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Professional Training of Local Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL) Teachers in Malaysia 马来西亚本土汉语国际教育人才培养探讨

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Abstract: The Belt and Road (B&R) initiative has brought the rapid development of the Chinese language in Malaysia and triggered the growing demand for the teachers of Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL) in Malaysia. However, there is still a shortage of professional qualified TCSOL teachers, which has become a major constraint on the growth of the Chinese language and the development of Chinese education in Malaysia. The rapid increase in non-native Chinese language learners in recent years has also highlighted the problem of insufficient TCSOL teachers. Therefore, with the idea of training local TCSOL teachers to solve the teacher shortage problem, the TCSOL programme was established in Malaysia to achieve the professionalism of the local TCSOL teachers in Malaysia. This article explores the program training method and uniqueness from the background and the current situation of local TCSOL teachers

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training programme in Malaysia and provides relevant solutions to the issues encountered. It does not only have practical significance for the development of TCSOL in Malaysia, but it also set a benchmark for the international TCSOL professional training in the future.

Keywords: Malaysia, Local, TCSOL teachers, Professional training

摘 要：“一带一路”倡议的实施带来了马来西亚汉语传播的快速发展，也引发了马来西亚对汉语国际教育人才需求的不断增长。但具备专业资格的汉语教育人才依然很匮乏，并日益成为制约马来西亚汉语传播和汉语教育发展的主要问题，近几年来非华裔汉语学习者的迅速增加更加凸显出汉语国际教育人才不足的问题。因此，在培养本土汉语教育人才解决师资问题的思路下，汉语国际教育专业在马来西亚应运而生，从而实现了马来西亚本土汉语国际教育人才培养的专业化。从马来西亚本土汉语国际教育人才培养的背景和现状出发，探讨其汉语国际教育人才培养的模式和特点，思考其存在的问题并提供相关建议，这不仅对马来西亚汉语国际教育的发展具有实践意义，而且对海外汉语国际教育专业的建构具有参考价值。

关键词：马来西亚，本土，汉语国际教育，人才培养

1. Introduction

Malaysia is the base and an important hub for the Belt and Road (B&R) initiative located in the heart of South-East Asia. With the advancement of the B&R initiative, the development of economic and trade relations between China and Malaysia, the “Chinese Fever” brought the rapid development of TCSOL education in Malaysia. However, the shortage of highly qualified professional TCSOL teachers has been

unable to meet the rapidly growing demand for Chinese teaching and has become a major constraint for the development of Malaysian Chinese language and TCSOL education in Malaysia. According to the data, the total shortage of Chinese teachers in Malaysia is about 90,000 (Xie Yanting, 2014). The increase of non-native Chinese learners has call attention to the shortage of Chinese language teachers and also TCSOL teachers, which led to lower teachers' entry qualifications and a drop in the Chinese language teaching quality. This vicious circle has resulted in the unsolved Chinese teaching problems in Malaysia (Ke Wenjing, 2017). To solve the shortage of TCSOL teachers, besides hiring Chinese teachers and volunteers from China, strengthening the local TCSOL professional training has become an important plan in Malaysia. In 2010, Malaysia's first programme in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL) was established. Through continuous exploration and development, it has led the training of the local TCSOL teacher to the professional path.

2. Local TCSOL Teacher Training Background in Malaysia

With the implementation and advancement of the B&R initiative, Malaysia's economic and trade relations with China have become closer in recent years, which has made the commercial value of the Chinese language more noticeable. Although this has provided more space for the development of TCSOL in Malaysia, the shortage of highly qualified professional TCSOL teachers has been unable to meet the rapid growing demand for Chinese teaching. This has then constituted the establishment of the local TCSOL teacher training programme in Malaysia.

2.1 The rapid development of TCSOL in Malaysia.

Since the Qin and Han Dynasties, the Chinese language has been outspread to the Malay Peninsula along with the sea trade route until today. As the native language of the Chinese people, Chinese language has been rooted and spread through education in Malaysia since then. Beginning in the 1990s, the rise of China has promoted the rapid growth of Chinese language. This can be proved by the trend of non-native Chinese learners learning Chinese language and the increasing number of Chinese language learning in different ethnic groups in Malaysia. In 2011, Chinese language classes became the official curriculum in about 7,600 national primary and secondary schools, which means the “Chinese as a second language” has been formally integrated into the national education system. Furthermore, the establishment of Chinese classes are also popularized in many private tertiary institutions. Currently, not only the Chinese language courses offered by 20 national universities in Malaysia, other private institutions such as Chinese language learning and training institutions, Confucius Institutes and international schools also started to promote Chinese language courses (Hoe Footerng, 2014). The rapid development and establishment of TCSOL education in Malaysia have demonstrated the following unique characteristics.

Firstly, the confluence between the teaching methodology of Chinese as a native language for Chinese students and the teaching methodology of Chinese as a second language for non-native Chinese students. In recent years, due to many of the non-native Chinese students have chosen to study at Chinese primary and Chinese

secondary schools, it has led the Chinese language classes to be set up as a second language learning in national schools. As a result, this has caused the confluence between the two Chinese teaching methods. While for the international school, independent primary and secondary schools, the above-mentioned teaching methodology also appeared in those Chinese classes (Wang Ruixin, 2018). Therefore, Chinese education in Malaysia not only has the history trace of Chinese language education but also incorporates the Chinese language international education in mainstream society. The confluence of the native Chinese language teaching methodology and non-native Chinese language teaching methodology in mainstream society has become one of the important components of the growth of Chinese language teaching in Malaysia (Zheng Tongtao, Jiang Youjing & Chen Ronglan, 2014).

Secondly, the coexistence of localization and internationalization. Malaysia is a multiracial country that consists of Malays, Chinese, Indians and other ethnic groups, and Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) is the national language of Malaysia. Therefore, the Chinese teachers are required to use Malay or Chinese to teach Chinese lessons in many teaching scenarios, and also need to understand the cultures of the local ethnic groups' cultures, in order to cope with the requirements of localization. Besides the Malaysian students, the Chinese language learners also include foreigners residing in Malaysia due to work or study. The TCSOL teachers are required to use English in Chinese classes and learn the foreign students' cultures, to adapt to the development of internationalization.

Thirdly, the influence on Chinese Teaching in Southeast Asia. Through the development of more than 200 years, Malaysia has established a complete system of Chinese education from primary and secondary schools to tertiary institutions. This has made Malaysia the representative country of Chinese education for Southeast Asian countries. The geographical, linguistic and cultural similarities have greatly influenced Chinese teaching in Southeast Asian countries. The developments of Chinese teaching in Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries are supported by Malaysia Chinese education philosophy, teaching concept and method, teachers and also teaching resources.

2.2 The shortage of local TCSOL teachers in Malaysia

Currently, Malaysia's Chinese teachers comprise of those locally trained (mostly) and those trained abroad. From these two sources, most of the Chinese teachers have the Chinese Language and Literature profession background and a small amount of them have the Chinese Language Teaching profession background. Overall, the shortage of highly qualified professional TCSOL teachers has been unable to meet the rapid growing demand for Chinese teaching (Wang Ruixin, 2018).

The training of the Chinese language teachers in Malaysia is mainly carried out through teacher education courses and teacher training programmes offered by the Government, as well as short-term training courses provided by some of the private educational institutions. According to the current situation of local training for Chinese language teachers, the main problems are as follows: (1) Lack of training.

The majority of the Chinese language teachers in Malaysia are trained by the government's teacher training system. However, the number of Chinese language teachers trained by the government every year is very limited, and the progress and number of training are far from the growing demand for Chinese language teaching. (2) Single training goal. According to the training curriculum offered by the Government, the training goal is to equip teachers with the professional knowledge and ability of native Chinese language teaching to meet the learning needs of Chinese students. However, the knowledge and ability of non-native Chinese language teaching are rarely involved. For the rapid growing demand of non-native Chinese language teaching, there is a lack of training goals for the Chinese language teacher. As a result, the Chinese language teachers are unable to apply the correct teaching methodology, which has also affected the teaching outcome to the non-native Chinese language students. (3) Lack of professional training system. Neither the teacher training programmes offered by the government nor the in-service teachers training courses provided by the private educational institutions set up the Chinese teaching training system according to the international level of TCSOL or as a professional programme. With the lack of a professional training system, the problem of training a high-quality Chinese language teacher is still yet to improve.

Therefore, the rapid development of TCSOL in Malaysia is in urgent need of high-quality and professional TCSOL teachers who are familiar with both native Chinese language teaching and non-native Chinese language, as well as the language and culture of other countries, especially the culture of Southeast Asia.

3. The Model for Local Training of TCSOL in Malaysia

With the urgent need for high-quality and professional TCSOL teachers in Malaysia, New Era University College (NEUC) has founded Malaysia's first Diploma in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL) in 2010. The aim was to train professionals in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL). In 2017, a bachelor's degree programme was also established in NEUC. Currently, this is the only TCSOL programme offered in Malaysia Higher Education. The methodology of TCSOL teachers training programme is as below:

3.1 The model of training goals: application, integration and internationalization.

This programme aims to train high-quality and professional local TCSOL teachers who have the knowledge and the ability to teach TCSOL. Moreover, the TCSOL teachers also need to be familiar with the languages and cultures of native and other countries, especially the culture of Southeast Asia. Through this model of training goals with application, integration and internationalization, this can improve the training system to a higher standard. The application model emphasizes that students can apply their knowledge and abilities to specific Chinese teaching practices. The integrated model defines that students can apply the combination of knowledge and ability of education, culture, Chinese and foreign languages to form professional teaching practices and cultural exchange. Internationalization refers to the penetration of international consciousness into professional training, and the formation of students' international and multicultural vision and international

competitiveness through the diversity of teaching language, teaching content and teaching targets.

The implementation of these training goals come from Malaysia's demand for the TCSOL teacher: (i) to have a solid knowledge of Chinese and strong cross-cultural communication ability for the development of Chinese and its culture; (ii) to have strong Chinese teaching ability and global vision to cope with the internationalization in education; (iii) to have cultural literacy and strong language ability when facing different ethnic groups and cultural diversity. Through the above-mentioned training goals, TCSOL teachers will be equipped with solid knowledge of Chinese, strong Chinese teaching ability and strong cross-cultural communication ability.

3.2 The Framework of the Curriculum System: Chinese Language, Education, Local Studies, International Studies

The curriculum system structure is the core of professional training as it is directly related to the cultivation of students' knowledge, ability and quality (Gao Ping, 2011). During the initial stage of setting up the relevant TCSOL programme, NEUC neither fully adopt the curriculum systems of China TCSOL programme nor the local Malaysia Chinese teacher training framework. Instead, the programme optimized the curriculum contents and built a multidimensional interactive curriculum system according to the requirements of the programme professional knowledge and ability. In addition, by comprehending the observation and reference to various regions and various types of Chinese language teaching professional programmes, studying and judging the needs of

localization and internationalization of Chinese language education, finally the solid curriculum and content frameworks were constructed.

The specific framework of the programme:

(1) Chinese Language and Culture Course section includes Ancient Chinese, Modern Chinese, Introduction to Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, Ancient Chinese Literature, Modern Chinese Literature, Chinese Contemporary Literature, Chinese Graphology, Introduction to Chinese Culture and others.

(2) Education and Teaching Course section consists of Pedagogy, Educational Psychology, Principles of Instruction, Instructional Design, Instructional Media, Introduction to Chinese Teaching, Chinese Teaching Methodology, Teaching Chinese Phonetics, Teaching Chinese Grammar, Teaching Chinese Listening and Speaking, Teaching Chinese Writing and Reading, Teaching Material Compilation and Analysis, Bilingual Education, Action Research, Teaching Practicum and others.

(3) The Local Studies section contains National Language (Bahasa Kebangsaan A), Malay Language (BM) Communication, Malaysian Studies, Introduction to the Constitution of Malaysia, Islamic and Asian Civilisation (Tamadun Islam dan Tamadun Asia), Chinese Social and Culture, Malaysian-Chinese Literature, Community Service (CS) and others.

(4) The International Studies section comprises Standard English Course, Workplace Writing, Multicultural Education, Ethnic Relations, Development of Chinese Education in South East Asia, Foreign Literatures, Foreign Literatures and others.

To sum up, the framework of the Chinese Language and Culture Course sections mainly highlights the fundamentals of the knowledge

and ability to expand Chinese language and teaching. The framework of the Education and Teaching Course sections mainly highlights the application of Chinese language and teaching methodology. The framework of the Local Studies section mainly reflects the localization of Chinese language teaching and growth in Malaysia. The framework of the International Studies section mainly reflects the internationalization of Chinese language and teaching, which can be practiced in different and diversified environments and regions. These four programmes' frameworks are interrelated and gradually move towards optimal in the course's specific practices.

3.3 The Core of the Teaching Methodology: Systematic Instruction, Group Discussion, Teaching Observation, Demonstration, Evaluation Feedback

The core curriculum of the professional training - Chinese Teaching class uses the Systematic Instruction methodology in teaching. Group Discussion is used when students are facing some of the key teaching issues. Students will analyze and discuss under the guidance of the lecturer. In addition, more often, lecturer will allow the students to discuss the teaching plan and modify it. After acquiring the basic theoretical knowledge and teaching methodology, students can experience the actual Chinese teaching scenario by observing the senior Chinese language teachers' on-site teaching or through watching relevant teaching demonstration videos. Lecturers and students will also discuss and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the relevant teaching demonstration. Follow up from the observation, students will

be assigned to design their own teaching plan according to different and diversified teaching objectives, teaching contents and teaching targets. Finally, students will need to submit a detailed teaching plan and carry out the teaching demonstration. These teaching methodologies will allow students to experience close to the real classroom teaching atmosphere, to further understand and master the classroom teaching strategies and abilities, and improve the classroom teaching ability (Zhang Ningzhi, 2010, p457).

After the teaching demonstration, lecturer will allow students to make constructive comments on each individual's teaching demonstration process to reveal the strength and find out the weaknesses. Through this kind of evaluation feedback, students will understand their own teaching problems and seek ways to improve teaching. Meanwhile, it also helps students learn from others' teaching strengths and exchange teaching experiences. As a result, the practice of this core teaching method, students not only learn the theoretical knowledge of Chinese language teaching and gain a good professional foundation, they also able to transform the professional knowledge and theories into real practice with different groups of target students and situations.

4. The Unique Characteristics of Local TCSOL Teacher Training in Malaysia

From the delivery of the training programme of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL) in NEUC and the ten-years practical experiences, the following conclusions can be drawn on the characteristics of Malaysia local TCSOL teachers training programme:

4.1 Focus on localizing contents while improvising the international characteristics.

To accommodate the need for both Chinese language localization and internationalization, the general ideas of TCSOL teachers training in Malaysia are as follow: (i) teacher training will be able to adapt the development of Chinese teaching in both Malaysia and Southeast Asia; (ii) the continuous reformation and innovation in curriculum structure, curriculum content, teaching organization form and practice segment, by constructing an open system for the training of Chinese education teachers, to further emphasize the goal of training excellent Chinese language teachers in Southeast Asian countries and regions (Mok Soonchong, 2012). It is the trend of TCSOL teachers training in Malaysia to utilize Malaysia's existing high-quality Chinese education resources, geographical, cultural and linguistic advantages to expand the international influence of TCSOL programme.

Since its establishment, the TCSOL programme has continuously provided students with related courses to improve their English and Malay standards, thus strengthening their cross-cultural communication ability. The main intention to send students to Indonesia for a two-month teaching internship is aimed at improving the students' international Chinese teaching ability. The local teachers training of TCSOL in Malaysia, not only provide the local professional TCSOL teachers to meet the requirements, but also provides teachers support for Indonesian and Singaporean Chinese language teaching. Despite focusing on the localize training foundation, the local teachers' training of TCSOL in Malaysia is constantly adapted to the development of

Chinese language teaching in Southeast Asia, and also highlights the characteristic curriculum of Chinese language teaching in Southeast Asia and expands the influence of this professional training in Southeast Asia.

4.2 Emphasis on both theoretical learning foundation and practicability.

Based on the local theoretical learning foundation, the local teachers' training of TCSOL in Malaysia emphasizes the practicability. There are both theoretical teaching and practical application in each class. The teaching process of each course strives to achieve the combination of knowledge with application, knowledge with ability. The combination of knowledge with application is not just reflected in Chinese teaching methodology, Instructional Design and other practical courses, it also simulated teaching or teaching cases. Moreover, Introduction to Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition courses both include presentation and practice investigation in the teaching planning structure. The combination of knowledge with practical ability enables the students to master their theoretical and transform the knowledge into practical ability. Besides teaching ability and cross-cultural communication ability, the ability to analyze problems, solve problems, teamwork and so on, will also be trained through group's work.

The internship is another important segment to cultivate students' teaching ability and innovation ability, as it is an important component in achieving the training goal (Zhu Hong & Wang Yi, 2013). Through the establishment of internships networking with Malaysia and other countries teaching centers, the programme provides opportunities for the students to feel and experience the real situation of Chinese language

teaching both in local and international environments (Jiang Hong, 2009). Classroom learning and the onsite teaching practice not only greatly enhances the students' Chinese language teaching practice ability, but also receive positive feedback from the internship units and help to build a good repertoire in the education field. This has definitely help laid a good foundation for students' future employments.

4.3 Professional training as a foundation, emphasizing the integrated model.

The disciplinary attribute of cross-border and cross-cultural in the TCSOL teacher training programme determined the teacher training has to adapt to the trends of globalization and the actual demand for integrated Chinese language teachers in the international market. The integrated TCSOL teacher should be a versatile teacher with cross-language and cross-disciplinary knowledge and ability in the background of Chinese, foreign language, culture, education, etc. Its knowledge and ability structure are the focus of study and linked to other similar professions with great interaction knowledge and ability, thus forming the knowledge and ability structure spectrum (Pan Songhan, 2018).

As a result, the local TCSOL teachers' training programme in Malaysia strives to emphasize the integrated model on the professional training model. In terms of knowledge construction, the programme strives to combine knowledge of Chinese language, teaching education and multicultural knowledge to meet the needs of the diverse teaching environment and cultural environment. In terms of ability training, the combination of teaching ability, language capability and cross-cultural

communication ability are accomplishing to meet the demand of Chinese international communication. In terms of language structure, a combination of the advanced level Chinese ability and strong English and Malay language ability help to meet the demand for Chinese teaching in Malaysia's local and international market and Southeast Asia. As a result, the programme helps cultivate teachers with the knowledge and abilities necessary for working. The trained teachers not only can conduct Chinese language teaching and Chinese writing but they also able to involve in other related fields such as the combination of Chinese communication and cultural exchange, translation and education.

5. The Reflection on Local TCSOL Teacher Training in Malaysia

Through 10 years of exploration, New Era University College “TCSOL”, as the only Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages Teachers Training Programme in Malaysia, it has become one of the important strengths in training local TCSOL teachers and has played a very important role in the dissemination and teaching Chinese language in Malaysia. Thus, the practice of professional training has led us to think further for the improvement of training TCSOL teachers in Malaysia.

5.1 The Confluence of the Native Chinese Language Teaching and Non-native Chinese Language Teaching According to the Chinese Education Development Trend.

The confluence between native Chinese language teaching and non-native Chinese language teaching brings new challenges to

the local TCSOL teacher. For example, the Chinese language teachers with native Chinese language teaching theory and experience will need more guidance of the non-native Chinese language theory and methodology to teach the increasing number of non-native Chinese students. On the other hand, the Chinese language teachers with experience and knowledge in non-native Chinese language teaching will also need more guidance in native Chinese teaching methodology to teach local Chinese students. In reality, the training for Chinese language teachers is often unified, it equates native Chinese language teaching with non-native Chinese language teaching, there is no distinction between teacher's training and teaching (Yeap ChunKeat, 2013). Furthermore, based on the principle of saving teaching resources and reducing the cost of education, the Chinese teacher is required to have both the native Chinese language teaching ability and non-native Chinese language teaching ability. This should be the important direction for the training of TCSOL teachers in Malaysia. In other words, under this trend, the TCSOL teacher should not only be able to understand the difference between native Chinese language teaching methodology and non-native Chinese language teaching methodology, but also be able to apply these two different teaching methods to different students' categories.

5.2 The Deepening on the Training and Structure of Chinese Language Cross-cultural Communication ability.

TCSOL teachers are not only to promote Chinese knowledge but also act as communicators of Chinese culture (Wang Qiongwu, 2016).

The diversity of local culture in Malaysia, its development tends to internationalize and influence Chinese language teaching in Southeast Asia. It also has made the ability training of cross-cultural communication an important task for the TCSOL teachers to enable them to teach different students effectively in Chinese language from different cultural backgrounds. In the actual training process, this ability is mainly focused on the setting of cultural knowledge and theoretical curriculum. As a result, students lack a deep understanding of Chinese cross-cultural communication ability, and also the ability to combine Chinese teaching with Chinese cultural communication. Therefore, the training of TCSOL professionals needs to further deepen the construction of Chinese cross-cultural communication ability from the following aspects: (1) To establish specialized foreign language classes combined with various courses, to enhance students' language proficiency and language communication skills. This aims to develop students' Chinese language expression and ability to use a foreign language to adapt Chinese teaching and spreading Chinese culture. (2) To establish cultural courses such as History and Culture of Southeast Asia and Introduction to Chinese Culture. This will help to enhance students' cognition and understanding of different cultures of the world and enhance their cross-cultural communication ability. (3) To set up teaching courses such as Chinese culture teaching, to train students on the methods and skills of spreading Chinese culture in Chinese teaching, and cultivate their cross-cultural communication ability. (4) To develop Chinese art courses such as Chinese painting, calligraphy and paper-cutting to enhance students' ability to practice Chinese culture.

5.3 Focusing on the Multidimensional Perspective of TCSOL to improve the teacher training dimensions.

Previously in Malaysia, Chinese language education was only concentrated in Chinese society and Chinese schools, now it has expanded to the diversity of different ethnic groups. Different educational settings such as preschools, primary schools, secondary schools and universities have become important centers in Chinese language teaching. Different teaching approaches such as physical teaching in schools and online teaching on the internet are implemented in Chinese language teaching. Two different groups of learners - native Chinese language learning and non-native Chinese language learning groups are learning Chinese language at the same time. Therefore, TCSOL training that practices a single approach can no longer satisfy the multi-dimensional change of Chinese education in Malaysia. Different levels of training programme should be offered in TCSOL according to the needs of the multi-dimensional nature of Chinese education. Solutions to these issues may include offering different levels of training curriculum for preschools, primary schools, secondary schools and universities Chinese language teacher; incorporate different Chinese language teaching approaches such as online teaching skills training module to enhance teachers' classroom teaching ability; offer different types of Chinese language teaching curriculum for different target learners, such as native Chinese language learners and non-native Chinese language learners. In conclusion, by enhancing the flexibility and adaptability of TCSOL training, it will help meeting the demands of the diversity professional training level in Chinese

language and to achieve the multidimensional needs of TCSOL development in quality and quantity.

6. Conclusion

In Malaysia, the training of local TCSOL teachers through its unique curriculum system and training model will help produce TCSOL professionals who are adapted to the Malaysia national conditions that have an international vision and international competitiveness. Furthermore, it has not only reflected the characteristics of Chinese education in localization but also responds to the internationalization development of Chinese education, especially the demand for Chinese language teaching in Southeast Asia. This definitely has a positive impact on the development of Chinese international education in Malaysia and has a high reference value for the career development of overseas TCSOL. With the advancement of the B&R initiative, the TCSOL of Malaysia will move toward greater development. Therefore, the training of local TCSOL teachers will need to seize the opportunity to set quality as the core, and continuously perfect the construction of self-improvement. To provide TCSOL with the requirement of high-quality teachers, it has to develop its own professional orientation and unique characteristics, to formulate a more targeted teacher training mode, thus contributing to the sustainable development of TCSOL education.

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