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## Education policy implemented by China to advance "Belt and Road" initiative in Kazakhstan

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### Abstract

**Relevance.** The relevance of this study lies in the significant role that China's "Belt and Road" initiative plays in promoting international educational exchanges, especially with Kazakhstan.

**Purpose.** The study aims to analyse China's education policy development in Kazakhstan under the "Belt and Road" initiative, focusing on the background, influencing factors, implementation measures, and future trends, to provide insights for educational practice in both China and Kazakhstan.

**Methodology.** The research employs a comprehensive review of policy documents, agreements, and implementation measures related to China's "Belt and Road" educational initiatives. It uses qualitative analysis to extract insights from these sources.

**Results.** The results highlight the establishment of a "Belt and Road" educational community, the signing of educational cooperation agreements with 24 countries, and the launch of educational programs in 23 countries. Notably, 60 Chinese colleges and universities have initiated overseas education programs, and 16 have established international cooperation laboratories.

**Conclusions.** The study concludes that the "Belt and Road" initiative has effectively fostered educational cooperation and integration. This initiative enhances higher education's role in economic, social, and cultural exchanges between China and countries along the route, particularly Kazakhstan. The findings offer a foundation for future educational policies and practices to further strengthen these international collaborations.

**Keywords:** "Belt and Road"; China; Kazakhstan; education policy.

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## Introduction

On September 7, 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech entitled "Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future" at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan. For the first time, the initiative to jointly build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" was proposed. The proposal of this initiative provides a platform for the development of political diplomacy, economic trade and people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and the countries along the "Belt and Road" [1-3]. Since the "Belt and Road" initiative was proposed, China has issued various policies to promote implementing the "Belt and Road" initiative. The goal of the "Belt and Road" initiative is not only to promote economic development but also to include various aspects of social development such as policy, industry, trade, finance, science and technology, humanities, and education. As of January 18, 2022, China has signed more than 200 cooperation documents on the Belt and Road Initiative with 147 countries and 32 international organisations [1; 4; 5]. In 2017, 317,200 international students from countries along the Belt and Road came to study in China, accounting for 64.85% of the total number of students studying in China [2; 6-8].

Kazakhstan is an important country along the "Belt and Road", a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and an important hub connecting the "Silk Road". Therefore, it is an inevitable choice for China and Kazakhstan to promote cooperation in various fields. In 2014, Kazakhstan's first President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed the "Bright Road" new economic policy. The core of this policy is Kazakhstan's infrastructure development plan, which aims to stimulate economic vitality and promote employment. In recent years, the construction of China's Silk Road Economic Belt and Kazakhstan's "Bright Road" new economic policy have practised docking and cooperation. With the smooth development of the "Belt and Road" joint construction between China and Kazakhstan, the two countries have become an important force in promoting the development of Asian regional integration, and the educational and cultural exchanges between the two countries have become more frequent and in-depth [9-14].

The national foreign education policy is based on the country's international strategy, national interests and international environment to determine the principles and guidelines of the country's foreign education goals. This will be influenced and constrained by domestic and foreign political, economic forms, and cultural trends, and is formulated through analysis and careful consideration of the overall situation. In the context of the "Belt and Road" initiative, China's designation and development of Kazakhstan's education policy depend on many factors. Times, politics, economy, culture, etc., are closely related to all aspects of social development.

## Factors Influencing China's Educational Policy Development in Kazakhstan

The formulation, implementation and development of any country's educational policy will inevitably be affected by the international environmental factors of the era. The education policy formulated and implemented by the government should not only consider the domestic

environment but also need to carefully analyse and evaluate the international environment, to ensure the implementation goals of the education policy. An excellent international environment is conducive to the healthy and stable development of education and educational cooperation, and it presents openness and harmony in policy formulation.

Under the background of globalization, the internationalization of education has become a trend, which provides a new development direction for cooperation, educational integration and internationalization between China and Kazakhstan in the field of education. In the process of establishing a new world pattern, China and Kazakhstan will closely engage in people-to-people and cultural exchanges. They will pursue pragmatic cooperation, mutual benefit, and win-win results. The countries will strengthen exchanges in the field of education and deepen cooperation in personnel training, scientific research, and social services. This collaboration aims to promote teacher-student exchanges, resource sharing, and innovation, opening up new horizons for the development of their respective education systems [15-18].

Educational policy is a kind of political behaviour, and the political factor is one of the core factors in the process of educational policy formulation and implementation. The political factors that affect educational policy are the sum of the political system, political structure and political relationship that may be faced when formulating and implementing educational policy. The setting of any educational policy goals must be politically feasible and consistent with the current political system and political goals. China and Kazakhstan formally established diplomatic relations in January 1992, upgraded the bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership in July 2005, established a comprehensive strategic partnership in June 2011, and signed the Joint Agreement on Further Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in September 2013.

In August 2015, the Joint Declaration on the New Phase of China-Kazakhstan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership was signed [3]. In September 2019, China-Kazakhstan relations were upgraded to a permanent comprehensive strategic partnership. The "Belt and Road" initiative proposed by China is highly compatible with the "Bright Road" initiative proposed by Kazakhstan in terms of goals, which makes the political relationship between China and Kazakhstan more consolidated. In recent years, China has adopted a series of educational policies and continuously innovated educational cooperation models, playing a major and positive role in strengthening bilateral cooperative relations.

Economic factors are one of the important factors in the formulation and implementation of educational policies. As Chinese scholar, Y. Zhenguo [4] pointed out: "Any education policy is ultimately determined by the economic situation, especially the economic foundation and economic interests. The economic situation of a country determines the basic structure, scale, degree and direction of its policy, determine the necessity, possibility and effect of the implementation of a certain policy". A country's economic development scale, economic structure, and economic situation have a huge impact on education. In the

context of the "Belt and Road" initiative, promoting national economic development and improving the country's status in the world economic system is one of the goals of formulating and developing education policies [19-21].

In 2020, the total trade volume between China and Kazakhstan will reach 21.43 billion US dollars. From January to November 2021, the bilateral trade volume will reach 22.94 billion US dollars, a year-on-year increase of over 15%. In recent years, China has firmly ranked Kazakhstan's second-largest trading partner country, the first export destination country and the second largest import source country [5]. China's education policy towards Kazakhstan mainly focuses on their respective economic advantages and promotes the cultivation of professional and skilled personnel in key cooperation fields. Comprehensively deepen exchanges and investment cooperation in the field to achieve mutual benefit and win-win results.

Cultural factors have a profound impact on the development of international education policy. The national cultural tradition of each country is reflected in its national education system, which determines that education has the characteristics of national character. In the "Belt and Road" initiative, whether Chinese culture can become an element of the economic development of countries along the route will test the influence of cultural communication and cultural soft power. China and Kazakhstan have signed a series of cooperation agreements in cultural, educational, scientific and other humanistic fields, and are committed to promoting the recognition, understanding and respect of the national cultures of China and Kazakhstan.

China's education policy towards Kazakhstan adheres to the concept of mutual respect for culture, provides charity for cultural exchanges, displays the excellent traditional cultures of both sides, builds the "Belt and Road" cultural exchange brand between the two sides, promotes the prosperity and development of cultural industries, and understands each other's cultural heritage. Establish a "community of destiny" with cultural values, respect each other and treat each other as equals.

### **Analysis of China's education policy towards Kazakhstan**

The "Belt and Road" involves 65 countries, 53 official languages, and more than 200 dialects. The cultures are diverse and the gap is huge. Only English and other international languages are spoken, and it is difficult to truly achieve "people-to-people bonds". Therefore, language education just provides a guarantee for the "Belt and Road". In this context, foreign language disciplines in Chinese universities take the initiative to undertake the mission and responsibility of promoting the exchange and integration of Chinese and foreign cultures, actively serve the implementation of the "Belt and Road" initiative, give full play to their own advantages, and build language majors in countries along the "Belt and Road". Language talents are the messengers of building a China-Kazakhstan educational community and enriching China-Kazakhstan educational cooperation. The "Belt and Road" initiative is being implemented in Kazakhstan, and the connection with the "Bright Road" new economic policy requires a large

number of talents who are proficient in international rules and familiar with each other's language and culture.

Since 2017, in order to meet the needs of the development and construction of the "Belt and Road" initiative, Chinese universities have actively constructed the fields of Kazakh language and literature, Kazakh literature, translation studies, Kazakhstan country and regional studies, and cross-cultural studies, relying on the advantages of multilingual disciplines. For support, the construction of Kazakh language majors began. In this way, it undertakes the language resource development function of the "Belt and Road". At present, Shanghai International Studies University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Xi'an International Studies University and other top foreign language universities in China have opened Kazakh majors, and regularly send students to Kazakh partner universities to learn Kazakh and Kazakhstan's national conditions and culture, and vigorously cultivate the language talent [22-24].

As a new major in Chinese universities, Kazakh major is facing the problem of a shortage of teachers. Therefore, the Ministry of Education of China has launched a non-universal language teacher training support plan, including Kazakh teachers, to train young teachers in the fields of "Kazakh language + country and regional research", and "Kazakh language + cultural and national conditions". Through the training of high-level Kazakh language professionals, the reserve of Kazakh language teachers will be improved. To this end, Chinese universities that offer Kazakh majors have strengthened their cooperation with top universities in Kazakhstan and encouraged Kazakh teachers to study abroad or study for a degree, to improve the professional level of teachers.

Before the "Belt and Road" initiative was proposed, China's international issues and country and regional research mainly focused on developed countries and regions in Europe and the United States, and the research on Kazakhstan was relatively weak. The proposal of the "Belt and Road" initiative has brought new opportunities for Chinese universities to improve their research on countries along the "Belt and Road". Since 2015, Chinese universities have strengthened regional research in Kazakhstan and established the Kazakhstan Center and Kazakhstan Research Center one after another. According to news sources on the official websites of Chinese universities, as of now, there are five Kazakhstan centres and 8 Kazakhstan research centres in China:

1. Shanghai University Kazakhstan Research Center in the SCO Public Diplomacy Institute was established in May 2012.
2. Shanghai International Studies University Kazakhstan Research Center, Kazakhstan Center in the Consulate General of Kazakhstan in Shanghai, Center for International Programmes of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan established in November 2015.
3. Beijing Foreign Studies University Kazakhstan Research Center, Kazakhstan Center in the Embassy of Kazakhstan in China established in December 2015.
4. Dalian University of Foreign Languages Kazakhstan Research Center, Kazakhstan Center in the Mukhtar Auezov South Kazakhstan University established in January 2016.

5. Yili Normal University Kazakhstan Country Studies Center established in July 2017

6. Xi'an International Studies University Kazakhstan Research Center, Kazakhstan Center in the Embassy of Kazakhstan in China, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University established in September 2017.

7. Northwestern University Kazakhstan Research Center in the Library of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Embassy, Kazakhstan China Research Center was established in October 2017.

8. Zhejiang University of Finance & Economics Kazakhstan Economic and Social Research Center, Kazakhstan Center in the Embassy of Kazakhstan in China established in October 2018.

The establishment of the Kazakhstan Research Center further facilitates the cooperation between China and Kazakhstan in multi-disciplinary research and professional personnel training in politics, economy, history, society and culture, and builds the center into a high-end academic research platform for cooperation and exchanges, and contributes to China-Kazakhstan friendship. New greater contribution. These academic platforms give full play to the advantages and disciplinary characteristics of each university and are of great significance to promoting cooperation in the field of education and people-to-people exchanges.

With the active advancement of the "Belt and Road" initiative in various fields, many Chinese companies are cooperating with Kazakh companies, and there is an urgent need for a large number of talents who are proficient in Kazakh language, understand the political and economic situation of Kazakhstan, and are familiar with local folk customs. Therefore, the construction of the "Belt and Road" put forward higher requirements for the training specifications of Chinese Kazakh professionals. Only those who can speak the language cannot meet the needs of the construction of the "Belt and Road", and compound talents with an international perspective should be cultivated. Compound talents are the "language +" talent training model, such as language + politics, language + technology, language + law, language + economy and other training models.

Chinese universities actively communicate with Kazakh universities and enterprises, promote professional talent training, and strengthen cooperation in corporate employee training and research. China University of Petroleum and Yessenov University have jointly cultivated professional and technical personnel in the energy field through education and scientific research cooperation. At the same time, they have provided training for enterprises in the oil and gas field of Kazakhstan. Zhejiang University of Finance & Economics is committed to cultivating talents in China-Kazakhstan economic and financial fields. Shanghai University of Political Science and Law is committed to cultivating talents in the field of Chinese-Kazakhstan law [25-28].

Educational cooperation and exchanges between China and Kazakhstan should actively meet their educational development needs and build a multi-level cooperation mechanism. According to the developmental differences between the two countries, focus on expanding postgraduate higher education cooperation with Kazakhstan, focusing on talent cooperation in the fields of

energy, information technology, transportation, textiles, tourism, agriculture, etc., and encourage Chinese universities and Kazakh universities to explore diversified cooperation channels.

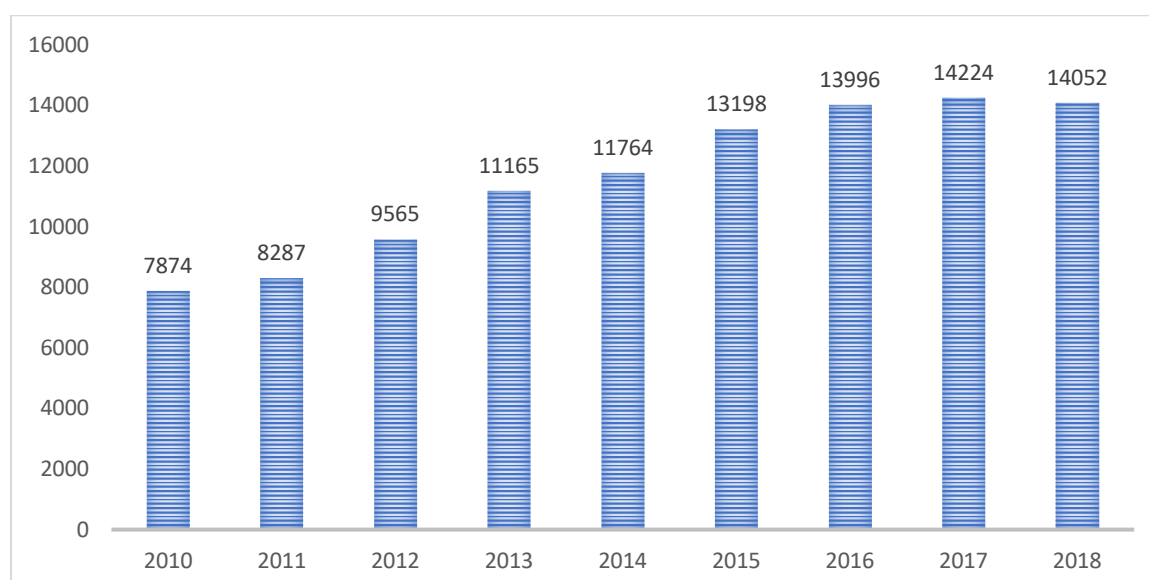
In the context of the "Belt and Road" initiative, China is actively building an international education cooperation platform to promote exchanges between Chinese and Kazakh universities. Now there are platforms such as the University Alliance of the New Silk Road and the China-Central Asian Countries University Alliance to connect higher education cooperation between China and Kazakhstan. The University Alliance of the New Silk Road was initiated by Xi'an Jiaotong University and was established in May 2015. The alliance promotes the Silk Road spirit of "peaceful cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, mutual benefit and win-win", builds an educational cooperation platform, and promotes inter-school exchanges, talent training, scientific research cooperation, cultural communication, policy research, and medical services.

Moreover, other friendly cooperation. There are 48 Chinese universities and 7 Kazakh universities participating in the alliance. Established in September 2016, the China-Central Asian University Alliance is an international interactive platform for deepening the "Belt and Road" scientific and educational cooperation. It consists of 51 colleges and universities in China, Central Asia and 7 countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt [6; 29; 30].

The proposal of the "Belt and Road" initiative has provided new opportunities for higher education cooperation between China and Kazakhstan. In this context, Chinese universities have signed cooperation agreements with Kazakh universities one after another. In recent years, Shanghai International Studies University has signed cooperation agreements with L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages.

Beijing Foreign Studies University has signed cooperation agreements with Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. China University of Petroleum has signed agreements with Kazakhstan's KIMEP University and Yessenov University. Minzu University of China has signed agreements with Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University. Additionally, Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics has signed a cooperation agreement with L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and the Astana International Financial Centre. Under this framework, China and Kazakhstan will carry out extensive exchanges in educational cooperation and scientific research to promote the development of universities on both sides.

In the context of the "Belt and Road" initiative, China has improved its international student training system and strengthened cooperation with Kazakh students. In recent years, the Chinese government has continuously increased its investment in scholarships for Kazakh students at all levels, including undergraduates, postgraduates, and advanced students, to improve the quality of international student training (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Statistics of the number of Kazakhstan students studying in China from 2010 to 2018

**Source:** Official website of the Ministry of Education of China [31].

Since 2010, the number of Chinese students from Kazakhstan has increased year by year. There are currently more than 14,000 Kazakh students studying in China. According to the statistics of the Chinese Ministry of Education, there were 14,052 Kazakh students in China in 2018, of which more than 3,800 received various scholarships provided by the Chinese government, accounting for more than 27% [7].

According to the China-Kazakhstan exchange scholarship exchange plan, the two sides exchange scholarships for 100 students each year to study or study in each other's countries. The majors selected are Kazakh language, Kazakh studies, international relations and mathematics, physics, oil exploration, science and technology. In addition, other majors to promote the cultivation of professional and skilled personnel in key cooperation fields.

Education output is an essential indicator of education development in the era of globalization. In recent years, Confucius Institutes and Chinese cultural promotion activities have flourished all over the world, including Central Asia, with remarkable achievements in people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. The export of Chinese language education represented by Confucius Institutes has enhanced the understanding and friendship between the people of China and Kazakhstan. It has improved the competitiveness and internationalization level of Chinese education.

With the deepening of exchanges and cooperation between the two countries, the demand for Chinese-language talents in various industries in Kazakhstan is growing. There are currently 5 Confucius Institutes in Kazakhstan, namely the Confucius Institute at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, the Confucius Institute at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, the Confucius Institute at Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, the Confucius Institute at Karaganda State Technical University, the Confucius Institute at K. Zhubanov Aktobe

Regional State University [8]. The Confucius Institute creates conditions for the Kazakh people to participate in language learning and cultural activities, innovates teaching methods, provides uninterrupted learning opportunities for many Chinese lovers, and builds bridges and links for the all-round implementation of the "Belt and Road" initiative.

## Conclusions

In 2013, China proposed the "Belt and Road" initiative, which injected strong impetus into international education policy and comprehensively promoted the educational and cultural exchanges between China and Kazakhstan. The deepening of exchanges and cooperation in various fields between the two countries has assisted in their respective economic and social development. Next, China will continue to promote the "Jointly Build the 'Belt and Road' Education Action". Strengthen the overall planning and coordination of various domestic departments and localities. The Ministry of Education works closely with the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Education, the Ministry of Commerce and other departments, as well as various industry and enterprise organizations, to find the focus of cooperation between China and Kazakhstan, and to connect the strategic plans of education development between the two countries.

Give full play to the geographical advantages and local characteristics of each region, establish sister cities between the two countries, etc., formulate an action plan for local education and economy to join hands in Kazakhstan, make full use of the advantages of local allocation of resources, and create regional educational cooperation and exchanges. Schools at all levels and various types have carried out cooperation and exchanges with Kazakhstan in an orderly manner, strengthening the establishment of cooperation and exchanges between primary and secondary schools in the two countries, and participating in the "Belt and Road" plan by leveraging

their advantages. Carry out a wider range of non-governmental educational exchanges, and support social institutions and professional organizations to engage in educational cooperation between China and Kazakhstan. The university actively cooperates with Chinese and Kazakh enterprises to carry out personnel training, scientific and technological innovation and transformation of achievements to serve the economic and trade development of the countries along the "Belt and Road". Under the new development pattern, the two countries will continue to deepen their cooperation and development in the field of education between the two countries.

Facing the future, China, which has entered a new stage of development, will provide stronger impetus, more

space, and better paths for the joint construction of the "Belt and Road". "All the Way" presents a new atmosphere and composes a new chapter in the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

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### Conflict of Interest

None.

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## Освітня політика Китаю для просування ініціативи "Пояс і шлях" у Казахстані

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### Анотація

**Актуальність.** Актуальність даного дослідження полягає у значній ролі, яку відіграє китайська ініціатива "Пояс і шлях" у просуванні міжнародних освітніх обмінів, особливо з Казахстаном.

**Мета.** Метою дослідження є аналіз розвитку освітньої політики Китаю в Казахстані в рамках ініціативи "Пояс і шлях", зосереджуючи увагу на передумовах, факторах впливу, заходах реалізації та майбутніх тенденціях, щоб забезпечити розуміння освітньої практики як у Китаї, так і в Казахстані.

**Методологія.** У дослідженні використано комплексний огляд політичних документів, угод і заходів, пов'язаних з освітніми ініціативами Китаю "Пояс і шлях". Для вилучення інформації з цих джерел використано якісний аналіз.

**Результати.** Результати підкреслюють створення освітньої спільноти "Поясу і шляху", підписання угод про освітню співпрацю з 24 країнами та запуск освітніх програм у 23 країнах. Зокрема, 60 китайських коледжів та університетів ініціювали закордонні освітні програми, а 16 створили лабораторії міжнародного співробітництва.

**Висновки.** У дослідженні зроблено висновок, що ініціатива "Пояс і шлях" ефективно сприяє освітній співпраці та інтеграції. Ця ініціатива посилює роль вищої освіти в економічних, соціальних і культурних обмінах між Китаєм і країнами, розташованими вздовж маршруту, зокрема Казахстаном. Отримані результати створюють основу для майбутньої освітньої політики і практик, спрямованих на подальше зміцнення цієї міжнародної співпраці.

**Ключові слова:** "Пояс і шлях"; Китай; Казахстан; освітня політика.