PART 3

***China, Migration, MOOCs:
What's in It for Higher Education in Africa?***

China's Higher Education Engagement with Africa: A Different Partnership and Cooperation Model?

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Abstract

What is the nature of China's educational partnerships with Africa? This chapter examines China's investment in human resource development in Africa, especially in higher education, through several programmes including long- and short-term training of Africans in China, Confucius Institutes, stand-alone projects, and the 20+20 scheme for higher education cooperation between China and Africa. It investigates several apparent differences between China's aid discourse and practice and those of traditional Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) donors. It asks how the enduring continuity of China's discourse on mutual benefit and common good in educational aid can be explained. Can what looks like a one-way partnership in terms of financing really, in fact, be symmetrical?

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1 Introduction

To date, China has paid very little attention to giving a full or detailed presentation of its aid or development cooperation in education or training with Africa, or, indeed, in any other areas.¹ It does not produce glossy accounts of its education development projects, such as those of the Korea International Cooperation

¹ The first full-length account of China's education cooperation with Africa is provided in King (2013a).

Agency (KOICA, South Korea), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA, Japan) and the Department for International Development (DFID, UK), at the global, regional or the country level.² Nor does it produce regular sector policy statements about education. Of course, unlike the above-mentioned bilateral donors, China does not have a designated development agency, just a small Department of Foreign Aid within the very large Ministry of Commerce.³

The lack of detailed accounts of China's education, training or capacity building programmes for Africa makes it harder to pinpoint key differences with traditional donors. Additionally, unlike neighbouring East Asian states, such as South Korea or Japan, where the rationale and scale of their training policies is outlined and readily accessible on their respective websites,⁴ it is challenging to tease out the culture of China's education and training aid. In the absence of the training and/or education policy papers common to most Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors,⁵ it is necessary to sift through the more general discourse of China's cooperation for references to educational aid.

It is fortunate, however, that in April 2011 China's State Council issued a White Paper on *China's Foreign Aid* (China, 2011). This illustrates that China provides foreign aid related to education and skills development under several different headings, notably 'technical cooperation', 'human resource development cooperation', as well as 'education' and 'training'. Human resource development (also 'HRD') is perhaps the most general of these terms.⁶

Human resource development cooperation means that China, through multilateral or bilateral channels, runs different kinds of research and training programmes for government officials, education programmes, and other personnel exchange programmes for developing countries. (China, 2011, 8)

2 See, for example, DFID (2013), JICA (2010 and 2013), or KOICA (2011, 192–206).

3 That said, there have been some very recent indications that China is moving towards a dedicated development agency, possibly entitled the 'International Development Agency of China'.

4 See, for instance, the detail on KOICA's website, <http://www.koica.go.kr/english/aid/education/index.html> (accessed on 26 November 2013) and the JICA site, www.jica.go.jp/english/ (accessed on 26 November 2013).

5 Not all DAC donors have habitually produced education policy papers; Germany, for instance, just launched its first ever education policy in 2011 (BMZ, 2011).

6 Though the 2011 White Paper notes that 'human resource training is an important part of capacity building' (China, 2011, 23), these two terms are used interchangeably with 'training'.

Similarly, in its 2013 White Paper on *China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation* (China, 2013, 23), 'human resources development and educational cooperation with Africa' are treated almost as a single concept.

Occasionally, China distinguishes support to education and culture from more general human resources development, but, for instance, in *China's African Policy* (China, 2006, 7), 'Cooperation in Human Resources Development and Education' is discussed under the heading of 'Education, Science, Culture, Health and Social Aspects'. More important than these changing descriptors, however, is the fact that the key elements of this educational capacity building in Africa (and other areas), principally involving tertiary level training, goes back to the 1950s. The foreign aid White Paper puts it nicely: 'Educational aid from China has helped recipient countries train a large number of qualified personnel in the fields of education, management, and science and technology, and rendered intellectual support for their social and economic development' (China, 2011, 14).

The range and diversity of these cooperation activities between China and Africa in the area of higher education and research have grown markedly in the eight years following the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit of November 2006, as new forms of exchange have been established by the triennial FOCAC conferences. We shall not, in the space of this chapter, be able to review more than a selection of these modalities of 'intellectual support', but we shall seek to draw out some of the common features of this engagement. In particular, we shall explore the extent to which the character of China's aid policy in general can be illustrated by its education and training policies and practice.

China claims to present what is essentially an ethical aid policy, based on principles of mutuality, complementarity, political equality and common development. Even though the overall politics of the Maoist era were very different from those of Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai, for example, in the mid-60s, frequently characterised China's solidarity with Africa and Asia in the following terms: '[M]utual economic assistance among the Asian and African countries was the kind of assistance between poor friends who were in the same boat pulling oars together' (China, 2000). This emphasis on reciprocity is reproduced, several decades later, in the closing remarks of the 2010 aid exhibition: 'This is a road of sincere and selfless friendship [...] This is a road of win-win for all on an equal and reciprocal basis. During these 60 years [...] China has stepped up mutual trust with the developing countries, explored complementarities and realised common development' (China, 2014).

Interestingly, the terms 'mutual respect', 'mutual trust', 'mutual understanding' and 'mutual learning', which are so widespread in China's formal discussions of its relations with Africa, are seldom connected to age-old Confucian doctrines

of relationship. In a recent work, however, Stephen Chan suggests that not only is this 'horizontal reciprocity' derived from Confucius, but it is also 'natural, desirable, and inescapable' (Chan, 2013, 16). He argues that '[...] when Chinese officials begin their perorations on Africa with sermonesque reiterations of peace and friendship and assistance, they really mean it' (Chan, 2013, 16).

Clearly, if there is such a thing as a 'Chinese brand' of development aid, it is one that revolves around the principles we have just mentioned: friendship, mutual trust, mutual respect, mutual support and benefit, common development, and win-win economic cooperation. It is these elements, presumably, that China would regard as 'overseas aid with its own characteristics' (China, Ministry of Commerce, 2014). Bearing this wider ethics of overseas aid in mind, in this chapter we shall review China's primary modalities for cooperation in education and training, with a particular focus on higher education partnerships.

We shall argue, firstly, that since 2000 China, along with Japan, India and South Korea, has developed⁷ a Pan-African mechanism, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, to address Africa as a whole. Several interesting issues surround the status and nature of these Pan-African mechanisms on aid or cooperation. Clearly, documents with specific pledges to Africa such as the FOCAC 2009 Declaration (China, 2009), the India-Africa Forum Summit of 2008 (Government of India, 2008), or the Seoul Declaration of the Second Korea-Africa Forum (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, South Korea, 2009) are not owned solely by specific countries in Africa; they are continent-wide. But are they also owned by the African Union, in addition to particular states? In this regard, there may be an interesting contrast between India's reliance, after its India-Africa Forum Summit, upon the African Union in deciding on the precise location of its various 'human resource development' institutional commitments, and China's continued practice of bilateralism in allocating its 'aid' hospitals, schools and training provision.

Secondly, China, along with India, Japan, Germany and South Korea, pays considerable attention to training and/or capacity building in the host country. Arguably, Japan, China, India and Germany run the largest short-term training schemes in the world.⁸ South Korea, in turn, has pledged to raise the number of African trainees in South Korea to 5,000 by 2012. It should be noted, however, that most forms of short and long-term training, with the possible exception

7 In the 1960s and 70s, China maintained political and diplomatic relations with a small number of African nations, such as Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia and Egypt.

8 See NORRAG (2011) for a detailed analysis of both the long- and short-term training aid provided by these and other countries.

of third country training, are tied aid. It is important to underline the fact that, in the view of the donor countries, such training is justified on the grounds of the benefits of exposure to specific, relevant development experience of each state. For instance, both South Korea and Japan make clear that in-country training is vital in order to profit from the unique development experience of the host nation. A similar case is made by China, for example, with respect to its International Poverty Reduction Centre, which seeks to demonstrate the strategies used by China to move millions out of poverty to international policymakers. Equally, China's success in providing nine-year compulsory education even before the 2001 creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is frequently referenced (King, 2013b).

Thirdly, many countries, including Japan, China and South Korea, place great store in the role of their own experts, sent overseas as technical assistance. Arguably, their experts and volunteers are an absolutely crucial part of bilateral aid. In this regard, it is significant to note that as of November 2009, South Korea had decided to send as many as 1,000 aid volunteers to Africa alone. China's volunteer numbers are growing slowly, with the exception of language volunteers, but its contingent of doctors, nurses and teachers in Africa remains large (China, 2011, 10).

These are just a few examples of instances where these three major Asian countries, China, Japan and South Korea, have followed rather similar paths.⁹ There are, of course, other dimensions of their aid history that stand apart, such as China's involvement with the non-aligned movement. Equally distinct is the very substantial historic migration of Chinese to different parts of Africa for trade and enterprise development.

As we turn now to examine briefly the main modalities used by China in providing higher education cooperation to Africa, we should note that mutual learning is one of the key emphases of the collaboration.¹⁰ Indeed, one of the first themes highlighted out in *China's African Policy* is two-way learning, expressed as follows:

Learning from each other and seeking common development. China and Africa will learn from and draw upon each other's experience in governance and development, strengthen exchange and cooperation in education, science, culture and health. (China, 2006, 3)

9 For a comparison of the similarities of Chinese and Japanese cooperation approaches, see King (2007).

10 There are of course substantial disagreements regarding the very idea of lesson learning and 'best practice'. These have been reviewed in *NORRAG News*, 2007.

Of course, it is one thing to claim and another to translate into practice. The task at hand thus invokes the age-old challenge of analysing policy-and-practice. Mawdsley (2011), for example, persuasively draws the landscape of South-South cooperation, including China's key role, but notes that there is a lack of empirical study of the claims regarding mutual benefit.

Intriguingly, the final draft of the Busan Outcome Declaration makes some reference to mutual learning, focusing, significantly, on South-South learning:

Encouraging the development of networks for knowledge exchange, peer learning and co-ordination among South-South co-operation actors as a means of facilitating access to important knowledge pools by developing countries. (OECD/DAC, 2011, para. 30)

In this context, the appearance of the term 'triangular co-operation' in the Declaration is worth noting. This term is frequently bracketed by South-South co-operation in the document, arguably implying that South-South co-operation may be enriched by triangulation with a Northern partner.¹¹

We shall now analyse in more detail the modalities used by China in its general human resource cooperation with Africa. We shall cover 1) the human resource dimensions of the FOCAC pledges, paying particular attention to the latest commitments from the November 2009 and July 2012 Ministerial Conferences in Egypt and Beijing; 2) the short- and long-term capacity building of African personnel in China; 3) the role of the Confucius Institutes (also 'CIs') in Africa; 4) stand-alone education or training projects outside the FOCAC framework; 5) and, finally, the 20+20 higher education co-operation between China and Africa. We pay particular attention to the theme of partnership running through a good deal of this interaction between China and Africa in education and training, particularly the 20+20 project. We should note, however, that while some of these items are concerned with the formal education system of either China or various African countries, others are related to training beyond the formal education sector, in agriculture, health, infrastructure, etc.

2 **The Latest Human Resource FOCAC Commitments to Africa for 2010–2012**

As mentioned above, China has a mechanism, the FOCAC, which seeks to engage with virtually the whole of Africa. Unlike many traditional donors, such

¹¹ We shall note an initiative in trilateral cooperation in our subsequent, brief review of the China-Africa 20+20 cooperation, and its link to UNESCO.

as France and Britain, China does not now, as it once did, cooperate principally with a special sub-set of countries with political, historic, linguistic, geographic or economic ties with the donor country. Also, China has historically sought to avoid giving these FOCAC pledges the appearance of aid or development assistance. Instead, these pledges are presented as elements of a joint agreement between two partners, 'featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges' (China, 2009, para. 1.2). China would also argue, like Japan, that its cooperation is primarily responsive. Both countries have substantial bilateral discussions at the country level, which correspondingly lead to country agreements, but also have continent-wide agreements negotiated through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and FOCAC. Indeed, it could be claimed that the very clear three-year target orientation of the FOCAC process has influenced the TICAD, spurring it to similarly adopt highly active follow-up measures upon the implementation of pledges. The same may be true of the Korea-Africa Forum, which has met at three-year intervals in 2006, 2009 and again in 2012.

Be that as it may, the FOCAC action plan for Africa is not an accumulation of individual country plans, but rather a freestanding framework that has manifest a fairly stable pattern in its declarations over five FOCAC triennia since its inception in 2000. First of all, FOCAC emphasises political cooperation, then cooperation in international affairs and economic cooperation, followed by 'social development' (China, 2003, para. 5) and, within this 'human resources development and educational cooperation' (China, 2003, para. 5.1). 'Cultural exchange and cooperation' also falls under social development (para. 5.3), and finally there is 'people to people exchange' within the same major section (5.4). The precise allocation of education and training to different categories differs a little in the different triennial FOCAC action plans. It is also worth noting from FOCAC IV in 2009, however, that items such as the training of 2,000 agricultural technicians and the deployment of 50 agricultural technology teams to Africa are categorised as Economic Cooperation (China, 2009, para. 4.14). Equally, the 'China-Africa joint research and exchange plan to strengthen cooperation and exchanges between scholars and think tanks' actually falls under the people to people exchanges and cooperation (China, 2009, para. 6.3.2).¹² The diffuse nature of the development portfolio is probably best understood as the coordination and collection of the many different plans of various sectoral ministries in China by the FOCAC process.

12 The first meeting of the China-Africa Think Tank Forum took place in Hangzhou on 23 November 2011, meeting between China and 27 African countries. See FOCAC website, www.focac.org/eng/xsjl/zflhyjijlh/t880276.htm (accessed on 27 March 2014).

The education-specific pledges build on the format of previous FOCAC commitments,¹³ and include an increase in long-term Chinese government scholarships per annum to 5,500 by 2012 and 6,000 by 2015; a pledge to support teacher and head teacher training for 1,500 participants; and a new 20+20 cooperation plan for intensive one-to-one cooperation between 20 Chinese universities or vocational colleges and 20 African counterparts. FOCAC IV, in contrast, pledges to provide Masters in Publication Administration (MPA) training to 200 middle- and high-level administrative personnel in programmes in China. Finally, the 'education' section contains a strong commitment to continue to develop Confucius Institutes, increase scholarships for African Chinese language and cultural teachers, and a redoubling of efforts to raise the capacity of African Chinese studies instructors.¹⁴ Under the category of human resources development, moreover, there is a continued commitment to the massive, short-term training of what the FOCAC calls 'African professionals in various sectors', with numbers reaching 20,000 in the 2012 triennium and 30,000 in the triennium ending in 2015.

One of the biggest additions to the FOCAC pledges in the 2010–12 agenda is the strengthened commitment to science and technology cooperation. This now includes the launch of a China-Africa science and technology partnership plan, China's execution of 100 joint research and demonstration projects, and the invitation of 100 African postdoctoral researchers to conduct scientific research in China. The FOCAC V commits to support the development of Chinese studies centres in African universities, and makes a generous contribution to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for higher education in Africa.

Similarly, in the field of medical cooperation, where, under the 2006–2009 triennium, China built 30 hospitals and 30 malaria treatment centres, they were now, under FOCAC IV, proposing the provision of medical equipment, the training of 3,000 doctors, nurses and administrative personnel, and the

13 Interestingly, the FOCAC first proposal for education and training aid in 2000 did not contain numerical targets, but rather stated the following: 'The Chinese side pledges to: grant more scholarships to African students to study in China, continue to send teachers to Africa to help local institutions of higher learning improve their disciplines and specialties, and set up channels of communications between universities of the two sides for the study of the Chinese and African civilisations; and establish an African Human Resources Development Fund and gradually increase financial contribution to the Fund for the training of professionals of different disciplines for African countries'(China, 2000, para. 15.1).

14 China is particularly eager to increase the numbers of African teachers of Chinese in Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms.

contribution of USD 1.5 million to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD's) nurse training and maternity projects.

How are we to understand these highly varied pledges with respect to China's aid modalities and approaches, potential differences from the practices of traditional DAC donors, or the leverage these offers might have on recipient countries? First, we can say that in addition to the continuation of its long-term historical support for student exchange and despatch of Chinese teachers, China's current commitments demonstrate much greater diversity than those of the past. Second, there is little doubt that China's educational aid agenda does not mirror the Education for All (EFA) priorities of the World Conference on EFA at Jomtien in 1990 or the World Forum on EFA at Dakar in 2000. Though the 2009 FOCAC notes the urgency of achieving the MDGs, it sees this more as the obligation of developed states in particular to deliver on their earlier pledges. Third, although FOCAC pledges are not bilateral but pan-African, they will very clearly be executed by Chinese universities or vocational colleges, Chinese think tanks, scientists, agricultural technologists or language teachers, and medical personnel. In other words, as mentioned above, Chinese expertise is central to the execution of these elements of the FOCAC agenda, just as elsewhere on the agenda, Chinese firms and entrepreneurs are seen as critical to the delivery of the China-Africa investment commitments.

The question, therefore, arises as to whether FOCAC's priority is basic or post-basic education and training. In terms of numbers, up to 50,000 short-term trainees are anticipated over the two triennia from 2009–2015; 34,500 Chinese governmental scholarships are allocated for the same period; and 4,500 spaces for doctors and nurses, with another 2,000 for agricultural technicians, have been created, not to mention those for postdocs, NEPAD trainees and others. In other words, from 2009–2015, well over 90,000 African personnel are intended to receive training at the post-basic level. These figures would seem to demonstrate that China focuses primarily on post-secondary and vocational training in practical applications of technology.

How precisely these very specific categories are decided at both the FOCAC and bilateral level when there are 50 African partner countries, and one non-African partner, China, involved, is not well-known, or much researched,¹⁵ but, as stated above, it is complicated by the fact that the FOCAC agenda also includes the priorities of the multiple Chinese ministries of Commerce, Foreign Affairs, Culture, Education, Science and Technology, Agriculture, Health and several others. As mentioned earlier, these are not yet coordinated by a single development agency in China.

15 See available information in King (2009b) and Taylor (2011).

In light of this, the ability to set priorities and translate them into a single document adopted in consensus with African countries for FOCAC is a substantial diplomatic achievement. The allocative challenge of distributing all these varied offers across an enormous variety of African contexts, however, must be huge, and involve staff in many Chinese and African ministries, host universities in China, as well as both the political and economic and commercial branches of China's African embassies. Some sense of the sheer scale of the activities associated with the FOCAC process can be gathered from a brief look at the FOCAC summary document on 'Implementation of the Follow-up Actions of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation' presented at the end of the three-year period from 2007–2009 (FOCAC, 2009a).

Again, in terms of comparing this goal-setting with that of traditional donors, it does appear that these 'human resource development' and other targets are taken very seriously by China. While aware of the dangers of the 'targetisation' of development—or what Jansen (2005) has called the 'politics of performance'—in which the very target numbers actually become a substitute for policy, many traditional donors would do well to consider China's determination to deliver on its target pledges, and compare that with the failure of several major countries to deliver on their 2005 Group of Eight (G8) commitments.¹⁶ At the same time, however, it is arguable that China itself is somehow caught in these target numbers, as there is clearly pressure to ensure that each set of FOCAC human resource development targets goes beyond those of the previous triennium.

It should be remembered also that unlike many of the more established agencies, such as DFID and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which have professional cadres associated with gender, environment, health, education, social development and governance, China has not developed these groups of aid professionals. Indeed, across the whole of Africa, China only has two Education Counsellors and two Science and Technology Counsellors, and their responsibilities have been limited to just two countries, South Africa and Egypt. In this area, Japan, again, has been more like China, relying on generalists and a very small number of professionals until an attempt, in the early 2000s, to develop more professional communities of practice within JICA.¹⁷

16 For instance, most G8 countries have not met the 2005 G8 Gleneagles target of doubling aid to Africa. See also the threats of reduced education aid financing in EFA/GMR (2011). The UK's DFID, in contrast, has successfully held to its overall aid target of reaching 0.7 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) by 2013.

17 See King and McGrath (2004) for an account of this process in JICA.

3 Short- and Long-Term Capacity Building of Africans in China

We have already mentioned the rise in target numbers for short-term trainees to 30,000 and long-term students to 18,000 over the 2012–2015 triennium. We have also noted that two DAC donors, Japan and Germany, pay serious attention to short-term training, while others such as the United Kingdom (UK) have cut back on this overseas training element. China, like Japan, Germany and, also, India, continues to believe that the direct exposure of students and trainees to their own development experience is vital. Moreover, serious students from Africa find it easier, in terms of visas etc., to access universities in China and India than those in many European countries, most notably the UK. The apparent ease and speed with which China still appears to be able to organise access for this diverse range of short and long-term training is noteworthy.¹⁸

4 Locating and Categorising the Unique and Dramatic Case of the Confucius Institutes¹⁹

The rise of the Confucius Institutes over the last nine years is commonly understood as something akin to the British Council, Goethe Institute or Alliance Française—another form of cultural diplomacy.²⁰ There are, however, very significant differences between these institutions and the Confucius Institutes, not least among which is China's insistence the spread of Confucius Institutes should be demand-driven, and not the object of a particular FOCAC numerical target. This is expressed as 'the principle of the foreign party taking precedence whilst the Chinese party plays the role of providing assistance'.²¹ In other words, unlike other training modalities, China does not have a target for Confucius Institutes expansion in Africa.

18 Much more detail on these two very large modalities of training in China is available in King (2013a).

19 None of the other obvious BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) nations, such as India, Brazil or Russia, have expended such efforts in promoting their major national language.

20 There are also an even large number of Confucius Classrooms that operate principally at the school level.

21 See the Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters website, <http://english.hanban.org/> (accessed on 3 March 2014).

As a result of this policy, there are some 100 Confucius Institutes in the United States of America (USA) and just 33 in all of Africa. The global diffusion of Confucius Institutes does appear, in a small way, to parallel the British Council and other cultural bodies, which are often associated as much with their countries' foreign offices as they are with development aid. What distinguishes the Confucius Institutes as a mechanism and an approach, however, is that they are not located on the main streets of the world's national and regional capitals, but rather in the heart of their major universities. Thus, they are found in the University of Nairobi, Rhodes University, the University of Cairo and a further thirty African sites. As their principal focus is the promotion of Mandarin and Chinese culture, it is unsurprising that their parent body, *Hanban*, the Chinese Language Council and Confucius Institute Headquarters, is a public body affiliated with the Ministry of Education.

There are several varieties of scholarships linked to Chinese language instruction from *Hanban*; these can be both long- and short-term, and, since 2010, the organisation has run a three-week summer 'camp' which brings groups of Chinese language learners from different universities and secondary schools to spend time in China. The sheer range of opportunities to study in China, from Confucius Institute scholarships to short-term language exposure, is considerable.

A further distinguishing modality of the Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms is that while all of these institutions are located outside the Chinese Mainland, each of them is formally linked to a university or secondary school in China. The Chinese institutions thus comprise the source of the Chinese co-directors of the various Confucius Institutes as well as regular and volunteer Chinese teachers sent to partner universities in Africa. The Chinese partner may host the different scholarship and language visitors to China from Africa. This crucial school and university partnership arrangement provides an attractive and versatile aid modality in a world that is increasingly keen to develop sustainable links with Chinese educational institutions.

As to locating the Confucius Institute as a particular aid modality, there are clearly problems with identifying it as a form of official development assistance, as more than 50 per cent of the support from China is going to Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in so-called developed countries. Yet almost all Confucius Institutes currently receive a generous annual subsidy from China for their work, in addition to receiving language teachers and volunteers. Furthermore, it is clear that there is scope for the Confucius Institutes to become a mechanism for broadening inter-university cooperation beyond language to include Centres of Chinese studies, as encouraged by FOCAC V in 2012.

This raises the further question as to the character of the partnership associated with the Confucius Institute. There are broadly two modalities: in cases where the Confucius Institute arrives at a university, such as Rhodes or Nairobi, with no previous instruction in Chinese language or culture, the Confucius Institute is responsible for introducing the study of Chinese at the degree level into the university system. On the other hand, when the Confucius Institute is invited to a university that already grants degrees in Chinese language and culture, though the Confucius Institute may supplement that instruction, it principally offers a range of non-credit activities for both regular and extra-mural students. It may also be responsible for organising seminars and special lectures relating to China.

Clearly, the Confucius Institute initiative may be classified as a form of soft power, or cultural diplomacy, but those terms do not do justice to the demand side of the Confucius Institute equation. The Confucius Institutes are not so much creating the demand for Chinese language learning as they are responding to a widespread vocational interest, evident in many countries, in acquiring Chinese linguistic and cultural expertise. This demand is of course inseparable from the very visible presence of Chinese enterprise, industry and commerce in so many different countries, especially in Africa, and their appreciation of workers with Chinese language skills.

Over the last nine years, this huge language initiative has continued to be basically demand-driven and responsive. Firstly, host institutions have taken the initiative in terms of starting up Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms. Secondly, there is considerable evidence of *Hanban's* openness to local institutional proposals generated by the Confucius Institutes. Different programmes and projects have been associated with different Confucius Institutes, including those in Africa. There is no evidence of a single, common curriculum and/or agenda for the Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms being promoted by Beijing. Instead, there appear to be some several hundred flowers blooming in different contexts and economic environments.

5 China's Stand-Alone Education and Training Projects in Africa

Thus far, we have briefly examined two large-scale frameworks within African countries that are supported by China. The FOCAC framework operates as a pan-African modality for relating to the continent, encompassing a series of human resource development, cultural, education and training commitments offered to, and negotiated with, the whole of Africa (with the exception of the

three countries maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan). Depending upon their economic status, and the visibility and impact of China's wider presence in their state, countries may differ in the extent to which they are able to profit from these FOCAC offers.

In contrast, the Confucius Institute framework, though mentioned in the later FOCAC agreements, extends far beyond Africa; the continent hosts only a 12th of global Confucius Institutes and a handful of Confucius Classrooms.

Independent of these frameworks, China has continued to give considerable attention to its bilateral commitments to African countries, as evidenced by the long-standing tradition of very senior politicians visiting Africa annually for more than 20 years. Often, these visits end in both sides signing off on a series of bilateral agreements. Of course, these non-FOCAC bilateral commitments cover a wide range of areas, including education and training, but they tend to be driven by the priorities of the African partners as much as by China's. The official rhetoric frames these interactions as win-win agreements amongst partners rather than donor-recipient agreements.

It should, therefore, not be surprising that African partner governments have tended to prioritise development projects that have proved difficult to secure from traditional sources, such as infrastructure, with a particular emphasis on roads, dams, power projects, stadia, etc. In contrast, many OECD donors are more prepared to support projects central to the delivery of the MDGs, including basic education and health care. This is not to say that human resource development projects, including formal education, have not figured in China's cooperation agenda with Africa. But unlike DFID's commitments to several African countries, for instance, China is certainly not allocating millions of renminbi (RMB) a year to basic education in sector budget support. Rather, it is responding to countries that have made specific higher education initiatives a priority. Hence, China has been responsible for building, equipping and staffing the large Ethio-China Polytechnic College in Addis Ababa. Similarly, in Malawi, China recently constructed a new Science University. In a further project supporting NEPAD's education and training programme, China has agreed to fund the development of a clinical master's degree in nursing in five African countries. Liberia also hosts several completed university projects, and several others are planned for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For many African countries, their priorities for bilateral projects with China lie outside formal education. Other donors, such as the UK and Japan, have very much larger formal education support programmes than does China. It is perhaps for this reason that China does not significantly participate in the various country-level arrangements for education aid donors to meet and coordinate their activities. This is also attributable, however, to the fact that China

remains very hesitant about being seen as an aid donor as opposed to a partner in South-South cooperation.

6 The 20+20 Higher Education Collaboration between China and Africa

China claims partnership is at the heart of its higher education cooperation with Africa. It is perhaps most obvious in the Confucius Institute partnerships, but several of other modalities also rely upon a Chinese partner to deliver staffing, local or overseas training, and/or administration. University partnerships between China and Africa go back to at least the 1980s and 1990s. Several of these long-standing examples of twinning have been reinforced by the addition of a Confucius Institute on the African side of the partnership. On the Chinese side, many domestic universities now have multiple Confucius Institute staffing obligations, not just to Africa, but also to the USA, Europe and other regions. The Confucius Institute framework has thus acted as an agent in the multi-dimensional internationalisation of Chinese universities. That said, it is by no means the only mechanism, as a series of competitive schemes in China exist to support the further internationalisation of its own higher education.

One such initiative with substantial connections to Africa is the 20+20 scheme linking twenty universities or colleges in Africa with counterparts in China, announced at the November 2009 FOCAC IV ministerial conference. Universities in China competed to recruit appropriate African partners and to be selected by the Chinese Ministry of Education. One of the key selection criteria was evidence that the Chinese partner has considerable experience of working in and with Africa.

Although it might be thought that Chinese universities would prefer to partner and work with high-ranking European and North American universities—and many such collaborations do exist—the final twenty Chinese universities selected for the 20+20 project included several eminent institutions, such as Peking University, Jilin, East China Normal, Shanghai Normal, Hunan, and Beijing Language and Culture Universities.²² On the African side, most of the selected higher education institutions (HEIs) were in the top 100 African HEIs;

²² In terms of China's different schemes for encouraging the development of world-class universities, no less than five of the twenty selected Chinese universities were in the prestigious 985 scheme, ten were in the similarly prestigious 211 scheme, and ten in China's top 100 universities.

these included some of the continent's most prestigious universities, such as Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Makerere, Lagos, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Cairo.

Certainly, as just mentioned, the 20+20 scheme is an attractive opportunity for the internationalisation of Chinese universities. The same attraction, however, likely also exists for many of the African HEIs, as they have diversified their academic links beyond their historical European partners.²³ The funding for 20+20 is provided by China's Ministry of Education and remains with the Chinese partner, in contrast to the Confucius Institute framework, wherein Chinese funding is actually transferred to the African or other overseas partner. As with the Confucius Institutes, there is the expectation that the host university, be it African or Chinese, would support the accommodation and expenses of delegations, staff or students coming from the other university. Better-off African universities are intended to support the costs of their own staff travelling to China, but, otherwise, travel for African university staff or students are dependent on the Chinese partner.

What are some of the research issues around this particular example of China-Africa higher education partnership? In the all-important area of symmetry in South-South cooperation, there is evidence that some Chinese professors perceive their 20+20 partnership as a form of capacity building for their African partners. In this sense, the 20+20 is seen as 'an aid project'. Equally, however, many—perhaps most—Chinese staff see the relationship as potentially symmetrical, even if most of the funding comes from the Chinese side. It is in this spirit that a senior Chinese international office staff member stated:

There is learning on both sides; we have learnt on the research side. So we see it as equal. There is an old saying: '*Qu Chang Bu Duan*—To enhance each other we learn from each other'. We have weaknesses and advantages and vice versa for our partners in Africa. We compensate for and take advantage of each other. (Chinese University, International Office, interview by the author, 31 May 2013)

The partnership thus seems to be at least as much about widening the horizons of Chinese professors as the other way round.

The other important dimension of China's higher education partnerships is that they are seen as long-term. Several of the university partnerships initiated

23 Other organisations and institutions, beyond the two immediate partners of China and Africa, have expressed interest in the 20+20 scheme. UNESCO has organised, with funding from China, two meetings which have sought to develop a trilateral cooperation initiative from this originally bilateral project. See, for example: 'UNESCO-China-Africa Tripartite Initiative for University Cooperation', 24–25 October 2013, UNESCO, Paris.

by China in the 1990s are still running and being supported by Chinese staff, many of whom have been in Africa for twenty years. There is therefore a strong understanding amongst Chinese staff both in the Confucius Institutes and 20+20 partnerships that they are engaged in a long-term commitment to their partner university in Africa. Given this time scale, it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of attitudes towards Africa held by individual Chinese professors. For instance:

I would say that Africa has a good feeling about China. Africa is not as advanced as China, but a beautiful continent and friendly people. No disease except malaria. I tell my staff that Africa is the place to go to in your lives.

There are challenges of course. But the Chinese are ready to offer something. And in China we don't have so many politicians running around. We have a long and positive relationship with Africa. We don't have the baggage of colonialism. We did a lot in Africa for infrastructure. People appreciate our help. We never saw ourselves as world leaders. We have a low-key approach and are modest. We make progress. Great. And we learn from our mistakes. (Interview, senior Chinese professor, 5 June 2013)

Equally, if not more important, are the attitudes of the African partners involved in the many academic and research collaborations with China. It is likely many share the position of this senior academic in Kenya:

China's success will be determined by its ability to persuade Kenya and other African countries that it is not going to be an exploiter, but a dependable development partner operating under mutual respect. (Amutabi, 2013, 26)

Many more accounts are available from the diverse characters involved in these partnerships, from the Chinese Mainland and African universities, as well as from both 20+20 universities and the CIs. The discourse around partnership is of course hugely varied, but academics and administrations on both sides frequently use terms such as 'mutual benefit' and 'mutual respect'.²⁴ Both Chinese and African students are exposed to very different environments through these schemes, and something of the resulting changes in

²⁴ For more detail, see King and King (2014).

their assumptions and perceptions has already been captured in King (2013a, chapter 3, *passim*).²⁵

7 Conclusion

Having briefly examined some of the modalities of China's higher education cooperation, the issue of whether these mechanisms actually illustrate the explicitly ethical discourse of mutuality, friendship, common development and 'a road of overseas aid with its own characteristics' remains to be discussed.²⁶ Can the ordinary world of university partnerships, language teaching and government scholarships to study in China really demonstrate 'a road of sincere and selfless friendship'? Can such educational aid point to a 'road of win-win for all on an equal and reciprocal basis'?

Determining the extent to which a particular aid discourse or rhetoric translates into specific aid practices is hugely demanding. Mawdsley's review of the aid discourses of non-DAC donors touches on this key issue of performance on the ground, claiming for instance, that at the micro-level 'China's development assistance is conducted in ways that are often strikingly different from much Western aid work' (Mawdsley, 2012, 157). Intriguingly, the observation that 'the modesty of the Chinese as a donor government was truly exemplary' is actually taken from a novel—*Gifts*, by Nuruddin Farah—(Mawdsley, *op. cit.*), but reflects the sentiment of many other comments regarding the relative modesty or humility of both Chinese and Japanese 'aid' workers or 'experts' in the field (King, 2013a, xi).²⁷

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from this brief discussion of some of the current modalities of Chinese aid to human resources development in Africa. We have, however, outlined both some preliminary insights and some continuing research challenges. For instance, amongst both Chinese academics and the Chinese policy community, there is a genuine hesitation to 'beat

25 For more information on the Confucius Institute as offering an insight into 'the real China' without the media overlay, see the Chinese co-director of a Confucius Institute (King, 2013a, 178).

26 '60 Years of China's Overseas Aid' website, http://yuanwaizhan.mofcom.gov.cn/images/zhuantiting_en.shtml (accessed on 3 March 2014).

27 Additional data, particularly on the African side of the 20+20 partnerships, will shortly be available through the research project on China-Africa university partnerships in education and training, supported by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council and based in the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). The project is led by Li Jun of CUHK in partnership with Kenneth King (Edinburgh) and Bjorn Nordtveit (Amherst).

the drum' and boast about what can be learnt from China. Hence, on the one hand, there is pride in the achievements of the China-Africa cooperation, and a readiness to show tens of thousands of African and Asian professionals, through the short-term training programme, just a little of China's own (successful) experience as a developing country.²⁸ On the other hand, there is very little 'preaching', or specific articulation of development 'lessons' for Africa. Part of the culture of non-interference is the belief that countries should make up their own minds about what can be learnt from elsewhere; they do not need to be told. In the discourse of policy analysis, this would be described as the crucial importance of policy learning by the country concerned, as opposed to top-down policy transfer from China.

In the human resource development domain, however, one of the principal difficulties in performing policy learning is that the Chinese do not openly discuss options for the allocation and use of educational aid. An accessible account of the trade-offs of investing in basic education versus secondary or higher, as has been produced in the West for decades, does not exist. As we said at the outset, China does not articulate an aid policy for the education sector of the kind that has been widespread in the West for 50 years. The importance of this point cannot be understated. As education cooperation is seen as just one among several vectors contributing to development, it is not perceived as a stand-alone sector. Correspondingly, though we have sought to comment on whether the human resource development elements of the FOCAC agreements are, on balance, tilted more towards higher education than basic, this is ultimately a somewhat artificial exercise. The FOCAC agreements should probably not be broken down into the conventional sectors or sub-sectors associated with DAC donors, any more than should *China's African Policy* of 2006 (China, 2006) be mined for its mere two-paragraph comment on cooperation in human resources development and education. Ultimately, the many elements of China's education and aid cooperation with Africa are inseparable from its political, economic and trade engagements on the continent. Discussions of the kind found in the aid and financing chapter of the EFA Global Monitoring Reports, which deal primarily with allocation *within* the education sector, are a world away from China's view of human resource development as a completely integral element of development policy and politics, whether in Africa or the West of China.

28 See, for example, Liu Hongwu, the director of China's largest Institute of African Studies: 'Today's China-Africa cultural exchange and cooperation, in particular, has become a shining scene shedding a spotlight on the changing global scene' (Liu, 2009, 17).

Consequently, it should not be surprising that China, though it was present and active at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea, does not spend much time considering whether its educational aid could be better harmonised with, and more complementary to, that of other education donors. Indeed, China, along with India and Brazil, decided not to be part of the Busan notion of a Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. This is doubtless in part a reflection of their hesitations about appearing to be part of the donor 'club'.

It may still be useful to sort out, as we have tried to do, what, if anything, constitutes the specificity of human resource development in China's engagement with Africa. This brings us back to the issue of the ethical discourse regarding development aid with which we started this paper. The claims about mutuality, reciprocity, trust, respect and common development are far from constituting aid modalities or mechanisms. They cannot be evaluated like the other FOCAC targets. These ethical assertions do, however, set the context in which the FOCAC targets are deliberately placed. China seeks to avoid positioning the FOCAC engagements to appear as aid or development assistance. Instead, they are presented, as mentioned above, as elements of a joint agreement between two partners, 'featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges' (China, 2009, para. 1.2).

The final challenge, therefore, is to interrogate the particularity of the politics of higher education partnerships in practice, on the ground, whether between China and South Africa, China and Kenya, or China and Ethiopia (see NORRAG, 2008). We have highlighted some distinct aspects of the discourse surrounding this cooperation, as well as some of the distinctive modalities of China-Africa higher education partnerships. We have commented on the characteristics of China's engagement with African universities through Confucius Institutes and the 20+20 initiative. These comments, however, by their nature, are principally suggestive and preliminary. We look forward to a much richer vein of analysis on China's aid-in-practice once the full detail of both the Chinese and African sides of the 20+20 project becomes available over the course of 2014.

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