

Challenges faced by Africans students in China

Zaida Esther Quade Bedane

Abstract— The main objective of this paper is to address the challenges experienced by african students in China, as China is a country that over the past few years has received numerous foreigners, specially africans, mainly in the academic field, and Africa has developed a strong relationship with China over years . China has been one of the main destinations for african students, who has welcomed the development of China and thus sought new horizons. However, moving from one place to another implies adapting it and can have strengths and weaknesses, so we decided to elaborate a work based on research and discussions about the challenges faced by african students in China. Which allows us to understand the problems or challenges faced by africans students in China in order to improve the solution of their problems in the future.

Index Terms— Challenges, africans students, china, study

I. INTRODUCTION

Increasing the number of universities and accepting higher numbers of international students each year in Chinese universities shows the importance of education in China. In addition to this, according to a report of it is known that students who go abroad for the education contribute to the economy. In this way, both students and the countries where they have been for study, that give a mutual advantages . Most of the africans students, who want to have higher education usually, choose United State of America, Canada, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Turkey, United Kingdom, and others European countries. With the development of China, international africans student's education in China is growing . More and more international africans students are going to China to learn chinese language and their culture. Africans students in China often find difficulties in adjusting their new life in different culture environment. International students come to China with different worldviews, different culture, and different linguistics backgrounds. International students, particularly those who enrolled in master and doctoral programs are important contributions in many fields of study, such as management sciences, engineering, biology, science, medicine, and information technology. They are not only contributing to research activities in these field, but also serve as teaching assistants for various undergraduate courses and laboratory sections. Many students experience linguistic and cultural challenges different from those of local students. They often struggle with academic language in Chinese. Furthermore to interact socially with Chinese peers, instructor, and local community members, international students have to personally adjust to local Chinese culture.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

African students are a progressively significant and valuable source of diversity in universities or colleges. An increasing number of African students are choosing universities in China to study medicine. "We had just eight African students in our school in 2006, but 558 last year," said Lei Haixin, executive associate dean of the International Education College at Dalian Medical University in Liaoning province. African students now account for more than a third of all overseas students at the university, Lei said. There are more than 60,000 African students in the country, a 20-fold increase from 13 years ago, making China the second most popular destination for students from the continent studying abroad, after France, which hosts more than 95,000. Gerard Nkengurutse is one of hundreds from Africa studying medicine at Dalian Medical University.

Since 2006, China has set scholarship targets to aid African students coming to China for study. For example, at the most recent 2015 summit, China pledged to provide 30,000 scholarships to African students by 2018. Although China stopped publishing regional scholarship data in 2008, our data analysis using the 2003-2008 data to generate scholarship estimates suggests that this target is on the way to being met. It's difficult to know exactly which African countries are sending the most students to China. These details are not kept by the Chinese Ministry of Education. But the statistics from Tsinghua University provide an insight. In the 2015-2016 academic year, the majority of the university's 111 African students came from Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Morocco, Eritrea, and Cameroon -- slightly favoring East Africa.

At the 2015 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Johannesburg, South Africa, China pledged to provide 30,000 scholarships to African students . Lei said, "This is better than just sending doctors to Africa, and China helps those countries in building their medical industry by training these doctors-to-be." Keen interest among overseas students in learning medicine in China became apparent in the late 1990s. From 1999 to 2013, more than 200,000 students traveled to the country to study medicine, accounting for about 10 percent of all those from overseas. In 2018, the number of African students pursuing higher education in China reached an all-time high – 16 percent of all international students in the country came from Africa. There were 81,562 African students in China in 2018, compared to less than 2,000 in 2003. In 2018, the Chinese government pledged to offer 50,000 scholarships to African students from the years 2018 to 2021. As a result, China now has the largest number of African international students in the world, more than traditional study abroad destinations like the US or UK. In less than 15 years the African student has grown 26-fold -- from just under 2,000 in 2003 to almost 50,000 in 2015. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the US and

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UK host around 40,000 African students a year. China surpassed this number in 2014, making it the second most popular destination for African students studying abroad, after France which hosts just over 95,000 students.

However, from the end of 2019 to mid-2020, the number of foreign students, mainly africans, decreased, because of the covid pandemic, when the virus started in China, and nap could still come back because of the pandemic.

III. METHODOLOGY

In preparing this work, africans students who study and have already studied in China were interviewed, the questions focused mainly on research questions.

Research Questions:

1. What challenges africans students have encountered in China?
2. How africans students try to overcome the challenges?
3. What is the solutions for those students who wants to come to study in China?

The collection of data in a qualitative research through an interview is extremely enriching and profound, since that by interviewing students we can have a physical and direct contact with students, and they can express their feelings, emotions and opinions in a clear and direct way. About 20 africans students were interviewed, 18 of whom are still residing in China and another 2 have already graduated and returned to their country of origin.

Of the interviewed students, 17 were male and the other 3 were female, some of them students from the HFUT, some from Wuran universities and some students from the university of Beijing. All students were CSC scholarship students.

The average duration of each interview was 20 minutes, the main topics of questions was the research questions, and the respondents had their data or names confidential, so we used codes to reserve the identity of the interviewed scholars, as their data they are only for qualitative research.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

Code	Gender	Age	Degree	Nationality
S1	F	22	Bachelor	Cape Verde
S2	F	24	Bachelor	Cape Verde
S3	F	31	Master	Cape Verde
S4	M	27	Master	Cape Verde
S5	M	27	Master	Cape Verde
S6	M	27	Master	Cape Verde
S7	M	28	Master	Cape Verde
S8	M	28	Master	Cape Verde

S9	M	28	Master	Cape Verde
S10	M	28	Master	Cape Verde
S11	M	28	Master	Angola
S12	M	29	Master	Angola
S13	M	29	Master	Angola
S14	M	29	Master	Angola
S15	M	30	PHD	Angola
S16	M	33	PHD	Mali
S17	M	34	PHD	Angola
S18	PHD	38	PHD	Namibia
S19	PHD	39	PHD	Angola
S20	PHD	40	PHD	Cape Verde

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Challenges africans students have encountered in China

This qualitative study found that African students have many challenges to face in China, as it is a country of a completely different culture, they have to face certain challenges, and one of the main challenges they face comes in the linguistic, academic and social-cultural sphere.

One student commented that “We African students have challenges to face during our study in China, the Chinese language is the main and biggest barrier for us”.

“I have faced some challenges after I came to China to study, the language challenge, the social-culture difference and to adapt to the weather”.

There are several factors and challenges that students face, as we can see in the table below, one of the main challenges that africans students reported.

Table n.2 Main challenges faced by africans students

Challenges	Description
Language challenge	Difficulty of speaking and understanding chinese language Difficulty in understanding and using numerous Chinese websites and apps Difficulty in ready books in chinese

Social-culture challenge	<p>Difficulty in making friends sometimes with Chinese</p> <p>Difficulty attending Chinese cultural activities</p> <p>Difficulty in getting used to certain habits and behaviors</p> <p>Faced some racial discrimination</p>
Academic challenge	<p>Difficulty understanding teachers' explanations during classes</p> <p>Difficulty interacting with Chinese colleagues during classes</p> <p>Difficulty passing exams</p> <p>Difficulty in making and presenting certain works in Chinese</p>

miss the cuisine of their countries, but cannot cook the same, because in China it is very difficult to find African ingredients, food or restaurants. One participant said “Here in my town there are no African restaurants, finding African ingredients is difficult, and when you find some they are very expensive.”

All this often causes anxiety, depression. Stress and frustration to students. In addition to having to deal with homesickness, family and friends, it also has to deal with academic, social-cultural and linguistic obstacles that they face on a daily basis.

For example, an engineering student reported how stressful it was to study his course, as it was very complex, the classes are all conducted in Chinese, and during the classes he couldn't understand very well the professors' explanations about the course.

4.2 How africans students try to overcome the challenges they face in China?

African students recognize that since studying outside their country of origin involves adapting to a new culture, habits, customs, food climate, they have to learn to deal with new challenges. And to face the challenges that they are subject to face with their transition to China, the participants reported the main supports that are available to them, and how they use it to overcome the challenges that are proposed to them.

Table 3 Main supports to africans students

Supports	Description
Tecnology support	<p>Support from chinese apps, like baidu, translater</p> <p>Support from international websites, like Google, YouTube</p> <p>Support from QQ, Wechat to communicate with teachers and classmates</p>
Family support	<p>Financial support</p> <p>Emotional and motivation support</p>
Friends support	<p>Sharing experience</p> <p>Friendship</p> <p>Advices from students with more experience</p>
University support	<p>Academic support services</p> <p>Research assistance</p> <p>Heath insurance</p> <p>Financial support(tuition fee, monthly stipend)</p>

We can see that these are one of the main challenges that African students are constantly facing, the first and biggest challenge being the Chinese language.

Students during the interview reported that they have difficulty communicating with their Chinese classmates and teachers during class because of the language, not being able to be interactive in class like their classmates. A master's student reported “during my master's it was very difficult to communicate with my supervisor, as I don't speak Chinese perfectly, and my supervisor also didn't speak English well”. Language is the main factor that ends up contributing to other obstacles, such as social-cultural and academic challenges.

African students said that often do not attend school activities because the activities are conducted in the Chinese language, except when it is an activity that involves only foreigners. Students reported how the language factor impacts their academic lives. An African student said “I had to change courses in my master's because I was studying engineering at the bachelor's level, in the master's I changed to business administration, it's very difficult to study engineering in Chinese, I can't follow and understand because of the language”.

All participants reported that they have already failed in exams and have certain works to present that are very difficult”.As for the social-cultural factor, students reported that they have already suffered discrimination in China, and said that Africans are the foreigners who suffer most from racial discrimination. One participant reported “Walking in the streets and some people take your photo without authorization, others call you 黑人(black), pointing the fingers or touch your skin, just because you are black”.

Many of the participants reported not feeling comfortable with these habits, and also spoke of Chinese food that has a different taste from their countries of origin and also how they

We can see in the table above the main factors that are of great support for African students, such as technology, family, friends and school support.

The students reported that technology is a fundamental tool in their studies, they can search on websites such as google, youtube, translator, as it is very difficult for them to use Chinese websites, since everything is in Chinese language .

“Youtube and google were one of the ways that helped me the most in my studies, to better understand the subjects, as I can find videos of classes in my mother language and books in English”-reported a student.

Chinese applications like wechat, QQ have been of great help for students, because they are more able to communicate with their Chinese colleagues and teachers, having information about classes, group meetings, exam dates and so on. “Through wechat and QQ, I can better communicate with my Chinese colleagues, and have information about classes, meetings, project deliveries and exams, I can't go a day without using these applications”-reported one student.

Also, as the support of the friends and family members has been important, Chinese friends sometimes help African students with translation and content information into Chinese, which they are not aware of, and international friends also help each other by sharing their skills, experiences, advice, ideas, information and friendships. The university has been a big support institution for African students as the acquisition of scholarship, Chinese universities are ones that give more and offer better conditions of scholarship, many students reported this as being a great support in their life as a student, not needing work. Universities offer rooms to live in and pay monthly salaries, as one student said, “I'm only concentrated on my study, I don't need to worry about financial living here in China, because I have schooling, its really helps us a lot , im really thankful about this”.

4.3 What is the solutions for those africans students who wants to come to study in China?

According to participants, they reported that they would first advise African students who plan to study in China to research and inform more about China, seeking information on the internet about Chinese culture, the climate; get in touch with students who have already studied in China and those who are still studying in China in order to gain more knowledge about the reality of studying in China.

Most students said that Chinese universities should provide separate classes from Chinese students, because it is very difficult for international students to understand teachers' explanations, as African students taking separate classes with Chinese, teachers could speak less quickly, and use more terms that foreigners could understand better, so one participant reported “A friend of mine at his university in Beijing, they only have classes among foreign students, I think that's how it should be at all Chinese universities”.

Other students also said that universities should organize more meetings and debates with African students so that they can have more knowledge of the real challenges that African students face in China, so that they can better help them and thus consequently lessen future obstacles for students Africans who plan to study in China may come face to face.

For African students who want to come to China, participants suggest that Chinese embassies should organize more cultural activities, promote more information about Chinese culture, language, climate, food and what possible challenges during the beginning of the transition might face.

V. DISCUSSION

During the elaboration of this research, I could talk a little with some African students in China, and debate with them closely about the main challenges that us africans students face.

Africans students face several challenges and the chinese language is the main and biggest problem we have to face and we also have to learn to get around this dilemma. Adapt to a new culture is not easy, it implies a lot of patience and willpower of will. When interviewing participants could see that they have a lot of claw and dreams to accomplish, and this motivates them not to give up and continue to fight for their dreams in China.

The challenge in the academic environment, it deserves more attention to the universities, which can further help African students, for example, i dont agree with some comments or suggestions about we africans students having separated classes from chinese students, because we are living and studying in China, so when you decide to leave your country of origin and go to a new and another culture, you have to learn to adapt to that new culture and learn to face and overcome challenges.and also think that Universities should put the disposition of foreigners more books in english, and organize more cultural activities in both languages, both in Chinese and English. And also agree that more meetings should be elaborated with African students to better help to solve the challenges they face. African students should try to integrate more with the Chinese community, making more friendships with Chinese colleagues and teachers, try to participate more in Chinese cultural activity and practice more Chinese language, because the more you practise the language the better you can communicate with the people of the country.

CONCLUSION

The China-Africa relationship has been going on for years, and over the years the cooperation relationship has developed and become stronger, thus being one of the great relations between China and Africa is in the area of education. China has received numerous African students and this also implies that when they go to study in China, they have to adapt to a new culture and customs different from their own. As such, this implies challenges that African students have to face and most importantly learn to overcome the challenges that they will have to face. And through this study we were able to find out what are the main challenges for African students, the biggest challenge they face in China is the Chinese language , since the language is the main factor of communication, being the Chinese language it is the main challenge that students try to overcome in order to have a good communication with colleagues. We have also seen other challenges that students have to face, difference social cultural, academic challenges among others. And as they try to overcome the challenges that are proposed to them, and Chinese Friends, Universities, Friends and Family Support, has been fundamental to African students, and they take advantage of these stands to overcome

the difficulties they tend to face. And also suggest solutions and improvements so that future students who want to come to study in China can better adapt to their new life away from their country. However, despite the challenges that students may face in China, it should be remembered that the exchange of education between China and Africa is beneficial for the continent and China, especially in the lives of African students who, after being able to overcome the challenges, also learned a lot and could develop professionally and personally.

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