

Research on the Development and Construction of Confucius Institutes in Portugal under the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was proposed by President Xi Jinping during his visits to Central Asia and Southeast Asia in 2013, advocating for collaborative development with countries along the route. Spanning across the continents of Asia and Europe, the Indian Ocean, and the western Pacific, the BRI involves 64 countries with a total population of over 3 billion and a combined GDP accounting for nearly 20% of the global economy, holding significant strategic importance. Historically, the BRI serves not only as a platform for commercial trade but also as a medium for cultural exchanges among the countries along its route. In reality, embracing cultural diversity aligns with the collaborative development goals of the BRI, promoting cultural and civilizational exchanges among nations, achieving holistic cultural complementarity, and fostering social harmony and development. In recent years, Chinese language education has been included in the educational systems of European, Latin American, and African countries alongside languages such as French, Russian, and Spanish. In the context of increasingly integrated global interests, Chinese language education has gained more attention. To internationalize and diversify Chinese language education, the term “Confucius Institute” was coined. Drawing on international experience, the Chinese government has established numerous Confucius Institutes and classrooms overseas. Among them, Portugal is one of the European countries with the closest cooperation with China in education, language, and humanities. With the comprehensive development of Sino-Portuguese relations, more opportunities have arisen for Sino-Portuguese language and cultural exchanges, expanding the development prospects of Confucius Institutes. Currently, the four main Confucius Institutes jointly established by major universities in Portugal are: Minho University Confucius Institute, University of Lisbon Confucius Institute, University of Aveiro Confucius Institute, and University of Coimbra Confucius Institute. Each Confucius Institute has its own educational positioning, such as providing basic Chinese language teaching, training Chinese language teachers, improving Chinese language teaching resources, and organizing Chinese cultural exchange activities, providing Portuguese students with a platform for learning Chinese language and culture.

Keywords: Confucius Institute, Belt and Road Initiative, cultural exchange, diversity

1. Introduction

With the continuous deepening of the globalization process, international exchanges and cooperation are becoming increasingly frequent, and language education has become a bridge connecting different cultures. Especially under the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative, cultural exchanges and language education cooperation among countries along the route have become particularly important. As an important partner of the Belt and Road Initiative, Portugal's Confucius Institute plays an irreplaceable role in promoting cultural exchanges between China and Portugal and enhancing mutual understanding. Therefore, researching the development and construction of Confucius Institutes in Portugal under the Belt and Road Initiative not only helps deepen cultural cooperation between the two countries but also has important theoretical and practical significance for promoting the development of global Chinese language education. This paper aims to explore the current situation, challenges, and opportunities of the development and construction of Confucius Institutes in Portugal under the Belt and Road Initiative. It reveals their positive role in promoting cultural exchanges between China and Portugal and enhancing the international influence of the Chinese language. At the same time, this paper will also discuss the challenges faced by Confucius Institutes in Portugal during their development process, such as cultural differences and uneven distribution of educational resources, and propose corresponding countermeasures and suggestions.

2. Significance of Confucius Institutes in Portugal for Intercultural Communication Research

The establishment of Confucius Institutes in Portugal has opened a window for local people to understand China and Chinese culture. As one of the world's oldest and most influential languages, the dissemination of Chinese language is of great significance in enhancing the friendship between the Portuguese people and those of other European countries. In Portugal, Confucius Institutes have organized a series of colorful cultural exchange activities such as calligraphy, painting, dance, and music. These activities provide Portuguese people with the opportunity to have close contact with and understand Chinese culture, while also enriching the diversity of local culture, providing more possibilities for Sino-Portuguese cultural exchanges [1]. The localization of Confucius Institutes also represents the integration of the two countries' cultures, deepening the Portuguese people's understanding of Chinese culture and adding profound connotations to the friendship between the two peoples. As a bridge for Sino-Portuguese educational exchanges, Confucius Institutes' establishment in Portugal has promoted cooperation between universities of the two countries, such as conducting joint research and student exchange programs. The multi-party cooperation between Chinese and Portuguese universities has further enhanced the education levels of both countries. At the same time, this has also strengthened the Portuguese people's sense of identification and friendly feelings towards Chinese culture, laying a solid foundation for cooperation between the two countries in politics, economy, society, and other fields. Moreover, as a cultural intermediary, Confucius Institutes also promote to some extent the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative [2]. In Portugal, Confucius Institutes, as important carriers of Chinese language education, play an active role in promoting the integration of the Belt and Road Initiative with Portugal. By promoting Chinese language education and increasing cultural awareness and identification, Confucius Institutes have cultivated a group of professionals with Chinese language skills in Portugal, contributing to cooperation between the two countries in trade, investment, science and technology, and other fields. Therefore, the author believes that Confucius Institutes in Portugal are of great significance for the development of cultural exchanges. They not only promote exchanges and cooperation between China and Portugal in education and culture but also play an important role in promoting the development of Sino-Portuguese relations and enhancing international influence. In the future,

Confucius Institutes in Portugal will continue to work hard to make more contributions to promoting Sino-Portuguese friendship and cooperation.

As an important platform for Sino-Portuguese cultural exchanges, Confucius Institutes in Portugal have profound significance for research on intercultural communication. In specific manifestations, events such as the Third Portugal-China Intercultural Dialogue International Conference held with Confucius Institutes as the main body of cultural exchange deepen mutual understanding and friendship between the people of the two countries. Additionally, Confucius Institutes also promote cooperation between the two countries in education, scientific research, and other fields. Confucius Institutes in Portugal are committed to promoting Chinese language and culture, periodically organizing China-themed cultural and creative competitions to allow students to understand Chinese culture through artistic creation. Events such as children's painting exhibitions are also held to celebrate Confucius Institute Day, showcasing the charm of Chinese culture. In order to strengthen cross-cultural communication, Confucius Institutes in Portugal promote cross-cultural integration between China and Portugal in various fields such as culture, art, and technology through hosting multidisciplinary exchange activities. For example, the "Beautiful Planet" children's painting exhibition attracted children from Portugal and China to participate together, showcasing artistic creations from different cultural perspectives. As a cultural exchange institution of China in Portugal, Confucius Institutes actively participate in international affairs, organizing international dialogue seminars to disseminate Chinese culture and enhance China's influence internationally. Confucius Institutes advocate for exchanges and mutual learning between different cultures, promote a civilization view of inclusiveness and mutual learning, and facilitate mutual understanding and friendship among people of various countries, making efforts to build a community with a shared future for humanity.

3. Challenges in the Development of Confucius Institutes along the Belt and Road

The development of Confucius Institutes along the "Belt and Road" plays an important role in international Chinese language teaching and the dissemination of Chinese culture, facilitating regional cultural interaction and economic and trade exchanges between China and countries along the route. In the short term, Confucius Institutes can provide Chinese language teaching platforms for countries and regions along the "Belt and Road" by cultivating local talent through on-site training and cooperation with Chinese partner institutions. Looking at long-term development, the talent cultivation and cultural exchanges conducted by Confucius Institutes can provide support and connections for cooperation projects between China and the host countries (regions), attracting more talent to participate in economic cooperation projects and enhancing China's cultural influence while addressing local employment [3]. More importantly, it is to let the development of the Chinese economy and culture benefit more countries and regions along the "Belt and Road," achieving the goal of shared development while enhancing China's overall soft power. However, based on past experiences, the development of Confucius Institutes often arouses suspicion or concerns in host countries (regions), with labels such as "cultural invasion," "academic unfairness," and "political tool" being attached to Confucius Institutes. At the same time, Confucius Institutes face challenges in their own development, including issues related to their operational models, layout, talent, and funding. These challenges to a large extent may affect the realization of the function of Confucius Institutes along the "Belt and Road" in promoting economic and trade development through cultural cooperation.

The Confucius Institutes have a relatively single mode of operation, which does not yet meet the development requirements of the "Belt and Road" strategy. According to the charter of the Confucius Institutes, their establishment mainly includes three modes: cooperation between the Confucius Institute Headquarters and the applicant (i.e., Sino-foreign cooperation), direct investment by the

headquarters, and authorization of franchise operations by the headquarters, among which Sino-foreign cooperation is the main mode of establishment [4]. Sino-foreign cooperation takes four specific forms, including cooperation between Chinese and foreign universities, joint establishment by Chinese and foreign universities and multinational corporations, cooperation between Chinese universities and foreign governments, and cooperation between Chinese universities and foreign social organizations. Among them, joint establishment by Chinese and foreign universities is the main mode, accounting for over 90% of all Confucius Institutes. The establishment of Confucius Institutes through cooperation between Chinese and foreign universities can effectively utilize the resources and teaching management experience of both parties, providing strong advantages in enrollment, teaching management, teaching implementation, standardization of training, and evaluation of teaching quality [5]. However, with the continuous expansion of the international influence of the “Belt and Road” initiative and the increasing number of participating countries, and the continuous establishment and implementation of infrastructure projects by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in Asia, there is an urgent need for more in-depth knowledge platforms and talent reserves regarding the economic, cultural development environment, and policy environment of the countries involved. Currently, the lack of understanding of the local investment environment by Chinese enterprises “going global” has become a significant obstacle restricting foreign trade and the export of Chinese culture. As the main promoter of spreading Chinese culture, Confucius Institutes have the responsibility and obligation to provide cultural and talent support for the development strategy of the “Belt and Road” [6].

4. Current Status of Main Confucius Institutes in Portugal

4.1. Confucius Institute at the University of Minho

As the first Portuguese university to offer Chinese language courses, the Confucius Institute was established at the University of Minho on December 9, 2005, in collaboration with China’s Nankai University. For over a decade, it has been at the forefront of promoting and propagating Chinese culture in Portugal. The University of Minho not only advances the construction of physical classrooms but also utilizes information technology to develop online classrooms, employing new communication technologies for online Chinese language teaching to enhance the stickiness of Chinese language learning in Portugal. Furthermore, the Confucius Institute at the University of Minho trains Chinese language teachers for Portuguese middle and higher education institutions, provides Chinese teaching materials, and promotes Chinese language teaching at the secondary school level. Additionally, it was the first Confucius Institute in Portugal to establish a Chinese proficiency exam center [7].

In terms of curriculum, the Confucius Institute at the University of Minho offers free courses, short-term courses, and summer courses. In addition to these, the institute also hosts various Chinese-themed events, such as exhibitions of traditional Chinese musical instruments, performances of Chinese traditional music, appreciation sessions of classical Chinese poetry, and discussions on customs and culture.

4.2. Confucius Institute at the University of Aveiro

Based on the profound cultural exchange and cooperation between China and Portugal, the Confucius Institute was established at the University of Aveiro in Portugal in September 2014, with Dalian University of Foreign Languages in China as the cooperating institution. The mission of this Confucius Institute is to support and promote the dissemination of the Chinese language and culture in Portugal, and to enhance friendship and cultural understanding between the two countries. The language courses at the Confucius Institute at the University of Aveiro are divided into three levels:

elementary, intermediate, and advanced, each offering specific courses in Chinese language and culture. The elementary courses focus on teaching basic Chinese knowledge, enabling learners to master basic pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Intermediate courses aim to consolidate learners' Chinese language foundation while gradually improving their oral expression and reading comprehension. Advanced courses primarily focus on enhancing learners' Chinese language proficiency and understanding of Chinese culture, including business Chinese, Chinese culture, calligraphy, and paper-cutting.

Compared to the University of Minho, the courses at the University of Aveiro Confucius Institute are more targeted. Specific courses include Chinese language courses, business Chinese courses, tourism Chinese courses, and Chinese proficiency exam preparation courses. In addition to these, interest-based courses such as calligraphy, hulusi (a Chinese musical instrument), martial arts, and Tai Chi are also offered. The Confucius Institute at the University of Aveiro is committed to the teaching philosophy of "learning by doing." It provides students with more practical opportunities and preferential policies, including 10 hours of extracurricular cultural learning, a two-week study visit to China, participation in Chinese classrooms, seminars and workshops, and visits to historical sites.

4.3. Confucius Institute at the University of Lisbon

The Confucius Institute at the University of Lisbon in Portugal is a Chinese language and culture exchange base jointly established by Tianjin Foreign Studies University and the University of Lisbon in Portugal entrusted by CLEC. As the capital of Portugal, the University of Lisbon, with its political and geographical advantages, has hosted numerous influential Chinese language promotion activities. In 2009, the Confucius Institute at the University of Lisbon organized a seminar on "Learning and Drawing Lessons from China's Stable Economic Development under the Global Financial Crisis of 2008." In 2010, it hosted the "First Chinese Cultural Festival in Portugal," with over 1600 participants. In 2014, the first "Global Confucius Institute Day" event was held in downtown Lisbon, which enhanced the influence of Chinese language and culture in Portugal. To accommodate individuals' learning of Chinese in their spare time, the University of Lisbon has been innovating teaching methods. In 2016, Chinese micro-classes were launched on the video-sharing platform YouTube, providing personalized teaching services based on students' needs through a combination of offline and online classrooms.

After the proposal of the "Belt and Road" initiative, the central radiation intensity of the Confucius Institute at the University of Lisbon further strengthened. In 2016, the number of students at the institute increased by nearly 30% compared to the previous year. In 2017, the President of Portugal praised the Confucius Institute at the University of Lisbon as an important institution for Chinese language teaching nationwide, and as the most important exchange link and cultural bridge between China and Portugal during Portugal's largest education exhibition. At the "12th Global Confucius Institute Conference" in the same year, the University of Lisbon was awarded the title of "Advanced Confucius Institute of 2017." Over the past decade, the Confucius Institute in Lisbon has been exploring adaptive Chinese language teaching and training models, its influence has become increasingly widespread, collaborations with various institutions have increased, and the number of students has increased year by year. As of the first semester of 2017, the number of student registrations had reached 8410, making it a significant force in spreading Chinese language and culture in Portugal.

4.4. Confucius Institute at the University of Coimbra

As one of Europe's oldest and most prestigious universities, the Confucius Institute at the University of Coimbra was established on July 4, 2016, in response to the trend. The Chinese partner institutions are Beijing Second Foreign Language University and Zhejiang Chinese Medical University.

The Confucius Institute at the University of Coimbra has specifically developed a series of courses: Chinese language and culture (Levels 1 to 6), health and wellness, introduction to Chinese medicine, integrated traditional Chinese medicine diagnosis, Chinese medicine discussions, and Chinese medicine teaching for full-time doctors. Classes are held once or twice a week, mostly in the evenings or weekends, to facilitate learning for professionals and practitioners. Additionally, the Confucius Institute at the University of Coimbra hosts a range of cultural activities, such as exhibitions on traditional Chinese medicine knowledge, Chinese musical instruments, Chinese virtues of respecting the elderly, as well as inviting elementary and middle school students to Chinese language classrooms, making dumplings, and holding celebrations during traditional Chinese festivals.

5. Opportunities and Challenges Facing Confucius Institutes in Portugal

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the initiative to jointly build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road. Essentially, the "Belt and Road" initiative is a comprehensive and win-win strategic exchange between China and countries along the Silk Road. The foundational goal of this exchange is to establish mutual trust, and the prerequisite for mutual trust is a common language. Only when languages are mutually understood can cultures be effectively exchanged, ultimately leading to the desired mutual understanding between nations. With the introduction of the "Belt and Road" initiative, the pace of internationalization of the Chinese language has accelerated. As the core carrier of overseas dissemination of Chinese language and culture, Confucius Institutes are bound to receive fresh impetus from the "Belt and Road" initiative.

On December 5, 2018, during his visit to Portugal, Xi Jinping met with Portuguese Prime Minister Costa and expressed willingness to develop "blue economy" and "blue partnership" with Portugal. The two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Belt and Road cooperation. Language, as an important bridge and link for economic, trade, investment cooperation, and civilizational exchange under the "Belt and Road" initiative, plays a crucial role in promoting China's international communication capabilities, enhancing the country's cultural soft power, and increasing international discourse power. In such a historical context, the important role of Confucius Institutes in cultural exchange in Portugal has become increasingly prominent, and their mission and functions have been further deepened and expanded. However, along with opportunities come challenges. Confucius Institutes in Portugal also face many issues.

Firstly, there is a lack of unified and universally applicable teaching materials. Overall, Chinese language teaching in Portugal is still in its early stages. The number of scholars in Portugal who research Chinese language and culture is limited, and the research of Portuguese scholars largely relies on the preliminary results of Chinese scholars, who themselves are also in short supply. Consequently, there is insufficient understanding within the industry regarding Portuguese students' motivations for learning Chinese, their content preferences, and areas of difficulty, making it difficult to compile teaching materials tailored to their needs. Furthermore, the Chinese language teaching materials currently used in overseas Confucius Institutes are mostly compiled by universities from various regions. These materials include introductions to Chinese customs and traditions, trade knowledge related to bilateral business, elective courses for students at all levels, and courses for members of the community interested in Chinese culture. However, regardless of the teaching purpose or target audience, there has yet to be an authoritative, unified, and universally applicable set of teaching materials. Taking the Confucius Institute at the University of Lisbon as an example, they

have chosen the textbook “New Practical Chinese Reader,” which students do not highly rate. The first issue is that the textbook is disconnected from real life, lacking in interest and coherence. Specifically, there is a shortage of content and vocabulary related to daily life, and the themes often jump from one topic to another; for example, discussing Peking Opera in one unit and then moving on to cultural tourism in the next. Moreover, the textbook is too lengthy and thick, making it impossible for students to complete within the 3 to 4 months of each semester. On the other hand, some teachers select teaching materials based on their own professional preferences, which often overlooks the learning motivation of some students and hinders their ability to review and learn new material [8]. Despite these ongoing issues, there has yet to be a bilingual Chinese-Portuguese textbook that meets students’ language needs. It wasn’t until 2017 that the Confucius Institute in Lisbon began to experiment with “Developing Chinese.” As an important platform for the dissemination of Chinese language and culture, it is suggested that Confucius Institutes should establish a standardized teaching plan, curriculum, and syllabus, especially launching an authoritative and widely accepted set of Chinese language teaching materials that are uniform throughout Portugal.

Secondly, there are disparities in the level of teaching staff and unreasonable assessment methods. The teachers at Confucius Institutes mainly consist of foreign teachers from overseas universities, Chinese teachers, Chinese volunteers, Chinese exchange students, and locally hired Chinese teachers. Firstly, there is a significant difference in the educational and cultural backgrounds of teachers, resulting in uneven levels of proficiency. Additionally, lacking unified quality control measures makes it difficult to ensure teaching effectiveness. Secondly, many Chinese government-sponsored teachers do not speak Portuguese, which poses a significant obstacle to communication with students. Moreover, conducting classes entirely in Chinese may not be suitable for students at the beginner level, leading to the use of English as the medium of instruction, which affects teaching effectiveness to some extent. Thirdly, government-sponsored teachers serve for two years at the Confucius Institute, leading to high staff turnover. Many students have expressed that “new teachers are changed every semester,” and the lack of familiarity with previous teaching content among new teachers results in repeated teaching content and decreased teaching efficiency. Fourthly, some teachers have low requirements for teaching effectiveness, and assessment methods are simple and inconsistent. For example, the proficiency test conducted during student enrollment only asks very basic questions like “What is your name? How long have you been studying Chinese?” Furthermore, there is a lack of standardized evaluation systems for final exams, leading to inconsistent assessment methods among teachers, which often fail to accurately reflect students’ true learning levels. It is suggested that Confucius Institutes consider these issues when selecting foreign Chinese language teachers. Additionally, as the popularity of Chinese language teaching in Portugal continues to rise, with an increasing number of teaching points in primary and secondary schools and a decrease in the age of beginners, it is recommended that the Confucius Institute cultivate Chinese language teachers who can adapt to different ages and social classes.

Lastly, the curriculum and cultural activities of the Confucius Institute are insufficient to meet the needs of cultural penetration and the audience. From the curriculum of Confucius Institutes in Portugal, it is evident that the teaching content is relatively homogeneous, mainly focusing on cultural products such as calligraphy, martial arts, traditional Chinese medicine, and Chinese musical instruments. However, the depth of cultural penetration is insufficient. Although the establishment of Confucius Institutes initially aimed to promote traditional culture abroad, there is a lack of in-depth exploration of traditional culture. Such cultural output lacks penetration and sustainability. Traditional Chinese costumes, Peking Opera, martial arts, and traditional Chinese medicine are indeed important components of traditional culture but not the entirety. Simplifying Chinese traditional culture has exacerbated foreigners’ stereotypical impressions of China. We should not be

satisfied with merely exporting superficial symbols of traditional culture abroad but also avoid shallow understanding and one-sided interpretation of traditional culture.

In addition to language, we should also export cultural masterpieces such as films, books, and music, ultimately promoting our mainstream values, ideology, and the wisdom and etiquette of the Chinese people. This is the essence of culture. “Portuguese students believe that the activities of the Confucius Institute lack variety and are not attractive enough, resulting in low participation rates. Students hope that teachers can introduce more Chinese television programs and at least screen a Chinese film once a month to stimulate their interest in learning. Additionally, they also hope that Chinese teachers can recommend videos, articles, or news websites through social networks, allowing them to have a more comprehensive understanding of China.” It is not difficult to observe the universal trend emerging globally, where many young people lack interest in their own traditional culture, let alone accepting the traditional culture of other countries. Although the target audience of cultural output encompasses people of all ages, since cultural dissemination is a long-term process, and language communication development follows unique laws characterized by long cycles and slow effects, it is difficult to achieve instant results. It requires persistent effort over many years, possibly decades, before initial results can be seen. Therefore, as young people become the main audience for cultural dissemination, it is necessary for us to listen to their demands.

6. Situation and Countermeasures

The four Confucius Institutes in Portugal are committed to promoting the dissemination of the Chinese language, providing a bridge for cultural exchange between China and Portugal. Each institute has its own characteristics and has made unremitting efforts to promote the Chinese language and culture. Minho University, as the earliest establishment of a Confucius Institute, has developed a relatively mature educational philosophy. The institute focuses on cultivating students’ cross-cultural abilities, enabling them to master Chinese language proficiency while gaining in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture through rich curriculum offerings and practical activities. Leveraging its geopolitical advantage, the University of Lisbon actively conducts influential proficiency tests, such as organizing the HSK and Chinese teacher training.

Furthermore, the University of Lisbon is committed to promoting innovative Chinese teaching models both online and offline, providing students with more convenient learning pathways. Aveiro University and the University of Coimbra continuously explore Chinese teaching methods suitable for the Portuguese context in practice. They emphasize integrating Chinese language teaching with local culture and make Chinese learning more vivid and interesting by organizing various cultural activities. The four Confucius Institutes in Portugal have played an active role in promoting the dissemination of the Chinese language and the promotion of Chinese culture. They not only provide high-quality Chinese education but also contribute significantly to enhancing friendship between the two countries’ peoples. In the future, it is believed that the four institutes will continue to make efforts to promote educational and cultural exchanges between China and Portugal.

With the proposal of the “Belt and Road” initiative, for Chinese dissemination in Portugal, it is both an opportunity and a challenge. We should recognize that existing teaching staff, materials, and curriculum settings are obviously insufficient to meet the growing number of students and their diverse learning needs. To enhance the development of Confucius Institutes in Portugal, we can adopt various strategies, focusing on the localization and innovation of course content. Designing Chinese teaching materials closely integrated with Portuguese history and culture is crucial. For example, offering specialized courses such as “Integration of Portuguese Literature and Chinese Language,” “Portuguese Art History from a Chinese Perspective,” and “Chinese Learning in the Context of Portuguese History,” aimed at deepening students’ understanding of Sino-Portuguese culture and improving language proficiency. At the same time, organizing cultural festivals and events regularly,

such as “Sino-Portuguese Cultural Week,” Chinese New Year celebrations, Portuguese traditional festival activities, and Sino-Portuguese food exchange meetings, can effectively promote bilateral cultural exchange between China and Portugal and enhance community participation and interest. In addition, the use of digital technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can significantly improve teaching quality. By simulating Sino-Portuguese cultural exchange scenarios, students can learn language and culture in an immersive environment, increasing interactivity and providing a more flexible and personalized learning experience. These innovative and practical countermeasures will not only enhance teaching quality but also deepen cultural exchanges and understanding between China and Portugal, promoting broader international cultural cooperation and exchanges.

Confucius Institutes should, with a comprehensive understanding of students’ learning motivations, develop authoritative teaching materials to guide instruction, supplemented by standardized teaching outlines and assessment systems, to make students’ goals clearer. In terms of teacher management, Portuguese Confucius Institutes should consider how to reduce teacher turnover and focus on cultivating and delivering more high-level teachers proficient in Portuguese, possessing cross-cultural abilities, and teaching experience. Furthermore, the ultimate purpose of language output is to disseminate cultural masterpieces. Since teaching students to write Chinese characters, emphasis should be placed on Chinese character instruction, such as offering specialized courses, assigning dedicated instructors, and analyzing various parts of Chinese characters, rather than merely scratching the surface of “brush graffiti.” Lastly, we should enrich the forms of cultural dissemination and tailor course offerings to the needs of young people as much as possible. Let the Portuguese, especially the younger generation, actively embrace Chinese traditional culture, ultimately enhancing friendship between the two peoples and achieving true mutual understanding. After all, learning a language is about understanding a country, and only through understanding can one identify, and only through identification can one love.

International cooperation plays a crucial role in promoting the development of Confucius Institutes, which has been reflected at various levels. Firstly, by establishing cooperative relationships with educational institutions and cultural groups worldwide, Confucius Institutes can access and utilize various valuable resources and professional knowledge. This includes not only teaching materials and technical support but also educational concepts and strategies for cultural dissemination. For example, by collaborating with overseas universities in joint course development, Confucius Institutes can integrate the advantages of both Chinese and Western educational models, innovate teaching methods, enrich course content, and better adapt to local students’ learning habits and cultural backgrounds. Secondly, teacher exchange programs are another important aspect of international cooperation. Through such programs, Confucius Institutes can not only bring in foreign experts and scholars to participate in teaching and research but also send their own teachers abroad for academic exchanges and further education, thereby enhancing the overall quality of the teaching staff and international perspective. This cross-cultural exchange and learning are key to improving teaching quality. Moreover, the organization of international academic seminars and cultural festivals not only enriches the cultural exchange activities of Confucius Institutes but also provides students and local communities with the opportunity to experience Chinese culture firsthand. Such activities not only enhance the attractiveness of the curriculum but also promote mutual understanding and respect for culture, establishing a more positive international image. Finally, international cooperation provides Confucius Institute students with a broader international perspective. In today’s increasingly globalized world, students with international perspectives and cross-cultural communication abilities are better equipped to face future social and workplace challenges. Therefore, international cooperation not only enhances the international influence of Confucius Institutes but also significantly improves their educational quality.

7. Conclusion

The establishment of Confucius Institutes and the “Belt and Road” Initiative represent China’s development strategy of “going global” in both cultural and economic aspects. By optimizing the layout of Confucius Institutes along the “Belt and Road” countries, adjusting the operating modes, and flexibly arranging teacher resources and financial investments, cultural and economic mutual promotion and collaborative development can be achieved. This will generate a synergistic effect, thereby promoting the overall enhancement of China’s international influence. As one of the “Belt and Road” countries, Portugal holds significant importance in the construction and development of Confucius Institutes. Confucius Institutes in Portugal not only promote Chinese culture and enhance the understanding of China by the Portuguese people but also play an active role in promoting Portugal’s economic development and fostering friendly relations between the two countries.

Of course, in the context of the “Belt and Road” initiative, the development of Confucius Institutes can also leverage the advantages of the Internet by establishing an Internet Plus Confucius Institute model, promoting the integrated development of online and offline Confucius Institutes. Additionally, while utilizing competition formats such as the “Chinese Bridge” to expand the influence of cultural dissemination, a new “Teacher Bridge” project could be introduced. This project would establish a platform linking domestic and foreign Chinese language teachers, facilitating exchanges between Chinese language teachers from different regions to jointly address the practical issues in the international promotion of Chinese culture, thereby enhancing overall research capabilities. Furthermore, efforts should be made to vigorously promote cultural activities at Confucius Institutes, particularly in Portugal, by collaborating with local community organizations to establish platforms for humanistic exchanges and public cultural activities, thereby enhancing the foundation of friendly cooperation between China and other countries. In the context of the “Belt and Road” initiative, it is imperative to fully tap into the development potential of Confucius Institutes in Portugal, leveraging their role in cultural promotion, economic cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges to contribute to the advancement of Sino-Portuguese relations and global influence. This approach also exemplifies China’s commitment to win-win cooperation and common development on the international stage.

In summary, under the “Belt and Road” Initiative, the development of Confucius Institutes is not only a task of cultural dissemination but also an important pathway to deepen Sino-Portuguese relations. Through continuous innovation and adaptation, Confucius Institutes will play a more significant role in promoting cultural and economic mutual promotion and collaborative development, thus making greater contributions to the overall enhancement of China’s international influence. At the same time, this also showcases China’s proactive stance in building a community with a shared future for mankind on the international stage.

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