



A Research on the Quality of Inner Mongolia Ethnic Education in the Context of BRI

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Abstract: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is China's grand strategy to strengthen regional collaboration and promote the prosperity of the world economy. The development of ethnic education provides an opportunity for countries along the Belt and Road to enhance their economic and political trust and to strengthen the educational growth of ethnic minorities. With the rapid economic and social development of Inner Mongolia, the existing ethnic education system is facing challenges and is unable to meet the demand for talents for the rapid economic and social development along the Belt and Road strategy. From the perspective of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Quality Management Theory of Ethnic Higher Education, this study concludes that the level of development of ethnic higher education is one of the important indicators of the overall development of ethnic regions. The study proposes the following conclusions: The institutions of higher education for ethnic minorities in Inner Mongolia should establish the concept of quality in higher education while taking into account the situation of the region and ethnic groups. The obstacles such as insufficient investment in teaching and learning, loss of human resources and old-fashioned teaching philosophy to achieve the high-quality development of ethnic higher education should be properly recognized. Inner Mongolia Ethnic Education in the Context of BRI is going to contribute to the long-term development and prosperity of the country and ethnic regions.

Keywords: Ethnic education, Ethnic higher education, BRI, quality control

Introduction

As a national strategy initiated by China and promoted at a high level, the The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has far-reaching strategic significance for the modernisation of China and the revival of the Chinese nation. The modernisation of ethnic education has been given a new significance after the BRI strategy was proposed by Chinese government. It will become an important pivot point for Inner Mongolia to build an all-round open education and cultural industry system, to integrate deeply into the world education system, and to actively explore a new model of cultural and educational modernisation. At the same time, the BRI strategy has opened up channels for cultural integration and innovation in various countries. It is through a comprehensive and accurate understanding of traditional cultural resources and contemporary cultural innovations that Chinese culture can make a unique contribution to human civilisation. Inner Mongolia is a border minority region in China and has an important geographical role in the BRI strategy (Figure 1). However, the level of higher education in the ethnic regions of Inner Mongolia is not yet sufficient to meet the demand for high-level talents and high-quality cultural products. The BRI strategy has promoted the spread of Chinese ethnic culture and provided an important opportunity for the development of ethnic education in Inner Mongolia. The Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party



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of China adopted the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on *Several Major Issues in Building a Harmonious Socialist Society*, which states that the priority of education and the efforts to make education equitable^[1]. In the context of the BRI, Inner Mongolia is currently at a disadvantage in terms of ethnic education, which is influenced by political, economic and cultural factors in ethnic areas on the one hand, and ethnic policies, education policies and specific ethnic education policies on the other. This is a serious constraint on the equity of education in Inner Mongolia.

Figure 1, Location of Inner Mongolia (source: research gate)

II. Literature Review

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an idea in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A theory of Human Motivation" in *Psychological Review*^[2]. His theories parallel many other theories of human developmental psychology, some of which focus on describing the stages of growth in humans. He then created a classification system which reflected the universal needs of society as its base before proceeding to more acquired emotions^[3]. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the structure of the hierarchy from the bottom of to top are: physiological (food and clothing), safety (job security), love and belonging needs (friendship), esteem, and self-actualization (Figure 2). At the very beginning stage, Maslow held that individuals must satisfy lower level deficit needs before meeting higher level growth needs^[4]. However, he later clarified that satisfaction of a needs is not an "all-or-none" phenomenon, admitting that his earlier statements may have given "the false impression that a need must be satisfied 100 percent before the next need emerges"^[5]. After decades of rapid development, China has become the world's second largest economy and is becoming increasingly influential in the world. The overall development of the nation should be accompanied by a high quality of spiritual civilisation in order to meet the needs the public. The quality of education is a source of spiritual wealth and a technical guarantee for the quality of social development. Especially in the ethnic regions like Inner Mongolia, ethnic higher education is to meet the needs of high quality national economic and social development.



Figure 2, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Source: The Science of Small Wins)

Theories of Quality Management in Ethnic Higher Education

Quality management refers to the coordinated activity of directing or controlling the quality aspects of things^[6]. In terms of Industrial Relations & HR Terms, Collins English Dictionary gives the following definition: an approach to the management of an organization that integrates the needs of customers with a deep understanding of the technical details, costs, and human-resource relationships of the organization^[7]. British Standards Institution gives TQM the following definition: "A management philosophy and company practices that aim to harness the human and material resources of an organization in the most effective way to achieve the objectives of the organization."^[8] The Origin of the term TQM was inspired by Armand V. Feigenbaum's multi-edition book *Total Quality Control* (OCLC 299383303) and Kaoru Ishikawa's *What Is Total Quality Control? The Japanese Way* (Figure 3). It may have been first coined in the United Kingdom by the Department of Trade and Industry during its 1983 "National Quality Campaign"^[9] From the

modern practice of quality management, its development process is divided into four historical stages: quality inspection, statistical quality control, total quality management and social quality management. However, it was Japan that first put the theory of total quality management into practice. Western countries attached great importance to the quality of higher education, so many countries, including China, used the theory of TQM in higher education management.



Figure 3 total quality management (Source:Farlex Free Dictionary)

Based on the concept of total quality management, Liu et al. proposed the monitoring of teaching process for quality assurance purposes and the construction of teaching quality operation mechanism, which is pivotal to cultivating innovative talents, promoting the reform of teaching and research work in higher education institutions and improving teaching quality^[10]. Yuan Guoqiu advocates that total quality management should be implemented in higher education, which plays an important role in improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, meeting the needs of society, achieving customer and staff satisfaction, and creating the brand of higher education institutions^[11]. Chu et al. argue that in order to ensure the quality of education in higher education

institutions, it is necessary to improve the management effectiveness of higher education institutions based on advanced quality management theories, and try to construct a quality management paradigm suitable for domestic higher education institutions by analysing the more classic quality management models in foreign countries^[12]. In summary, the theory of total quality management is based on a concern for quality requiring the participation of all members, through long-term leadership management and monitoring, mutual evaluation and feedback between managers and the managed, resulting in teamwork and thus improving the quality and standards of teaching, academic research, social impact and student learning experiences.

III. Major problems of Quality of Inner Mongolia Ethnic Education

1. Inadequate investment in teaching funds

This is the primary limiting factor for the high-quality development of ethnic higher education in Inner Mongolia, hindering the expansion of education scale and affecting the improvement of the overall education level in the region. Maslow's hierarchy of needs proves that the basic needs of individual is the guaranteeing of the self-actualization. In other words, economic level decides the higher development of the individual.

The guarantee of teaching funds plays a decisive role in the high-quality development of education in the Inner Mongolia. In the past few decades, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region implemented the National Education Planning Outline and the Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Higher Education, making quality improvement an important focus for the development of higher education in the Autonomous Region^[13]. The report on the quality of undergraduate teaching in Hohhot College of Nationalities for the 2017-2018 academic year shows that the daily operating expenditure of teaching in Hohhot College of Nationalities was RMB 22,245,400, and the daily operating expenditure of undergraduate teaching per student was RMB3,369. In 2017, a total of 10 items of special undergraduate teaching funds were arranged, amounting to RMB 34,166,400, of which RMB 22,245,400 was spent on daily operation of teaching; RMB 56,000 was spent on teaching reform; RMB 362,500 was spent on professional development; RMB 962,500 was spent on internship and experimental teaching; RMB 157,300 was spent on the construction of ideological and political theory courses; RMB 507,900 was spent on student activities; RMB 533,400 was spent on training and further training; and RMB 9,331,400 was spent on equipment acquisition.^[14] However, the above expenditure only barely guaranteed the various expenditures for general undergraduate teaching activities and their auxiliary activities. The problems caused by the inadequate investment in teaching funds or even education funds, if not solved in time, may play a negative role to the high-quality development of the ethnic college under BRI. Besides, it will certainly widen the gap among the level of higher education in ethnic areas such as Inner Mongolia and non-ethnic areas. The main reason for the inadequate investment in teaching or education funding is the poor economy of the region and the low living standard of the people. At the same time, ethnic colleges and

universities are highly dependent on financial allocations. The current financial management system is not yet perfect in terms of performance evaluation mechanism.

2. Loss of talent resources

This is another obstacle to the high-quality development of ethnic higher education in Inner Mongolia under BRI. Talent resources are the main force to promote economic, social and cultural development, and they are also an important force to promote the high-quality development of education in Inner Mongolia. In TQM, it refers to the employees, who are in the intersection part of quality and management. Talent resources, together with principles and leadership, will decide half success of the running of a business.

The ethnic higher education cause is the cornerstone of cultivating excellent talents, and at the same time, the ethnic education business also relies on the gathering and functioning of excellent talent resources to promote its own development, strengthening the talent team and optimising the structure of teachers in order to better promote the prosperity of the ethnic higher education business. However, the quality development of higher education in Inner Mongolia is facing the problem of the loss of ethnic higher education talent resources. On the one hand, the brain drain is manifested in the difficulties encountered in the implementation of talent introduction policies, due to the relatively harsh environment, poor basic conditions, low salaries, poor living environment and public facilities such as transportation and other welfare systems. These factors are negative for the talents "blood-building" function, not only by failing to attract talented people from developed regions, but also by losing the talented people from the region. On the one hand, the mechanism of introducing talents and the incentive and punishment mechanism in Inner Mongolia is not mature and standardized. It is not attractive to the high-level talents to work in education field. Besides, a large number of high-level talents from Inner Mongolia prefer to work in developed regions in the Middle East as well as the coastal regions. With the advantages of the own economic development, these places provided generous welfare benefits for the personnel in the higher education field. In recent years, most provinces and regions of the country have been working actively in attracting talent through various preferential policies, leaving ethnic regions such as Inner Mongolia a disadvantage position. The imbalance in the distribution of talent between eastern and western regions and between ethnic and non-ethnic regions has led to a chronic dilemma of insufficient supply of talent resources for Inner Mongolia to promote high-quality development of ethnic higher education.

3. Undeveloped economy and the recruitment

Poverty can lead people to choose lower needs in life and thus despise education, especially higher education. If students in rural herding areas are unable to go on to higher education, ethnic colleges and universities will lack a source of students. As a result, education for poverty alleviation has become an important part of the strategy of poverty eradication in Inner Mongolia. According to statistics released by the Department of Education, Inner Mongolia, in 2017 the Leading Group of Poverty Alleviation and Development of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region identified 15 national-level poverty-stricken areas in Inner Mongolia. At the same time, 31,041 students were enrolled in schools in the extreme poor areas, of which 24,791 students from poor families were benefiting from various education subsidies, with a total of RMB 408.54 million in subsidies. 23,588 students from poor families were benefiting from living subsidies of RMB 185.54 million, and 9,085 students from poor families were benefiting from scholarships of RMB 154.45 million. In terms of loans, 2,511 students from poor families were benefiting from student loans of 3,509,000, 3,114 students received RMB 8.89 million from the Rainbows Programme, 1,996 students received RMB 20,510,800 from the Pan Sea Education Grant, and 2,682 students received RMB 14.5 million from other grants^[15]. Therefore, the successful enrollment of students from low-income families is not only an economic issue, but also a social issue for the development of education in ethnic areas. The elimination of poverty is also closely related to higher education, as these students must eventually acquire the appropriate competencies through ethnic institutions of higher education

4. Outdated educational vision and philosophy

A good understanding to the concept of ethnic higher education is the precursor of all actions. An outdated thought on the concept of ethnic higher education development will hinder the development of the effective implementation of the rural revitalisation strategy or the battle against poverty. At present, problems including outdated teaching mode, inactive teaching method, and poor students' participation in classroom activities should be studied. It is necessary to update teachers' educational concepts, establish a student-oriented philosophy, accelerate the reform efforts of student-centered teaching models and teaching methods, and advocate independent, cooperative and inquiry-based learning. The promotion of high-quality development of ethnic higher education under BRI should rely on the scientific educational concept. Under the leadership of the central government, ethnic higher education institutions should implement the fundamental task of establishing moral education, develop student-oriented education, and follow the leadership of the government. The construction of teaching quality assurance system is a prerequisite for the overall improvement of education and teaching quality, an important basis for effective allocation of resources, and an important means to improve scientific management. Inner Mongolia ethnic higher education institutions should attach great importance to the monitoring and guarantee of teaching quality, and constantly strengthen the institutionalization

and standardization of undergraduate teaching work to achieve good teaching results. Besides, international cooperative education is also one of the methods to update the education concept. Universities and colleges should bring in the high quality educational resources from abroad: attracting well-known schools, scientific research institutions and associated enterprises at home and abroad to cooperate in setting up educational teaching. Programs including internship training and research institutions, international students/staff programs and joint collaboration in research work should be encouraged with the support from the government.

IV. Vision and Prospects for ethnic higher education in Inner Mongolia

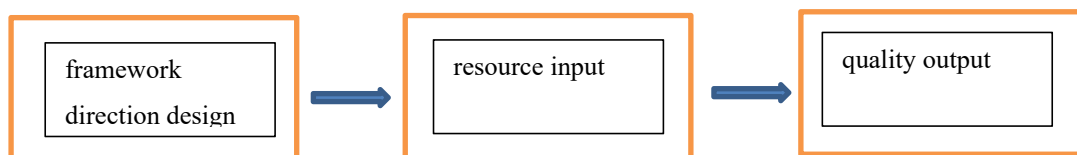
The quality development of ethnic higher education is a need for the balanced development of China's regional society. Ethnic education, especially ethnic higher education, is an important link in the development of society. With the economic and social development of Inner Mongolia region as well as the BRI, ethnic higher education has also entered a brand new era. A healthy and orderly development of Inner Mongolia ethnic higher education is of great significance to the high-quality development of BRI.

1. On ethnic culture

In a multi-ethnic country like China, the high-quality development of ethnic culture is conducive to the development of ethnic regions, which is the content of building a harmonious society. Ethnic culture plays an important role in ethnic regions. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is an important ecological barrier in northern China. Historically, the Mongolian people have accumulated a wealth of wisdom and knowledge to protect the ecological environment of the grasslands, among other things. Thus, the high-quality development of higher education in ethnic regions must highlight regional and ethnic characteristics, create a unique management system for high-quality development, improve the cultural environment, and adhere to the priority development of specialties.

2. Information technology

In the age of information technology, the integrity of information is a technical link in the high-quality development of ethnic higher education, from the decision-making to the evaluation of the effect of capital investment, and to the improvement of teaching management on the overall high-quality development. The management process of ethnic higher education is designed as:



In this regard, each process must be quantified by figures for accessible, assessable, and testable purpose. Revisions are necessary but the process must be open and transparent. By making good uses of the resources and potentials from all aspects, the administrative level will make effective plans to create conditions for staff to take advantage of their mental resources, achieving the goal of high-quality development.

3. Ethnic higher education and social responsibility

Ethnic higher education is the cradle for cultivating ethnic talents, and ethnic talents are the backbone of the development of ethnic regions. The the high-quality development of ethnic higher education is to reserve talents for the future development of ethnic regions; therefore, the management of high-quality development of ethnic higher education is a social responsibility. The lack of investment in education and the unclear management process have long hindered the quality development of ethnic higher education, resulting in a poor attraction to the high-quality talents. The effective way out of the dilemma is to accelerate the high-quality development of ethnic higher education. The high-quality development management is the social responsibility of ethnic higher education institutions.

V. Conclusion

The level of ethnic higher education is one of the important indicators to measure the overall development of ethnic regions. Ethnic higher education in Inner Mongolia bears the responsibility of cultivating ethnic talents, it should establish the concept of quality of higher education, take into account the local situation of the region and ethnic groups to overcome the hindering factors such as insufficient investment in teaching funds, loss of human resources and old-fashioned teaching visions and philosophy. With a high-quality of ethnic higher education in coordination with the economic development of the region, Inner Mongolia is to make due contribution to the long-term development and prosperity of the country and ethnic regions.

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