

Enhancing the Management of International Chinese Language Education in Southeast Asia

Peng Wenhao¹, Wang Yameng², Zou Yixuan³

1 Cebu Cherish School, Cebu 6000, Philippines

2 Lunan Technician College, Linyi 276000, China

3 Linyi Vocational College, Linyi 276000, China

Abstract: In the new era, management has become the “fourth key element” in international Chinese language education, alongside teachers, textbooks, and pedagogy. Southeast Asia, a key region for Chinese education, is vital for the Belt and Road Initiative and regional cooperation. As demand for Chinese grows, improving educational management is crucial. This paper explores enhancing management capacity through three perspectives: promoting Chinese civilization, advancing governance modernization, and supporting high-quality educational development. It also suggests strengthening research, improving talent cultivation, and building sustainable management systems to contribute to global Chinese education governance.

Keywords: Guangzhou area; birth rate; PEST analysis method

1 The Strategic Significance of International Chinese Language Education Management

As global politics, diplomacy, and historical patterns rapidly evolve, international Chinese language education faces both new opportunities and significant challenges. A key question emerges: how can the field balance domestic and international priorities and bridge the East–West divide to achieve sustainable, high-quality development?

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, international Chinese education has grown steadily for over seventy years. It now serves as a key platform for educational openness, cultural exchange, and global mutual understanding. As more countries incorporate Chinese into national curricula and learner numbers grow, new complexities have emerged—ranging from diverse educational needs to institutional and policy challenges.

While teacher training, textbooks, and pedagogy—the traditional “three pillars” — have long supported the field, they are increasingly inadequate in regions like Southeast Asia. Here, issues such as teacher shortages, uneven resource distribution, and outdated management models are acute.

Recent studies highlight education management as a crucial but overlooked “fourth pillar.” Gaps in planning, coordination, and leadership hinder reform and sustainability. Despite rising academic interest, research in this area remains limited.

This paper examines the strategic role of education management through four dimensions: strengthening China’s international communication, modernizing governance, improving educational quality, and enhancing management systems—laying a foundation for future global development.

2 Boosting the Influence of Chinese Civilization Through the Capacity Building of International Chinese Education Management

Compared with traditional competitions based on hard power, cultural soft power has increasingly become a key variable in expanding a country’s international influence and shaping its national image. As a carrier of culture and a pioneer of its dissemination, language plays a fundamental role in the construction of soft power. Chinese is not merely a tool for communication, but also an important medium for conveying Chinese culture and values. As a crucial component of China’s national language strategy, international Chinese language education serves as a vital bridge for promoting Chinese civilization on the global stage.

In some Southeast Asian countries, there is a noticeable tendency to prioritize expansion over governance, quantity over quality, and teaching over management. While Chinese language programs continue to grow in number, the lack of effective governance mechanisms, weak organizational coordination, and underdeveloped support systems have seriously undermined the quality of instruction and limited the depth of Chinese cultural dissemination. Clearly, the absence of strong governance capacity has become a bottleneck restricting both the quality and sustainability of Chinese language education in the region.

3 Strengthening the management capacity of international Chinese language education in Southeast Asia is an integral part of advancing the Belt and Road Initiative

Strengthening international Chinese language education management in Southeast Asia is essential to advancing the Belt

and Road Initiative (BRI). As a strategic hub with deep historical ties, cultural diversity, and close cooperation with China, Southeast Asia plays a pivotal role. Effective language education governance supports mutual understanding, educational collaboration, and cultural exchange.

Despite growing enthusiasm and rapid expansion, Southeast Asia faces significant management challenges, including fragmented institutions, slow policy responses, and inadequate localization. These issues hinder sustainable progress in China-ASEAN educational cooperation, limiting the strategic role of language education. A systematic governance approach, integrating policy design and grassroots implementation, is crucial for fully realizing the benefits of Chinese education within the BRI framework.

Therefore, the enhancement of international Chinese education management capacity in Southeast Asia should be integrated into the broader “soft connectivity” agenda of the Belt and Road Initiative. By aligning educational policies, coordinating teacher management, and establishing standardized evaluation frameworks, it is possible to construct a multilateral, collaborative, and mutually beneficial governance model. Such efforts will not only address current structural issues in Chinese language education, but also provide strong support for building cultural identity and strategic trust between China and Southeast Asian countries—ultimately reinforcing the social foundation of people-to-people connectivity under the BRI framework.

4 Enhancing governance in Southeast Asia’s international Chinese education sector plays a vital role in advancing the overall quality of international Chinese language education

Enhancing the governance capacity of international Chinese education in Southeast Asia plays a vital role in advancing the overall quality of global Chinese language education. As a strategic corridor linking China with the rest of the world, Southeast Asia functions not only as a regional hub for linguistic and cultural exchange but also as a powerful force in the global dissemination of Chinese education and the promotion of civilizational dialogue. The region maintains deep-rooted connections with China in various fields such as culture, economy, and education, having developed a solid foundation for Chinese language learning and long-standing cooperation. With its advantageous geographic location and its unique dual characteristics as part of the East Asian cultural sphere and a multilingual environment, the effectiveness of governance in Southeast Asia has significant implications for surrounding countries and for multilingual education strategies across diverse

linguistic settings.

5 Strategies for Strengthening Governance in International Chinese Education

Language education management plays a critical role in the global dissemination of languages. However, scholarly discussions surrounding the construction of systematic frameworks for language education management remain insufficient, particularly in the context of international Chinese language education governance, where research is still in its early stages. Existing studies primarily focus on two areas: the management of international students in China and classroom management in Chinese language education.

The second major research focus lies in classroom management within international Chinese education. As a fundamental factor influencing teaching efficiency and learning outcomes, classroom management is particularly complex in multilingual and multicultural settings, where student backgrounds are diverse and learning environments are varied. Although the volume of research has grown in recent years, the field still suffers from a lack of theoretical innovation, repetitive themes, and uneven academic quality. Much of the existing literature consists of master’s theses in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL), with a limited number of high-quality journal publications. While some scholars have begun exploring broader areas such as instructional management, volunteer teacher coordination, and internship administration, these studies remain fragmented and lack systematic depth.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, enhancing the governance capacity of international Chinese language education is not only a practical requirement for achieving high-quality development but also a strategic foundation for strengthening the global communication of Chinese civilization and advancing China’s cultural soft power. Particularly in key regions such as Southeast Asia, the construction of an efficient, professional, and sustainable educational governance system has become a critical pathway for addressing complex educational environments and meeting the diverse needs of learners. Moving forward, it is essential to deepen both theoretical research and practical exploration, prioritize the cultivation of management professionals, and promote institutional innovation. Through these efforts, the management system of international Chinese education can evolve toward greater scientific rigor, standardization, and systemic integration, providing strong support for the global advancement of Chinese language education.

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