



International Cooperative Management Between China and Thailand in Vocational Education

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Abstract

This research article aimed to explore the international cooperative management between China and Thailand in vocational education. This research is qualitative research by interview 20 experts. The instrument used for data collection were unstructured interview form. Statistics used for data analysis included frequency and percentage and content analysis. The research results found that the international cooperative management between China and Thailand in vocational education were 5 dimensions; 1) Cooperative Integration Design; It is an important foundation and starting point that aims to promote systematic and efficient work by focusing on establishing direction, creating structure, and allocating resources to ensure smooth cooperation and lead to tangible results. 2) Cooperative Linking Learning Organizations: An "educational ecosystem" that provides students with opportunities to learn from real-world experiences outside the classroom, linking theoretical learning in educational institutions with practical work in the working world to develop essential skills and meet the demands of the labor market. 3) Co-developing the curriculum for academic quality; Combining the strengths of both countries to create a modern curriculum that meets international standards and meets the needs of the labor market. 4) Cultural Connections; It is an essential foundation for managing China-Thailand relations, focusing on promoting smooth and stable cooperation by building sincere ties and truly learning and understanding cultural differences; and 5) Controlling cooperation, both countries have two joys, the control for running the cooperative activities. Those who are considered must come to share and discuss. While collaboratively driving technology and innovation, they are crucial factors in managing modern relationships to keep pace with the times, adapt to the future, and enhance mutual learning capabilities.

Keywords: International Cooperation; Vocational Education; China; Thailand



Introduction

Rapid global technological advancements have necessitated the accelerated production of specialized skilled personnel. In response, China's "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) has prioritized "people-to-people connectivity" and the "Silk Road of Intelligence" through international educational cooperation (Min, 2019). In the context of Thailand, the "China-Thailand 210 Project" exemplifies this strategy by facilitating industry-education integration and modernizing vocational curricula to meet 21st-century market demands (Tang Chinese Education & Technology Ltd., 2024). However, despite these strategic frameworks, operational implementation faces critical challenges. Evidence suggests significant discrepancies in curriculum standards, ambiguous coordination mechanisms, and policy uncertainties (Administrators of Guangxi College of Mechanical and Electrical Technology, 2025). Furthermore, from the perspective of cross-cultural management and international TVET governance, existing approaches lack a unified system to handle linguistic barriers and differing administrative cultures. This has led to operational redundancy and inefficient resource allocation, creating a distinct gap between high-level policy frameworks and practical execution. To address these structural inefficiencies, this research aims to develop an international cooperative management model for vocational education between China and Thailand. This objective is pursued using Ethnographic Futures Research (EFR) to explore and construct future scenarios—optimistic, pessimistic, and probable—that can bridge the gap between policy and practice. The study focuses on networked vocational institutions under the "China-Thailand 210 Vocational Education Cooperation Project." By synthesizing expert insights to diagnose weaknesses in coordination and organizational culture, this study contributes a "Strategic Management Model." This model defines clear roles and standardized evaluation systems, ultimately providing a roadmap to sustainably enhance workforce competencies in alignment with global labor market demands.

Research Objective

To explore the international cooperative management between China and Thailand in vocational education

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design utilizing Ethnographic Futures Research (EFR). EFR is an open-ended, semi-structured interview technique used to elicit perceived future scenarios from experts. This approach is specifically



chosen to align with the research objective of developing a management component by exploring potential future outcomes—Optimistic, Pessimistic, and Probable scenarios—of international cooperative management between China and Thailand in vocational education.

Key Informants The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific expertise criteria rather than random selection. The key informants consisted of 20 experts divided into two groups: 1) 10 senior executives from vocational education institutions in Thailand, and 2) 10 senior executives from vocational education institutions in China. The inclusion criteria for expert selection were as follows: 1) Experience: Possess at least 10 years of relevant working experience in vocational education management. 2) Expertise: Have a deep understanding of international cooperative management and are actively engaged in China-Thailand vocational education projects. And 3) vision: Familiar with advanced cooperative management concepts, development trends, and policy frameworks both domestically and internationally.

Research Instruments: The primary instrument was an unstructured interview guide developed based on the EFR framework. The instrument was validated by three experts in educational research to ensure content validity. The interview guide was designed to elicit three specific future scenarios. Sample guiding questions included: What is this question: how to manage the international cooperative management between China and Thailand in vocational education?

Data Collection: Data collection was conducted between January to April 2025. The procedure followed these steps:

Step 1 Ethical Approval and Consent: Prior to data collection, the researcher explained the research objectives and obtained informed consent from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly assured.

Step 2 EFR Interview Process: In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with the 20 experts. Each session lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. The researcher acted as a facilitator, guiding the experts to visualize and describe the three future scenarios (Optimistic, Pessimistic, and Probable) regarding cooperative management.

Step 3 Recording: All interviews were audio-recorded with permission and supplemented by field notes to capture non-verbal cues.

Data Analysis: Data analysis was performed using Thematic Analysis, involving the following rigorous steps:



1. Transcription: Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim immediately after each interview.

2. Coding: The researcher read the transcripts multiple times to generate initial codes. Data were categorized into meaningful segments related to management structures, challenges, and future trends.

3. Theme Extraction: Codes were grouped into key themes representing the dimensions of the cooperative management model.

4. Trustworthiness: To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, member checking was employed, where a summary of findings was returned to a subset of participants to verify accuracy. Additionally, data triangulation was used to cross-verify information between Thai and Chinese experts.

Results

Based on the Ethnographic Futures Research (EFR) interviews conducted with 20 experts from China and Thailand, the findings reveal a consensus on the "International Cooperative Management component." The experts identified that successful cooperation relies on five key dimensions, derived from synthesizing the optimistic and probable future scenarios. These dimensions are presented as follows:

1. Cooperative Integration Design The first dimension serves as the structural foundation for cooperation. Experts emphasized that effective management requires joint strategic planning where both parties agree on consistent goals, visions, and values. To translate policy into practice, the establishment of a central coordination mechanism is crucial. This includes forming a central committee and a Thai-Chinese cooperation center to monitor progress and solve problems collaboratively. Furthermore, the management system must be governed by central regulations and concrete Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). To support sustainability, the experts also suggested establishing public-private MOU networks for scholarships and ensuring the continuous dissemination of useful information to all stakeholders.

2. Cooperative Linking Learning Organizations This dimension focuses on academic harmonization. The core finding suggests adopting a "2+1 Curriculum Model" (studying 2 years in Thailand and 1 year in China) as a standard approach. Experts highlighted the necessity of mutual qualification recognition, ensuring that degrees issued are valid for employment or further studies in both countries without limitations. Additionally, this dimension entails creating a network to develop teaching models that meet international standards and continuously updating curricula to align with current labor market demands.



3. Co-developing Curriculum for Academic Quality While the previous dimension focuses on structure, this dimension focuses on workforce competency and skill development. The findings indicate that cooperation must extend beyond the classroom to include professional training networks. Key elements include establishing networks for advanced technology skills (AI, Robotics, Data Science, and Cybersecurity) and essential soft skills (language and teamwork). Experts also recommended facilitating personnel exchanges, study tours, and joint training programs between government and private sectors to directly create job opportunities for graduates.

4. Cultural Connections Experts unanimously agreed that sustainable management requires strong socio-cultural ties. This dimension involves building a collaborative network that goes beyond administrative duties to foster genuine relationships. Key activities include student and teacher exchange programs specifically designed to share knowledge, techniques, and cultural perspectives. The goal is to create a "cultural exchange network" that opens new worldviews and minimizes conflicts arising from cultural differences.

5. Controlling Cooperation (Technological Support & Digital Governance) The final dimension relates to the mechanisms used to control and facilitate operations through modern technology. Experts proposed the "Smart Vocational Education Platform" as a central tool. This involves developing collaborative online learning platforms (MOOCs), virtual labs for simulating real work situations, and mobile applications for communication among personnel in the 210 Project. These digital tools serve as the "control mechanism" to ensure fast communication, resource sharing, and access to practical industrial equipment regardless of location.

Discussion

The findings of this research reveal that the international cooperative management between China and Thailand in vocational education consists of five interrelated dimensions. These dimensions reflect a comprehensive approach to bridging policy with practice. The discussion for each dimension is presented as follows:

1. Cooperative Integration Design The study found that successful cooperation requires a systematic design encompassing planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. This implies that management cannot be ad-hoc but requires a structured framework with clear roles and central committees. This finding supports the concept of collaborative governance proposed by the OECD (2011), which



emphasizes that effective policy governance requires multi-sectoral participation and clear communication mechanisms for development. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), this dimension addresses the need for "cross-cultural governance," ensuring that Thai and Chinese stakeholders can align their strategic visions despite administrative differences.

2. Cooperative Linking Learning Organizations The findings indicate that cooperation must extend beyond simple agreements to create an "educational ecosystem," such as the 2+1 model and internship networks. This structure allows students to gain practical experience from experts, effectively linking curriculum with industry. This aligns with Li and Pilz (2023), who argue that the international transfer of vocational education requires adaptability and mutual learning activities to be successful. The implication is that Thai-Chinese vocational institutions must transform into "Learning Organizations" that are flexible and responsive to the rapid changes in the global labor market.

3. Co-developing Curriculum for Academic Quality A key dimension identified is the joint development of modern curricula that combine the strengths of both nations. This ensures the production of a workforce that meets international standards. This finding is consistent with the policy of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2023), which prioritizes establishing teaching standards and developing vocational curricula to meet concrete industrial needs. By modernizing the curriculum to include advanced skills (e.g., AI, Robotics), this cooperation fits the global trend of TVET modernization, directly addressing the "skills gap" in the industry 4.0 era.

4. Cultural Connections. The study emphasizes that building trust and understanding cultural differences are prerequisites for reducing conflict and fostering "brotherhood." This supports the theory of trust in international cooperation by Duenas and Mangen (2023), who state that emotional and cognitive trust reinforce each other, facilitating interaction and adaptation. In terms of global trends, this dimension fulfills the "People-to-People Connectivity" goal of the BRI. It implies that sustainable management relies not just on contracts, but on the "soft power" of cultural exchange to smooth over operational friction.

5. Controlling Cooperation (Technological Integration) Finally, the research highlights the role of technology and innovation, such as smart platforms and AI, in monitoring and facilitating cooperation. This is consistent with Osipov et al. (2020), who studied "Smart Cooperatives" and found that applying AI and digital technologies optimizes decision-making and efficiency. Furthermore, Nic-Daeid and Tessarolo



(2023) support that digital innovation facilitates the exchange of methods towards common goals. The implication is that "Controlling" in the modern era does not mean bureaucratic policing, but rather using Digital Governance tools to ensure seamless communication and real-time resource sharing across borders.

New Knowledge from Research

From the research results, the researcher presents the new knowledge as follows:

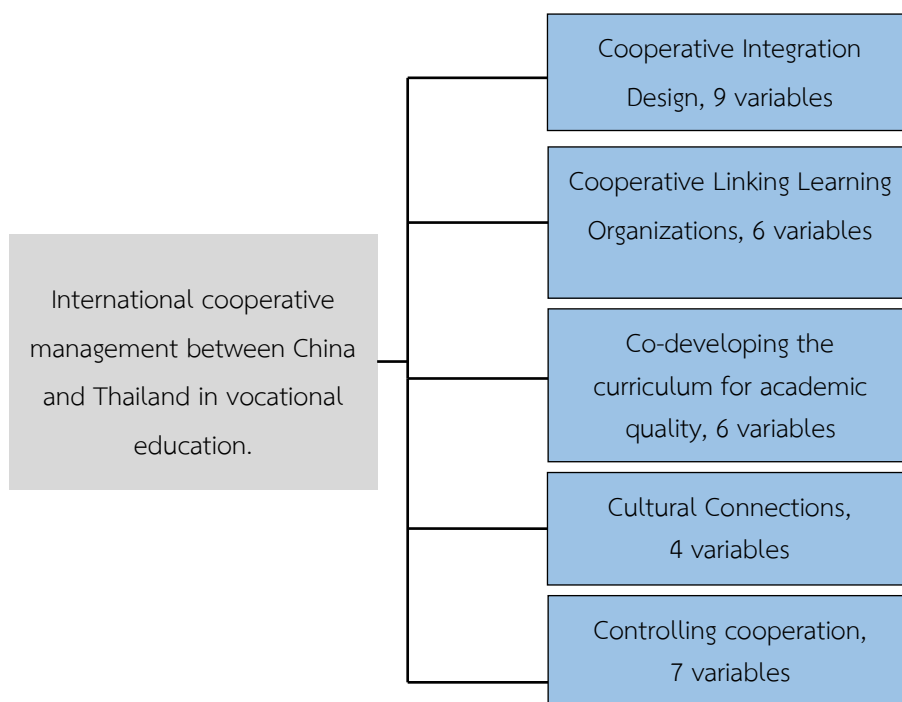


Figure 1 The dimension of international cooperative management between China and Thailand.

The international cooperative management between China and Thailand in vocational education has 5 dimensions: 1) Cooperative Integration Design; 2) Cooperative Linking Learning Organizations; 3) Co-developing the curriculum for academic quality; 4) Cultural Connections; and 5) Controlling cooperation.

Conclusion

The findings of this research illustrate that successful international cooperative management between China and Thailand in vocational education cannot be achieved through fragmented activities. Instead, it requires a holistic



"International Cooperative Management component" comprised of five interrelated dimensions. Conceptually, the model functions as a system where 1) Cooperative Integration Design serves as the strategic backbone, establishing the rules and committees necessary for governance. This structural foundation supports the academic operations of 2) Cooperative Linking Learning Organizations and 3) Co-developing Curriculum for Academic Quality, ensuring that educational outputs align with the "2+1" model and modern industrial demands. Furthermore, the sustainability of this cooperation is reinforced by 4) Cultural Connections, which foster trust and reduce conflict, and is monitored efficiently through 5) Controlling Cooperation, utilizing digital platforms and innovation.

Reflections on Research Objectives This comprehensive model directly addresses the initial research problem regarding the "dichotomy between policy frameworks and practical implementation." By clearly defining these five dimensions, the study resolves the issues of ambiguous coordination, structural inefficiencies, and cultural barriers that previously hindered the "China-Thailand 210 Project." **Contributions** To align with the requirements of international TVET research, this study offers the following contributions:

Theoretical Contribution: It demonstrates the application of Ethnographic Futures Research (EFR) in constructing management models, proving that future-oriented scenarios can effectively guide present-day strategic planning in cross-cultural contexts.

Policy Contribution: The findings advocate for a shift from loose agreements to structured governance, suggesting the implementation of "Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)" and joint committees as essential policy tools.

Practical Contribution: The identification of specific variables, such as the "Smart Vocational Education Platform" and the "2+1 Curriculum," provides practitioners with a concrete checklist to enhance operational efficiency and workforce quality.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations for applying the research results

1.1. Both countries should establish a joint committee to monitor, evaluate, and resolve issues. This includes creating a clear "Standard Operating Procedure - SOP" for vocational education institutions to use as a guideline for creating and managing cooperation with foreign countries, in order to reduce duplication and create clarity in operations.



1.2. Both countries should establish a shared think tank to enhance teaching materials, promote teaching and learning, and provide digital learning resources accessible to teachers and students from both sides.

1.3. Both countries might expand networks to SMEs: Encourage educational institutions to establish networks with small and medium-sized enterprises, developing the country's economic base and increasing opportunities for internships and employment.

1.4. A "Cross-Cultural Training" course is mandatory for students and faculty participating in the exchange program to bridge cultural gaps and promote mutual adaptation.

1.5. It should create a central platform for government agencies and develop a bilingual (Thai-Chinese) "Smart Vocational Education Platform" system, enabling all participating institutions to collaborate effectively.

2) Recommendation for future research.

2.1. The research should conduct a study on the components of Digital Learning Resource Development for Transnational Vocational Education: A Case Study of Project 210

2.2. Research on factors affecting the relationship between students in the China-Thailand exchange program"

2.3. A study on social and cultural adaptation to professional collaboration among students and faculty in exchange programs"

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