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ZAMBIA COUNTRY BRIEF

Chinese Influence in Education

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In the past two decades, China has transitioned from a large recipient of foreign aid to a significant donor to development assistance efforts worldwide. According to the Chinese Government’s recent white paper, *China’s International Development Cooperation in the New Era*, China awarded RMB128 billion (approximately 19 billion USD) in grants to fund social welfare projects in developing countries between 2013-2018 (State Council Information Office, PRC, 2021). Furthermore, it has increased its support to Africa (Bothwell, 2016). Within education, the Chinese government primarily focuses on the tertiary level, funding school infrastructure projects, Chinese-language instruction, university partnerships, scholarships for study in Chinese universities, and in-service training programs (State Council Information Office, PRC, 2021).

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also supports diverse education programs worldwide, and specifically in 19 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Under USAID’s *Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance*, the agency values and actively fosters open collaboration across local and international donors in order to leverage synergies, encourage knowledge sharing, and maximize effectiveness (USAID, 2019). It is within this spirit that USAID has commissioned a desk study to examine Chinese support for education programming in sub-Saharan Africa associated with Confucius Institutes (CI).

RESEARCH METHODS. *This desk study collected information from multiple sources, including but not limited to the Confucius Institute, Government of Zambia, Chinese Embassy in Zambia, academic papers, social media platforms and relevant media stories. Where sufficient data was available, the research team triangulated information across several different sources, however, the extent that this was possible varied for each brief and the specific topics discussed.*

Few studies on Chinese support to education initiatives exist, and information on the Chinese government’s foreign assistance programming is often difficult to access due to a lack of a singular coordinating foreign aid agency in China, (King, 2010; Nordtveit, 2011). As such, these country briefs, designed for 11 countries in which USAID works, aim to address this knowledge gap and to support future cooperation efforts. This country profile describes Chinese support to education in Zambia.

CHINESE SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA

China’s engagement in the education sector in Zambia is primarily through the CI, which is a partnership formed with the University of Zambia (UNZA) and Hebei University of Economics and Business (HUEB) based in Shijiazhuang, China. The CI at UNZA mainly provides Chinese-language instruction to university students, staff, and the public at large, which more recently include staff of Zambian public and private institutions and employees at Chinese-owned companies. Furthermore, the CI and the Zambian Ministry of Education (MoE) have established 17 additional locations for Chinese language classes at universities, public secondary schools, and several private schools across all 10 provinces (CI UNZA, n.d.). The CI at UNZA is coordinated by the Office of Chinese Language Council International, also known as Hanban, which is an agency of the Chinese Ministry of Education. Hanban directly funds and manages all CI staff, and in 2012, it funded the construction of a new building on UNZA’s campus to house the CI and other university staff (Kragelund & Hampway, 2016).

The Confucius Institute at the University of Zambia: Language and Programming

In July 2010, the CI was established at UNZA under the leadership of a local director and a Chinese deputy director, who was appointed from HUEB (CI UNZA, n.d.). The CI aims to promote education cooperation and mutual understanding through Chinese language (Mandarin) instruction, cultural events, teacher training, and the administration of several Chinese proficiency tests, including Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) and the Youth Chinese Test (YCT) (Chisi, 2019).

“Apart from being a learning centre, the Confucius Institute is a means for exchange of cultural experiences between Zambia and China, thereby improving communication and collaboration between the two countries.” – Dr. Sande Ngalande, CI Acting Director

Source: Chisi, 2019

The CI is the only institution within Zambia that teaches Chinese language, and it offers both short and long-term courses. Short-term courses run four times a year for approximately 12 weeks and are organized into four proficiency levels (CI UNZA, n.d.). These courses primarily cater to university students; however, they are open to staff and the general public. Currently, Hanban sets the curriculum,¹ and appoints volunteer teachers from China to conduct the courses (CI UNZA, n.d.). Most of the operational cost of conducting the courses is reported to be subsidized by Hanban, while participants are responsible for small

¹ Krugeland and Hampway (2016) reported that UNZA was given the choice between several different curriculum options that had been developed and approved by Hanban. However, no additional public sources were found to corroborate this.

fees, which were between 800 – 1500 Zambian Kwacha² in 2019 depending on the class level (CI UNZA, 2019; Kragelund & Hampwaye, 2016). The CI also offers preparation courses for the HSK, and business-oriented Chinese language courses (CI UNZA, 2017). Both public and private sector organizations, including the Zambia Police Force, are reportedly working with the CI to offer basic Chinese language course to their employees to support their frequent interactions with the 8,900 Chinese workers currently in Zambia (Johns Hopkins University SAIS China-Africa Research Initiative, 2021; Krugeland & Hampwaye, 2016).

Starting in 2014, the CI at UNZA established a Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Chinese, which is administered through the Literature and Languages Department (School of Humanities and Social Sciences at UNZA, n.d.). According to Kragelund and Hampwaye (2016), the impetus behind establishing the bachelor's degree program was to prepare Zambian university students to teach Chinese language courses at the secondary level. In its first year, eight students enrolled in the four-year program, with the expectation that demand would increase in future years. However, UNZA's initial intake lists for 2021 suggest that only six new students enrolled for the 2021 academic year. In 2018, UNZA also reported that it had entered into an agreement with Hunan Normal University to develop a postgraduate training program in Chinese language under the CI to provide additional support to Chinese language teachers (UNZA, 2018). The Zambian Ministry of Higher Education also signed a memorandum of understanding with Xian Jiaotong University in late 2019 to establish the Belt and Road Joint Research Centre at the CI, which aims to strengthen the research capacity of UNZA staff through postgraduate training, staff exchanges, joint research, workshops, and conferences (UNZA, 2019a).

The CI also supports programming at three other tertiary sites – Mulungushi University (MU), Copperbelt University, and Livingstone Institute of Business and Engineering Studies (LIBES). At MU, Chinese language courses are mandatory for all students within the School of Social Science's International Relations and Development department. At LIBES, Chinese language courses have been developed for specific majors, including international tourism and food production (CI UNZA, n.d.).

The CI is also mandated to organize cultural and extracurricular events for students and the community. The annual Chinese Bridge Competition draws both university and secondary school students from across Zambia to demonstrate their Chinese language skills for an opportunity to travel to China to compete against students from around the world ("Zambian students compete in Chinese language contest," 2019; CI UNZA, n.d.). Other activities include Job Expos to showcase employment opportunities with Chinese companies, Chinese New Year celebrations, Tea ceremonies and dumpling making (CI UNZA, n.d.).

Chinese Support to Primary and Secondary Education

Chinese support at the primary and secondary level in Zambia also focuses on Chinese language instruction. In 2013, the Zambian MoE, in collaboration with the CI and Hanban, embedded Chinese into its curriculum framework as an optional foreign language starting in junior secondary school (Grades 8-9) (Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, 2013; UNZA, 2019b). Initially rolled out as a pilot program, junior and senior secondary students drawn from 10 public secondary schools and several private schools began learning Chinese in 2014 (Chisi, 2019). One to two volunteer teachers from China are appointed by Hanban to each school to conduct Chinese language classes and cultural events. In May 2019, it was reported that the MoE planned to scale up its implementation of Chinese language courses across all public secondary schools at the start of the 2020 school year (Mutale, 2019; UNZA 2019b). To support this expansion, the CI, working in collaboration with UNZA, is reportedly developing a fast-track teacher training program and a new textbook with HUEB (UNZA, 2019c). Furthermore, the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) signed an agreement with the CI to develop two new national examinations for Chinese Language for Grade 9 and Grade 12 students, thereby formalizing Chinese as a taught and tested subject (ECZ, 2020; UNZA, 2019b). Dr. Chilala, Director of ECZ, reported that the first administration of these exams in December 2020 was successful (Chilala, 2020).

At the primary level, Chinese support for education has been limited to two private schools in Lusaka where the CI appoints two volunteer Chinese teachers to the schools. Specifically, Rhodes Park School offers Chinese language and martial arts classes for students in Grades 1-12 as a Confucius Classroom, and Mary Queen of Peace Girls' School offers Chinese language classes to children in Grades 3 – 5 (CI UNZA, n.d.).

Scholarships

The Chinese government has provided scholarships to Zambian university students to study at Chinese universities since 1972 (Kragelund & Hampwaye, 2016). Most Chinese scholarship programs are administered by the Chinese Scholarship Council; however, Hanban also offers the Confucius Institute Scholarship (CIS) (CI UNZA, n.d.; Reilly, 2015). CISs are for master's degrees, one-year, and semester-long programs for students, academics, and Chinese language teachers (CI UNZA, n.d.). Additional

² Based on the USD – Kwacha exchange rate at the time of the Facebook posting, this equates to approximately \$67 - \$126 USD per course.

scholarships are provided under the China-Africa Friendship Scholarship Scheme. In 2021, these scholarships were offered for master's and Ph.D. programs in science, engineering, agriculture, medicine, education, Chinese study, and journalism (Higher Education Loans and Scholarship Board, 2021). Chinese Ambassador to Zambia Mr. Li Jie reported that more than 1,000 Zambians had received scholarships to study in China and a total of 4,000 Zambian students were currently studying there as of 2019 (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Zambia, 2019). Recipients of Chinese government scholarships could not travel to China in 2020 due to COVID-19; however, the *Lusaka Times* reported that 51 scholarships were offered and that some Chinese universities provided online lessons to accommodate the recipients ("Russia, China, Egypt and Tunisia offer Scholarships to Zambians," 2020). In addition, the Chinese government also provides a limited number of scholarships through the Chinese Ambassador Scholarship to enable Zambian students to complete their studies at UNZA (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Zambia, 2021).

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