

**The post COVID-19 Educational Cooperation Between China and Africa: Case
Study of China-Cameroon**

Abstract

Due to closed borders policies caused by COVID-19, neither former nor new foreign students have traveled to China since 2019. The number of African and Cameroonian foreign students in particular has therefore considerably decreased especially because of the lack of proper tools required for online classes. These led to many interrogations between scholars, institutions, governments, politics, parents, and students as to when China's borders will re-open. Is online education as efficient as classroom education? Will China continue recruiting new foreign students for online classes if the current set of international students graduates behind closed borders? This paper seeks to answer these questions in the context of Cameroon as a case study. This research also intends to evaluate the efficiency of online classes, especially for Cameroonian engineering students with poor assets for online classes and lack of proper practical sessions on one hand and the effort of the Chinese government to offer the best of itself in another hand. Based on interviews and questionnaires with parents, government officials, and politicians, Cameroonian students are frustrated with their government because of the poor supply of electricity, and the internet coupled with the prolonged Chinese policy of closed borders. It is estimated that if China continues with online registration and classes, educational cooperation between China and Cameroon may not achieve its goal.

Key words: China, Cameroon, International education, post COVID-2019

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Introduction

Research background

The educational exchange between China and Cameroon is one of the oldest ties that lasted for several decades with no remarkable interruption since the 1950s. December 2019 with the official discovery of the first case of COVID-19 in Wuhan China marked the date of a new way of living: restrictions of traveling, distance, wearing masks, frequent nucleic tests, quarantine, online activities, etc. The unexpected tragedy has therefore imposed itself on the world and forced students to stay home nationally and internationally. The permanent exchange of knowledge training, internship, and seminars has made education one of the important keys in bilateral relations between China and Cameroon. Compared to the USA and Europe, former major destinations of Cameroonian foreign students, China has been leading in this field lately with 1700 Cameroonian foreign students in 2018. Families and governments of these two nations shared a common interest and strong ties from the beginning of their relationship that can be justified by the increasing number of self-funded Cameroonian students in China and various parts and fully funded programs via scholarships and awards. Talking of China-Cameroon bilateral relations, many think of win-win cooperation based on encouraging realizations in such a short term of cooperation as compared to Cameroon's bilateral cooperation with other nations. Besides scholarship, infrastructures such as roads, bridges, schools, training centers (about 40 centers in 2017), and hospitals were built in Cameroon. COVID-19, a sudden incident has destabilized the trends and plans and has become a major concern among scholars, foreign students, families, and government officials. Despite the dramatic situation, classes have held on mostly online for both students in China and those back home. More than 80% of educational staff interviewed found that this actual online method is not efficient and they have no idea when China will officially open borders to foreign students. Even one of the Chinese school personnel interviewed in Huangdao-Qingdao on July 10th, 2022 said that everything may be back to normal in about two (02) years from now: "I was talking to my student in France just right now on a phone call and guiding him on how to prepare the documents required to return to China. Recently, some of our students from Russia came back smoothly". "The uncertainty is still dominant" he added. Based on the popular saying "every beginning has an end", it is certain that the Covid-19 pandemic will come to an end. This end also called post covid-19 era won't come without changes in ways of living and ways of thinking in both individual and society's relationships. The aim of this paper is to examine the future cooperation of Chinese International Education with Africa, the case of bilateral Cooperation China-Cameroon. Two major questions guided this research: What is the current status of educational cooperation between China and Cameroon during the outbreak? What is the expected future of this cooperation? This project reflects data gathered over thirteen weeks through face-to-face interviews with foreign Cameroonian students currently in China and Cameroon, schools and government officials of both countries, and observation of the evolution of the outbreak.

Literature review

Sino-Cameroon cooperation since its official signature in March 26, 1971, has involved several domains such as economy, culture, and education. Numerous researchers from around the

world debated in detail on each of the mentioned aspects: In education for example Collins Magali stated that “cooperation with China has opened a new route to Cameroonian private initiative”. Jean-Pierre Cabstand’s research reveals that in 1996 first Cameroon (Pauline Zang Atangana) was trained fully with the support of scholarship, and the number of scholarships has increased from 10 in 1973 to 100 in 2010; For him, Cameroon’s Confucius Institute (which was created in Cameroon in 2007) is a kind of aid and thought that from then on, the level of Sino-Cameroon cooperation in the 4 Hitesh Bhasin (2018), “Why China or Chinese economy is the fastest growing economy”^[1].

For this kind of study, please refer to AFRODA (2011), “*Mapping Chinese Development Assistance in Africa: an analysis of the experience of Cameroon*”, AFRODA; Jean-Pierre Cabstand (6 March 2005), “*China-Cameroon Relations: fortunes and limits for an old political complicity*”, South African Journal of International Affairs. It is found that Sino-Cameroonian education cooperation has improved significantly.

In 2011, Bjorn H. Nordveit published a work titled “*An Emerging Donor in Education and Development: a case study of China in Cameroon*”, in which he illustrated four types of China aid to Africa including Confucius scholarship, long and short term scholarship, school construction and stand-alone education project. In this paper, the researcher found that Cameroon benefits of all these various aids and young Cameroonians have been developing more interest to learn Chinese or to travel to China for studies. There are quite a few other works that examined the deep educational cooperation between China and Cameroon like support of funding of Chinese government to Cameroonian students through numerous scholarships by Ehizuelen and the others, Yerima Kini Nsom, Kimeng Hiltong Ndukong, and Kimeng Hilton. The aids from China provide easy access to high quality education for all Cameroonian students even the less privileged, and the cost of studies in China is care free in most cases, as revealed by these authors and researchers. Moreover, some published works such as “*Why African Students are Choosing China over the West?*” by Jeremy Luedi, “*Impact of Chinese Investment in Cameroon*” by Asongne Ngufor Benis¹., “*An Emerging Donor in Education and Development: a case study of China in Cameroon*”, International Journal of Education and Development². Ehizuelen Michael Mitchell Omoruyi and Alt (November 2017), “*China Enhancing Development in Africa: Case Study of Cameroon*”³, Kimeng Hiltong Ndukong (11 October 2017), “*Cameroon Embassy signs scholarship deal with Xingtai Polytechnic College*”⁴. Kimeng Hiltong Ndukong, “*Chinese Language to Train More Cameroonian Instructors*”, Cameroon Tribune (Yaounde), Asongne Ngufor Benis (2017), “*Impact of Chinese Investment in Cameroon*”, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, vol.7, no 2, 2017⁵ had analyzed basically the empowered cooperation between China and Africa.

Furthermore , Li Anshan’s paper titled “*African Students in China: history, reality, and reflection*” examined many aspects of educational cooperation between China and Africa, and found that African students came to China owing to multiple factors such as scholarship, policy and the

¹ (6 March 2005) Jean-Pierre Cabstand, “China-Cameroon Relations: fortunes and limits for an old political complicity”, South African Journal of International Affairs, <http://www.tandline.com/loi/tsaj207> Bjorn H. Nordveit (2011)

² <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ijedudev>

³ (16 April 2010), IISTE, <http://www.iiste.org>.9 Yerima Kini Nsom

⁴ (11 October 2017), <http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/1011/c90000-9278475.html>

⁵ <http://ijhssnet.com>

development of China Chen Xiuqiong and Gong Xiaofang conducted research on what elements affect African students' study adaptation in China and found that study motivation, sense of study effect, study statics, Chinese language level, teaching model, and teaching management are the main elements. Some scholars used the push and pull factors theory to examine the factors that affect African students' motivation to study in China, or their willingness to go back after graduation.

“East versus West: Chinese and American Development Efforts and Perceptions in Cameroon” by Grace Perkins appreciated the flourishing cooperation between China and Cameroon and wish if China could teach more to catch the fish to Cameroonians but not only to eat fish, in other words this cooperation should emphasis more on technology transfer not donations for better future he said.

All these works analyzed the importance of Sino-Cameroon educational cooperation. But since the outbreak, both parties seem to be so busy fighting the virus and apparently pay less attention to the future of the cooperation.

However, Erudera colleges' news published on July 17, 2022 on its page an article titled *“Over 100 International Students Allowed to Return to Their Chinese University”*⁶. This article revealed the endless effort of China government to welcome back international school. It is stated that students allowed to return to China come from the following countries: The United States, Ethiopia, France, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Thailand, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore and students must travel on a direct flight from their home country.

Ameen Amjad Khan and Mimi Leung published on University World News on July 01, 2022 an article titled *“Students begin return to China as COVID restrictions ease”*⁷. They revealed that a Thai diplomatic source said, while China will allow in small groups from certain “friendly countries”, a general ban on foreign students entering the country would continue and those who have been able to return “under special agreements” will not be able to travel freely within China due to its strict “ZERO-COVID” policy. He added that “Another Asian diplomat, who wish to be anonymous, told *University World News* that groups of students were allowed back based on the institutions in which they were studying”.

*“Trends and Orientations of Cameroonian Students upon Graduation from Chinese Higher Education Institutions”*⁸ by Mathias Guiaké1 & Célestine Laure Djiraro Mangué2 & Jean Gonondo3 is one of the works which directly actualized the Sino-Cameroon Educational cooperation during the pandemic. It found out that despite the challenges, the Educational Cooperation between China-Cameroon has been excellent from academic support through scholarships and awards to graduation rates and multiple opportunities upon graduation since the beginning of Sino-Cameroon relations till now. It is also found that despite the fact that Sino-Cameroon educational education has been much better than the Western-Cameroon educational system, many Cameroonian international students from China are still facing similar challenges to return home after graduation like those who

⁶ <https://collegenews.org/over-100-international-students-allowed-to-return-to-their-chinese-university/>

⁷ <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220701132904469>

⁸ International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies
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graduated from Western Universities. But this research stressed the future of this cooperation with less emphasis on the possible impact of COVID-19 which may impose new policies in days ahead susceptible to redirecting this beautiful relationship.

All in all, the previous works have shown the resistance, consistency, and willingness of both the China and Cameroon government to overcome obstacles and keep improving their relationship. This has been proved sufficiently in the educational sector mainly during the pandemic. However, it is quickly noticed that priorities for international students to return to China has been given first mostly to Asian countries or Sino-foreign sister universities. Based on the fact that China has been Africa's first partner in almost all domains for several decades already, I felt the necessity to examine the future of educational cooperation between China and Cameroon.

Methodology

This project was completed over thirteen weeks (May 2022 to September 2022). It was set in Shandong China and Yaoundé-Cameroon targeting Cameroonian foreign students for many reasons: due to Chinese government policy of Zero COVID-19, travelling around China is restricted. Shandong province has top ranked universities in China and top 100 universities hosting more foreign students in China according to the statistics published by Christine Chiu on 27 January 2021: Jinan University 11th with 4,861 students, Shandong University 16th with 4,012 students, Ningbo University 38th with 2,464 students, Jilin University 51th with 2,003 students and Qingdao University 64th with 1,774 foreign students.⁹ There are over 80,000 African students in 2021. Couple to the fact that China has one national policy; the research conducted in Shandong universities on African students will reflect that of China as whole.

Cameroon, African in miniature has been leading with the largest number of African students in China with 3,000 students according to UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2021 and (CGTN, 2019). Cameroon has been considered for many decades as Africa in miniature based on its diversities which represent that of the Africa as a whole. Yaoundé, its Capital city is the country's seat of institutions and hosts of good number of its governmental resources. Thus the realities in Yaoundé-Cameroon represent that of Africa. It is therefore clear that the outcome of this research to some extent reflect that of Sino – Africa educational cooperation after COVID-19.

To have better and various opinions on the future Sino-Africa educational cooperation post COVID-2019, several sets of data were gathered in China and Cameroon. I administered different questionnaire contents to various groups due to several environmental realities on COVID-19 and governmental policies. Some interviewees were so eager to participate to an extent that they answered some questions before I asked and others were reserved especially on relationship between school and government or/and relation government-government.

Data presentation

⁹ <https://www.china-admissions.com/blog/chinese-universities-with-the-highest-number-of-international-students/statistics>

Chinese Educational Administrators and Chinese government

To have a better insight information on Sino- Africa educational cooperation post Covid-19, I have contacted some school authorities through phone calls or /and Wechat especially those that have known me previously. The main aim here was to have an overview of the school administration policy on the ongoing fight against COVID-19. Secondly the interviewees were asked about their cooperation with local government to overcome the challenge and lastly they were interrogated on their opinions on the new education trend method with emphasis on whether online teaching is as effective as classroom training and about the eventual new perspective on Sino-African educational cooperation. Some questionnaires were sent out and returned via Cameroonian foreign students to their institutions. I also consulted websites, magazines and articles from Chinese Ministry of Education, Chinese Ministry of External affairs and Chinese Ministry of health.

Foreign Students in China

I contacted some international students in China to seek their opinions about their future plans after graduation. I started the interview with friendly conversation to give them a chance to freely express their thoughts. It was easier to get the questionnaire answered by many in the form of guided conversation as many feel reluctant to fill-in a written questionnaire. I had the privilege to interview some Cameroonians and other foreign students in the form of group conversation as they feel more comfortable to discuss about the topic with their friends, classmates or country mates

Cameroonian students abroad that couldn't return to China

I interviewed mainly those in Cameroon via WhatsApp calls, written questionnaire and exchange messages. The main goal was to find out the effectiveness of the ongoing online classes, to get the feedback from the learner's environment, the facilities and how they foresee the future education with China. The 98% of the interviewees were those in Cameroon mainly based in Douala and Yaoundé: Economical and political capital of Cameroon respectively.

Questions were actively answered. Some interviewees gave general answers. I had to analyze those responses to extra answers to my interrogations.

Cameroonian Government and its citizens

Questions were designed to find out the effectiveness of online classes for international students, the impact of the COVID-19 and the future alternative to improve the current learning and teaching method. For the latest updates, I have been directed many times on the ministry of Education website. At the level of citizens, despite the fact that many were not much concerned or not familiar with the topic, they gave me a chance to explain to them before they could attempt to give any answers.

Cameroonian foreign students in the West, Cameroonian foreign students in China and future Cameroonian foreign students in China and others.

To round up with interviews, I interrogated Cameroonian students in the west especially those in Europe and America to have an idea of ongoing online learning there and its potential impact to

have their preferred destination according to the current situation. Also I interviewed other China foreign students mostly from Asian's countries.

Data Analysis

This part presents the data collected from both Chinese and foreign involved in Sino-African Educational cooperation. All the questionnaires set are synchronized in three groups: Chinese institution, foreign students in China and Foreign students who couldn't return to China because of outbreak. Foreign students in China interviewed are mostly Cameroonian students. The same questionnaire was administered to targeted universities, similar questionnaires were administered to all international students in China and different questions were asked to two governments involved. Nearly all feedback had some extra answers along the interview based on the topic.

Chinese universities

Yantai University

On the question how do you foresee the future educational cooperation between China and the West, Mr. Wu Hongun, josephwhj@163.com, officer of international education of Yantai University was interviewed on August 8th 2022 via WeChat video conference call organized by a Chinese friend and former student of the school. He said that his institution doesn't have any African international so far but host a lot of foreign students mainly from Asia. He continued by saying that the said "privilege" given by China to sister's universities students to return to China is just the rumor. According to him, saying that China is giving privilege to sister universities to return is exaggerated. Different countries around the world have different travelling policies restrictions lately, if the host country and the country of international student's policies are compatible, they are welcome to return to China at any time. Despite the fact that China and the west are working hand in hand to improve world citizen education, people need to adapt to the new trend. "The new lifestyle which is online has affected the whole world. If foreign students and the host country think travelling is safe, no problem. But we need to manage the risk of life to achieve our goal."

Binhai University of Qingdao

Mr. Bowlin Wang, email: 810901859@qq.com is the head teacher in charge of international department in Binhai University of Qingdao. During an interview on July 10th, 2022 at 2:20 PM in his office, he said that both China and foreign friend's want life to be back to normal as before, but the fact is visible by everyone. To the question when is the expected return period of international students he said "I was just talking with one of our foreign students who is actually in France on the procedure and paperwork to combine to come back to China". He added later on a written questionnaire submitted to him that, "the return of international will resume step by step and majority of students will hopefully be back in 2023". While waiting for the effectiveness of trip resumption, foreign educational cooperation will continue to be strengthening with online classes. "NO" was the answer to the question Is the returning of international students left out of the country because of COVID-19 the priority to your school, government ? He argued that the priority is people's life.

Hebei University of Technology

Only an online questionnaire was submitted to Hebei University. The school officer who answered preferred to be anonymous. He said that the returning of foreign students is neither the priority of the school nor that of the government: “To keep the educational cooperation alive with foreigners, foreign, students will keep learning online and could potentially seek for help from their local colleges and universities in using their labs with cooperation of their teachers and supervisors in China”.

China Ministry of External Affairs

Updated information and articles were found on various websites and Chinese magazines on the ongoing pandemic such as *China Highlights*, *China briefing*, *foreign affairs*. It is found that despite the huge and remarkable impact on national and international economy, China opts for human safety first via closed borders to avoid more imported cases while working on the better solution .

China Ministry of Health

“Zero COVID-19 policy” has found to be the major priority of the China Ministry of Health has found. This Ministry has laid emphasis on neutralizing the virus. From lock down, distancing, nose covering, constant PCR testing to vaccination for all. Collected data: journals, articles, books on both national and international level.

Based on data collected, Chinese government and institutions give more attention and effort to neutralize the virus as soon as possible that will lead life to be back to normal. It is also revealed that while fighting the virus, China is showing deep concern on maintaining other aspect of life like education. All the interviewees asserted that Chinese institutions keep close relationship with foreign students abroad who so far continue to follow the training from China.

Cameroonian Students in China

To have useful information on daily life and future plans of foreign students currently in China with Cameroonian students as targeted population, over 60 questionnaires were shared and 25 students interviewed mainly on WeChat call. 52 questionnaires were answered. To the main question when do you think students will be able to return to China? And how long will you like to keep studying in China? Answers were coded by level of studies. 89% of undergraduate students said they will leave China as soon as they graduate and they have no idea on when trip to China will resume as before. They said that before the outbreak, life in China was manageable, at least they could visit places around, but now they can barely leave campus premises. “The only difference with our classmates out of China is that we attend live classes with teachers” they said. Perez Lontsi, second year Undergraduate student at Jiangnan University said on phone interview that “We cannot even go to play out of the campus”. Harris Nebba, third year undergraduate student at Nanchang Hangkong University said that “it is even harder because even online business with the West is hard as we face serious trouble with money transaction”. Mungutu in final year of undergraduate from Hebei University said despite the challenges, he’ll likely stay in China for a while after graduation for more socio-cultural empowerment.

95% of graduate students said borders will surely be opened soon and they prefer to stay in China for some time after graduation. None of them mentioned exactly, or couldn't say how soon they expect borders to be opened. Astibom Valery, Master Graduate from Petroleum University of Huangdao in face to face interview said that there are a lot of opportunities in China despite the outbreak: "I just got a scholarship to further my PhD from September 2022 that will enable me to gather more knowledge and become a potential expert in my field." Domche Gilles, Master graduate from the same school and September 2022 PhD scholarship winner said on phone interview that "It is better to persevere and round up with what we came here for".

Cameroonian International students out of China

Out of 72 questionnaires shared, 38 were answered. 91% of Cameroon international students stocked out of China because of outbreaks are in Cameroon. Many interviewees prefer to be anonymous. After gathering the answers mainly on the effort of Cameroonian Government to improve online learning from China, 89% said there is no improvement in terms of local learning equipment: Nothing has changed so far from lab equipment, internet speed and availability of devices. No major improvement as well from Confucius centers. Abdou Njoya Woussouona, Cameroonian student registered in Nanjing University, presently working at American Language Center Douala - Cameroon as Administrative support and social media manager said "I appreciate the fact that the Chinese government has introduced online teaching. Unfortunately, not all the world population has access to a stable and fast internet, cell phone and a computer. Also, internet is still costs much in less developed countries which discourage the majority of international students to follow up their courses online. Time difference also discourages online teaching". 87% said they will prefer to return to China to finish their studies because of lack of facilities. Ngouh Michel, living with his parents in Yaoundé Cameroon said on WhatsAap call that "Despite the fact that the Chinese government has donated some equipment to the Cameroon Ministry of Higher education, it is insignificant as compared to the number of students registered in China and most importantly this equipment is for the whole Cameroon and will be surely used only in big cities like Yaoundé and Douala".

Other foreign international students out of China.

Along this research, less attention was given to other nationals assuming Chinese policies on Zero COVID-19 apply on all foreign friends. However I interviewed few other international students different from Cameroonian. On WeChat call with Temoor, Pakistani, and September 2020 PhD scholarship awarder from Ocean University of Qingdao said "Finally I received a notification by email from my school saying that I can come back to China in September 2022". Ulan in Kazakhstan, former student of Petroleum University of Huangdao said on WhatsApp call that "I don't really know when Chinese borders will allow people in their country".

In general, it is found that despite the zeal to return to China for further studies or to be able to move out and into China as easily as before, no foreign student can say exactly when that will be possible. Others hope for that dream to manifest soon. While waiting, others anticipate their future plans with exiting China or not returning to China anytime soon. Among Cameroonian students currently in China, it is found that mostly undergraduate students are eager to return home or go to

different countries whereas graduate students will like to stay a little longer after graduation: the reasons collected are found to be the precision on their life's objectives: Along this research, 88% of undergraduate students have no specific professional goal other than to further studies in different countries whereas 89% of graduate students plan to start their career upon graduation.

Cameroonian Government

From educational and health officer to political influencer interviewees, Cameroonians in general were friendly even though it was difficult to have straight personal opinion. The majority of answers have been anonymous and implicit.

I thought it was useful to collect data also from the Cameroon Ministry of External Affairs, The Cameroon Ministry of Public health and Ministry of Higher Education.

On March 26, 2021 China and Cameroon celebrated their 50th anniversary of bilateral cooperation. The Cameroon Ministry of External Affairs, His Excellency Mbella Mbella after exposing the strong, friendly and prosperous relationship between China and Cameroon stated that "Far beyond the ensuing achievements, this would certainly be a moment of deep reflection in new priorities accruing from the CameroonChina partnership in the upcoming years". It is revealed from data collected mainly in journals and online news such as *CRTV*, *Actu Chine-Cameroon*, *Cameroon-Tribune*, *XINHUANET* and official website of Chinese Embassy in Cameroon and Cameroon targeted ministries mentioned above that up to date, despite the outbreak, China is leading as first investor and partner in Cameroon with direct impact on Cameroonian population: From mega project such the Lagdo Hydrolic Dam, The Palais de Congres de Yaounde, The Genyco-Obstetrics hospital and pediatrics of Yaoundé, the polyvalent palace of sport of Yaoundé to the 2/6 stadium qualified for African Nations Cups 2021 held in Cameroon to minor projects such as agricultural firms, restaurants and supermarkets.

Guo Jianjun, the economic and commercial counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Cameroon) handover to The Yaoundé Central Hospital, one of the largest designated hospitals for COVID-19 treatment in Cameroon a batch of medical equipment donated by China to fight against the novel coronavirus on March 15, 2021. Besides numerous medical equipment such as ventilators, oxygenators and electrocardiographs, Chinese government has also donated to Cameroon one million doses of COVID-19 vaccine of Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinopharm to fight the virus. *XINHUANET* reported that "vaccine quantity and vaccination rates are low in Africa, including Cameroon, and this free aid from China is important at a time when the world is ravaged by COVID-19 variants such as Omicron. At the recently concluded, Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, China pledged to provide one billion doses of vaccines to Africa. Within the framework of China-Africa cooperation, health cooperation and joint fight against COVID-19 between the two countries will certainly achieve fruitful results" said GUO

Ndoula said to *XINHUANET* that "vaccination is one of the most effective ways to control and end this pandemic. However, the availability of vaccines is one of Cameroon's major concerns, and the reception of one million doses will help his country in its vaccine activities. This donation has not only deepened bilateral cooperation in the field of health, but also the friendship between the

two countries”¹⁰. During the same ceremony, numerous personnel and office equipment were donated by Chinese embassy to the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education.

To the main question what do you think of the future of Sino-Cameroonian educational Cooperation? Asked to Educational officers (workers from ministries of higher education, University lecturers, and language centers administrators), it is revealed that ‘‘China and Cameroon have strong ties not only on education but also in various domains that a small virus like corona can’t destroy. Even though the effort seems not be satisfying from both Chinese and Cameroonian Government, they ‘‘hope the best still to come’’ said an anonymous government officer. Another interviewee said ‘‘The mentioned cooperation is far off to be concrete as many decrees are one sided’’.

According to the last category of Educators, Chinese and Cameroonian government have been working very hard together lately for win-win cooperation: new Confucius centers have been built around the entire country, learners have been encouraged through various scholarship programs: Confucius scholarship, Chinese government scholarship, Cameroon government scholarship also partnership between universities have been strengthened: Zhejiang university and University of Yaoundé 1, University of Maroua and more importantly, Chinese language has become one of the major subject in secondary school with the same quota just like Spanish and German since 2014 said KENNE.N SINTIA MARL ÈNE, Chinese language teacher at Lycée General Leclerc Yaoundé to *Actu Chine-Cameroon*.

Political influencers said Cooperation between China and Cameroon is been prosperous so far. Corona virus is just one of the obstacles to be overcome. Young Cameroonians interviewed randomly in Yaoundé on their opinion on bilateral Cooperation Sino- Cameroon in general said they prefer learning from China than from the West. Some factors like affordable tuition fees, scholarships, and Chinese not involve in Cameroonian politics as compared to other foreign nation’s cooperation with Cameroon drive Cameroon and China to better future. They concluded.

Through this session, it is found that Cameroonian and its government appreciate the prosperity of their cooperation with China. Almost all interviewees went beyond educational cooperation during the interview.

IV- Answer to research question

What is the current status of educational cooperation between China and Cameroon during the outbreak?

China, the first destination of African students

Marketing Intelligence for International Students Recruitment ICEF posted in 21 April 2021 that China has become the first destination of African International students over the West. ‘‘The rate

¹⁰ http://www.news.cn/english/2021-12/15/c_1310372698.htm

of growth of African students going to China for study abroad grew by 258% between 2011 and 2017, compared with a growth rate of 30% for the US and declines of -2% for France and -24% for the UK”¹¹ This paper has confirmed from data collected that COVID-19 hasn’t stopped the fast growth of Sino-African cooperation. However, in education to be more specific, Cameroonian individuals from students to parents have risen numerous complains about the effectiveness of online teaching, Chinese assistance which is affordable only by few elites in some areas in Cameroon. Also, it is found that almost all undergraduate Cameroonian students currently in China wish to leave immediately after graduation. Surprisingly, It is impressive to notice that throughout this research, no one has been found regretting the cooperation between China and Cameroon. Instead they wish for the better future. More and more Cameroonians are hoping to further their studies in China sooner or later: Ngapout Salamatou Aleya, college student, schooling in Lycee General Leclerc, Chinese language learner revealed her dream to further her studies in China in Textile engineering to *Actu Chine-Cameroon*. She added that despite the fact that her environment constantly complains that Chinese language is hard to learn, she sticks on to her teacher’s encouraging words “When there is a will, there is a way” “世上无难事，只怕有心人”。

New equipment donated to Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education is also an emphasis and prove to a prosperous Bilateral Cooperation between the two countries: Donated in March 2021 along with a million doses of vaccine against Covid-2019, it can be concluded that “action speaks louder than words”. From Chinese government and Chinese institutions, the emphasis is on fighting against the Virus. Almost all Chinese interviewees said as long as people are safe, life will retake its traditional trend. Yantai University and Bihai University both said they are now ready to receive students from abroad as long as the health procedure is well taken care off and they confirmed that students are coming back already. Numerous available scholarships to foreigners for this year and next year are available on schools and Chinese government websites. This testifies as well the willingness of China to continue its unstoppable fulltime educational cooperation with the west.

China becoming the top educational partner of Africa

“China and Africa: Strengthening Friendship, Solidarity and Cooperation for a New Era of Common Development” published on the Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Republic of China on August 18th, 2022 revealed the update of Chinese realization in Africa. And it was already published on the same page on November 2021 that China is “Building an Even Stronger China-Africa Community of Shared Future”. COVID-2019 seems not to affect much the deep cooperation and dedication to brighter future of Sino-Africa cooperation. Chinese donation and realization in Africa has been increasing remarkably even during the hard time of the pandemic especially in education sector. China has been therefore re-affirming its first rank as Africa’s largest partner. To keep the flame, it’s noticed that some recent bigger realizations in Africa: donations and projects in Africa during the outbreak are progressing. The aim of the win-win cooperation is surely no possible without educational cooperation.

¹¹ <https://monitor.icef.com/2021/04/china-emerging-as-a-major-destination-for-african-students/>

In education, Cameroon, case study of this research received educational equipment from Chinese Government during outbreak in March 2021. From individuals to government, Cameroon prefers China over the West. Throughout the interviews, individuals said the basic Cameroonian can enjoy good road sides, sport centers, schools, hospitals built by Chinese. It is revealed that more Cameroonians are eager to study in China. Cameroon government as well has been showing it willingness to accompany its population through this journey of knowledge query: Chinese language via implemented in Cameroonian secondary school, Confucius institutions been built all over the country, scholarships been given to outstanding students to study in China. Besides these charming projects, programs and realizations, some common Cameroonians interviewed on Yaoundé and Douala streets said that the benefits from China cooperation is still to be perfected. It is resulted that Chinese infrastructures mainly hospitals and schools have been built only in big cities which is not accessible to the less privileged who is the majority of the population. One said “it’s funny to be adding schools, stadium and hospitals only in Douala and Yaoundé where similar facilities are available already and neglecting rural areas of the country”. Another interviewee said “foreign scholarships are only for children whose parents have high rank in the government. Foreign aids should better be directed to the right target”.

Undergraduate students currently in China said their major concern is hiddenness and less opportunity been in China. To the question what do you suggest to improve your staying in China? A student from Wuhan University said “if we, the foreign students could be allowed to do few hours paid job, it could help us a lot in interacting more with Chinese society, train us to job market and definitely give us more opportunities”.

Chinese government cherishes Sino-African cooperation. China is dedicated to improve the lives of its population and that of foreign friends in join future venture. This vision and wishes were renewed once again in March 2021 on official website of The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China on the open letter to African Union¹².

In conclusion, it is found that despites the partial satisfaction from local African population, they prefer Sino-Cooperation over Western-Cooperation.

What is the expected future of China-Cameroon?

Sino-Cameroon educational cooperation: The savior to Cameroon?

Based on findings during this research, it is obvious that both parties involved in this cooperation expect the brighter future. However, Chinese government mentioned more the “give out” than the “take in”. Also, less official data from Cameroon with specific statistic is found on the benefit of China from the Continent. The difficulties to find such data for comparative analysis on Sino-Africa Win-Win cooperation was one of the major challenges that faced this research. To get more insightful opinion on China-Cameroon cooperation in general as the topic of China-Cameroon educational cooperation sounded more like broadcasting news for many locals, I decided to go closer to those who are direct coworkers, neighbors or friends to Chinese resident in Cameroon. The

¹² https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202208/t20220819_10745617.html

question asked was: What is China really benefiting from Cameroon? Almost all common citizens interviewed said that Chinese are exploiting a lot of natural resources from Africa. Furthermore, it is found that 80% of Chinese workers and businessmen in Cameroon are so prosperous and want to stay longer in the country. Yang Xiampei, a Chinese farmer arrived in Cameroon in 2017 started farming vegetables such as cucumber, cabbages and peppers among others cumulates a net worth of \$500,000 already. He is now looking for a bigger space to expand his farm as reported Actu Chine-Cameroon. Many Chinese companies involving in natural resources are found mainly in private Medias such GAODA International Investment Trading Sarl specialized on exploiting building materials from natural rocks. China is one of the main partners in exploiting mine in Mbalam reported CRTV, state national television. *Business in Cameroon* also published on September 14th 2022 an article title *Mbalam–Nabeba project: the five Chinese firms eying the exploitation component revealed*.¹³

The reasons revealed by interviewees is the less restriction given to Chinese Expats by Cameroon government on their daily activities. Many Chinese are found with parallel activities to assure multiple stream of income. Moussa Ngah , a clothes reseller in Marché Congo, Douala, one of the biggest markets in the Economic Capital of Cameroon said “Chinese are not only working nowadays in offices or sites, but they are our rivals in local markets in all sectors”. *Bloomberg, Asia Edition* published on May 10th 2022 on an article title *China’s “Sinosteel signs \$690 Million deal for Cameroon Iron Mine”* that “China’s Sinosteel Corp. has signed a \$690 million contract to exploit an iron ore mine in southern Cameroon amid a push to cut Chinese reliance on Australian and Brazilian ore”¹⁴.

Few government magazines like *Cameroon tribune* published as partnership with China in exploiting natural resources from Africa as well.

From these, it is now clear that China and Cameroon in particular are both benefiting from their cooperation, therefore the slogan WIN-WIN is been materializing.

Hidden agenda of China in Cameroon: Conspiracy or reality?

The expression “hidden agenda of China in Africa” is not more a new topic among scholars, politics, medias and journals. It started some decades ago when China became the largest Africa’s trading partner. From the scares of slavery and colonization, many local and foreign critics raise the concern or ring a warning alarm to Africa not to fall again into yesterday traps. It is reminded that Colonizers came firstly like friends, investors or cooperators and started turning to the masters of lands by using all means after been welcomed and well established in Africa. To the question “Does China really have hidden agenda”? The answer is “Yes” for foreign critics and “No” for others. On the article posted by QUARZT AFRICA titled *China “gifted” the Africa Union a headquarter building and then allegedly bugged it for state secrets*” the China’s Ambassador to AU dismissed the report as “absurd” and “prosperous”. Kuang weilin told reporters in Ethiopia that it was “very difficult to understand” *Le Monde’s* claims and that the story was certain to “create

¹³ <https://www.businessincameroon.com/mining/0103-12371-mbalam-nabeba-project-the-five-chinese-firms-eying-the-exploitation-component-revealed>

¹⁴ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-09/china-s-sinosteel-signs-690-million-deal-for-cameroon-iron-mine#xj4y7vzkg>

problems for China-Africa relations”¹⁵. The words neo-colonial master, spy , exploiter etc. used by many critics to describe China interest in Africa have been argued through research by many scholars such as Corkin on cooperation China-Africa, Angolan case study (A’Zami, P.730). However, it is undeniable that a common point has been found among arguments that China and African are enjoy their cooperation. It is necessary to remind that neo-colonial master, spy mostly imply negativity, one sided exploitation, taking advantage etc. This research has found that beyond critics, China and Africa all enjoy profits, fruits of their cooperation. Also, maybe there is a need to be honest on reminding that local population of both parties said to be satisfied. Even though “there is no friendship between nations, there is only interest” according to the school of diplomacy, it is clear that the difference between the Chinese presence in Africa and that of Westerners is the respect of the sovereignty of African countries. That gives hope to future prosperous cooperation for both parties and question the term “future neo-colonial master”. Cameroonian has fundamental conceptions on foreign education cooperation. Alongside the history, several Cameroonian families “lost” their loved ones who travelled abroad for studies and never came back, or came back with dual nationalities to serve a foreign master. These scares are still visible now and the impact undeniable by Cameroonian parents. This sad experience is the root of numerous question marks on China-Cameroon educational cooperation. It is time to remind that China, one of those countries visited Africa in early ages didn’t think of colonization, but always thought of business cooperation. It could be somehow exaggerated for Cameroonians to lay more emphasis on questioning the intention of China assistantship on Cameroon education especially in this revolution era. Moreover China as compared to the West hardly keep talented Africans by issuing dual nationalities or other forms of permanent residence after graduation, it encourages skilled trained youth to return home to contribute to local development. Thus China’s agenda to Africa can be resumed with less fear in three words so far: WIN-WIN COOPERATION though more still to do.

To overcome this common goal with China, Cameroon and Africa in general should keep remembering that no great country in the world history is the fruit of foreign aids. Therefore, they need to strengthen the basis of the cooperation from educational to economic cooperation, drive the cooperation to more objective and pragmatic side with direct impacts on population in need: For example scholarships to China should focus more on concrete and significant programs for Africa development like engineering, health and economy. Also, future projects could be directed more to the entire population and more privilege should be giving to the locals, traditional owners of exploited sites. Otherwise the minority benefiting will probably be regarded as trained collaborator to “neo-colonial master” sooner or later as it was yesterday with western invaders and their assumptions confirmed. Thus the future of Educational cooperation between Cameroon and China will be brighter no matter the obstacle.

Conclusion

This research aimed to analyze The Educational Cooperation between Africa and China post COVID-19: case study of Cameroon. Based on thirteen weeks of interview of Chinese and foreign students, educational and government officers in and out of China, this work firstly argues that Chinese government and Institutions prioritize safety of the population more than resuming

¹⁵ <https://qz.com/africa/1192493/china-spied-on-african-union-headquarters-for-five-years/>.

international travelling: “Zero COVID-19 policy” and million doses of Covid-19 vaccine donated to Africa in 2021 justified the effort of Chinese fight against the pandemic. Based on investigation, China has uninterrupted greater joint projects for future with Africa in all domains since the beginning of their cooperation. Secondly, Cameroonian international students, the direct target population of this cooperation expressed their uncomfortable mindset to continue to study in China under lock down: undergraduate students mainly wish to exit China immediately after graduation because of lack of opportunities and restriction of movement whereas graduate students plan to stay longer in China to perfect their training after graduation. Finally, it is argued that China has been maintaining its position as largest African partner via various and remarkable projects in economy, health and education.

Despite the fact that Chinese projects, especially scholarships and other educational facilities are being directed mainly in big cities in Cameroon and to some elites. Upon this unsatisfactory remark by some locals, this research hasn’t found anyone rejecting or regretting the Sino-Cameroonian Educational cooperation. Instead, local population still prefers Chinese cooperation and wish for more consideration in future“. Therefore it is undeniable to admit that the “hidden agenda of China in Africa” which has been argued by many critics is found to be more of conspiracy. This Cooperation appears to be WIN-WIN COOPERATION since both China and Africa are found to enjoying the fruit of their cooperation and wish for the better joint future. The future of Educational Cooperation China-Cameroon is been announced greater as China said to be ready to welcome foreign students as soon as the safety of the population is assured. Both parties need more patience and more focus. My past years and experience in China and which Chinese are colored with respect of each other, respect of sovereignty and the desire of joint growth. Besides numerous scholarships and awards in educational sectors to many countries around the world, Chinese’s desire of better economy for all can be read on world projects like “one belt, one road initiative“. Even though the travelling cost to China since the outbreak still has not been affordable by students from average family, plenty of awards have been allocated for upcoming semesters to attract talented foreign students. As response to locals about awards going to particular group of elites, many Chinese university offer direct sponsorships to talented internationals without a third party. These include CSC scholarship, Provincial scholarship, one belt one road scholarship etc where any qualify candidate can apply direct to the designated program.

To achieve a better future goal as this cooperation portrays, this research suggests that Cameroon and Africa in general strengthen and redirect this fruitful joint venture to avoid the training of potential future “neo-colonial collaborators” as it was some decades ago with the West “la main qui donne seulement est la main qui dirige”: it could be done by increasing the number of scholarships in the domain of engineering, health and economy or/and building more vocational institutions in Cameroon and Africa. The bright future of Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation is loyal in the eyes of the direct beneficiaries however it could be better if China emphasis on dialogue with locals on their needs. On the Cameroon side, giving a voice to locals on foreign cooperation will be a positive turning point as many receive what is been given not what their really need. However, urgent rigorous definition of foreign educational cooperation need to be implanted by Cameroonians for a better future as no country in the world has never been developed by foreign aids only.

Thirteen weeks is insufficient amount of time to follow up the trend of future Educational Cooperation China-Africa. People interviewed also are far less to represent the Chinese government, African foreign students, African governments and its citizen. In future, other research could target other African countries; gather more data from other Chinese government entities. Interviewing more Chinese government officers of foreign investment will be more useful to examine the knowledge transfer policy which is the key of development of a nation.

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Appendix 1

This questionnaire is conceived for academic research only. All answers will be kept confidentially and used only for the purpose.

Interviewee name

Email.....

Institution

Title/Occupation.....

Place, Date and time of interview

1-Is your institution a member of Sino-Cameroonian Educational cooperation? If yes which program is the expression of this cooperation?

2-How many Cameroonian students have ever travelled to China for the last decade through/from your institution?

3-What is your opinion about online teaching?

4-Is the returning of Cameroonian students registered in China and stocked in Cameroon since the outbreak the priority to your school, government? If yes, what is the ongoing measurement?

5-Have you noticed any effort from Chinese and/or Cameroonian government to ease learning through online?

6-When do you think international students will be able to return to China with ease.....

7-Is there any alternative to keep strengthening this promising educational cooperation with China if borders fail to open as you expected?

Best wishes!

Thank you

MONYEN RODOLPHE

Appendix 2

Assistance	This Research paper survey is designed for Cameroonian students in China	Demography
<p>1- Are you a self-funded or scholarship students? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> self-funded</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> scholarship</p>	<p>This questionnaire aims to examine the future of educational cooperation between Cameroon and China after Covid-19. Your answers will be used only for the intended purpose and will be kept confidentially. thank you</p> <p>dolpmo9@gmail.com (not shared) Switch accounts</p> <p> *Required</p>	<p>1- Sex *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Male</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Female</p>
<p>2- How is your support status from your sponsor? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Increased</p> <p><input type="radio"/> decreased</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> stantard</p> <p><input type="radio"/> cancel</p>	<p>1- Which period you did come to China ? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 2019-2017</p>	<p>2- How old are you? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 15-24</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 25-34</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 35-44</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 45 and above</p>
<p>3- When will you graduate? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> this year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> next year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> two (02) years later</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> three (03) or more years later</p>	<p>6- When do you think smooth trip to and from China will be effective ? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> In six (06) months</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> next year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> two (02) years later</p> <p><input type="radio"/> four (04) years later</p>	<p>3- marital status *</p> <p>2- How do you hear first about covid-19? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> friends</p> <p><input type="radio"/> school</p> <p><input type="radio"/> relatives</p> <p><input type="radio"/> media</p>
<p>4- How much do you miss home ? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very much</p> <p><input type="radio"/> a little bit</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> not at all</p>	<p>7- Do you think study in China is still a great opportunity for foreign students? why? *</p> <p>Ok</p>	<p>3- How do you find Chinese culture ? (food, music, language?) *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> interesting</p> <p><input type="radio"/> boring</p> <p><input type="radio"/> exiting</p> <p><input type="radio"/> bad</p> <p> This is a required question</p>
<p>5- Do you plan to leave China after graduation? *</p>	<p>8- which city and province are you in ? *</p>	

Appendix 3

This questionnaire is conceived for academic research only. All answers will be kept confidentially and used only for the purpose.

Interviewee name

Email.....

Institution

Title/Occupation.....

Place, Date and time of interview

1-Is your institution a member of Sino-Cameroonian Educational cooperation? If yes which project is the expression of this cooperation?

2-How many Chinese ever worked or work with your institution for the last decade?

3-What is your opinion about Sino-Cameroon Cooperation?

4-Is the returning of Cameroonian students registered in China and stocked in Cameroon since the outbreak the priority to your institution? If yes, what is the ongoing measurement?

5-Have you noticed any effort from Chinese and/or Cameroonian government to ease learning through online?

6-What do you think of numerous projects and aids from China?

7-Is there any alternative to keep strengthening Sino-Cameroon educational cooperation with China if borders fail to open as you expected?

Best wishes!

Thank you