

# *Reflection on the Cooperation between the Confucius Institute in Kenya and Chinese-Funded Enterprises in Kenya to Cultivate “Chinese +” Practical Talents*

**Luo Duoduo**

*Huawei Technologies (Kenya) Co., Ltd, Nairobi, 66430, Kenya*

**Keywords:** Confucius institutes in Kenya, Chinese-funded enterprises in Kenya, “Chinese +” applied talents

**Abstract:** In the context of current globalization, the scale of Confucius Institutes in the African continent continues to expand. Meanwhile, many Chinese companies have accelerated their investment in Africa. With the continuous deepening of the “Belt and Road” initiative, Kenya has attracted more than 400 Chinese-funded enterprises which created nearly 130,000 jobs for the local communities. How to satisfy the talent demands of Chinese-funded enterprises by improving the talent training model of Confucius Institutes and realize the common development has a significant impact. This article analyzes the current status of Confucius Institutes and Chinese-funded enterprises in Kenya, as well as their related issues regarding talent training and talent demands to understand the differences between them. At the same time, this essay proposes a cooperated way in training mode of “Chinese + “ which may be an effective method to train talents.

## **1. Introduction**

China and Kenya signed a trade cooperation agreement at the beginning of reform and opening up in 1978. In recent years, the cooperation of economic and trade between the two countries has reached an unprecedented level. More and more Chinese-funded enterprises have responded to the country’s “One Belt, One Road” call to go abroad and come to Kenya. The arrival of Chinese-funded enterprises has introduced advanced experience of China’s reform and opening up and technology, equipment. Meanwhile, it has also brought a large number of jobs to the local society, cultivated a group of local talents, and effectively helped local employees to realize their self-worth and promoted the sustainable development of the enterprise. However, due to the low level of education and the lack of education resources of universities and colleges there are not so many outstanding talents with professional backgrounds in the local talent market of Kenya. Based on the actual experience of working in a Chinese-funded company in Kenya, the author discussed how the company can more effectively combine the resources of the Confucius Institute and cultivate more applied talents with both professional skills and language advantages through cooperation and mutual assistance.

## **2. Development Status and Talent Training Methods of Confucius Institutes in Kenya**

## 2.1 Development Status of Confucius Institutes in Kenya

Since the establishment of the first Confucius Institute in Africa in 2004 at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, the African Confucius Institute has a history of more than 10 years. So far, Kenya currently has four Confucius Institutes, namely the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi, the Confucius Institute at Egerton University, the Confucius Institute at Moi University, and the Confucius Institute at Kenyatta University<sup>[1]</sup>. The four Confucius Institutes in Kenya have similarities and differences. The commonality is that the four Confucius Institutes all adhere to the mission of disseminating Chinese language and culture by Confucius Institutes, offer courses related to Chinese and Chinese culture, and regularly hold Chinese cultural activities. The difference is that Egerton University is a comprehensive university featuring agriculture. Nanjing Agricultural University successfully established the world's first Confucius Institute featuring agriculture at Egerton University in July 2012. The Confucius Institute at Moi University is the world's first Confucius Institute featuring textile engineering and fashion design which established by Moi University and Shanghai Donghua University through a joint organization of Hanban.

## 2.2 Talent Training Methods

As far as curriculum is concerned, in addition to language and culture courses offered by the four Confucius Institutes in Kenya, the Confucius Institute at Egerton University and Moi University also offer special professional courses based on the characteristics of their schools. For example, the Confucius Institute at Egerton University has added three agricultural courses for students majoring in horticulture, including greenhouse management, vegetable cultivation, and horticultural crop protection. The Confucius Institute at Moi University has set up professional courses in textile engineering and fashion design. Apart from that, it also cooperates with the China Test Center to provide Chinese proficiency test services.

The four Confucius Institutes in Kenya have diversified teaching methods, such as Chinese teaching materials, Chinese software teaching and multimedia teaching. In order to enable students to master Chinese listening, speaking, reading and writing skills at the same time, the Kenya Confucius Institute has designed two teaching methods in actual teaching, namely formal teaching and informal teaching. Formal teaching mainly refers to a fixed class time, a specific learning stage and the final completion of the course to take related examinations; an informal course means that the teaching time is not fixed, and the course is mainly carried out according to the agreement between the teacher and the student. Informal teaching is mainly carried out as a supplement to formal teaching. The purpose is to supplement and expand the content learned by students in class. The main forms are conversations between students and teachers, student group discussions, Chinese corner, calligraphy club, painting club, cooking club, Dance clubs and music clubs etc. This kind of out-of-class Chinese teaching activities can not only help students strengthen their speaking, listening and reading skills, but also stimulate their interest in Chinese and Chinese culture.

As for the teachers, the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi has two local teachers and eleven Chinese teachers. The Confucius Institute at Kenyatta University has eight Kenyan teachers and nine Chinese teachers. The Confucius Institute at Egerton University and the Confucius Institute at Moi University each have six Chinese teachers, and there are no Kenyan teachers. It can be seen from the above data that the distribution of teachers among the four Confucius Institutes is not balanced. The Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi and the Confucius Institute at Jomo Kenyatta University in the capital have obvious advantages in teaching staff. Due to cultural differences, teachers do not have a high social status in Kenya, so local teachers have both part-time and full-time jobs, and some local Chinese teachers are engaged in tour

guides or translators. In addition to the number of teachers, the various Confucius Institutes have made different efforts to improve the quality of teachers. The Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University hold regular Chinese teacher training every year, and will encourage local teachers to actively participate in the local teacher training organized by Hanban, so as to improve the teaching ability of teachers to better serve Chinese education.

The current textbooks used by Confucius Institutes in Kenya are mainly language and cultural textbooks, such as “New Practical Chinese Textbook”, “Happy Chinese” and “HSK Standard Courses” for the Chinese proficiency test.

### **3. Development Status and Talent Demands of Chinese Enterprises in Kenya**

#### **3.1 Development Status of Chinese Enterprises in Kenya**

Kenyan President Kenyatta proposed the “Four Development Goals” in 2017, taking manufacturing development, universal health insurance, housing and food security as the country's key development directions. And it is committed to improving the lives of Kenyans and promoting Kenya's economic and social development. With the continuous deepening of China-Kenya cooperation, Chinese-funded enterprises continue to strengthen their work in various fields such as economy, trade, investment, production capacity cooperation, human resources and technical training, which have strongly promoted Kenya's economic and social development and contributed to the “four major development goals”.

There are currently more than 400 Chinese-funded companies operating in Kenya, and at the same time, the level of localization of employees in various companies is continuously improving. “In 2018, the jobs provided by Chinese-funded enterprises for local people in Kenya have increased from 42,000 in 2016 to more than 50,000 with a localization rate of 96%, especially for basic jobs that do not require high skills. Basically realized local recruitment and management.”<sup>[2]</sup>

According to a 2016 report by the World Bank, Chinese companies in Kenya employ an average of 360 local employees, which is much higher than the number of 147 local employees employed by other foreign companies in Kenya.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### **3.2 Talent Appeal**

According to relevant investigations and studies, “Chinese-funded enterprises have shown great demand for local talents who have both relevant industry knowledge and advanced Chinese language ability, and who can use Chinese to engage in relevant professional fields.” “Enterprises demand for Chinese talents. There are two major characteristics in this respect: one is the strong demand for Chinese + professional applied talents; the other is the expectation of other local languages + Chinese in addition to the official language ability.”<sup>[4]</sup> In the process of advancing the localization of human resources, companies tend to preferentially select local employees with well-tested and outstanding performance for promotion based on labor costs and corporate strategy.

### **4. The Distinction between the Confucius Institute's Talent Training and Corporate Talent Demands**

Xu Lin once pointed out at a joint meeting of Confucius Institutes in Africa, “Compared with Confucius Institutes in North America or Europe, Confucius Institutes in African universities, especially Confucius classrooms in middle schools, should include some vocational and technical training courses so that these children can learn the skills of earning a living while learning Chinese. Some necessary skills that can be applied to work in a Chinese-funded enterprise.”<sup>[5]</sup> However, as

far as the current situation is concerned, the Confucius Institutes in Kenya still focus on language and culture teaching. “Teaching equipment is also mainly based on language rooms and multimedia smart classrooms that serve language teaching, and there is a lack of equipment and venues for vocational skills training.” From the perspective of teachers, teachers from the Confucius Institute in Kenya are mainly Chinese teachers volunteers, and there is a lack of professional technical teachers. Besides, as for teaching materials, they are mainly based on language and culture teaching, with few professional teaching materials. In general, although two Confucius Institutes in Kenya have set special professional teaching, there is still a big shortage of resources such as venues for vocational training, teachers, and teaching materials which can not meet the needs of Chinese-funded enterprises and provide counterpart talents.

## **5. Ways and Significance of the Cooperation between the Confucius Institutes in Kenya and Chinese-Funded Enterprises to Train “Professional +” Applied Talents**

### **5.1 Approach**

The Confucius Institute and enterprises can cooperate in training talents in the following ways. One is that the Confucius Institute provides training courses for enterprises. While providing local language-Chinese translation talents for enterprises, it should also pay attention to the market demand-oriented “Chinese+ “ applied talents. Then adjust the curriculum, “Change the general language course into a course with both language characteristics and industry characteristics. Help students with industry backgrounds master the discourse structure, paradigm features and expression methods of industry Chinese, and cultivate compound talents who can use Chinese proficiently and possess a great skill.” In addition, the Confucius Institute’s cultural courses should also include courses and lectures on “Corporate Culture, Introduction to Key Projects, China-Africa Relations, Economic and Trade Policies for Chinese-funded Enterprises in Kenya” to deepen local students’ understanding of Chinese-funded enterprises’ industry culture and China’s policies toward Africa. “ To provide company employees with opportunities for language training and understanding of company culture and China-Africa economic and trade policies through course adjustment.” The second one the Confucius Institute and enterprises work together to develop special teaching materials, especially professional training courses. The Confucius Institute can make use of its own advantages in Sino-foreign cooperation to organize Chinese, foreign parties, host universities, industry leaders and experts from Chinese-funded enterprises to jointly carry out the development of characteristic teaching materials according to actual needs. The third is to set up internship sites in companies to gain a deep understanding of the company's local talent needs and improve the pertinence of local talent training. At the same time, make full use of enterprise equipment to effectively make up for the current shortcomings of the Confucius Institute in vocational and technical facilities and human facilities. Establish a joint information release platform with companies to release the company’s employment needs in a timely manner. The fourth is to strengthen the introduction of teachers with relevant industry knowledge and technical background. The Confucius Institute can unite the faculty of the Chinese host colleges and the expert talent team of Chinese-funded enterprises to form a trainer camp to conduct specialized professional course teaching, broaden the professional knowledge horizon of the students and improve the technical capabilities of the students. <sup>[6]</sup>

### **5.2 Meaning**

It is of great significance for the Confucius Institute and Chinese-funded enterprises to cooperate in training “professional +” applied talents. First of all, language training for employees will help

employees better understand the corporate culture and integrate into the corporate environment. From the perspective of linguistics, language is the material carrier of thinking, and thinking can affect language.<sup>[7]</sup> Learning a language is, to a certain extent, learning a new way of thinking. At present, the employees of Chinese-funded enterprises mainly use English as the medium. However, the English level of many Chinese employees is not very good. After the improvement of Chinese, local employees can communicate more effectively with Chinese leaders and colleagues. Reduce communication costs, improve work efficiency, and expand promotion channels.<sup>[8]</sup> Secondly, actively explore the combination of language and culture teaching with the employment needs and career development of the students. The development and training of applied talents can not only cultivate the urgently needed vocational and technical talents for Kenya at this stage, but also enhance the students' sense of value. At the same time, the Confucius Institute will obtain more support and social resources. Confucius Institutes are able to improve their school-running level and sustainable development capabilities.

## 6. Conclusion

Through the profound cooperation between Confucius Institutes and Chinese-funded enterprises, it is possible to train more application-oriented talents for Kenya, reduce the local unemployment rate, and meet the talent needs of enterprises. Promote the mutual benefit and inclusiveness between the Confucius Institute and Chinese-funded enterprises and the local society, and promote the development of Kenya's local society as well.

## References

- [1] Kenya China Economic and Trade Association. (2019). *Chinese Enterprises in Kenya Social Responsibility Report 2018-2019*[R]. Kenya: Kenya China Economic and Trade Association, pp 5
- [2] World Bank. (2016). *World Development Report 2016: Overview of the Digital Dividend*[R]. World Bank: Washington, pp 190
- [3] Yang Xinzhang. (2006). *Introduction to Linguistics*[M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press, pp241