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## Examining the impact of China-Africa Educational Cooperation in Africa: A Case study of Cameroon

**Ehizuelen Michael Mitchell Omoruyi<sup>1</sup>; Tachago Tchuente InesBrenda<sup>2</sup>; Fadimatou Tangué  
Chancelle<sup>3</sup>; Payong Nana Marie Julie<sup>4</sup>; Edeh Emmanuel Chidiebere<sup>5</sup>**

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**Abstract:** *In recent years, the Sino-Cameroonian's cooperation and the re-emergence of China as a major partner and donor in education resource player in Cameroon, has been characterized by different discourses. Cameroon is an interesting case to exemplify China's engagement with Africa, since it has had well-established diplomatic ties with China for over four decades, and the educational cooperation between the two nations possesses numerous characteristics that are helpful for the understanding of China's policies in Africa. As such, the paper aims to analyze Chinese educational cooperation with Cameroon. The paper focuses on the following kinds of Chinese educational aid to Cameroon: Confucius Institutes, which offer language and cultural training in the host nations; long-term scholarships and short-term training in China; school construction; and autonomous educational projects. By examining how these diverse kinds of collaboration are happening in Cameroon, a number of and apparently contradictory strategies and discourses appear.*

**Keywords:** *Africa, China, Cameroon, Development, Education cooperation*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world has witnessed a strong presence of China in Africa. The continuously growing, changing and development of China and African cooperation is evident in political, economic and educational fields. Educational cooperation between Africa and China dates back from the precolonial period of 1950s when China established official bilateral trade agreement with African countries (Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Guinea, Sudan and Somalia) as they break away from colonial shackles down to the millennium era with the inception of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000 (FOCAC) which gave a new impetus to educational exchanges under the framework. It first started as a ministerial meeting (FOCAC) held in Beijing 2000, and from 2006, metamorphosed into a high-level outstanding summit for China-African co-operation, which take turns in China and Africa tri-annually. During the first FOCAC forum, China and Africa agreed to establish the "African Human Resources Development Fund" through which China can financially support Africa's personnel training and educational development by providing African students with Chinese government scholarships, helping African countries

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Nigerian Studies, Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University

<sup>2</sup> Chinese Language and Culture, Zhejiang Normal University

<sup>3</sup> College of Teacher Education, Zhejiang Normal University

<sup>4</sup> Chinese Language and Culture, Zhejiang Normal University

<sup>5</sup> Chinese Language and Culture, Zhejiang Normal University

construct laboratories and schools, sending teachers and volunteers to Africa, to assist with Chinese language teaching (Jian,2015).

By 2013, China had provided over 45,000 training for Africans, covering more than 20 fields including economics, science and technology, and environmental protection (Hu, 2013) and the volume of the financial support to Africa were increased once every 3 years. In addition, as of 2013, China has also become a major destination for international students, and ranks third overall among the world (Sheehy,2013) with International students enrolled in over 775 higher education institutions in China<sup>6</sup>. In 2015, there were over 397,635 foreign students from 202 countries and regions studying in China showing a 5.46% increase from the previous year of about 377,054 and about 12.52% constituting 49,792 are from Africa<sup>7</sup>. The influx of foreign students to China in the recent time has been linked to the Belt and Road Initiative and it is predicted that by 2020, China will overtake the United Kingdom as the second most popular country for international students<sup>8</sup>. However, As the number of foreign students studying in China increases, some serious concerns about the quality of education they are receiving and the skills they have at graduation are also questioned.

A study by *McKinsey* estimated that only 1.2 million of 15.7 million university graduates (or 7.6%) have skills that are valued by international markets for human capital<sup>9</sup>. As such, the vast majority of students educated in Chinese universities lack adequate skills to compete internationally except for most local Chinese industries. Nevertheless, China has continued to forge its Cooperation with African countries in all areas (trade, commerce, economic, political, health, cultural and education), and China's assistance towards education development is a priority for Africa's development.

China's support for Africa is reflected in countless cooperation projects that teach people, for example, how to fish, complement each other and benefit from each other (Frédéric, 2018) of which Cameroon, a developing country, is one of the beneficiaries of this development support. As such, this study examines the impact of China-Africa Educational cooperation in Africa with a focus on Cameroon. It also examines a series of different dimensions of China's education and training cooperation with Africa which includes: support to short term and long term training of Cameroonians in China; university to university cooperation between China and Cameroon; development of Confucius Institutes; development of education or training projects and project-related training within Cameroon; through a review of corresponding literature and materials with hope of providing solutions towards improving the educational exchanges between China and Cameroon under the Sino-African framework. This paper is structured as

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<sup>6</sup>China Education Center Ltd (<http://www.chinaeducenter.com/en/cedu.php>).

<sup>7</sup>2015 Statistics of Foreign Students in China " People's Republic of China Ministry of Education April14, 2016.

<sup>8</sup>China's higher education (17 September 2016). "China to overtake UK as a study abroad destination - China Chinadaily.com.cn"

([http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-09/17/content\\_26811371.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-09/17/content_26811371.htm)).www.chinadaily.com.cn.

<sup>9</sup> Addressing China's looming talent shortage" (<http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/china/addressing-chinas-looming-talent-shortage>). McKinsey & Company. Retrieved 2016-03-16.

follows: chapter one introduces China-Africa education exchange and cooperation. Chapter two focuses on educational cooperation in Sino-African relations. Chapter three assesses the impact of China development assistance in improving the education quality, access and skill development in Sino-African cooperation. Chapter four presents a case study of Sino-Cameroonian Cooperation and the fifth concludes the paper.

## **2. EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION IN SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS.**

Sino- African educational exchanges began in the 1950s with Egypt and by the end of 1966 about 164 African students from 14 African countries had studied in China, and 14 Chinese teachers had worked in Africa (He, 2007; Jian,2015). this exchanges ended abruptly due to the cultural revolution of May 1966-1972. However, by 1978, 43 African countries had established diplomatic relations with China (Li, 2007) and by the 1980s the number of African students coming to study in China began increasing (Edeh and Wang,2018). Ehizuelen et al (2017) noted that China 's increased economic engagement with Africa countries in the last decade has resulted in the rapid increase of educational cooperation, especially through the Forum On China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The first Sino-African Education ministerial meetings held in Beijing in 2005 was marked with the signing of the – Beijing Declaration by 17 African countries (Ehizuelen et al,2017). As observed by Nordtveit (2009) the declaration was geared towards a common commitment towards educational development with special focuses on primary education, vocational and technical education. Furthermore, the 2005 FOCAC declaration recognized the importance of education to economic development – as evident in the process of pursuing economic development, mutual benefit, poverty alleviation and the intention to pursue multilateral consultations around common issues.

As such, during the FOCAC summit of 2006, the Chinese government listed four main area of education cooperation with Africa, which includes- : (1) setting up rural schools in Africa, (2) increasing the number of Chinese Government Scholarships, (3) providing training for professionals and educationalists of various institutions in Africa, and (4) the establishment of Confucius Institutes (CI) for Chinese language teaching and the encouragement of teaching African languages in Chinese universities (Edeh and Wang, 2018). More so, in 2011, a total of 44 presidents and vice-chancellors from Chinese and African universities met in Paris for the UNESCO China-Africa University Leaders' Summit to discuss how to advance university cooperation between these two parties (Ehizuelen et al,2017; Edeh and Wang, 2018). following this summit in 2012 during the FOCAC meeting, China announced its three years –African Talents Plan which sets to train 30,000 Africans, award 18, 000 government scholarships and to build cultural and vocational training facilities by 2015 (Ehizuelen et al,2017).

Hanauer and Morris (2014) noted that there was an increase in the 2012 FOCAC pledge compared to the 2009 FOCAC meeting which foresaw 5, 500 government scholarship and promised to train 20,000 Africans. This also witnessed a further increase in 2015 FOCAC summit held in Johannesburg where China also pledged to enhance development experiences by offering occupational training courses for African youths and training young talent in agricultural science, increasing the Chinese government scholarships from 30, 000 in 2015 to 50,000 in 2018 for Africa and invite 2,000 young people from Africa to visit China (Johannesburg action plan, 2015). China through the FOCAC framework is forging its overall relations with African countries and has remained hesitant about using the traditional donor's modality.

Since the inception of FOCAC in the year 2000, China's aid and cooperation policies with African countries largely follows strategically the 3-year plan of the FOCAC framework and often a consensus on most of the aid and cooperation projects are reached between China and African countries during the high-level meetings. For instance, as stated by the Chinese embassy in Yaoundé" *We are trying to make a strategic plan, a long-term plan. Every third year, the inter-ministerial forum [FOCAC] evaluates the actions and makes plans for new actions. For example, we decided to construct schools. In the years to come, we will evaluate whether we should continue to give support to the same sector. These decisions are taken during the meetings of the forum. The principles of the cooperation are said to be related to African needs, and secondly, to help in domains that the Chinese are capable of helping them in; hence the focus on practical aid projects, rather than the use of conditionality and a meta- narrative on, for example, structural adjustment or economic policies, human rights, the environment, or other themes that are often being promoted by the Western donors.*" (Ehizuelen et al,2017).

King (2014) pointed out that FOCAC pledges are not bilateral but Pan-African, and are largely executed by Chinese expertise, this includes Chinese universities or vocational colleges, Chinese think tanks, scientists, agricultural technologists or language teachers, and medical personnel. However, King (2010) asserted that there is also still the strong bilateralism that underlines the importance of understanding the way China has chosen to work with any particular country. Notably, China, like the established donors also justifies its overseas economic activities with development objectives. but such development objectives have often been subordinated to strategic, diplomatic, or commercial considerations, while maintaining that it helps developing countries to promote sustainable economic development and poverty reduction.

There are 3 major perspectives onChina's development cooperation strategy. The first perspective is Beijing's desire to secure strategic resources—those most fundamental to national security— and secondarily for diplomatic reasons. The second perspective is the Chinese aid policy which has always maintained its distance from the established aid model under the guidance of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and will not necessarily challenge the existing international aid regime. The third perspective argues that China does not have a coherent aid strategy that is carefully designed and implemented. Diplomatic and commercial agendas often drive the Chinese aid policy as observed by some scholars. The diplomatic agenda regards aid as an instrument for Exercising diplomatic influence on the international stage and deepening cooperation with selected countries whereas the commercial agenda views aid as a useful way of assisting domestic businesses to go international and expand exports and investments (Brautigam 2009).

More so, the Chinese aid and cooperation administration in the policy of non-interference and in its principles of non-conditionality, may have even less control than other donors over the recipient country. For instance, Cameroon's use of funding and the selection of personnel to be trained or for scholarship awards. Nevertheless, studies have shown that China had only recently emerged as a donor, and the Chinese institutions have not yet had time to adjust to the dramatic increase in aid and cooperation that took place after the inception of FOCAC. As cited in Ehizuelen et al, (2017) Chinese Embassy Personnel in Yaoundé stated - *Our statistic services are not very good, and we are yet not established a very good data system...Chinese aid and cooperation with Africa have been hindered by a lack of transparency, and a lot of the documentation on prior projects has been lost. The new strategy of aid to*

foreign countries is important for us, and we are currently reviewing old projects and practices, to learn for the future. Edeh and Wang (2018) also noted that funding, Scholarships and training are often in line with the FOCAC agenda and will involve staff in many Chinese and African ministries such as (Ministries of Commerce, Foreign Affairs, Culture, Education, Science & Technology, Agriculture, and Medicine etc.), host universities in China, as well as both the political, economic & commercial branches of all of China's African embassies.

### **3. EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN SINO-AFRICAN COOPERATION**

Education and skills development are important for Africa to close the gap that has been created by a lack of local skill which prevents Africa from fully unlocking private investments for key infrastructure development. Clearly stated in the African Union's 'Agenda 2063, the Africa we want,' needs to catalyze education and skills revolution. This includes; building technical and vocational training centers in Africa; developing an African Accreditation Agency to monitor and develop African education standards; strengthening the Pan African University; actively promote science, technology, research and innovation – to build knowledge, human resources, capabilities and skills for the African century.<sup>10</sup> Africa's education systems and skills development can improve through sharing of developmental objectives and experiences from developed and emerging economies through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, required to build human, institutional and systemic capacities, capable of self-sustaining. To this end, Africa is actively seeking cooperation from emerging economies like China, and the rest to tackle the bottlenecks towards education and skills development.

China is not the only emerging economy supporting Africa's education and skill development, Brazil also contributes to education and skills development in Africa through the private-sector firms which provide scholarships, corporate social responsibility programs, business strategies and training.<sup>11</sup> However, our main focus is on four main pillars of China's educational cooperation with Africa (support to short term and long term training of Africans in China; university to university cooperation between China and Africa; development of Confucius Institutes; development of education or training projects and project-related training), to give a better understanding of China's major education programs and its impact in improving education quality and skill development.

China's support to short term and long-term training of Africans in China is viewed as a means of building capacity and skill transfer. The 2006 and 2009 FOCAC summit respectively, witness a massive investment in the Short term and long term training of Africans professionals. According to King (2010), China, by the year 2009, was offering Kenya an extraordinary range of short-term training courses while Niu, (2013) stated that the short-term training courses China offers to African countries cover over 20 professions ranging from politics, education, agriculture, medicine, environmental protection, public policy, fishing industry, medicinal plants, economy, energy, IT and

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<sup>10</sup>African Union, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, August 2014,

[http://agenda2063.au.int/en/sites/default/files/agenda2063\\_popular\\_version\\_05092014\\_EN.pdf](http://agenda2063.au.int/en/sites/default/files/agenda2063_popular_version_05092014_EN.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>VAZQUEZ, K.C. and CARRILLO, S. (2014) 'Sustaining the Benefits of Brazilian Direct Investment in Sub-Saharan Africa: Skills and Capacity Development.' Rio de Janeiro: CEBRI.

journalism. The Information Office of the State Council in 2010, also published a paper stating that China had provided training programs for over 30,000 people from African countries.<sup>12</sup> Niu (2013) grouped the human resources training projects into two categories according to their participants.

The first category involves short-term training course is for African government officials from different departments, it focuses on information exchange and experience sharing, exposing participants to best practices in approaches, technology and management in China so as to promote mutual understanding and cooperation., with the duration of about 20 days in length. The second category is short-term courses for training professional technicians, with focus on practical skills, such as agrometeorology, medical techniques, marine organism culture and hybrid rice technology which usually last for two to four months. Niu further cited the 2008 offshore training course on the quality and safety of horticultural products for African nations conducted with the collaboration of Nanjing Agricultural University and Egerton University in Njoro, Kenya, which witnessed a total of 24 participants from six East African countries as part of China's active role in improving the quality and effectiveness of the short-term training for local training.

Further observation by King, (2014) shows that over the two triennial from 2009–2015 up to 50,000 short-term trainees were expected trained. Capacity building among local technicians along with supervisory expertise and skills, will be integral for the long-term sustainability of large infrastructure projects and innovative training in the area of education in the continent. Scholarship for African Students is also evident in university cooperation and forms a major part of the long term training for African students in China. Representing the earliest form of China-Africa, scholarships to African students have increased since the fifth FOCAC of 2012 to the latest Beijing 2018 summit. As stated earlier in the previous page, it rose from 20, 000 in 2012 to 50,000 in 2018. The scholarship is allocated through different ministries ranging from Ministries of Commerce, Education, Foreign Affairs, Culture, Science &Technology, Agriculture, and Medicine. Also, a reserve portion is allocated by universities; however, the distribution of scholarship and training opportunities among different countries still remains unclear. Nevertheless, Changsha (2014) views the scholarship program as a mechanism for strengthening mutual understanding and friendship between China and other countries. Also, a more outstanding move is the 20+20 higher education cooperation between China and African universities announced during the 2009 FOCAC summit.

Scholars have viewed it as an added advantage towards promoting capacity building and internationalization of higher education institutions between Chinese and African universities. Another form of university cooperation is the Confucius institute framework. The support from the 2012 FOCAC gave more impetus to the development and spread of Chinese language studies in African countries. Currently, there are about 54 Confucius Institutes and 27 Confucius Classrooms in Africa. However, King (2018) stated that the 54 Confucius Institutes in Africa is located in only about 33 countries while the rest are yet to partner with the Confucius institute. The Confucius institute provides a range of short and long term language training sessions in China, including master degrees, four-year bachelor degrees, one-year training courses, one-semester training courses and four-week training courses (King,

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<sup>12</sup>Information Office of the State Council (2010), "China-Africa economic and trade cooperation", available at:  
[www.gov.cn/zegk/2012-12/23/content-1771638.htm/](http://www.gov.cn/zegk/2012-12/23/content-1771638.htm/)

2010). the Confucius Institute serves as an avenue for promoting friendship and understanding among China and African people through social interactions and cultural exchanges.

King (2014) further stated that the funding for 20+20 higher education cooperation and the Confucius Institute is funded by the Ministry of Education, However, there are different approaches to the funding mechanism. The fund for 20+20 cooperation remains with the Chinese partner(university) while that of Confucius Institute is transferred to the African or other overseas partner and the host university, be it African or Chinese, would be expected to support the accommodation and expenses of delegations, staff or students coming from the other university. The importance of the Chinese language is also evident in the economic activities between the Chinese people and the host countries(King, 2014). Furthermore, educational projects which often are presented in the form of infrastructural provision also find their way in China-Africa cooperation. Usually, these projects are aimed at addressing the pressing need to improve education quality, access and skill training. For instance, the area of school construction and the provision of study materials.

China has been providing for school construction since the third FOCAC and the numbers have increased over the years. However, Ehizuelen et al (2017) observed that academic assessment of this endeavor is entirely absent with little knowledge about the effects and perceptions of this program. It is pertinent to note that in terms of educational projects, China responds to countries specific priorities, hence the construction of a primary school and higher education in different African countries. According to the Information Office of the State Council, 2011, China has constructed 107 rural primary schools, with two or three schools in every African country, and provided School equipment for over 30 schools.<sup>13</sup>

Since 2012, China has built and donated primary school classrooms to different Nigerian states including the federal capital territory. According to Edeh and Wang (2018), in 2018, two newly constructed classrooms were handed over to the Nigerian government by China in Abuja with the aim of boosting the standard of education in Nigeria. In 2007, China also built, equipped and staffed the massive Ethio-China Polytechnic College in Addis Ababa (Niu, 2013). Similar structures and completed projects also took place in Malawi and Liberia, together with China's support for NEPAD's education and training programme, and the funding for the development of a clinical master's degree in nursing in five African countries (King 2014). China through the FOCAC framework seeks to strengthen ties with African countries by adopting Pan-African of responding to the pressing need in different African countries, however, to further appreciate the impact of China's education cooperation with Africa, we proceed to make a case study of Cameroon in the next chapter.

#### **4. A CASE STUDY**

Since 1971 when the Republic of Cameroon established relations with the People's Republic of China, it's been over four(4) decades of strategic partnership and successive visits of officials from both sides which have led to deepening of cooperation between Cameroon and China. With a population of about 25million people whose labour

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<sup>13</sup>Information Office of the State Council (2011), "China's foreign aid", available at: [www.gov.cn/english/official/2011-04/21/content\\_1849913\\_5.htm/](http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2011-04/21/content_1849913_5.htm/)

force constitute about 65% of the total population, the country's population is estimated to reach about 36,883,632 million by 2035.<sup>14</sup> Although there is a positive increase in population, however, 40% of the population is estimated living below the poverty level and poor access to proper education, especially in the rural areas. Also, lack of employable skills have been a bottleneck for the teeming population of the youths in Cameroon to secure well-paid jobs resulting in the high unemployment rate. Nevertheless, in seeking a better alternative towards solving its developmental issues, Cameroon has turned towards China as a reliable partner other than the traditional donor (France). Against the backdrop and backed by strong political will, the Republic of Cameroon has forged its strong relation with China on mutual economic needs and interests.

While China needs Cameroon's natural resources and raw materials (oil, cotton, timber and iron), Cameroon needs China's rapidly built and easily financed infrastructure (Jean-pierre, 2015). The mutual interest and benefit that Sino-Cameroonian cooperation pursues is evident in the speech made the former Chinese President, Hu Jintao during an official visit to Cameroon in January 2007, that China's relation with Cameroon is sincere, based upon equality, reciprocal benefits and win-win cooperation (Ehizuelen et al, 2017). Over the decade, Bilateral cooperation between China and Cameroon have significantly increased, A report from the presidency of the Republic of Cameroon stated that, In 2015, China was Cameroon's first trade partner, while the latter was the second largest beneficiary of Chinese aid in Africa; FCFA 1,430 billion.<sup>15</sup> Chinese companies are involved in 70% of Cameroon's official 'structuring projects', which are the key development and particularly infrastructure projects (Dams, hydroelectric power plant, low income-house construction, high-way construction, deep water port among others) launched since the end of the 2000s (Jean-pierre, 2015; Amindeh, 2018).

The diplomatic cooperation also covers other areas such as aid towards health, culture and tourism exchanges, military training, and educational exchanges. However, we shall focus on the Sino-Cameroonian education cooperation to better understand its impact in tackling the problem of skill deficit through these main axis of educational cooperation: support to short term and long term training of Cameroonians in China; university to university cooperation between China and Cameroon; development of Confucius Institutes; development of education or training projects in Cameroon. Human resource development and capacity building have been a major bottleneck that African nations have to face towards achieving "the Africa we want" (Agenda 2063) of which Cameroon a developing country is not left out. Outlined in Cameroon's vision 2035 is the desire to develop its industries, substantially increase exports, provide import substitution, and open local markets to foreign investments, as well as the strong desire to attaining the level of middle-income economies.

Also, the Cameroon development strategy is deep-seated in the country's National Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) with a reference framework for government action over the period 2010-2020. It replaced the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) instituted in 2008 (which was simply a tool aimed to help guide the attainment of the MDGs goals) following its non-satisfactory outcomes (Ehizuelen et al 2017). China, on the other

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<sup>14</sup>World population review. Available at <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cameroon-population/>.

<sup>15</sup>Cameroon-China to reinforce ties in 2017. Available at <https://www.prc.cm/en/news/audiences/2119-cameroon-china-to-reinforce-ties-in-2017>.



hand, has responded positively to make skills transfer a key element of a new phase in its partnership with Africa countries, as Beijing agreed to support Africa in vocational/technical training, higher education and science and technology (Ehizuelen, 2018). The Johannesburg action plan 2015, emphasized heavily on the need to encourage education and skill transfer within the framework. As cited from Ehizuelen, (2018) China and Africa attached importance to skills transfer, and to carrying out exchanges in technological innovation policies and the building of science and technology parks and to encouraging research institutions and enterprises to have intensive cooperation covering areas such as agriculture, industry, civil aviation, energy, and resource, tax, logistics (FOCAC, 2015).

As part of China's soft power diplomacy towards Africa, China provides Cameroon technical training for a much shorter period of time (2–3 weeks), and a longer period of 3 - 4 months with a programme specially designed for civil servants and politicians (numbering between 100 and 110 yearly) who travel around China free of charge (Jean-pierre,2015). Nordtveit (2011) stated that, in 2008, approximately 60 Cameroonian civil servants and 30 technicians were trained. More so, the Chinese telecom giant Huawei has been active in bringing digital and telecommunication revolution to the ICT sector in Cameroon. According to Amindeh, (2018) in May 2018, Huawei Marine, partnering with China Unicom and Cameroon Telecommunications (Camtel) began laying the 6,000km-long South Atlantic Inter Link (SAIL) cable system from Kribi in Cameroon to Fortaleza in Brazil. South Atlantic Inter Link(SAIL) is said to be the first cable system to directly connect Africa and South America is modelled using Huawei Marine's advanced 100G technology and will have a capacity of 32Tbits/s once completed. He further reiterated that, in the last eight years, Chinese mobile phone manufacturers like (Tecno Mobile, Huawei, Itel, LG, ZTE, Oppo, OnePlus) and a myriad of others (mobile broadband modems) have been overwhelming the Cameroonian market with affordable smartphones, giving thousands of people the incentive to go online and easiness to sign up to multiple telecom services.

More so, Sichuan Telecommunications Construction Engineering Company has also been tasked to construct, equip and commission nine university digital development centers to facilitate e-learning and e-administration. Nevertheless,besides connecting people together, the Chinese electronic gadgets in the Cameroonian market have also provided opportunity for unemployed youths who either engaged in repairs or sales of these gadgets. However, missed reactions have been raised concerning China's engagement in Cameroon's Information and communication technology (ICT) sector. For instance, AchiaRolence a computer engineer and an alumnus of the University of Buea, praised china for the role it's in Cameroon's digital sphere, he disclosed that the Chinese company Huawei has a program with the university whereby students go to China for intensive training in IT, However, he asserted that China has not provided any direct assistance to help their emerging tech ecosystem – Silicon Mountain – in Buea.

Also, Bama Etienne Cham, an expert in international trade negotiations, holds that China is facilitating Cameroon's digital boom but questions the cost. *"Looking at its sustainability, there is a need to be cautious about the quality and other impacts of these products [IT devices]. Such trading approach where all, including services, comes from China without transfer of technology is a serious call for concern. How do we sustain when we don't have the know-how?"* he stated. This, however, questioned the fact about skill transfer in Sino-Cameroonian Cooperation, whether China is to be blamed or the Cameroonian government for this loophole in the passage of technical know-how to the local Cameroonians.

### **Scholarship**

As part of the long term training for Africans in China, Scholarships are awarded in different disciplines to African students of which Cameroonian students also benefit. Like most African countries, Cameroon relies on foreign aid to tackle many problems especially in the areas of educational development and skill transfer. As such China's long term training of Cameroonians through different scholarship programs are aimed at assisting Cameroon to build up the necessary skills required to brace up the human resource capital for the 21<sup>st</sup> century industries. In a statement issued by MrAnYan, Director of the Division for Student Mobility in the Chinese Ministry of Education, stated that 718 Cameroonians have received Chinese scholarships since 1959. Since the past decade, especially with the commencement of the high level FOCAC framework scholarships quotas for African students in China, have increased successively. For Cameroon, in 2009, scholarship quota was increased to 40 places making China emerge the first scholarship donor, ahead of Morocco and Algeria (Nordtveit, 2011).

In 2016 more than 300 Cameroonians travelled to China for various training programs. Currently, about 1700 Cameroonians are studying in China, making it the highest number of African students in China (Kimeng, 2018). Cameroon receives scholarships, not only from the Chinese government, but also from independent institutions in China. Usually, some student travel to China on self-sponsored (i.e without scholarship) when they get to China, some are lucky to obtain a school scholarship after one year based on their academic performance and the school regulatory system. Different categories of Cameroonian students travel to China every year which include bachelors, masters and doctoral students, while many reapply for further studies or move to other countries instead of returning to their home country, only a few are compelled to return home. Many reasons have resulted in this attitude, most of the students complain of lack of employment opportunities in Cameroon as most of the programs they studied cannot be practiced in their country. For instance, students studying software engineering, robotics and other related courses have less opportunity than those studying business administration, economics and other management courses, as such the former is less likely to be employed or find a company that needs their services. Owing to this, the authors assert that the bottleneck is not just lack of skill, it is also as a result of lack of infrastructures, and industries that are ready to employ the graduates.

In addition, lack of proper curriculum that aligns with the needs of already established industries also results in a shortage of skills, as some students complain that practical knowledge is usually hidden from them. The case of a self-sponsored bachelor's degree Chemistry student Richard from Cameroon who withdrew from his school in China and returned to Cameroon after he felt he was not satisfied with what has been taught. This could be argued as language barrier as well as cultural constraints in learning in a different environment other than one's native place, however it is a call to action on the Cameroonian side towards ensuring active participation in the affairs of their wards in ensuring that adequate skills are transferred.

### **The University Cooperation Between Cameroon and China**

The higher education cooperation between China and Africa represents the earliest form of educational cooperation between the two parties. Introduced since the 1980s, it was aimed at assisting African countries to build and improve the curriculum systems in higher education studies, and cultivate scientific and technical talents. This

period also was marked with donations of teaching facilities and scientific equipment to African countries by the Chinese government. A report from Compiling Group of China Africa Cooperation, (2005), stated that with the support and help from China, about 23 advanced laboratories in the fields of biology and microbiology, physics, material science, analytic chemistry, food preservation, horticulture, civil engineering and Chinese language teaching have been built in African universities as cited from (Niu,2013). Furthermore, Nordtveit (2011) cited 1993, university cooperation signed between the University of Yaoundé I and the University of Zhejiang (ZJNU) for student exchange and research cooperation in the field of sciences and microbiology as the earliest form of university cooperation between China and Cameroon. Niu, noted that the cooperation is still on till date but no more significant.

The cooperation led to the equipping of the microbiology laboratory by China, sending of 10 Chinese teachers and the graduation of 10 Master degrees, 13 DEA [diplomed'études approfondies, or "diploma of advanced studies" (MPhil equivalent)], and five Ph.Ds. student by 1997. Nevertheless, more impetus has been given to higher educational cooperation since the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> FOCAC forum. In other to enhance the exchange of research and ideas, promote higher education studies to boost scientific and technical talents cultivation, the 2009 FOCAC forum announced the 20+20 university cooperation between China and African countries. 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. On the African side, most were in the top 100 African higher education institutions (HEIs); these included some of the continent's most prestigious universities, such as Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Makerere, Lagos, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Cairo (King, 2014).

In line with the 20+20 university cooperation, in 2017, the Cameroon embassy in China has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Xingtai polytechnic college, Hebei province to grant scholarships to Cameroonian students in various disciplines. The MOU aims at providing training for 20 Cameroonian students each year in Diploma programme (the Cameroonian equivalent of Higher National Diploma, HND), With full scholarship (free tuition, accommodation, health insurance, books and a monthly stipend of 1,500 RMB (126,727 FCFA). Students undertake a year study of Chinese language in Cameroon before proceeding to China to read their courses for two years. Upon completion, they can enter university for two years to obtain a Bachelor's degree (Kimeng, 2018). A further aspect of training for Cameroonians is the Chinese language training which we shall discuss below.

### **The Confucius institute training**

In December 1995, China and Cameroon agreed to cooperate and create the first Chinese center. The center kick-started in 1996 as a higher education cooperation between Zhejiang Normal University in China, and the University of Yaoundé II in Cameroon. In November,2007 the center was upgraded to Confucius institute under the supervision of the Chinese language governing center (Hanban). It became the first Confucius Institute in Cameroon boasting 7 teaching centers and by 2011 a total of 6000 students registered in the institute (Dreher et al,2017). Confucius Institutes offer scholarships and Chinese language teaching resources. They organize Chinese Proficiency Tests and certify Chinese language teachers, provide information and consultancy services on Chinese education, culture, and organize language and cultural exchanges between China and other countries as stated by Xia Jianhui,

Hanban deputy director general.<sup>16</sup> The establishment of Cameroon Confucius institute(hence forth CI) is based on agreement by both the University Yaoundé II, in Cameroon and Zhejiang Normal University in China to support Chinese studies in Cameroon, they jointly work on the , development, planning, advertisement and promotion of Confucius Institute under the supervision of the Office of Chinese Language International Council (Hanban) .

Funding is also a dual responsibility by both parties: the University of Yaoundé II, through international relations institute of Cameroon (IRIC) for Cameroon and HANBAN (Confucius InstituteHeadquarters affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education) for China. Apart from this direct funding by both parties, there are self-generated funds that the Confucius Institute gets from tuition fees and other channels. Since the establishment of the Clin Cameroon, the institute has grown from less than 200 students at inception to about 1000 steady growth of new students annually (Mbom, 2015). In 2017, the CI celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and by the end of 2018, the institute boasts of over 10,000 registrations from students. According to Hanban news, 1n 2017, the institute has set up 26 teaching centers with over 40 teachers and volunteers teaching the Chinese language. In 2016, the CI center at the University of Maroua became the first in West Africa to graduate teachers in Chinese language education. So far as reported by Kimeng (2017), 200 have graduated from the programme whose Head of Department trained in Zhejiang Normal University. He further noted that Zhejiang Normal University has offered to train Cameroonian civil engineers for free so that they can return home and boost the local construction industry.

In other words, it could be said that as the interest for the Chinese language is growing, there's a gradual shift from an ideology-based interest in Chinese language and civilization towards economic interest. Also in 2017, Zhejiang Normal University opened its first innovation center with the aim of meeting the requirement for practical education and skill transfer. The center aims also at fostering cooperation between the university and the Chinese enterprises who offer jobs and internship opportunities for foreign student in the university. Nevertheless, the aim of the paper is not to reiterate promises made (both fulfilled and unfulfilled) with the China-African cooperation, as well as Cameroon, but to critically examine its impact on Cameroonians as well as African, as they are on the receiving end of the win-win cooperation. To this end, on the side of the Confucius institute training in Cameroon, it is no doubt that they are training and graduating homegrown teachers, however only a few numbers are employed as China continues to send more native teachers and volunteers to assist in Chinese teaching.

Again with increase opportunity for training of Cameroonians under the FOCAC framework as pledges increases with each successive tri-annual summit a significant impact is yet to be made toward transferring the technical know-how that will help Cameroon Innovate independently. For instance, Chinese loans for infrastructure development goes from Chinese banks to state-owned companies. Usually, 70% of the workers are Chinese will 30% constitute the locals. These locals are employed to do the less skilled tasks, while the skill required task are done by the Chinese leaving no room to bridge the skill gap as such the Chinese are expected to manage the structures for years before handing over to the country. This is not peculiar to Cameroon, but also to several Africa countries, as

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<sup>16</sup> Cameroon: Chinese Language - Confucius Institute to Train More Cameroonian Instructors<http://za.chinaembassy.org/eng/zfgxss/t1495433.htm>.2017/08/30.

such, this paper maintained that the indifferent and unpatriotic attitude by some of the representatives in African institutions lead to these cases. It, therefore, calls for patriotic and pragmatic actions from the African representatives.

#### **Development of Education or Training Projects in Cameroon.**

China, as we stated in the previous section chapter prefers to be seen as a partner than as an Aid donor. Like other donors in Cameroon, China has contributed to school construction and education material assistance in Cameroon, however, they are still behind Japan in the area of primary school construction in Cameroon. In line with the 2006 FOCAC pledge to build 150 primary rural schools in Africa between 2006 and 2012, and the Chinese Premier WenJiabao's announcement in 2010 for construction of 200 elementary schools in developing countries by the Chinese government from 2010 to 2015, China by 2009 completed the construction of three primary schools in Cameroon. Also in 2017, China completed the construction of Yabassi professional agricultural high school which was described as a gift from China to Cameroon.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the production of 500,000 laptops for Cameroonian university students by China's Sichuan Telecommunications Construction Engineering Co. Ltd funded by the China Exim Bank which was described as part of the e-National Higher Education Network project being put in place by government of Cameroon.

However, as noted in the previous section, Ehizuelen et al(2017), holds the same view about Chinese companies and skill deficit where he stated that *"Contrary to the Japan, the largest bilateral donor in primary school construction in Cameroon who generally makes use of a local subcontractor doing construction, the Chinese is using technicians from China; materials are brought from China or purchased in Cameroon. However, due to the complexity of the Cameroon education system, these constructions are controlled by Cameroonian experts so that the Chinese engineers can follow the norms adapted to the reality of the country."* Nevertheless, China's efforts in assisting Cameroonian improve access to education by offering free schools building and educational material are welcomed and considered to be the positive and beneficial role of China's aid towards the improving the education development in Cameroon when compared with the traditional donors.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

The Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation illustrates facets of China's development engagement with Africa. First, one notes a clear transition from a political engagement phase to a more economic driven phase that can be dated to the period of opening-up policies preceding the first FOCAC (in 2000). This preliminary account of China's engagement with educational evolution development in Cameroon has not yet itself fully engaged with the useful literature that has emerged from China-Cameroon relations in these last 2-3 years. With that said, the analysis of various Chinese education projects in Cameroon demonstrates that China is a new donor – with particular problems and weaknesses related to its quick expansion of the aid and development sector: absence of a professional aid and

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<sup>17</sup> Chinese-built professional agriculture high school goes operational in Cameroon.<http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/0818/>

[c90000-9257351.html](http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/0818/c90000-9257351.html)

coordination structure, ad-hoc replies to demands, unstructured aid that does not always correspond to the needs of the recipient. Nonetheless, in general, Chinese engagements are positive, misgivings are temporary, and basically, a managerial issue that can be resolved given the existing political will on the side of the Chinese'. Notably, the presence of an Africa Policy on China's side needs something more of a China Policy on the African side, and not just the series of bilateral arrangements between China and Cameroon.

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