

Discussion on Rules Docking of Cooperation in Higher Education in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

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Keywords: Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; Higher Education; Cooperative Mechanism; Rules Docking

Abstract. The promulgation of *The Development Plan for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area* clearly puts forward the development goal of promoting the development of educational cooperation and building a talent highland. The crucial path to accomplish this goal lies in the construction and in-depth cooperation in the field of higher education so as to promote the collaborative and innovative development of education in the three places. The intercommunication of elements concerning higher education and policy coordination in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area constitute the guarantee to achieve the development goal in this area.

Introduction

The construction of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (hereinafter referred to as the “Greater Bay Area”) is not only a new measure to promote the formation of a new pattern of all-round opening-up in the new era but also a new practice to advance the cause of “one country, two systems”. On February 18, 2019, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued *The Development Plan for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area* (hereinafter referred to as “Development Plan”), which made an overall deployment for the construction of Greater Bay Area, formulated a detailed action plan, clearly proposed to push the development of cooperation in the field of education and to build a talent highland, and brought a fresh opportunity for the development of higher education in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

Development Plan sets both a direction and a tone for the education construction in Greater Bay Area and clarifies the cooperative relationship between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. Cooperation in the field of education in the new era plays a crucial but special role in realizing the high-quality development of education especially the development of higher education in Greater Bay Area. Cooperation of higher education is inseparable from the collaborative education management. However, collaborative effect of management can never generate in a spontaneous way for its generation, continuance and maintenance shall be safeguarded by a specific mechanism and system. Therefore, a study is helpful for promoting the docking of higher education rules in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, boosting the construction and development of the international science and innovation center and beneficial for providing a reference for international science and innovation cooperation in other fields.

Supporting Conditions and Existing Problems of Cooperation in the Field of Higher Education

Guangdong has the unique geographical advantage of being adjacent to Hong Kong and Macao, as well as the unique advantages of being connected with Hong Kong and Macao regionally, economically and culturally. In addition, Guangdong has a good tradition of exchanges and cooperation with Hong Kong in the fields of economy and higher education. Compared with the cooperation through running schools with foreign higher education institutions, the cooperation in higher education between the mainland and Hong Kong still belongs to the cooperation between

different regions within one country, which does not involve issues such as educational sovereignty, making it easier to achieve cooperation and exchange in terms of specific operation [1].

Cooperation in the field of higher education in Greater Bay Area is also facing practical challenge originated from system differences, administrative barriers, urban labor division, industrial transformation and upgrading, etc.[2] The prominent feature of Greater Bay Area, namely, “one country, two systems, three customs territories and four central cities”, determines that its particular governance mechanism for educational cooperative development. According to some scholars, social integration between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, that is, the convergence of social policies between Guangdong and Hong Kong and the convergence of social policies between Guangdong and Macao, is the origin for the rising problems related to education, medical care, providing for the aged, work and life encountered by people from Hong Kong and Macao in the mainland [3]. The legal systems of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao exhibit respective characteristics in the context of “one country, two systems”. Integration of different systems in three places puts an immediate request for the establishment of a modern innovative governance mechanism in line with the characteristics of Greater Bay Area, making rules docking the way of system integration in Greater Bay Area.

Development Basis of Cooperation in Higher Education in Greater Bay Area

In terms of cooperation history, cooperation in higher education in Greater Bay Area can be divided into three stages [4]. The first stage is the start-up stage starting from 1949 to 1978 when a large number of students from Hong Kong and Macao went to study in Guangdong, and Guangdong offered certain policy support for these students; the second stage is the development stage starting from 1979 to 1996 when institutions of higher education in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao carried out interactive activities; the third stage is the deepening stage starting from 1997 to the present day. Cooperation in higher education between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao has realized further deepening since the beginning of the new century. A series of policies related to education integration and development in Greater Bay Area have greatly pushed the cooperative development of the three places. Due to the positive influence and impetus of *Development Plan* and other policies, various sectors in Hong Kong and Macao have made active responses and issued corresponding policies. Such policies have laid a solid foundation for Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to strengthen cooperation and actively promote policy docking especially in the field of higher education.

In terms of cooperation development direction, cooperation in the field of higher education in Greater Bay Area in the future will be based on the long-term cooperation of education in the Pan-Pearl-River Delta Region. Cooperation in higher education will break through the barriers of administrative divisions, promote the effective flow of institutions, projects, talents and other elements, and build a world-class regional education system of full integration. However, with the proposal and implementation of the national strategy of “Construction of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area”, cooperation in higher education in Greater Bay Area is expected to enter a new stage of integrated development, which puts forward the new requirements for the governments as well as the education authorities of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to unify the strategic planning and seek for the effective flow and efficient allocation of resources.

Characteristics of Cooperative Development Policies in the Field of Higher Education in Greater Bay Area

Higher education system in Greater Bay Area is carried out based on the principle of “one country, two systems” and shall be promoted through consultation between the central government and the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. Such distinctive feature makes it different from other world-class bay areas and provides an opportunity for institutional innovation to some extent. In terms of cooperation policies, under the positive influence and impetus of *Outline of Reform and Development Plan for the Pearl River Delta Region (2008-2020)* and other

documents, all sectors of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao have been making active efforts to strengthen cooperation, especially in the field of cooperative education since 2009 and have achieved new breakthroughs. Ministry of Education promulgated *Exemption of Entrance Examination for Students from Hong Kong in Some Mainland Universities in 2012 (trial)*, stipulating that Hong Kong students have been exempted from the Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan joint entrance examination and some universities in the mainland may select Hong Kong students based on their achievements in Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) since 2012 [5]. At present, the cooperation of higher education between the mainland and Hong Kong and Macao mainly refers to *Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools and Measures for Implementation*, which came into effect on September 1, 2003. However, the regulations and measures are exhibiting many misfits with the rapid development of the situation. The lack of special laws and regulations leads to the lack of clear policy guidance for the joint training programs between mainland universities and Hong Kong and Macao. Policy constraints have made the cooperative education between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao encounter diversified difficulties. The lack of effective guarantee for the legitimacy and sustainability of cooperation has weakened enthusiasm of cooperation among the three places to some extent.

In terms of cooperation system connection, the differences and even contradictions in educational concepts, systems, rules, quality management and other aspects of the three places have resulted in great difficulties for cooperation and docking in the field of higher education [6]. Legally speaking, the legal basis for cooperation in higher education between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao is neither domestic laws nor international laws but a system of complex rules and systems composed of the basic laws of Hong Kong and Macao, WTO framework system, *Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement* (CEPA), and relevant administrative agreements such as *Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Cooperation*, *Framework Agreement on Macao/Guangdong Cooperation*, etc. [7] Cooperation in higher education in Grater Bay Area is still in the extensive stage although great improvement has been made in cooperation between universities in Grater Bay Area and cooperation has realized the change from one-way and single cooperation to two-way and diversified cooperation [8]. Inequalities still exist in institutions and mechanisms, resources and power, and culture and values, and effective policy connection matching communication and cooperation in the fields of education and culture is still required.

Strategic path for Policy Docking of Cooperation in Higher Education in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

Strengthen Top-Level Design

The collaborative development of higher education in Greater Bay Area requires both clear strategic positioning and top-level design, making it urgent to improve the quality and level of the collaborative development of higher education in Greater Bay Area through the coordination led by the central government [9]. It should be noted that in addition to promoting collaborative development, docking feedback from the Hong Kong and Macao SAR governments shall not be ignored. Besides, SAR governments shall play the unique role in promoting collaborative development, promote the mutual coordination and connection between governments and development, which has more important practical significance for deepening the development of education cooperation in Greater Bay Area.

The three places have great differences in the relationship between the government and the market and between the government and the society. In the field of education cooperation, the functions of Hong Kong and Macao governments are different from those of Guangdong government. Therefore, the Hong Kong and Macao SAR governments must also re-examine the drawbacks of the existing policies in promoting education cooperation among the three places, give full consideration to the premise of “one country, two systems” as the general policy to promote policy docking among the three places [10]. In order to meet the needs of the development strategy of Greater Bay Area, all parties should administrate according to law, integrate national interests

with regional interests and promote the organic integration of higher education in the three places on the premise of ensuring national interests.

Improve Policy Coordination and Docking Mechanism

Firstly, continue to build a consensus on the docking of policies, rules and standards. Policy docking is a concrete manifestation of the implementation of various development strategies, and the docking of rules and standards is a basic guarantee for deepening mutual trust and cooperation [11]. Find areas where the interests converge so as to form the largest synergy for extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. Secondly, continue to innovate ways of policy docking. The three places of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, have jointly explored and formed an effective way of realizing the docking of strategies, plans, mechanisms and projects after years of practice. Thirdly, improve the way, in which, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao coordinate their social policy system. The governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao shall adapt to the objective situation of the development and change of in-depth regional integration, formulate and improve the social policy system of the three places, and entitle the policy system with greater policy coordination and integration capabilities.

Summary

Rules docking of cooperation in higher education in Greater Bay Area should start from strengthening the top-level design. At the same time, the two-way beneficial interaction between the central government and local governments shall be noticed, docking between policies and plans shall be promoted, various legal and policy barriers shall be removed, institutions and mechanisms for cooperation and exchanges shall be reformed, efficient allocation of resources shall be realized, and the cost of cooperation and exchange shall be reduced so as to promote facilitation, standardization and sustainability of higher education exchanges and cooperation between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

Acknowledgement

Fund Project: This is stage research result of projects in the department of science and technology of Guangdong province, which name is research on the coordination mechanism of science and technology management in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao (2019A101002022).

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