

Speech at “Sino-Australia Forum on Transnational Education and Student Mobility”

Chen Yinghui

(March 27, 2015 in Beijing)

Honorable Ms. Anne Baly, Ms. Cathryn Hlavka, Ms. Kate Duff, Respected leaders and dear colleagues,

Good morning!

It's a great honor to be here at this forum. In the first place, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Australian Embassy in China and China Education Association for International Exchange for their great efforts make this forum a huge success. My thanks also go to everyone present today for your attention to and reflection on transnational education and your contribution to enhancing Sino-Australia educational communication and cooperation.

Globalization is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable trends in the 21st Century for human society. It brought about drastic changes across the planet and made education internationalized. As globalization and the new technological revolution are gaining momentum, conventional shackles restraining education development are broken step by step and cross-cultural communication and international understanding are defined as the new mission of education. To protect and optimize the shared interests of human race is now a common issue and the responsibility for global education. The new task for education today is to nurture large quantities of talents who have international perspectives, know well cultures of other countries, have good knowledge of international rules and are gifted at international communication and cooperation.

With the globalization, and in particular with the fast Chinese economic growth in the past 3 decades, China has raised more requirements for diversified and high-quality education. As a result, transnational education of all forms is developing rapidly in China. China has become a main importer of transnational education and at the same time is becoming an exporter. Transnational education, mainly in the forms of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools, running schools in foreign countries, two-way overseas study between China and other countries, cooperation in scientific research, hiring foreign teachers and student exchange, has become an important aspect in international cooperation and communication in education. It plays an important role in reforming China's educational system, diversifying modes of personnel cultivation and promoting the opening-up of education to the world.

Next, I will give a brief introduction to three aspects. They are Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools, running schools in foreign countries, and student mobility.

1. Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools

We have made rapid progress in this aspect. Ever since the issue of the National Education Plan in 2010, we have maintained a high-speed and high-level development of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools, which has attracted increasing attention and has

earned improved credibility and greater social influence.

Up to now, 2324 Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run educational institutions and programs have been officially approved in China. Among them there are 7 Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run universities that offer bachelor and bachelor above level of High Education, including New York University Shanghai, University of Nottingham Ningbo, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, etc. There are also 56 secondary institutions and 1055 programs. The Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools covers all educational levels and categories, including 12 disciplines and more than 200 majors, ranging from science, engineering, agriculture, medical science, humanities to social science. According to incomplete statistics, there are currently around 550,000 students studying at various Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools at all levels, among whom about 450,000 students are at higher education level, accounting for 1.4% of the total number of full-time students in colleges and universities. Over 1.5 million students graduated from Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run universities or colleges.

More than 400 universities and colleges in 33 countries including America, UK, and Australia have cooperated with Chinese universities and colleges. China runs 499 institutions and programs in cooperation with Australia, taking up 19% of all the Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run educational institutions and programs.

Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools is facing new trends and becoming a new normal. For years, we have attained remarkable achievements by introducing from other countries advanced education concepts, education contents, teaching methods, personnel training modes and managerial experience. It has boosted the discipline and specialty construction in domestic schools, promoted the cultivation of faculty and international talents, injected vitality into school running and expedited education reform.

At present, China's adjustment of its national development strategy and the ever changing international situation has provided a new historic opportunity to further improve the quality of Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run educational institutions and programs. Managers of Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools should hammer out good plans and strategies at the top level, improve laws and regulations, and stress the integrated development of cooperatively-run schools, foreign students studying in China and Chinese educational institutions in foreign countries.

The first thing to do is shift from pursuing expansion of scale to the connotative development of emphasizing quality improvement. At present, about 600 universities and colleges run educational institutions and programs in cooperation with foreign countries. With the further development of education in China, Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools will play a more important role in promoting the teaching strength of a school and making it more internationalized. Besides, a proper system should be established to guarantee the quality of Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools, and quality assessment should be carried out regularly. We should regulate the order of running schools, intensify penalty and promote the withdrawal mechanism, and eliminate the institutions and programs that do not meet the statutory requirements or do not execute the agreements of cooperation in running schools.

Second, we should shift the focus of development from study to innovation. In its early

stage of development, Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools was mainly concerned about students' need of going abroad for study. The practice of stressing the market performance of a cooperatively-run major, and lack of attention to discipline construction and its coverage, have caused the problems of unsatisfactory overall quality and weak capacity of discipline radiation. China is now in a transitional development stage when growth is driven by innovation, therefore, cooperatively-run educational institutions and programs are faced with new requirements. They should have the awareness, the foundation and the capacity to lead the trend, and they should overcome various short-term behaviors in running schools. They should focus on discipline construction and pay efforts to establish top-notch education rooted in the land of China. Moreover, by giving a full play to the leading function of such cooperation, we should improve the mechanism and set up new and internationalized schools, trying to generate catfish effect and form a mechanism of reversal pressure to expedite the educational reform in China.

The third thing is to strictly check on the import of educational resources, shifting from bulk importing foreign resources to only focusing on high-quality educational resources. Recently, considering the project and institute structure the cooperation has brought about, we will probably establish cooperatively-run educational institutions and programs in key fields such as advanced manufacturing and modern agriculture, emerging industries, and natural sciences including science, engineering, agriculture and medical science, etc. We should strictly control the number of chain schools of foreign universities in China so as to avoid repeated discipline establishment at low cost.

Forth, as to management, we should intensify process supervision instead of putting too much attention to administrative approval, reinforce top-level design and policy making, and optimize managerial methods. The Chinese government is transforming with great efforts its function in order to improve its governance capacity and to realize ruling the country by law. Ministry of Education has now completed the development and on-line operation of the application system, filing system, registration and authentication system for cooperatively-run educational institutions and programs. In this way, we have established “online application” and “one-stop” approval mechanism, thus the information management of cooperatively-run schools has basically been put into place.

2. Running schools in foreign countries

International communication and cooperation in education not only means “bringing in” but also means “going out”. One important way for Chinese education and culture to go global is Chinese universities' running schools in foreign countries, which is also a critical component of Chinese transnational education.

Running schools outside China has taken into shape. Universities in China have been exploring ways to set up schools in foreign countries since 1970s. With the improvement of China's comprehensive national strength and the internationalization of education, universities in China have shown greater interest in “going out” to set up schools in foreign countries. In recent years, a rising number of universities in China proposed plans to set up schools in other countries, and some have successfully carried out teaching activities. Up to now, Chinese universities have established 3 educational institutions and 97 educational programs in 14 countries and regions. Running educational institutions or programs in foreign countries has now become an important way for Chinese universities to carry out educational communication, and it is also an important measure to improve the level of internationalized school management. It also shows that the Chinese pattern of developing higher education and our educational achievements have been recognized by the international community.

We are blessed with precious development opportunities of running educational institutions and programs in foreign countries. The first opportunity is the rapid growth of China's economy and society and the boost of China's national influence, which creates favorable conditions for universities and colleges to explore the outside world and develop education outside China. The improvement of China's comprehensive national strength provide universities with strong support of resources to develop education overseas, and meanwhile national strategies such as "One Road One Belt" have aroused other countries' increasing need for China to set up schools there, which is creating a more friendly external environment. **The second opportunity is that the economic culture is "going out" at a faster pace.** China, the second largest economy in the world, is attracting more and more countries to learn about China and to ride with China's Express of Economy. At the same time, a lot of Chinese enterprises are going abroad to get engaged in global cooperation in economy and trade. Schools in foreign countries that are run by Chinese universities can help those countries train specialized talents who know China well and excel at relevant skills and technologies, which will ultimately provide a strong support for the realization of mutual benefits and a win-win situation.

The fact that China's higher education is getting increasingly competitive has laid a solid foundation for universities to establish educational institutions or programs in foreign countries. Recently I visited Laos, Jordan and Egypt because these countries request China to set up schools there. Officials in Laos' Ministry of Education said that China's education is of high quality in Asia and that China's higher education has made notable progress over the last decade. They hoped that the educational institute that Suzhou University set up in Laos could offer more vocational and technical specialties so that graduates will find jobs more easily. When I visited Ministry of Education and universities in Jordan, they said they would like to learn the Chinese pattern and work together with China to establish institutes of applied technology. They want to develop engineering and technical education in multiple areas and produce more talents specialized in practical techniques. More and more governments and enterprises avert their attention to Asia and to China. There are an increasing number of requests for China to set up schools in their countries because Asian schools and China are close both geographically and culturally. Lately, countries including Tanzania hope China could set up an agricultural university in their country. Faced with so many needs, we also want to ask whether Chinese universities are ready and able to share with other countries the experience that suits Chinese social development.

Next I will talk about the development strategies for running educational institutions and programs in foreign countries. We conducted a research last year, so we know what we have achieved in running schools outside China and understand what needs to be improved and what's the future trend. Based on the research, we realize how running educational institutions and programs outside China has improved the competitiveness of our higher education and its positive influence on other countries. But we also find that when running schools in other countries at an early stage we are faced with problems in terms of policy planning and capacity construction of schools. That means we must redouble our efforts and be fully prepared.

First, we need to consider from a strategic and long-term perspective, strengthen the policy support and bring new ideas to the system. China has only a short history of running schools in foreign countries and is not experienced, so it needs the guidance of strategic deployment and overall planning at the national level. It is pressing to know how to coordinate resources such as education, culture, trade and foreign aid within the framework of national strategies. In this aspect, Australia has helpful experience of transnational education for us to learn in both student mobility and running schools abroad. Therefore, communicating with our Australian counterparts is quite beneficial when we want to develop overseas education of all forms.

Second, we must take advantage of the strategic opportunity period of developing overseas education and promote the Chinese education of practical techniques to the world. To promote economic growth is a common mission shared by all developing countries. Therefore, they long to draw upon from China, introduce Chinese education mode and resources related to vocational techniques, and cultivate local engineering talents so as to make their countries more industrialized. In this case, Chinese universities and colleges should combine their advantages with the needs of foreign countries, with careful plan and scientific design, eventually figure out a pattern of overseas education that suits the interests of all parties.

Third, we need to improve the universities' capacity of construction to meet the market demand and the strategic needs. At present, domestic universities are basically short of inter-disciplinary talents who have international vision. Therefore, a key part of developing overseas education is to build a team of professional teachers that are proficient at foreign languages and teaching skills.

Forth, we should establish more educational institutions of top-level quality in foreign countries. Chinese universities' setting up educational institutions in other countries is related to the international reputation and the influence of China's higher education. The education quality and acts in particular have a direct impact on the international image of China's higher education. That means we must pay special attention to and guarantee the quality of educational institutions run by Chinese universities in other countries. On one hand, the schools that Chinese universities run in other countries should apply consistent teaching standards with the mother university. They should not issue unworthy certificates and make the schools merely "certificate factories". On the other hand, the schools in other countries that are established by Chinese universities should be incorporated into our university quality evaluation system in order to guarantee the education and teaching quality.

3. The mobility of international students

Chinese students studying abroad and foreign students studying in China is a very important component of China's education opening-up, and it's also one of the key areas of China's transnational education.

The number of Chinese students studying in other countries and foreign students studying in China is growing rapidly. In 1978, China sent the first group of 52 students to study in America at the national expense. Both the number of students and the courses available were limited at the time. Today, the situation of studying abroad is totally different. In 2014 alone, nearly 460,000 Chinese students went abroad for study, covering almost all subjects and fields.

As China's economy is developing and the national strength has improved, "foreign students studying in China" is becoming a heat and China is attracting more and more foreign students. In 1950, only 33 foreign students came to study in China, but the number rose to 1,236 in 1978, and in 2014 it amounted to 377,000. In 1950, the subjects that foreign students studied in China were only confined to several majors of language learning, but now they cover almost all subjects and fields. At the beginning, only several universities like Tsinghua University and Peking University were available for foreign students, but now foreign students can study in more than 700 Chinese universities and colleges.

Two-way overseas study between China and other countries is beneficial to China's

modernization. On one hand, studying abroad has provided intellectual support for China's technological innovation and core competitiveness and has promoted the overall development of our nation and society. Many of the students who went abroad for study are now important talents who have cross-cultural communication ability, innovation ability and international perspective. Over 70% of presidents of "985 Project" universities, more than 80% of academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Engineering, and over 90% of Chang Jiang Candidate Scholars have overseas studying experience. They are the intellectual source of China's technological innovation and core competitiveness.

On the other hand, Chinese students' studying abroad helps China improve its international influence and promotes the people-to-people exchanges between China and the rest of the world. With their hard work, students who study in foreign countries connect China with the world and they are bridges between people from different countries. They have made active contribution to building a world featuring equality, peace, common development and harmony.

Two-way overseas study between China and other countries is faced with challenges. In terms of future development, overseas study has also encountered challenges. The first challenge is to improve the policy and relevant regulations because the existing ones can not effectively address new problems that keep popping up. The second is to deal with problems related to personal safety, academic disputes and infringement upon students' legitimate interests, and to create a safe, healthy and successful environment for foreign students. The third is to improve management and service capability.

To promote the development of two-way overseas study, we need to make special efforts in the following aspects.

First, we need to coordinate the work of Chinese students studying in foreign countries and the other way around, keep on expanding the scale and improving the quality. Sending Chinese students to study broad and attracting foreign students to study in China may complement each other and they are both effective ways to train top-level international personnel. On one hand, it is important for us to select and encourage outstanding youth to study in first-class universities in the world so as to train talents that can help with reform and development undertakings. On the other hand, we need to encourage and attract excellent young people from other countries to study in China. We hope, one day, "studying in China" could be an aim, even a dream for ambitious students around the world.

Second, it is imperative to perfect the system and regulations and establish a sound system of management and service. We should try to construct a comprehensive support system of regulations and policies related to studying abroad so as to better guide, regulate and serve the work in every aspect of overseas study.

Third, we should establish a talent pool for students studying abroad and give a full play to their leading role in innovation and business start-up and their ambassador role in cultural and educational exchanges. We should encourage those students to focus on key areas of social and economic development, aim at leading-edge technology progress and devote themselves to promoting innovation-driven development.

It is necessary to improve management and service level by applying information technology. We need to integrate the existing management system of students studying abroad and the network information resources, establish a management and service system for Chinese students studying abroad and foreign students studying in China, and create information products that serve these students.

I just learned from the introduction of New Colombo Plan that more Australian students are willing to study in China. Of course, China will do the best to welcome them. The U.S. president launched “100,000 Strong Initiative” in 2010 in the hope that 100,000 American students would come to study in China within 4 years. In order to carry out this program, I exchanged ideas with my counterparts in the U.S. Department of Education. They thought two main factors may hinder American students in their desire to come to China. First, they could not find enough information online about our universities or colleges; the second problem is the language, because Chinese is a very difficult language which may cost them more time to learn. However, we have been paying efforts to improve the situation in these aspects in recent years and we hope we could create more favorable conditions for students in Australia or other English-speaking countries when they come to China for study.

Thank you!