

Towards a Sustainable Counterbalanced Development: Educational Cooperation between China and African Countries

Author: Ketema Meskela Daddi, PhD Scholar

Northeast Normal University

5268 Renmin Street

Changchun, China 130024

E-mil: ketema_2005@yahoo.com

Corresponding Author: Hong Zhu, PhD, Associate Professor

Northeast Normal University

E-mail: joyce825@hotmail.com

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Abstract

In the last half a century an extensive cooperation between China and African countries have been launched, of which exchange and cooperation in education is one of the most important forms. In this aspect, China has played an important role in student exchange and education programs for African educational officials. However, African countries were limited in providing logistics in this cooperation of boosting human resource development. African-Chinese educational cooperation was mainly presented as Africans coming to China. In order to construct a sustainable mechanism of cooperation in both sides, it is imperative to complement the economic disparity and counterbalance the exchange by sending Chinese to Africa. Besides these the paper has also investigated the drives behind Chinese will to host these programs.

Key words: China-Africa relations, cooperation in education, counterbalance, bilateral relations

Introduction

Following the gradual rapprochements, friendly China-African cooperation has seen steady development in the past fifty years. The People's Republic of China (hereafter China) and African countries showed expanding and deepening cooperation in the areas such as politics, economy, trade, culture, education, and health. Of all the remarkable achievements of cooperation, this paper will focus on China-Africa educational cooperation.

Educational cooperation between China and African countries has produced great effects on social and economic development of both sides. The cooperation has been reflected in high-level visits, exchanges of students and teachers, cooperation in higher education and research projects, China's provision of various professional and vocational training programs to Africans, Chinese language teaching in Africa, and other inter-school

exchanges and cooperation. The interactive cooperation has been strengthened by the establishment of the Forum on China Africa Cooperation in 2000. However, for a deepening and sustainable development of Sino-African cooperation in education and culture, it is significant to pay close attention to the insufficiency and limitations of Sino-African relationship whereby the balance of economic benefit will be reached by both sides.

Empirically our starting point and the theoretical framework is that an understanding of the nature of China-Africa relations in educational cooperation has been on the basis of mutual assistance with the recognition of the complementarities of their development. Secondly their cooperation has also been a reflection of the principle of South-South Cooperation in terms of the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries also known as countries of the global South. This trend justifies what Sandra Gillespie called the flow of international students among Third World nations themselves (Gillespie, 2006, p. 2).

1. An Overview on the Cooperative Ties between Chinese and African Education

Education is the fundamental factor of sustainable social and economic development. As such, the cooperation from the China's side has been viewed in its heavy investments in Africa's education through training professionals, sending teachers to Africa, and providing scholarships to African students from across the continent to study in China's universities. After the forging of diplomatic relation between China and Egypt in 1956, a pioneer in China-Africa ties (Khalili, 1970, pp.308-319) the first tangible cooperative move was made by signing the "Cultural Cooperation Agreements" between the two countries in 1956. It led to the agreement on mutually inviting instructors of language and literature to teach at universities, exchanging students, accrediting each other's diplomas and degrees, and encouraging exchanges of scholars and scientists, and sending education delegations for friendly visits. Other African countries, such as Cameroon, Kenya, and so

on followed the trend and signed agreements on science & technical cooperation, education and culture exchange with China. Based on the agreements, China and African countries have since been dispatching students and visiting scholars to each other countries' and strengthened exchange of high level visits.

Training exchange students for African countries has been one of the very import aspects among the issues of China-Africa educational communication and cooperation. It was in the 1950s when most African countries hadn't won their independence that training exchange students started between China and African countries. Following the four students coming from Egypt in 1956, China received other ten students from Sub-Saharan African countries of Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, and Malawi. Reciprocally, China sent seven exchange students and one Chinese teacher to Cairo in the same year (Ai, 1996, pp. 190-191; He, 2007, p.14). In the subsequent years, such exchanges continued unabatedly and have further contributed to the China-Africa cooperation.

On the basis of the newly achieved independence, African countries needed more educated citizens to bring a sustainable development. Meanwhile, China's readiness to help with hosting more African students coming to China became viable. As a result, China accepted 164 students from different African countries in 1960s. Accordingly, it had sent 14 teachers to work in Africa. Basically in the first three decades the trainings were focused on the immediate demands of the Africans such as agriculture and medicine, and later on engineering.

Nevertheless domestic situation in both China and some African countries adversely affected the positive development. While China was occupied by internal matters attached to the Cultural Revolution and ideological fundamentalism (mainly between 1966 and 1972), there were political disturbances in some of the African countries as well (He, 2007, pp. 14-15; Li, 2006, p. 5). Consequently, the relations between China and some African countries was either interrupted or cooled down. China even sent back some African students to their own countries.

Nevertheless, these setbacks were short lived. Educational cooperation relations with African countries resumed at a faster pace. The recovery has been facilitated especially by the coming into being of three crucial factors. Firstly, the adoption of the Three World Theory by Mao Zedong which had ushered a new wave in China- Africa interaction has played a major role. The theory became a pull factor to bring China and Africa closer to each other whereby China committed itself to stand alongside the African countries in their endeavor for development. The theory aimed at increasing solidarity, unity and co-operation within the Third World, in view of protecting its interests and advancing revolution against the 'imperialistic aggressors'. Reportedly, during his discussion with President Kenneth David Kaunda of Zambia on February 22, 1974, Mao discussed on this question of the differentiation of the Three Worlds for the first time (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998, p. 454; Ma Chao, 2007; Roy, 1998, p. 30). This became a background for the cooperation between China and Africa and many African students coming to China.

Secondly the introduction of the concept of South-South Cooperation in early 1970s had emphasized ties between China and Africa on the issues of human resource development. The United Nations created a Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (SU/SSC) in the late 1970's, which supported academic research and voluntary cooperative efforts between southern countries to promote South-South trade and investment. It is an initiative that is being promoted as an essential cross-cutting mechanism designed to enhance UN ability to deliver capacity building and technology support activities in the field of different aspects in developing countries and regions of the South.

SSC is important to these nations for two reasons. First, SSC contributes to economic advances in southern nations, especially in Africa, southern Asia and South America. Second, SSC lacks the overtones of cultural, political, and economic hegemony sometimes associated with traditional North-South aid from the United States, Russia, and Western Europe (Chisholm & Steiner, 2009; South-South Cooperation, web; Shelton,

2006). African countries also prefer South-South Cooperation to the north because of the following factors. In the case of South-South Cooperation costs of education are much less than in the North; it reduces brain drain and isolation of scientists in the South; enhances ability of scientists to work in Third World environment and address real-life problems; facilitates building long-term links between institutions of learning and research in the South. It was on such an equal basis of mutual support that China and Africa established their cooperative ties.

Subsequent Reform and Opening up of China starting from 1978 further strengthened African-Chinese mutual assistance and cooperation for a new trend towards economic advancement. In the late 1970s China opened up itself to the outside world and strengthened its relations with Africa in economic and social affairs. Hand in hand with the rapid social and economic reformation, the number of African students coming to China increased greatly. This increase coincided with the independence of most African countries during that period. The newly independent countries were earnestly looking for equal and mutual benefit partnership. China appeared itself as such a country ready to develop cooperation with African countries on the condition of equality and mutual benefit. The basis of the relations presented by both China and African countries has been mutual support in essentially bilateral terms, but in ways that focus on the mutuality and two-way benefits that accrue to both sides. Thus the transformation on both sides has paved the way for a further Sino-Africa educational cooperation.

In the late twentieth century, more than 1000 African students have been awarded scholarship per year by the Chinese government. Accordingly, since the late 1980s, China has been determined to assist Africans' endeavor to build up their own educational systems with qualified professionals. For this purpose, China has hosted various seminars, training programs, and symposiums, which concentrated on three fields: management, engineering, and education administration. The Chinese government has arranged various symposia in order to train African professionals as well as for the Chinese to exchange ideas and experiences with African colleagues. These measures were highly valued by African governments. Because, in addition to assisting African countries in their pursuit

for educated personnel, the training and education programs provided by Chinese government have given Africans opportunities to share and transfer the technology. Reciprocally, African countries have become staunch supporters of China for the One China Policy and to boost her international image. Concurrently when China was admitted to the UN in 1971, out of the 76 votes which China received 26 were from African countries making one third of the total. Besides, back in 1980s about 48 African countries have already established diplomatic relations with China. Later when it was faced with threats of Western embargo after Tiananmen Incident in 1989 African countries were the ardent supporters of China (Kinfe, 2005, pp. 43-45, 53).

As reviewed above, the Africa-China educational cooperation has not been fully counterbalanced by Chinese students going to Africa. In fact, Chinese language study has become popular in some higher education institutes in Africa. Predominantly colleges and universities in Egypt, Tunisia, Cameroon, Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa and some other countries have courses about Chinese language and culture. Even though African countries lacked the capacity to provide scholarships for Chinese students, there is a room for the Chinese government to send its students to African universities as well. Thus, a two way educational exchange and cooperation could be maintained.

Table 1: African Scholarship Students in China

Year	No. of Students	Remark
1950s	24	
1960s	160	
1970s	648	
1980s	2245	
1990s	5569	
2010s	17000	The establishment of FOCAC has played the major role

Sources “China’s Ambitious Training aid for Africa: Implications for the Mainland-and for Hong Kong?” <http://www.hku.hk/cerc/KK-article/8.China's.training.aid.King.2007c.pdf> ; Gu Jianxin, “The Emerging Education Sector in China’s Aid Policy to Africa,”

As can be seen from the table 1 above the number has shown a remarkable increase in the 1980s and respectively at the beginning of this century. While the transformation in both China and Africa (the Reform and Opening up and the stability in African countries

respectively) had provided basis as of the 1980s, the founding of FOCAC (see the detail in Part II) and Chinese African policy paved the way for the dramatic increases in the 21st century.

Therefore, another approach of the educational cooperation between the two has been adopted, that is cultivating African scholars to teach and conduct researches in higher education. Up to the end of the last century, China sent many teachers and scholars to Africa. In all, the number of specialized teachers sent to Africa from 1956 to 2003 reached about 523 (People's Daily Online, Feb. 04, 2007; Li, 2008, p. 2).

Table 2: Dispatching Chinese Teachers to Africa

Year	Teachers Sent to Africa	Remark
1950s	3	
1960s	14	
1970s	115	
1980s	123	
1990s	238	
2010s	523	Most of these are sent to teach Chinese language

Source: Gu Jianxin, "The Emerging Education Sector in China's Aid Policy to Africa," http://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/topics/archives/jica/2007/docs/070129_04.pdf ; Li Baoping, "On the Issues Concerned with China-Africa Education Cooperation",

Though the number is not big compared to the number of Africa countries and population, the sending of these teachers has provided a substantial assistance and it represented the willingness of China to participate in all aspects of Africa's capacity building.

In the late 1980s, China launched a series of associated aid programs called Advanced Education and Scientific Research Program, mainly aiming at: donating teaching and scientific research equipments to African universities, sending teachers in aid to Africa doing scientific researches together with the local university teachers and scientific researchers, selecting young teachers and scholars dealing with scientific research or technologies to attend in an advanced studies in China. From 1995 to 2003, China has

implemented 43 sessions of Advanced Education and Scientific Research Program in 21 African countries, and under the assistance, 21 comparatively advanced laboratories in the fields of biology, micro-biology, computer science, physics, analytical chemistry, food refreshment and processing have been set up in universities of those countries.¹ This appears to be a major shift in China's approach to Africa. As such it is up to the African countries to utilize this opportunity for their development endeavor.

Between the commencing of the educational exchanges in the mid 1950s and 2005, over 17,000 African students had been enrolled in Chinese universities (Li Baoping, 2006, pp. 12-13). These students typically spent one year learning Chinese language, then they studied technical subjects, particularly majored in engineering, management and economics disciplines. As it has been once indicated by Gu Jianxin, out of all African students studying in China in 2005, 815 of them were studying Technology and Engineering, 246 Management, 361 Medical Science, 580 Language and 765 studying other disciplines (Gu, 2007).

This support for education improved China's image in many countries, built grassroots support in local communities, and obtained a better understanding of China among the educated elite. But more than just increasing goodwill towards Beijing, these educational programs helped to provide China with the kind of workforce required to use Chinese high tech industrial products in Africa. Thus Africans would also benefit from technological advances underway in China.

2. China-Africa Cooperation Forum and Educational Exchanges

China is known as the biggest developing country, while Africa is the continent with the greater concentration of developing countries. China-African friendship is deep-rooted. They share similar historical experiences of being dominated by colonial powers and remained economically backward for long. They are free from any historical conflicts. As an impetus for further linkages and conviction, the Forum on China-Africa

Cooperation (FOCAC) was launched in 2000. The formation of the forum partly was in defiance of the gaps between the North and the South. As it has been described in the Beijing Declaration of the Forum in 2000 “ there still exist serious destabilizing factors in the world and a huge gap between the North and the South” (HADAD, 2003, p. 9) whereby cooperation among the global south of which China and African countries are the part becomes crucial. President Jiang Zemin’s keynote speech (Kinfe, 2005, p.183) reiterated and expanded upon this theme: “South- South Cooperation is an important means through which developing countries may effectively respond to the challenges in the international situation and meet the challenges that may be brought about by economic globalization.”

One of the programs of the Forum was the Cooperation in Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD). On the basis of CEHRD, China pledged 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 communication between universities of the two sides for the study of the Chinese and African civilizations; and establish an African Human Resource Development Fund and gradually increase financial contribution to the fund for the training of professionals of different disciplines for African countries (Kinfe, 2005, p 147; Looy, 2006, pp. 8-9).

Accordingly, China has established a fund, jointed by several Chinese ministries, to provide training and education to Africans. In the mean time, the number of African students studying in China exceeded 1200 in 2001 and grew to 1646 in 2002 (Sautman, 2006, p. 22). Presumably, African countries, attaching great importance to a stronger cooperation with China in human resources development, have initiated cooperation plans and provided logistic support for training programs and cooperation projects (Kinfe, 2005, pp. 203-204). All these endeavors have provided vital importance of talent training and capacity building to sustainable development in Africa and of the great potential for cooperation between the two sides in human resources development. Apparently the issue of equality and mutual respect has been reiterated in all FOCAC meetings and dialogues. It emphasized the principle for the continuity of cooperation between the two which has

begun long ago.

African-Chinese cooperation has been reinforced by the Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) Action Plan of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2003. This development plan has enabled 6000 personnel get trained and 1500 students sent to China on educational exchange programs from the year 2003 to 2006. At the same time, another important commitment in the ministerial meeting of 2003 has been the pledge by China to train 10,000 African professionals in a whole series of technical, scientific and administrative fields within three years time (HADAD, 2003, pp. 7-8). By providing these scholarships and trainings opportunities, China has significantly contributed to the human resources development in Africa. Cooperatively, African countries provided necessary logistic support and facilitation, and selected the appropriate persons for the training programs. In order to make a more effective multilateral cooperation, African countries chose Ethiopia, the host and co-chair of the conference, in cooperation with the African diplomatic corps in Beijing, serve as a coordinator responsible for communicating with China on African countries' requests, proposals and specific arrangements concerning human resources development up to the next conference to be held in 2006 (FOCAC, 2003); Rios, 2006). In this way, Ethiopia has served as a bridge between African countries and China in terms of human resource development. These measures will thus help Africa to be part of the globalized world. Hence, besides facilitating sources for trained man power, African countries need to make proper use of the opportunity which could add up to their endeavor to fight poverty.

It is also imperative to observe China-Africa educational cooperation from the vantage point Ali A. Mazrui's theory of Three Strategies of African Modernization through the model of positive action to adjust global inequities. Mazrui strives to transform knowledge structures and consequently transform political and economic power structures. Under this framework he urges Africans to domesticate imported knowledge and make it relevant to the local culture. As Sandra Gillespie postulated, Mazrui's remarks hold much promise for China's academic relations with African nations. As

quoted in Sandra, Ali concluded that:

Full reciprocal international penetration is a precondition for a genuinely symmetrical world culture. As Africa first permits its own societies to help balance the weight of western cultural influence, then permits other non-western external civilizations to reveal their secrets to African researchers and teachers, and then proceeds to transform its educational and intellectual world in a manner which makes genuine creativity possible, then Africa will be on its way toward that elusive but compelling imperative-not only to decolonize modernity, and not even merely to participate in it, but also to help recreate modernity anew for future generation (Sandra, 2006, pp. 12-13).

As China's development took strides and its relations with Africa grew with surprising pace, studying in China has attracted more peoples from all walks of life. According to Chinese sources, the number of exchange students has increased every year. The number reached 1300 in the year of 2005, while students from Africa studying at their own expenses striking about 1390, exceeding those students sponsored by the Chinese government (King, 2006, pp. 8-9). Since all have been from Africa it has boosted the cooperation between China and the African continent and reflects the interest of African students to come to China. On the other hand, Chinese students have also begun to go to Africa. As one study indicates, by 2002 there were 270 Chinese scholarship students in African countries. Meanwhile few self-supporting students used to go to South Africa, Egypt and the like (Gu, 2007). In the subsequent years this number showed steady increment. Apparently, up to 2005 about 3300 students are said to have went to South Africa alone for study purpose (PRC Embassy in South Africa, 2006). Overall such educational exchanges and scholarship programs encourage bonds between Chinese and African countries and institutions.

As stated above, educational cooperation is also manifested in Chinese language teachings in African institutions. In addition to individual language courses, the Chinese government has launched on establishing Confucius Institutes in selected African universities. Since the first Confucius Institute was established in Kenya in 2004, there are now about seven Confucius Institutes in South Africa, Kenya, The Sudan,

Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Cameroon and Egypt. It is said that about ten new Confucius Institutes have been opened up to the year 2008 and the number is planned to grow to 21 in the near future (Xinhua News Agency Oct. 8, 2008). The institutes are focusing on teaching Chinese language and culture, an instrument for strengthening ties between the two sides. Many of the African countries have also shown sincere willingness to host and accommodate the Confucius Institutes. Actually, Chinese language study in Africa will also help those students who aspire to come to study in China to have a preliminary knowledge about the language and culture. It is assumed that when they come to China, the students would not have difficulty in coping up with their specific academic areas. However there still is a fear that these might be used for strengthening Chinese influence in the continent.

In November 2005 China hosted the First Sino-African Education Minister Forum attended by representatives from 17 African countries and China. The delegates called up on more cultural communications to further educational cooperation while talking about their own countries' concerns and achievements regarding education for all goals. The forum adopted the Beijing Declaration, which claims that free primary education is a basic human right and that countries must expand secondary education after fulfilling primary education targets (Peoples Daily Online, 29 Dec. 2005). The meeting was seen as an excellent example of South-South Cooperation. China pledged to provide educational assistance to developing countries in the form of training of teachers, providing scholarships, and building of schools in rural areas. Accordingly, the Chinese pledged to increase the number of exchange students to 2000 and short term trainings to 1000 each year (Peoples Daily Online, 29 Nov. 2006). Presumably, the endeavor would have multiple benefits. While it is contributing to African human resource development, the educational exchange also meant to assist the expanding Chinese economic development. Africa would provide China with ample natural resources and market. The ties based on educational cooperation thus will facilitate communications between the two and further expand economic relations. In this stance 50 African countries have established cooperative relations with China.

To strengthen its relations with African countries, China has adopted a new African policy in early 2006. One of the premises of the policy is still the cooperation in human resources development and education:

The Chinese Government will give full play to the role of its 'African Human Resources Development Foundation' in training African personnel. It will identify priority areas, expand areas of cooperation and provide more input according to the needs of African countries so as to achieve greater results. Exchange of students between China and Africa will continue. China will increase the number of government scholarships as it sees fit, continue to send teachers to help African countries in Chinese language teaching and carry out educational assistance project to help develop Africa... (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 Jan. 2006).

Such a policy would provide a base for Chinese commitment to help tackle shortages of African trained professionals. African countries consequently need to make use of such an opportunity and fit it into their national and continental development programs.

The Forum on China- Africa Cooperation has facilitated as a driving force for dynamic links between the two. The Beijing Summit and Third Ministerial Conference of FOCAC which was held in 2006 came up with lofty multilateral agreements. The Chinese side committed to receive more African students under scholarships. The total number will increase from then 2000 to 4000 and train 15,000 professionals up to the year 2009, and to promote academic exchanges and teaching of the Chinese language in Africa. Meanwhile, African countries undertook providing necessary support and assistance in terms of selecting trainees and providing logistical services (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21Jan. 2006). All the trainings and education programs will be constructed on the basis of African countries' need and the Chinese government vowed to improve the follow-up monitoring mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of trainings (HADAD, 2003, pp. 17-20).

With the development of these continuous exchanges and cooperation, China and African countries have established a mutual trust. It will facilitate a long-term relationship with African elites that formerly might have been educated in their own country or in the West,

where most of Africans studied and ended up remaining. With an entire difference, studies indicate that Africans who study in China usually return to their respective countries so to contribute to their national development (Sautman, 2006, pp 22-23). Overall, this would further stimulate the cooperation between the two sides and supplement the vied sustainable development by playing a significant role in addressing the shortage of trained manpower of the countries concerned.

While these measures were conducted at state to state level, individual educational exchanges have also been developing through time. This could be reflected in the increasing number of African teachers coming to teach especially English language in China. Many educational institutions from China have been looking for teachers from Africa. In one of its notice the Jilin Provincial Education Department made a specific job fair for teachers from South Africa (Jilin Education Department, 2008). Apparently it is not rare to see many Africans working in China. While it is creating job opportunity for African professionals, China is using the mechanism to facilitate grounds for it hunger for raw materials and market.

3. Institutional Roles: The Case of Northeast Normal University

To operate the international education and training programs of high quality, the Chinese government has entrusted a series of top ranked universities and academic centers in the country. Northeast Normal University (NENU) is one of such universities. NENU is a comprehensive normal university, which is directly funded and administrated by the Ministry of Education of China (MOE). Located in the Northeastern part of the country, NENU was founded in 1946. The university has educated and trained dozens of students, international students and professionals of which considerable number of Africans has been a part.

The University comprises 19 schools with various undergraduate and graduate (offering 145 M.A. degree specialties, and 77 Ph.D. degree specialties) programs. Besides, the

research bases/centers, laboratories and libraries of the university provide liberal facilities for the success in education. The Library of Northeastern Normal University holds abundant collections of teaching and scientific researches. It has about 2,400,000 items including 400,000 books in foreign languages. E-books, e-journals and the databases to all-in-one retrieving system have made materials available to both faculty and students (Northeast Normal University Library, 2008). Thus favorable conditions and its overall capability lay a solid foundation for the university to carry on its educational cooperation and exchange programs with African countries.

NENU started receiving international students in the late 1960s. With the Opening-up and Reform Policy of China, the university expanded its fields of studies and admitting international students. In the late 1990s NENU was chosen as one of the universities in China to accept exchange students from Africa. Based on this about 115 exchange students from Africa have joined the university in different academic disciplines.

The period after the creation of China-Africa Cooperation Forum has witnessed a great increase in African scholarship and exchange students in NENU. Though the data for the early periods is not available it is clear that many of the African students started to come to NENU in the last few years. This can be observed from the following table.

Table 3: African Students Studied in Northeast Normal University

Number	Year	No. of Countries	No. of Students*	Remarks
1	2001	4	7	
2	2002	1	1	
3	2003	3	3	
4	2004	6	12	
5	2005	8	12	
6	2006	9	15	
7	2007	12	17	
8	2008	23	34	Two of the students are self sponsored
Total		66**	101	

Source: Northeast Normal University, International Students Office.

Note: - * the number shows the size of students admitted for that specific year

**Indicates that some of the same countries have sent students in different years

The table above shows that the period after the creation of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum has observed a gradual increase in the number of exchange students coming to the university from Africa. Basically the number increased dramatically after the Second Ministerial Conference of FOCAC in 2003. As seen above, China is making its commitment to increase the number of exchange students. Being one of the universities to host the exchange program, NENU has increased the admission number of African students. Thus out of the 115 students who are said to have studied at the university in the last half a century 101 (87.7%) have joined the university after the creation of FOCAC. Overall in the year 2008/2009 academic year about 65 students from Africa are pursuing their studies in the university. This shows that NENU is becoming a place for academic career of African students as well.

As a matter of fact the university also introduced a new international program in the fall semester of 2008, which is a full English instruction programs on education and biology for master degree and other advanced studies for senior scholars. Based on this fourteen of those African students who have been enrolled in the university in the same year are attending their study in English. Surprisingly these students have also showed greater enthusiasm to learn Chinese language, which is essential to understand the history and culture of the country.

The increase is not limited in the number of individual students but the number of the sending countries as well. From the table above, while only one country sent exchange student to the university in 2002 the number showed a radical change to reach 23 countries in 2008. There has been a positive progress on a yearly basis, which reflects the affiliation and cooperation of many of the African countries with NENU.

Holding specialized workshops and seminar programs have also been an import part in China-Africa education cooperation. NENU started to offer this program for African educational professionals and officials as of 2002. For the last six years 14 workshops

and seminars have been provided to about 272 professionals who came from different countries of the continent. In the first seminar conducted from 16th to 31st October 2002, 27 senior education officers from 27 African countries have participated in the training (Northeast Normal University News, 2003; Xiu Fei, 2006). The seminar which was conducted through lectures, visiting and having informal discussion to launch deep exchange of experiences around several questions such as Chinese educational reform and latest development of the country and international educational development, was meant to equip the education administration officials with contemporary developments and capacity to assist their respective countries' human resource development. According to information collected from the university's Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges most of the trainings were focused on basic education management so as to assist African countries to achieve the millennium goal and realize sustainable human resource development.

That trainings focused on educational cooperation have benefited many African education officials. The trainings involved education officials from ministry of educations, university presidents, and officials responsible for primary and secondary educations. On the basis of this data if we assume that they came from all countries of Africa, at least three education officials from each African country to the average have come to attend these conferences at Northeast Normal University. The trainings have been conducted at large for about twenty days where by they can grasp basic ideas of the programs and exchange experiences.

In two of the recent workshops conducted in 2006 and 2007 university presidents from 21 African countries have participated to boost institutional capacity and relations. Apparently the training has focused on Chinese educational system, tertiary institutions management, the building of faculties in universities, students and management of the education of the new era. A considerable experience and knowledge has been achieved in the program. The trainings as a result would contribute and help boost the human resource development of African countries and institutional ties.

Despite its recent beginning to receive exchange students and officials for training, NENU also strives to establish bilateral relations with universities in Africa. While the first relation has been established with Desert Research Center (DRC) of Egypt the university has signed a preliminary agreement with nine universities in six African countries in 2007. African higher education institutions have got to make their utmost efforts to strengthen ties with Chinese universities so that they could further contribute to the human resource development of their respective countries. However, the agreement was only on cooperation around exchange of experience and Chinese technical assistance. Africans have the problem of shortage of manpower themselves, there are no Africans coming to NENU on the basis of work. But with the development of the capacity of Africans and expansion of agreements, we hope to see a balanced communication and exchange with African professionals coming to work in NENU.

4. Conclusion

On the basis of tremendous commonalities of interests, China and African countries have succeeded in constructing bilateral and multilateral co-operations. Exchange and cooperative ties in education have been developed in time and cemented with the creation of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Besides strengthening their relations, such educational cooperation would help African countries to break away from being further marginalized globally and lag behind in the world economic competition. Thus it would promote human resource development and economic prosperity of African countries. Universities in China have been playing a major role in promoting such cooperative education relations through exchanging students and hosting training programs and workshops for African educational officials.

However, there was a gap between mutual exchange and cooperation regarding the statistics and more efforts should be made from both sides for a prosperous future. With the tremendous increase in the number of exchange students and training programs

provided by China, African countries need extra efforts to counterbalance the exchange and communicative cooperation by accepting Chinese studying in African continent. The opening of Confucius institutes in some African countries needs to be expanded with caution to other countries so as to help expand Chinese teachings in Africa, which could help to counterbalance the uneven economic relations between the two and widen African understanding of China. While China is strengthening its assistance to Africa, African countries need to explore approaches for a proper utilization of such resources in education, which is a base for an overall development. African countries however have to investigate mechanisms which could help them not to fall under the influence of China in one way or the other. Be that as it may, cooperation in education entails to be further strengthened to facilitate the transfer of technology among these nations.

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