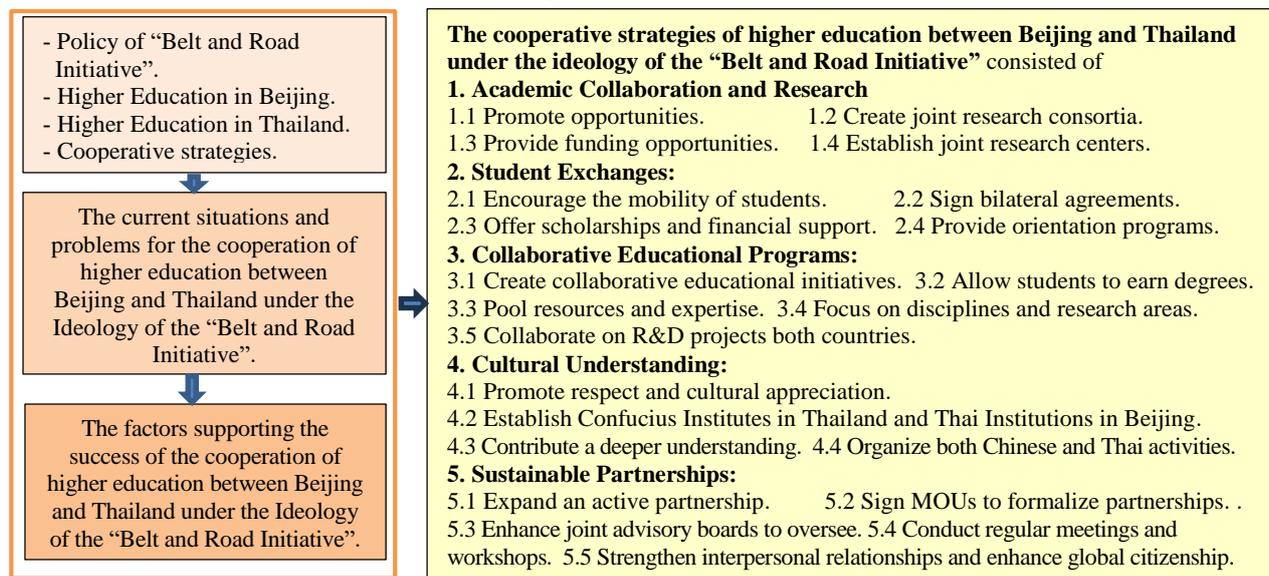


Figure 1 Research framework (Source : Researcher, 2025)

Results

Phase 1: Results of investigation of the current situations and problems for the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” consisting of nine important components as follows: 1) policy and government support; 2) cultural exchange and understanding; 3) academic collaboration and research; 4) student mobility and exchange programs; 5) quality assurance; 6) academic communication; 7) academic communication, and 8) sustainability of educational partnerships. The details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The current situations and problems for the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”.

The current situations	Problems
1. Policy and Government Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both Beijing and Thailand have expressed strong governmental support for educational collaboration under the BRI. - The Chinese government actively promotes educational exchange as a part of its soft power strategy, and Thailand views cooperation with Beijing as a means to enhance its educational standards and global competitiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Despite this alignment, there are challenges in policy implementation. Differences in bureaucratic processes and legal frameworks can lead to delays and miscommunication. - Additionally, the lack of a unified strategy for educational cooperation at the ASEAN level, including in Thailand, can hinder the full potential of BRI projects.
2. Cultural Exchange and Understanding	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural exchange programs, including language courses and student exchanges, have been established to foster mutual understanding. - Chinese language learning has seen increased popularity in Thailand, and Thai cultural studies are gaining attention in Beijing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language barriers and cultural differences still pose significant challenges. While there are initiatives to address these, the depth of mutual understanding remains limited, often leading to superficial engagements rather than deep, meaningful exchanges. - There is also a perception that Chinese culture has a stronger presence in the exchange program, which could potentially cause some feelings of imbalance.
3. Academic Collaboration and Research	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint research initiatives and academic partnerships are in place, focusing on areas such as engineering, technology, and sustainable development. - Universities from both countries have signed MoU, and collaborative research projects are on the rise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic collaboration faces challenges in funding, research priorities, and intellectual property rights. There is also a disparity in research infrastructure and resources, with Chinese institutions generally being more well-equipped. - This can create an imbalance in contributions to joint projects, leading to tensions and a lack of true partnership.
4. Student Mobility and Exchange Programs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a growing number of student exchanges, with Thai students studying in Beijing and vice versa. - Scholarships from the Chinese government under the BRI initiative have increased the accessibility of Chinese education for Thai students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The quality of the student experience can vary, with issues such as language difficulties, adaptation to different educational systems, and support services for international students. - Additionally, the mobility and the recovery have been slow, affecting the continuity and growth of these programs.
5. Technological Integration and Digital Education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborative efforts in digital education, such as online learning platforms and virtual exchange programs, have been initiated, especially in response to the pandemic. - These efforts aim to integrate technological advancements from both countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technological disparities exist, with Beijing being more advanced in digital infrastructure. - Thailand faces challenges in adopting new technologies at the same pace, leading to difficulties in fully participating in these digital initiatives. Moreover, concerns about data privacy and cybersecurity may arise due to differences in regulatory standards.
6. Quality Assurance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both Beijing and Thailand are working towards mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications. - Collaborative efforts have been made to align quality assurance frameworks to facilitate academic mobility and recognition of academic credentials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are significant differences in the standards and processes of quality assurance between the two countries. - Thailand’s higher education system may have concerns about the rigor and compatibility of Chinese accreditation standards. - This disparity can lead to challenges in the mutual recognition of degrees, potentially limiting the effectiveness of student exchanges and joint programs.
7. Academic Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efforts have been made to enhance language proficiency among students and faculty, with Mandarin becoming increasingly popular in Thailand, and English serving as a common medium of instruction in many joint programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Despite these efforts, language proficiency remains a barrier to deeper academic collaboration. - The varying levels of English and Mandarin proficiency among students and faculty can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations of academic content, and challenges in collaborative research. - This can hinder the overall quality and depth of academic exchanges.

Table 1: The current situations and problems for the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”. (Continue)

The current situations	Problems
8. Sustainability of Educational Partnerships	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both governments are committed to sustaining educational partnerships over the long term, with strategic plans and agreements in place to guide future collaboration. - Both countries have shown commitment to long-term educational cooperation, with strategies aligned with the broader BRI goals. - There are ongoing discussions to expand and sustain these efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The sustainability of these partnerships is challenged by external factors such as geopolitical tensions, economic fluctuations, and shifts in domestic priorities. - Additionally, the long-term success of these partnerships depends on their ability to adapt to changing educational needs and global trends, which requires ongoing dialogue and flexibility from both sides. - The long-term sustainability of these collaborations can be threatened by shifting political landscapes, economic uncertainties, and changing priorities within both countries. - Additionally, there is a need for a more clearly defined and mutually agreed-upon strategic vision to ensure that the cooperation remains beneficial for both sides in the long run.

Phase 2: Results of analyzing the factors supporting the success of the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”. The data were analyzed by content summarizing as follows:

1. Encourage participants to think about policy, institutional commitment, cultural understanding, and academic quality is classified as follows:

1.1 Policy

- The success of cooperation is highly dependent on well-defined bilateral agreements between the governments of Beijing and Thailand.

- These agreements should outline mutual goals, frameworks for collaboration, and mechanisms for resolving disputes.

- Strong support from both governments, including funding, scholarships, and policy incentives, is crucial.

- This support ensures that the cooperation is sustained and aligned with broader national strategies, such as Thailand’s policy and Beijing’s BRI objectives.

- Effective cooperation requires the harmonization of legal and regulatory frameworks to facilitate the mobility of students, faculty, and academic programs.

- Simplified visa processes, recognition of qualifications, and streamlined bureaucratic procedures are essential.

1.2 Institutional Commitment

- The commitment of leading universities and research institutions in both countries is vital.

- Successful cooperation is often driven by strong institutional partnerships that go beyond formal agreements to include shared research agendas, joint degree programs, and collaborative projects.

- University leaders who prioritize international collaboration and are willing to invest resources in developing long-term relationships are more likely to see successful outcomes.

- Long-term success is supported by sustainable funding models that involve both government and private sector investments. Institutions need to have clear financial plans that include provisions for maintaining programs, infrastructure, and faculty development.

1.3 Cultural Understanding

- Programs that promote cultural exchange, such as language courses, student exchanges, and faculty visits, foster mutual understanding and help bridge cultural differences.

- These programs are crucial for building trust and reducing cultural barriers that may hinder collaboration.

- Providing cross-cultural training for students, faculty, and administrative staff can enhance the effectiveness of cooperation by preparing individuals to navigate cultural differences in educational settings.

- Success is also supported by a commitment to mutual respect and the willingness to adapt educational practices to suit the cultural contexts of both countries. This involves integrating diverse perspectives into curricula and fostering an environment of inclusivity.

- Engaging local communities and stakeholders in both countries can enhance the relevance and acceptance of cooperative initiatives. This includes involving local industries, alumni networks, and civil society organizations in educational projects.

1.4 Academic Quality

- The collaboration's success is underpinned by a commitment to maintaining high academic standards.

- This includes ensuring that joint programs and research initiatives meet international quality benchmarks and are recognized globally.

- Providing opportunities for faculty development, including joint training programs, workshops, and research fellowships, supports the continuous improvement of academic quality.

- It also ensures that faculty members are well-equipped to contribute to and benefit from the partnership.

These factors collectively support the success of higher education cooperation between Beijing and Thailand under the BRI. By addressing these areas, both countries can build a robust and mutually beneficial partnership that contributes to their respective educational and developmental goals.

2. Identify the most significant barriers and guidelines for solutions classified and shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of the most significant barriers and solutions.

Barriers	Guidelines for Solutions
2.1 Differences in educational policies, legal frameworks, and regulatory standards can create obstacles to collaboration. This includes issues like the recognition of qualifications, visa regulations, and intellectual property rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish regular policy dialogues between Chinese and Thai education ministries to align regulations and create joint frameworks for cooperation. - Develop mutual recognition agreements for academic qualifications, ensuring that degrees and certifications are recognized in both countries. - Implement streamlined visa and work permit processes for students, faculty, and researchers involved in joint programs. - Establish regular policy dialogues between Chinese and Thai education ministries to align regulations and create joint frameworks for cooperation. - Develop mutual recognition agreements for academic qualifications, ensuring that degrees and certifications are recognized in both countries. - Implement streamlined visa and work permit processes for students, faculty, and researchers involved in joint programs.
2.2 Language differences between Beijing and Thai students, faculty, and administrators can hinder effective communication, collaboration, and understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer language training programs in both Mandarin and Thai for students and faculty, focusing on improving communication skills and cultural understanding. - Develop bilingual education initiatives and resources, such as joint publications and course materials, to support academic collaboration. - Encourage the use of English as a common medium of instruction and communication in joint programs to facilitate better understanding and collaboration.
2.3 Cultural differences between Beijing and Thailand can lead to misunderstandings, particularly in areas such as academic practices, social norms, and work ethics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize cross-cultural workshops and training sessions for students, faculty, and staff to enhance their understanding of each other's cultures and reduce the potential for misunderstandings. - Expand cultural exchange programs that allow participants to experience each other's cultures firsthand, fostering mutual respect and understanding. - Develop curricula that reflect and respect the cultural contexts of both countries, incorporating diverse perspectives into the learning experience.
2.4 Differences in academic standards, quality assurance processes, and educational philosophies can lead to challenges in maintaining the quality of joint programs and research initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop joint quality assurance frameworks that align academic standards and ensure the credibility and recognition of degrees and research outputs. - Establish peer review mechanisms involving faculty from both countries to assess and enhance the quality of joint academic programs and research projects. - Collaboratively develop curricula that meet international standards and are tailored to the needs and contexts of both Chinese and Thai institutions.
2.5 Ensuring the long-term sustainability of educational partnerships can be challenging, particularly in the face of changing political, economic, and social conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop long-term strategic plans that outline clear goals, milestones, and evaluation mechanisms for the cooperation, ensuring that it remains relevant and adaptable to changing circumstances. - Implement continuous monitoring and evaluation processes to assess the progress and impact of joint initiatives, making adjustments as needed to ensure sustainability. - Encourage adaptive partnerships that can evolve, incorporating new technologies, research areas, and educational trends to remain at the forefront of global education.

By addressing these challenges and implementing the proposed solutions, the cooperation of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the BRI can be strengthened, leading to more successful and sustainable partnerships that benefit both countries.

3. Focus on actionable steps that can be implemented by universities and governments is classified as follows:

3.1 Actionable Steps for Governments

- Create bilateral working groups comprising representatives from the ministries of education, higher education institutions, and regulatory bodies to align policies, streamline visa processes, and facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications.

- Formulate a comprehensive education agreement between Beijing and Thailand, outlining specific goals, responsibilities, and timelines for collaboration in higher education under the BRI framework.

- Offer financial incentives, tax breaks, and grants to institutions that actively participate in BRI-related academic collaborations, joint research projects, and student exchange programs.

- Allocate dedicated funding for joint research initiatives, academic exchanges, and infrastructure projects between Beijing and Thai universities. This could include creating a special fund for BRI-related educational projects.

- Encourage public-private partnerships that involve universities, industry stakeholders, and government agencies in developing educational programs aligned with BRI goals.

- Offer competitive research grants for collaborative projects that align with BRI objectives, encouraging innovation and high-quality research outcomes.

- Work with partner institutions to co-develop curricula that meet international standards and address the educational needs of both Beijing and Thai students.

3.2 Actionable Steps for Universities

- Review and align university policies with national BRI objectives, ensuring that institutional strategies support cross-border educational initiatives.

- Collaborate with other universities and educational associations to advocate for supportive policies and regulations that facilitate international partnerships.

- Set up joint research centers focused on key areas of mutual interest, such as sustainable development, engineering, technology, and public health. These centers can serve as hubs for collaborative research and innovation.

- Create dual-degree programs that allow students to study in both countries, earning degrees recognized by both Beijing and Thai universities. This enhances academic mobility and strengthens institutional ties.

- Implement faculty exchange programs that allow professors and researchers to work and teach at partner institutions. This not only enhances academic collaboration but also builds faculty capacity and cross-cultural understanding.

4. Prioritize the recommendations based on their potential impact and feasibility is arranged as follows:

4.1 Dual-degree programs have a significant impact by fostering academic mobility, enhancing the global competitiveness of graduates, and strengthening ties between institutions. The feasibility is high because many universities already have the frameworks for such programs and can build on existing partnerships.

4.2 Joint research centers can drive innovation, produce high-quality research, and address global challenges, aligning well with BRI objectives. The feasibility is high given existing research collaborations and the availability of funding from both governments and private sectors.

4.3 Offering financial incentives and grants can accelerate collaboration and attract more institutions to participate in BRI-related projects. Governments can readily implement this through policy adjustments, making it feasible with appropriate political will.

4.4 A comprehensive education agreement would align both countries' educational strategies under the BRI, providing a clear framework for collaboration. While impactful, it requires significant diplomatic effort and alignment of interests, making it moderately feasible.

4.5 Jointly developed curricula that meet international standards can significantly enhance the quality and relevance of education in both countries.

4.6 Language programs can significantly reduce communication barriers and improve collaboration. These are relatively easy to implement, with existing resources and frameworks in both countries, making them highly feasible.

4.7 Long-term strategic planning ensures the sustainability of educational partnerships and aligns them with broader BRI goals. However, the feasibility depends on the institutions' commitment to long-term collaboration and adaptability to changing circumstances.

Phase 3: Results of developing the cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” consisted of one vision, five missions, one goal, and five strategies with twenty-two measures as follows:

3.1 Vision: The “Belt and Road Initiative” aims to establish a comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnership by utilizing research collaboration, cultural understanding, and educational exchange to promote regional development and global connectivity.

3.2 Mission:

3.2.1 To create opportunities for joint research projects and academic partnerships to improve educational quality.

3.2.2 To promote cross-cultural experiences and academic enrichment.

3.2.3 To bridge cultural gaps and foster mutual understanding.

3.2.4 To establish joint degree programs and collaborative educational initiatives.

3.2.5 To build and sustain strong, long-term partnerships between universities and research institutions.

3.3 Goal: The “Belt and Road Initiative” strengthens the partnership between the two countries, enhances educational outcomes, and contributes to mutual development and global progress.

3.4 Strategies/Measures: Five strategies consisting of twenty-two measures were developed. The details are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of developing the cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the Ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”

Strategies	Measures
1. Academic Collaboration and Research: Develop collaborative research projects that address common challenges and leverage the strengths of institutions in both Beijing and Thailand.	1.1 Promote opportunities for joint research projects and academic partnerships to improve educational quality and innovation. 1.2 Create joint research consortia involving universities and research institutions from both countries to tackle shared issues. 1.3 Provide funding opportunities and grants for joint research projects to support collaborative efforts. 1.4 Establish joint research centers focused on areas of mutual interest, such as technology, sustainable development, and social sciences.
2. Student Exchanges: Increase the number and diversity of exchange programs to facilitate international academic experiences.	2.1 Encourage the mobility of students and faculty to promote cross-cultural experiences and academic enrichment. 2.2 Sign bilateral agreements to facilitate student and faculty exchanges, including short-term and long-term programs. 2.3 Offer scholarships and financial support to students and faculty participating in exchange programs. 2.4 Provide orientation programs and support services to help exchange participants acclimate to their new academic and cultural environments.
3. Collaborative Educational Programs: Establish and promote joint degrees that provide dual qualifications and broaden educational opportunities.	3.1 Create collaborative educational initiatives to provide students with comprehensive qualifications recognized in both countries. 3.2 Allow students to earn degrees recognized by both countries. 3.3 Pool resources and expertise, both countries aim to advance their educational institutions and produce high-quality graduates. 3.4 Focus on disciplines and research areas that directly impact educational quality development. 3.5 Collaborate on R&D projects, and universities in Beijing and Thailand that benefit both countries and contribute to global progress.
4. Cultural Understanding: Foster deeper cultural understanding and appreciation between Beijing and Thailand.	4.1 Promote mutual respect and cultural appreciation through educational programs. 4.2 Establish Confucius Institutes in Thailand and Thai Institutions in Beijing to promote both Thai and Chinese languages and cultures. 4.3 Contribute a deeper understanding among Chinese and Thai students and people. 4.4 Organize both Chinese and Thai activities and invite all educational agencies to join.
5. Sustainable Partnerships: Build and maintain strong, long-term partnerships between universities and research institutions.	5.1 Expand an active partnership with relevant sectors. 5.2 Sign MOU to formalize partnerships and outline areas of collaboration. 5.3 Enhance joint advisory boards to oversee and guide the implementation of collaborative initiatives. 5.4 Conduct regular meetings and workshops to review progress and address any challenges. 5.5 Strengthen interpersonal relationships and enhance global citizenship.

Discussions

The research team summarized and selected the important issues for discussion as follows:

In terms of the current situation, Beijing and Thailand have shown strong support for educational collaboration under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, with the Chinese government promoting exchange as part of its soft power strategy. Cultural exchange programs have been established to foster mutual understanding, with Chinese language learning becoming more popular in Thailand. Joint research initiatives and academic partnerships are in place, focusing on engineering, technology, and sustainable development. Student mobility and exchange programs have grown, with Chinese government scholarships increasing accessibility for Thai students. Technological integration and digital education have been initiated, with both countries committed to long-term sustainability. Quality assurance efforts are also being made to facilitate academic mobility.

Fang (2018, p.229) analyzed the challenges faced by foreign students in China's education, highlighting regional differences, inadequate training, poor quality, and weak management systems under the Belt and Road Initiative. In response, strategies were proposed to enhance educational quality, structural improvements, management services, and cultural sensitivity to better cater to international students. Additionally, Nukitrangsan (2024, p.13-14) noted Thailand's strategic response to China's educational influence, exemplified by collaborations such as the establishment of Confucius Institutes and classrooms, partnerships with the Chinese Ministry of Education, and the adoption of Chinese language textbooks. These efforts have bolstered interest among Thai youth and facilitated recognition of Chinese language proficiency tests.

In terms of the problems, the bilateral education cooperation (BRI) between China and Thailand faces several challenges, including policy and government support, cultural exchange, academic collaboration, student mobility, technological integration, long-term sustainability, quality assurance, academic communication, and the sustainability of educational partnerships. Despite policy alignment, challenges in policy implementation, cultural exchange, and academic collaboration persist, leading to delays and miscommunication. Academic collaboration faces funding, research priorities, and intellectual property rights issues, while student mobility and recovery are affected by language difficulties and slow recovery. Technological integration and digital education also face challenges, with Beijing being more advanced in digital infrastructure and Thailand struggling to adopt new technologies. The long-term sustainability of these partnerships is threatened by shifting political landscapes, economic uncertainties, and changing priorities.

Yue et al. (2022, p.105) reviewed higher education under the Belt and Road Initiative and emphasized the need for tailored measures to local conditions, addressing cooperation imbalances, promoting cultural engagement, and providing resources to universities in central and western regions. Their findings highlighted the importance of raising academic and cultural voices, fostering foreign student development, and building world-class universities with an inclusive and supportive research environment. Similarly, Yodpet (2023, p.292) stressed the role of virtual joint committees and foreign policy initiatives in promoting flexible cooperation and mutual accountability. However, to navigate challenges posed by the pandemic and cultivate an open knowledge culture, stronger collaboration and engagement are essential. Higher education institutions must reassess their roles and strategies both before and after the pandemic to effectively plan for future cooperation.

In terms of factors supporting the success of higher education cooperation between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has led to significant higher education cooperation between Beijing and Thailand. This success relied on well-defined bilateral agreements, strong government support, harmonization of legal and regulatory frameworks, and streamlined bureaucratic procedures. Institutional commitment is crucial, with leading universities investing resources in long-term relationships. To address barriers, regular policy dialogues, mutual recognition agreements, streamlined visa and work permit processes, bilingual education initiatives, and cross-cultural workshops are essential. To ensure long-term sustainability, governments and universities should create bilateral working groups, form comprehensive education agreements, offer financial incentives, allocate funding, and collaborate with other institutions.

Xinhua Silk Road Information Service (2020) outlined the education action plan for the Belt and Road Initiative, emphasizing strengthened cooperation, deeper mutual understanding, and increased educational exchanges among participating countries. The plan aimed to foster people-to-people ties, develop skilled talent for policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, and financial integration, ultimately contributing to regional educational advancement and a shared future. Similarly, Guo (2019, p.86) highlighted China's commitment to educational development through the 13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education, released in January 2017. This policy emphasized tailoring educational strategies to each country's unique context while advancing an integrated approach to educational opening-up. Key initiatives included expanding the scope and quality of international education, actively engaging in global education governance, and fostering mutually beneficial cooperation through diverse partnerships.

In terms of the cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, the “Belt and Road Initiative” aims to establish a comprehensive partnership between Beijing and Thailand through research collaboration, cultural understanding, and educational exchange. The mission is to improve educational quality, promote cross-cultural experiences, bridge cultural gaps, establish joint degree programs, and build long-term partnerships between universities and research institutions. Five strategies were developed to achieve this goal in terms of academic collaboration and research, student exchanges, collaborative educational programs, cultural understanding, sustainable partnerships, and cultural understanding. Academic collaboration involves developing collaborative research projects, creating joint research consortia, providing funding, and establishing joint research centers, as well as sustainable partnerships involve expanding active partnerships with relevant sectors, signing MOUs, enhancing joint advisory boards, conducting regular meetings, and strengthening interpersonal relationships to enhance global citizenship.

Zheng & Katasila (2021, p.245) discussed Thailand's response to China's Belt and Road Initiative, emphasizing the mutual benefits and strengthened ties between the two nations. The policy presents opportunities for joint development in the education sector and fosters collaboration between public and private sectors to expand emerging markets, particularly within ASEAN, aligning with China's strategic goals and benefiting both countries. Similarly, Krukowska (2016, p.163-164) analyzed the broader implications of the Belt and Road Initiative on the global order, suggesting that it could position China as the dominant regional power by leveraging its economic influence. However, the initiative's success depends on maintaining a peaceful development policy, eliminating harmful practices, and ensuring mutual profitability for partner nations. If executed effectively, this strategy could reshape global economic dynamics, with Beijing at the center of a new Asian economic core.

Similarly, Lertprakaisang (2017, p. 7) highlighted Thailand's strategic approach to strengthening ties with Laos, emphasizing the need for cultural adaptation and deeper cooperation due to their shared language and traditions. Strengthening this relationship was crucial for fostering both friendship and business alliances. Similarly, Yang (2023, p.30) discussed the Belt and Road Initiative as a key driver of China's higher education internationalization, advocating for quality-oriented policies, institutional reforms, and increased external participation in governance to enhance regional education collaboration. Expanding on this, Peters et al. (2021, p.16-17) stressed the importance of adapting China's international development strategy to the modern era by promoting cultural understanding, diversity, and shared benefits. To ensure sustainable growth, China must move beyond power politics and foster global cooperation through inclusive education initiatives aligned with the principles of globalization and mutual development.

Conclusion and suggestions

Conclusion : The research on cooperative strategies in higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” has significant implications for the development of education. It can be applied to various aspects, including curriculum development, the establishment of joint degree programs, the enhancement of academic exchange initiatives, and the promotion of language and cultural programs. Additionally, the research supports the construction of educational infrastructure and the integration of cooperative strategies into teacher training programs, ensuring long-term sustainability. Engaging the private sector and monitoring the effectiveness of these educational cooperation strategies further contribute to their success. Ultimately, this research not only

advances academic knowledge but also fosters positive societal and community impacts. By bridging gaps in education, culture, and policy, it strengthens bilateral relations and paves the way for a more interconnected and prosperous future for both nations.

Suggestions from this research.

1. The research on the cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” can be applied to education for developing curricula that reflect cooperative strategies, such as courses on international relations, global trade, and cross-cultural communication.

2. An evaluation of the educational policies and frameworks established under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” that facilitates cooperation between Beijing and Thailand can analyze how these policies impact higher education collaborations.

3. The research can be used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of educational cooperation strategies, ensuring long-term success by applying these strategies that significantly impact the development of educational programs, policies, and collaborations aligned with the goals of the Belt and Road Initiative.

4. The research findings are to design or enhance curricula that reflect the cooperative strategies between Beijing and Thailand, which can involve developing courses on international relations and cross-cultural communication with a focus on the BRI and its implications for education.

Suggestions for Further Research.

1. There should be an investigation of the long-term impact of BRI-driven educational cooperation on students’ academic and professional development in both countries.

2. There should be case studies of successful cooperative programs or initiatives between universities in Beijing and Thailand.

3. There should be a comprehensive analysis of cooperative strategies in higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the BRI for policymakers, educators, and researchers involved in international collaborations.

New knowledge and the effects on society and communities

The research on cooperative strategies of higher education between Beijing and Thailand under the ideology of the “Belt and Road Initiative” has provided valuable insights into the development of intercultural educational models, strategic arrangement, innovation in cross-border education, and higher education impacts. The study identifies key strategies for improving educational policies and curricula, such as harmonizing academic standards, developing joint degree programs, and creating standardized quality assurance mechanisms. It also highlights innovative approaches to cross-border education, such as digital platforms for virtual exchanges and joint research initiatives. The research has enhanced educational opportunities, strengthened bilateral relations, promoted community development, promoted regional stability, and emphasized the importance of cultural preservation and exchange. The research supports the understanding of the economic and social impacts of educational cooperation under the “Belt and Road Initiative” and its potential to drive educational growth together.

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