

Chapter 21

Accessibility of Sino–African Educational Partnerships in Higher Education: History, Achievements, Challenges, and Directions

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ABSTRACT

By analyzing current literatures (2012-2016) and using author's personal experience in bringing one Chinese university's students to have service learning projects in Africa, this chapter aims at 1. reviewing the current forms of and 2. explore the alternative way of Sino-African educational partnerships in higher education since the establishment of Peoples' Republic of China in 1949. The literatures have informed that Sino-African educational partnerships have received positive feedback. However, cultural challenges associated with the existing educational partnerships may result in lowering the partnerships quality. The motivations of the African students to pursue their studies in Chinese universities may subsequently be lowered. To deal with these potential problems, the chapter argues that one way to handle the cultural issues could be to let both Chinese and African students experience their cultures physically before educational partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

Readers with the following two main interests may find the chapter useful. First, those who are interested in historical review of Sino-African educational partnerships in higher education since the establishment of the Peoples' Republic of China in 1949. Second, those who are interested in future development in education accessibility in Sino-African higher education. This chapter will employ two main methodological tools; 1. literature reviews from different documents in the recent five years (2012-2016) and 2. the

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3019-1.ch021

author's personal experience in initiating four university trips from one Chinese university to Africa to explore the possibility as one way of Sino-African accessibility in higher education in a cultural manner. The literatures collected from the first tool have revealed that although the current Sino-African educational partnerships have become massive in scale after six decades and remarkable results have been achieved, some challenges exist behind those achievements, which have given misleading information to students from both sides. Seeing those challenges, the author's data from his service learning trips leading one Chinese university's students to a number of African countries in the past four years hopes to provide some solutions for the better development of the partnerships. The author likewise aims at making students from both regions more prepared to handle their potential university peers from very distinct cultures. The main objective of this chapter is to explain cultural awareness plays a key role in determining the quality of accessibility in educational partnerships.

BACKGROUND OF SINO-AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Since the establishment of the Peoples' Republic of China in 1949, higher education development and partnerships have been one attention in Chinese higher education policies; one of the locations being Africa (Jiang, 2013). In the Government level, the words such as "internationalization" and "partnerships" appear frequently in different higher education systems in China such as Ministry of Education admission system in mainland China (Ministry of Education, 2016) and Diploma of Secondary Education (Hong Kong university admission system since 2012) in Hong Kong (HKEAA, 2016). In institutional level, for instance, Peking University has been internationalizing itself by providing exchange programs with different foreign countries and recruiting different foreign students and professors (Peking University, 2016). In Hong Kong, for instance, The University of Hong Kong has been emphasizing internationalization as one major development agenda, by providing exchange programs for the international students and offering internship programs to foreign countries (The University of Hong Kong, 2016a). These policies can show that internationalization and partnerships are one major agenda in Chinese higher education. In scholastic level, Luo and Xu has pointed out new education development needs multiple forms of cooperation (2014). All the above documents (for example, The University of Hong Kong, 2016a) have shown that the internationalization of the accessibility to higher education is not only meant to internationalize a higher education institute within the national boundary, but also to show international influence in international arena of higher education. Because of this idea, the chapter serves as a sample to show how accessibility of different regions can be enhanced by examining how China and African countries work together in enhancing accessibility to higher education.

To begin with, the general development of Sino-African educational partnerships will be presented in terms of forms and numbers. In order to provide more analysis of the partnerships, three case studies of partnerships will be analyzed in depth.

Sino-African Higher Education Partnerships in Different Decades (Forms)

According to Jiang (2013), the main forms of university partnerships in different decades can be summarized into the following major activities,

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