

The Pain Points, Difficulties and Paths of Vocational Education and Training in Rwanda under the “Belt and Road” Initiative

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Abstract

In the context of the “Belt and Road”, the compatibility of policy orientation, internal demands and practical needs provides the possibility for vocational education and training cooperation between China and Rwanda. However, at present, Rwanda’s vocational education and training have problems of low school quality, cultural adaptation obstacles and low security, which restricts the development of vocational education and training in Rwanda. In view of this, we can seek the development of vocational education and training from four aspects: top-level design, focusing on the quality of talent training, promoting cross-cultural adaptation, and raising funds.

Keywords

Rwanda; vocational education and training; Path of action

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1. Introduction

For Rwanda, joining the Belt and Road Initiative provides better development opportunities for the development of vocational education and training in Rwanda, indicating that international cooperation in vocational education between China and Rwanda will move towards a broader, deeper and more practical stage of development under the background of China-Rwanda comprehensive strategic partnership. Exploring the compatibility, practical difficulties and development strategies of vocational education and training in Rwanda under the “Belt and Road” initiative is an objective requirement for deepening

vocational education cooperation between China and Rwanda.

2. What it can be: the compatibility of vocational education and training in Rwanda under the “belt and road” initiative

2.1. Policy orientation: china-rwanda vocational education and training policies have been gradually improved

In July 2018, Rwanda joined the “Belt and Road”

initiative, and the international cooperation in vocational education between China and Rwanda was based on the “Action to Promote the Joint Construction of the “Belt and Road” Education”. government guidance, private subjects; consultation and co-construction, open cooperation; Guidelines for Harmonious, Inclusive, Mutually Beneficial and Win-win Cooperation, laying a solid foundation for China-Rwanda vocational education and training cooperation. The “China and Rwandan Government Cultural and Scientific Cooperation Agreement - Implementation Plan from 2018 to 2020” and the “Rwanda Smart Education Project Preferential Loan Framework Agreement” have been signed one after another. Escort China and Rwanda to establish a “Belt and Road” vocational education community with interconnection and win-win cooperation.

2.2. Internal demands: Rwanda’s industrial development has a strong demand for talents

The improvement of Rwanda’s domestic industrial development has brought good opportunities for the development of vocational education and training. Rwanda’s average annual economic growth since 2000 has been 8%^[1], has great potential for economic development, and related industries have also developed rapidly. According to a survey in the NYABIHU region OF Rwanda, students in vocational education and training have a greater advantage in acquiring vocational skills, achieving employment and securing employment^[2], Vocational Education and Training highlights the role of skills in lighting up the lives of Rwandan students.

2.3. Practical needs: China-Rwanda vocational education and training cooperation has entered a new stage

The cooperation and friendship between China and Rwanda has a long history. In November 1971, Rwanda established diplomatic relations with China, and the two countries actively cooperated in the fields of economy, science and technology, and humanities, and cooperation in the field of vocational education and training was no exception. In 1993, the first vocational and technical college in Rwanda, Rwanda’s Ngtangdeqi Agricultural and Veterinary School, was completed, offering two majors: agriculture and veterinary medicine. Heilongjiang

Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Medicine^[3], providing professional training in veterinary medicine for Rwanda.

3. Difficult difficulties: The practical dilemma of vocational education and training in Rwanda under the “Belt and Road” initiative

3.1. The quality of education and running schools needs to be improved

First, Rwanda’s vocational education and training infrastructure is insufficient. In terms of vocational education and training infrastructure, in 2017, Rwanda proposed to accelerate the construction of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and promote the digital transformation of Rwanda’s education, but in 2021, 74.9% of Rwandan vocational colleges lacked electronic smart boards, 64% of schools failed to have smart classrooms, and 48.1% of schools did not have scientific experiment kits Education^[4], the progress of ICT infrastructure construction is slow.

Second, the skill level of students is not high. According to a survey in the Gazabo region of Rwanda, 88% of the 150 vocational college students surveyed reported a lack of skills needed to complete a specific exam, 78% reported a lack of entrepreneurial skills, 57.33% reported a lack of start-up capital, and only 28% said they lacked^[5].

3.2. Cultural adaptation and language barriers

First, cross-cultural adaptation is difficult. For some Rwandan international students, accepting a new lifestyle and education system and following the new cultural norms of life are compulsory courses. Rwandan students in China in terms of eating habits, customs and culture and communication rules There are problems, and it is difficult to adapt to the rhythm and lifestyle of Chinese teaching, which will affect the quality of learning.

Second, there are obstacles to language communication. The official languages of Rwanda are Rwanda, English, and French, while Rwanda is a high-pitched tonal language , there is a big difference in pronunciation with Chinese, so it is difficult for Rwandan students to distinguish between the upper voice and the yangping in Chinese tones when learning Chinese^[6],

which limits the Chinese proficiency of Rwandan students in China and increases the difficulty of language communication.

3.3. Social risks and sustainability are difficult to guarantee

First, traditional and non-traditional security are challenged. In terms of traditional security, according to the Rwanda 2023 Statistical Yearbook survey, in the four years from 2019 to 2022, the number of the ten main types of crime in Rwanda showed a significant growth trend, from 55,969 to 79,418, of which theft and assault were the main crime types, which reflected the risk of Rwanda's social security situation to a certain extent.

Second, there is a large funding gap for the development of vocational education and training. Rwanda is struggling to raise funds for vocational education and training. Rwanda's finance mainly relies on foreign aid, and foreign aid funds account for 33.2% of the 2021-2022 budget^[7]. the country's financial autonomy is not high, it is easily affected by the willingness of third-party countries to assist, and it is difficult to effectively provide funds for the development of vocational education and training.

4. What to do: The action path for vocational education and training in Rwanda under the “Belt and Road” initiative

The development of vocational education and training in Rwanda under the Belt and Road Initiative should explore a path of development in terms of top-level design, standards-oriented, cultural identity promotion and funding.

4.1. Strengthen top-level design and optimize the ecology of vocational education at home and abroad

First, it is necessary to intensify the reform of vocational education and training in Rwanda. Improve the infrastructure of vocational colleges in Rwanda, coordinate the development of vocational colleges, improve the conditions and standards for running vocational colleges, and increase investment in updating

teaching facilities and equipment in vocational colleges in a timely manner.

The second is to maintain social stability and further improve public security capabilities. Although Rwanda is the country with the best security in Africa, in the face of global challenges and changes, it is more important to establish crisis awareness and improve emergency response capabilities. Only by strengthening the construction of early warning mechanisms, conducting regular risk assessments, and formulating sound crisis management plans can we improve the confidence of foreign capital inflows.

4.2. Adhere to high standards and pay attention to the quality of talent training

First, pay attention to the needs of enterprises and industries to improve the practicality of vocational education and training. In the development of vocational education and training courses, the current teacher-centered curriculum development concept should be abandoned^[8], establishing the concept of ability-based development, formulating curriculum standards according to professional standards and vocational abilities, and taking the mastery of vocational abilities as an important reference for course evaluation.

The second is to strengthen the construction of the teaching staff and improve the overall quality of teachers. With the development of Rwanda's society, the problems of insufficient number of teachers and low education are increasingly exposed. To this end, Rwanda should cooperate with Chinese universities to encourage and support original teachers to apply for postgraduate studies, actively introduce highly educated talents who have returned from studying abroad, and provide salary subsidies, living security and other conditions.

4.3. Optimize cross-cultural adaptation mechanisms and promote cultural identity among international students

The first is to put people first and respect cultural differences. Optimize the management model of vocational colleges and improve the ability to serve international students. Domestic vocational colleges should consider the particularity of Rwanda's international student group and reasonably set up psychological

counseling rooms for international students, and carry out targeted psychological counseling and counseling.

The second is to make good expectations for studying abroad and improve adaptability. International students themselves are the main body of study abroad activities, and they need to take conscious actions to increase their understanding of Chinese culture. Maintain a positive attitude, formulate a study abroad plan, strengthen Chinese learning, and improve Chinese proficiency. Strengthen Chinese reading and writing training in daily study and life, boldly practice Chinese pronunciation, and gradually master Chinese pronunciation skills.

4.4. Take multiple measures to raise education funds to ensure the continuous progress of the project

First, based on the long-term and flexibly responding to debt pressure. The current downturn in the world economic cycle has aggravated Rwanda's debt problem, in accordance with the Common Framework for Follow-

up Debt Treatment of the Debt Relief Initiative, strengthen international debt consultation and cooperation, carry out cooperation with international private capital, and avoid falling into sovereign debt default.

The second is to seek third-party cooperation to reduce the burden of education financial expenditure. Strengthen cooperation with international vocational education and training. Rwanda should further promote the "Belt and Road" initiative, strengthen ties with China's partner universities, strengthen overseas joint education and international teacher training programs between universities, and share high-quality vocational education resources.

The "Tianjin Consensus" has opened a new chapter in vocational education cooperation between China and Rwanda. Rwanda's vocational education and training will also seize the development opportunities brought by the Belt and Road Initiative, and move towards a better future in an open, inclusive and win-win environment.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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