

Diploma serves diplomacy: China's 'donor logic' in educational aid

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### **Abstract**

China's engagement in Africa is an increasing popular topic in 21<sup>st</sup> century. However there are not much attention have been paid in the field of education and little evidence can be seen about what actually happens on the ground. This paper aims to explore China's educational aid in Africa, from both textual and fieldwork resources. It will focus on three parts: firstly, the existing recognitions on China's distinctions in foreign aid and China's donor logic based on 'win-win' strategies; secondly, an argument that China's donor logic in educational aid might be informed by producing soft power through the 'public diplomacy'; thirdly, a discussion of people's perception collected in Tanzania, including voices from official people and returning African students. The paper will take China's main educational approach, the Government Scholarship Scheme as an example, and look at how this educational practice has been processed in a 'diplomatic' way. It is concluded that China's educational aid and its features in practice, based upon diplomatic policies and China's distinctive donor logic of foreign aid, is serving

bilateral relations rather than orthodox aid relations. If quality transformation and communication can be maintained in the Chinese universities, education would contribute to a lasting and cooperative relationship between China and Africa. It may add more complexities to ‘soft power’ within broader conceptions under the contemporary global political economy.

### **Key word**

China, Africa, aid, donor logic, soft power, public diplomacy, education

### **1. Chinese aid to Africa: a different logic?**

Aid has been operated within a changing global situation from the period of ‘decolonisation’<sup>1</sup> to the current period of ‘globalisation’, and from the ‘Washington Consensus’ based on neoliberal policies to ‘Post Washington Consensus’ based on poverty reduction agenda (Robertson et al., 2007; Yuan, 2012: 258).<sup>2</sup> It varies from country to country and from actor to actor, and its forms have also changed significantly during the last fifty years. From George C. Marshall’s plan to provide massive aid to European countries in order to rebuild their economies after the Second World War, to the US oriented aid policy for strengthening national security, and the other Western countries’ considerations based more upon moral principles and ‘a kind of veneration of their own former colonies’, the motives of

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<sup>1</sup> The 1960s were labelled the ‘development decade’ by the United Nations, and such a label corresponded with the ‘departing of colonialism’ (United Nations, 1961: 17). The concept ‘decolonisation’ refers to the achievement of independence by former Western colonies in Africa and protectorates in Asia following the Second World War (United Nations, 1961; Laenui, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, S., Novelli, M., Dale, R., Tikly, L., Dachi, H. & Alphonse, N. (2007) Globalisation, education and development: Ideas, actors and dynamics. (London, DFID Publications).  
Yuan, T. (2012) Does Western ‘aid’ work? - Changing discourses and logics, Academics in China (English Version), (2), 257-275.

donors are changing (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003: 9).<sup>3</sup> Aid is not a neutral term; it carries clear strategies and motives, and contains complex relations.

Although it has taken various forms, the underlying ‘principles’ of aid, based on modernisation theory, are quite consistent in the Western context, and assume that developing countries need ‘help’ in order to ‘catch up’ with developed countries, including the area of education. In American economist W.W. Rostow’s (1960) *The stage of economic growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, modernisation theory became the “dominant explanation of how low-income countries could improve the living conditions of their populations by following a set of prescriptive policies to encourage economic ‘taking off’” (Robertson et al., 2007: 19).<sup>4</sup> This has set the fundamental rationale of Western aid.

With the increasing South-South cooperation and the fast economic development in some developing countries, it has been increasingly recognised that the ‘emerging donors’, also called non- Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors (Davies, 2007; Woods, 2008; King, 2010a) are challenging this orthodox ‘logic’ of aid.<sup>5</sup> In a recent discussion of ‘challenging the aid paradigm’, Sørensen (2010: 3) points out the challenge to Western aid clearly:

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<sup>3</sup> Degnbol-Martinussen, J. & Engberg-Pedersen, P. (2003) *Aid: Understanding international development cooperation*. (London, Zed).

<sup>4</sup> Rostow, W. W. (1960) *The stages of economic growth. A non-communist manifesto*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press). This is cited in Robertson et al. ‘Globalisation, education and development: Ideas, actors and dynamics’..

<sup>5</sup> The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is the principal body through which the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) deals with issues related to co-operation with developing countries. The Western donors to African countries mentioned in this paper refer mostly to DAC countries such as Germany, France, Japan, UK, US, Switzerland, etc. These compare with the new donors to Africa such as China. Davies, P. (2007) *China and the end of poverty in Africa – towards mutual benefit?* (Sundbyberg,

However, although there is with some variation, a general Western consensus, which is also the international mainstream operating through the major institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organisation, there has now for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union emerged an actually existing alternative in what is sometimes called South-South cooperation. This is especially the case with Chinese aid and investment, in Asia, Africa and, to a growing extent, Latin America.<sup>6</sup>

More specifically Welle-Strand (2010: 11) concludes that with respect to ‘emerging donors’ (and China is the main donor in her article): ‘the emerging donors provide foreign aid on different terms, in different sectors, through different organisational structures, and with different goals than do the traditional donors’. She looks at ‘four main ways’ China challenges the current foreign aid paradigm:

The *donor-recipient relationship* is challenged by a partnership of equals;  
The *modes of provision* are challenged by China’s focus on aid that is mutually beneficial; The *use of conditionalities* is challenged by China’s insistence on sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs;  
*Multilateralism* is challenged by China’s preference of going the major foreign aid projects alone (Welle-Strand 2010: 3).<sup>7</sup>

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Woods, N. (2008) Whose aid? Whose influence? China, emerging donors and the silent revolution in development assistance. *International Affairs*, 84(6), 1205-1221.

King, K. (2010a) New Actors – Old Paradigms? *NORRAG News* (44), 8-12.

<sup>6</sup> Sørensen, J. S. (2010) Challenging the aid paradigm: Western currents and Asian alternatives. (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan).

<sup>7</sup> Welle-Strand, A. (2010) Foreign aid strategies: China taking over? *Asian Social Science*, 6(10), 3-13.

Increasing number of scholars have pointed to the distinctiveness of China. They find a growing realisation that, 'poor nations might find appropriate, low-cost and sustainable solutions to their problems in other developing countries rather than in the rich north' (Owen and Melville, 2005: 1).<sup>8</sup> They notice that the role of China is different from the Western donors - 'unique, has one foot in the developing world and another in the developed one, with a seat on the UN Security Council', and this dual status gives it a considerable political and diplomatic advantage in the pursuit of its interest (Muekalia, 2004: 5).<sup>9</sup> During the Beijing Summit, King (2006: 4) found, 'what is absolutely clear today, four decades later, is how China's discourse about common economic benefit, common political exchange, and common cultural cooperation appears to have been fully accepted by its African partners', and he found two-way trade was 'one of the key messages of the Beijing Summit' (King, 2006:12).<sup>10</sup> Zafar believes that the Chinese way of aid will influence both Africa and Western donors, and thus the West should creatively bring the Chinese model into the broader development platform (2007: 126).<sup>11</sup> Brautigam (2011: 752) characterises Chinese aid as 'non-transparent and poorly understood'. As she summarised, 'China's cooperation may be developmental, but it is not primarily based on official development aid. This suggests that the institutions established at

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<sup>8</sup> Owen, O. & Melville, C. (2005) China and Africa: A new era of 'South-South cooperation'. Available online at: [http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-africa\\_democracy/south\\_2658.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-africa_democracy/south_2658.jsp) (accessed 1 February 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Muekalia, D. J. (2004) Africa and China's strategic partnership. *African Security Review*, 13(1), 5-11.

<sup>10</sup> King, K. (2006) Aid within the wider China-Africa partnership: A view from the Beijing Summit. Available online at: <http://www.cctr.ust.hk/materials/conference/China-Africa/papers/King,Kenneth.pdf> (accessed 21 May 2010).

Beijing Summit is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in Beijing, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Zafar, A. (2007) The growing relationship between China and sub-saharan africa: Macroeconomic, trade, investment, and aid links. *The World Bank Research Observer* 22(1), 103-130.

the OECD to develop and apply standards for foreign aid (the DAC) may not be the right ones to govern these growing ties'.<sup>12</sup>

Based on this growing recognition of China's distinctive approach to foreign aid, this paper explores the 'donor logic' of China's educational aid in Africa. Firstly, 'donor logic' in this paper embraces the ways that donors justify their strategies and actions to both the recipients and their sponsors (if applicable, e.g. foundations, enterprises, governments, etc.). It also considers the donor ideologies, philosophies, motives and rationales, and how they legitimatise their actions. Basically, it is about what types of aid are provided, how and why. Therefore 'donor logic' refers to the aggregate of the donors' presentation of 'aid'. This presentation includes the donors' rationale for providing aid visibly shown in practice and in discourse, and the actual underpinning logic that needs to be interpreted.

The term 'donor logic' is not often directly mentioned in the research literature. It can be seen directly in Steiner-Khamsi's (2008: 3) *Donor logic in the era of Gates, Buffett, and Soros*, when she contrasted the drivers behind aid from the donor's perspectives with recipients' actual needs. In her study of Mongolia's educational 'imports', the support from the lender was driven more by what they had to offer than by what the borrower actually needed. She also looked at the logic of NGOs, and encouraged us to focus more on the 'unruly' and 'very generous private funders' rather than the 'rule-abiding and rule-enforcing multilaterals', in order to make some effort to change the aid environment (ibid: 6).<sup>13</sup> The paper indicates

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<sup>12</sup> Brautigam, D. (2011) Aid 'with Chinese characteristics': Chinese foreign aid and development finance meet the OECD-DAC aid regime, *Journal of International Development*, (23): 752-764.

<sup>13</sup> Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2008) Donor logic in the era of Gates, Buffett, and Soros. *Current issue in comparative education*, 10(1/2), 10-15.

how some lenders' logic may be 'illogical' towards the recipients. There are very few other studies that have considered donor logic. Cammack (2007) has argued that certain political logics, under 'much centralisation of power' and 'little accountability and transparency' in some poor performing and fragile African countries, 'undermine economic development and democratic consolidation' (ibid: 61), and these led the author to suggest that recipient governments should be driven by the needs and desires of their people rather than by donors.<sup>14</sup> King (1992) earlier examined the external aid agenda and internal educational reform and called for a clearer definition of foreign aid policies. As he pointed out, 'if therefore the new aid paradigm is more invasive of national policies and politics than ever before, it looks as if the logic of the new approach should lead to as much rethinking of the aid process in the donor countries as of reform in the recipients' (ibid: 262).<sup>15</sup> Here, he could be seen to be suggesting that a shift in aid may require a more profound reappraisal of the fundamental donor logic. These discussions directly or indirectly call for reflection on the gap between what donors think about and what recipients need. From this perspective China's donor logic makes it easier to consider the voices of the recipients, since in comparison with the Western 'catching up' logic, it is based on a 'win-win' policy. Therefore this aid practice will not only shape the recipient side (one-way, which can easily cause a hierarchy) but also the donor side, as well as their relationships (two-way). Some existing literatures (e.g. King, 2006; David, 2007) have discussed China's win-win strategies but have not reached a

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<sup>14</sup> Cammack, D. (2007) The logic of African neopatrimonialism: What role for donors? *Development Policy Review*, 25(5), 599-614.

<sup>15</sup> King, K. (1992) The external agenda of aid in internal educational reform. *International Journal of Educational Development* 12(4), 257-263.

comparison between this and the Western logic- to reveal this is actually the fundamental difference between China and the West.<sup>16</sup>

Based on this reciprocal logic of aid, the key question which underlines the notion of ‘donor logic’ is: Is there any rationale about ‘how to make aid welcomed’? This is perhaps the main difference between Chinese and Western aid, as China is aiming to deliver a welcomed aid (developing a fraternal relationship) while the West is focusing more on an effective aid (harmonising a paternal relationship). In the practice, China gives ‘aid’ while seeking cooperation and exchange. The Chinese government uses the phrase ‘China-Africa cooperation’ more frequently than ‘Chinese aid to Africa’. In the educational field, China also prefers to use ‘educational exchange’ rather than ‘educational aid’. The educational discourse and practice (which will be discussed in the next section) from China are shown with the focus on building two-way relationships rather than professionally suggesting development modalities. It is more than setting up a ‘China model’ but rather a process for lasting cooperation in the long run. The Chinese media likes to use a proverb to describe the logic of China’s educational assistance for Africa: ‘Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime’ (Yuan, 2010: 60).<sup>17</sup> It is therefore, like Brautigam’s (2011) discussion mentioned, difficult to calculate and evaluate Chinese aid according to the Western logic and modality framework as it is a developmental process for both of the

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<sup>16</sup> See King, ‘Aid within the wider China-Africa partnership: A view from the Beijing Summit’, and Davies, ‘China and the end of poverty in Africa – towards mutual benefit?’.

<sup>17</sup> Yuan, T. (2010) China’s aid logic to HRD in Tanzania: give a fish, teaching to fish, and sharing a fish. *Norrag News*, (44): 58-60.



donor and recipients rather than a ‘prescription’ operated by professional agencies/donors (Dale, 1982).<sup>1819</sup>

From the official discourse, the concept ‘win-win’ is shown as an economic strategy; from the description given by the Chinese government: ‘a new type of strategic partnership with Africa that features political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchange’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2006a).<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the ‘win-win’ policy is centred upon a mutually beneficial economic process. However, since in recent times the word ‘win-win’ has increasingly been used in Chinese policy discourse, the meaning of win-win has been extended to different fields. According to Davies (2007: 34), apart from with economic cooperation, China and Africa could also share experiences on common challenges such as rural development, labour migration, urbanization and population growth, regional imbalances in development, the development of the domestic market, and integration with the international market. The two could also learn together to safeguard national interest in the face of the globalisation of

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<sup>18</sup> See Brautigam, “Aid ‘with Chinese characteristics’: Chinese foreign aid and development finance meet the OECD-DAC aid regime”.

Dale, R. (1982) Education and the capitalist state: Contributions and contradictions, in: M. W. Apple (Ed.) Cultural and economic reproduction in education: Essays on class, ideology and the state. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 127-161.

<sup>19</sup> China does not ‘do’ ‘professional aid’. In what has been described as its ‘technocratic frame’, Western aid is typically delivered through bureaucratized and professionalized consultants and specialist agencies and organisation (Kothari, 2005: 443) Quite differently, China has little delegation to, or participation/ involvement with local actors, and puts considerable emphasis on direct construction by Chinese engineers, or direct transferring and sharing of its own experience as a developing country.

Kothari, U. (2005) Authority and expertise: The professionalisation of international development and the ordering of dissent. *Antipode*, 37(3), 425-446.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (2006a) China's Africa policy. Available online at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t230615.htm> (accessed 15 March 2013).

markets, and could together promote the interests of developing countries in world affairs.<sup>21</sup>

Thus from a broader perspective, based on the official language and the academic analysis (as suggested in the definition of ‘donor logic’), this paper would like to define China’s ‘win-win’ logic of the foreign aid as: to ‘win’ a strengthened position in the global political economy while helping Africa to ‘win’ its development. This includes both of boosting China’s hard power- mainly economic development and boosting China’s soft power- for which one of the aims is to improve public understanding of China. The following sections will introduce how educational aid helps China to ‘win’ its soft power through strategy of public diplomacy.

## **2. Logic of China’s educational aid: gaining soft power through ‘public diplomacy’**

### 2.1 Increasing educational practice

The above exploration indicates a different way of producing influence by China. More clearly, the logic is not about ‘how you catch up with me’ but about ‘how I can build a broader mutual beneficial (win-win) relation with you’. This relationship is not just about ‘trade’ but also about ‘communication’. Based on fieldwork undertaken in Tanzania, this paper is going to explore what sort of ‘win-win’ relationship is demonstrated with China’s educational aid. Simply this paper

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<sup>21</sup> See David, ‘China and the end of poverty in Africa – towards mutual benefit?’.

considers what China wants to win internationally, especially in Africa, through educational support, exchanges and cooperation.

It is noticeable that although in the last 50 years China has forged cooperative relations in the field of education with 50 African countries (Li, 2007), compared with the extensive discussions on China's economic relations with Africa, Chinese educational aid has received very little attention.<sup>22</sup> However, the Forum on China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), held every three years since 2000, has been making increasingly stronger promises in the field of education, particularly in its action plans at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum (Beijing Summit) in 2006 and the 4<sup>th</sup> Forum in 2009 (FOCAC, 2006a; 2009).<sup>23</sup> Education is clearly shown as an important component in China's current African Policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2006a) as stated: 'the Chinese Government will give full play to the role of its "African Human Resources Development Foundation" in training African personnel' and the 'exchange of students between China and Africa will continue'.<sup>24</sup>

While the FOCAC which dictated general cooperation between China and Africa, the education ministers from China and 17 African countries actually jointly signed a Beijing Declaration on 27 November 2005. 'The Sino-African Education Minister's Forum is an important platform for exchange and cooperation between China and Africa on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, and a significant

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<sup>22</sup> Li, B. (2007) On the issues concerned with China-Africa educational cooperation. Available online at: <http://www.cctr.ust.hk/materials/conference/China-Africa/papers/Li,Baoping-Eng.pdf> (accessed 6 June 2012).

<sup>23</sup> FOCAC (2006a) Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009). Available online at: <http://www.focac.org/eng/ltda/dscbjzjhy/DOC32009/t280369.htm> (accessed 2 March 2013). FOCAC (2009) Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Sharm el Sheikh Action Plan (2010-2012). Available online at: <http://www.focac.org/eng/dsjbzjhy/hywj/t626387.htm> (accessed 2 March 2013).

<sup>24</sup> See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 'China's African Policy'.

move for developing countries to seek educational development', the declaration said (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2005).<sup>25</sup>

A small number of discussions particularly on Chinese educational aid have occurred around the 2006 Beijing Summit, the 3<sup>rd</sup> FOCAC (PKUCAS, 2005; King, 2006; 2007; Li, 2007).<sup>26</sup> Brautigam (2009: 119) in the book *'the Dragon's gift'* shows evidence of the 'accelerated training component of Chinese foreign aid' that has been provided since 2000, 'focusing in part on transferring information about China's own experience with urbanisation, economic growth, and poverty alleviation'; and the doubling in the number of scholarships promised to African students at the Beijing Summit.<sup>27</sup> According to King (2007: 343), although the 2006 forum was 'piggy-backed on the High Level Meeting on Education For All (EFA), it struck out on its own', focusing more on the 'prudent policies for vocational education and technical education, as well as to encourage higher education and cultural diversity'.<sup>28</sup>

Despite China's focus on higher education and training, what is also of interest in this paper is the underpinning logic of Chinese educational aid: although not directly shown in the official document, this 'win-win' based practice is assumed

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<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (2005) Sino-African Education Minister Forum issues Beijing Declaration. Available online at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zflt/eng/zt/zfjybzlt/t223750.htm> (accessed 20 April 2009).

<sup>26</sup> PKUCAS (Centre for African Studies of Peking University) (2005) China Africa education cooperation (Beijing, Beijing University Press) (in Chinese). Also see King, "Aid within the wider China-Africa partnership: A view from the Beijing Summit"; and Li, "On the issues concerned with China-Africa educational cooperation".

<sup>27</sup> Brautigam, D. (2009) *The dragon's gift: The real story of China in Africa*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

<sup>28</sup> King, K. (2007) The Beijing China-Africa Summit of 2006: The new pledges of aid to education in Africa. *China Report*, 43(3), 337-347.

to be informed by the term ‘soft power’ (Nye, 1990; 2004).<sup>29</sup> What does China seek to win from this educational investment? This paper will argue that educational aid helps China produce its soft power through the strategy of ‘public diplomacy’. The following discussion will take the Chinese Government Scholarships scheme as an example, which is also the main approach of Chinese educational aid, to show how educational support to Africa is operated in a diplomatic way and its actual perceptions on the ground.

## **2.2 China’s engagement in soft power and public diplomacy**

Soft power is not a new term in international relations but a crucial task for the contemporary China. In the current world there are various instruments to increase soft power which could be understood much more readily than the ‘persuasion’ which was used through media and foreign policies before and during the time of the Cold War. Within these instruments public diplomacy is used by governments to mobilize resources (culture, political values and foreign policies) to communicate with and attract the public of other countries, rather than just their governments (Nye, 2008: 95).<sup>30</sup> The modern meaning of public diplomacy was coined in 1965 by Edmund Gullion who said that public diplomacy deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies (Cull, 2006). Nye combined ‘public diplomacy’ and ‘soft power’ and suggested that the current dimensions of public diplomacy include ‘daily communications’,

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<sup>29</sup> Nye, J. S. (1990) *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. (New York, Basic Books).

Nye, J.S. (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. (New York, Public Affairs).

<sup>30</sup> Nye, J.S. (2008) Public diplomacy and soft power, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and social science*, 616: 94-109.

‘strategic communication’ and ‘lasting relationships’ (Nye, 2008: 102). The last of these components will be addressed below.

Gaining a good image of China in the world is a key task for the current PRC government. The Chinese government has started ‘issuing a steady flow of white papers’ clarifying its policies on issues such as ‘ethnic minorities, human rights and national defence’ after the State Council Information Office (SCIO) was established in 1991, and ‘educational and cultural exchanges were resumed’ (D’Hooghe, 2007: 22).<sup>31</sup> In 2007, for the first time, the term ‘soft power’, ‘a Western term from 90s last century, was written into the report of the 17th Communist Party Congress’, which was extensively focused on the cultural dimension of the soft power (People.com.cn, 2007).<sup>32</sup>

China’s practice in foreign aid, based on its ‘Chinese characteristics’ (Brautigam, 2011) and its mutual beneficial logic, is becoming attractive to our existing understanding to the soft power. Kurlantzick's (2007) book *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World* focuses on how China uses its soft power - culture, investment, academia, foreign aid, public diplomacy - to influence other countries in the developing world.<sup>33</sup> According to Brautigam (2009: 15), like the US, China gives aid for three reasons: strategic diplomacy, commercial benefit, and as a reflection of society’s ideologies and values. Therefore political leaders set

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<sup>31</sup> D’Hooghe, I. (2007) The rise of China’s public diplomacy. (Hague, Netherlands Institute of International Relations).

<sup>32</sup> People.com.cn (2007) ‘Soft Power’ for the first time was written into the report of the 17th Communist Party Congress (in Chinese). Available online at <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/49157/49165/6495273.html> (accessed on 15 February 2012)

<sup>33</sup> Kurlantzick, J. (2007) *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*. (New Haven, Yale University).

and shape aid as one of many instruments of foreign policy.<sup>34</sup> Chinese aid to Africa is seen as an important and challenging area for the government to develop its soft power (Wei, 2011).<sup>35</sup> Increasing media reports are also showing China's engagement in boosting its soft power in foreign aid especially its relation with Africa, and this will perhaps result not only a growth in soft power growth but also in hard power.

The embrace of foreign aid as an instrument of 'soft power' and as a pillar of foreign policy has been notable in the United States – and it is increasingly so in India, Brazil and China as well. It is a reflection of how the landscape of global development and aid financing has changed in recent years (Jayawickrama, 2010).<sup>36</sup>

Use of soft power diplomacy will continue to be a key driver of China's strengthened relations with Africa and likely to propel China to higher global economic and military influence it currently commands (Musyoka, Mutai, & Ochieng, 2011).<sup>37</sup>

In recent times China has realised the importance of using public diplomacy as an instrument to improve soft power. In 2009 President Hu Jintao for the first time declared the strengthening of 'public diplomacy and the cultural diplomacy' at

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<sup>34</sup> See Brautigam, 'Dragon's gift'.

<sup>35</sup> Wei, X. (2011) China's aid to Africa and China's soft power. *Journal of University of International Relations*, (1): 31-36. (in Chinese)

<sup>36</sup> Jayawickrama, S. (2010) Foreign Aid as "Soft Power" (in India, Brazil and China), Available online at: <http://hausercenter.org/iha/2010/10/20/foreign-aid-as-soft-power-in-india-brazil-and-china/>. Accessed on 31st March 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Musyoka, D., Mutai, P. & Ochieng, B. (2011) Soft power diplomacy to drive China-Africa relations in 2011, Xinhua News Net, available online at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-01/17/c\\_13694941.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-01/17/c_13694941.htm). Accessed 1st April 2013.

China's 11<sup>th</sup> Diplomatic Envoys Meeting (Gmw.cn, 2011).<sup>38</sup> In 2010 an academic journal called 'Public Diplomacy Quarterly' was established as the first Chinese journal for research on public diplomacy. Meanwhile a number of symposiums on public diplomacy were held in China (ibid). The official website of Chinese public diplomacy 'www.pdcec.com' was also established in May 2011, which aims to improve the national knowledge of public diplomacy and build a better image of the country (PDCEC, 2011).<sup>39</sup> 'China's stunning economic growth in the last 30 years has not resulted in positive public feelings abroad for the country as misunderstandings over many issues, such as territorial disputes, have generated negative sentiment', wrote by Zhou and Mo (2012), 'but the Chinese have in recent years experimented with discreet public diplomacy strategies to help point the way toward a more effective use of soft power a way to build up the country's image'.<sup>40</sup>

The China Public Diplomacy Association (CPDA) unveiled in Beijing on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 is a non-profit organization which is 'dedicated to providing professional consultation and coordination services to advance the development of China's public diplomacy'. Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi commented that, 'Public diplomacy is a major direction for China to explore in the future, and tangible efforts will be made to boost public diplomacy and cultural exchanges'. The chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of China's National People's Congress, Li Zhaoxing, was elected president of the association. Li said that the association

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<sup>38</sup> Gmw.cn (2011) China's public diplomacy: let the world understand a true China (in Chinese). Available online at: [http://theory.gmw.cn/2011-07/26/content\\_2342419.htm](http://theory.gmw.cn/2011-07/26/content_2342419.htm) (accessed 14 March 2012)

<sup>39</sup> PDCEC (2011) About us. Available online at <http://www.pdcec.com/list.php?fid=185> (accessed 10 March 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Zhou, Q. & Mo, J. (2012) How 21st-century China sees public diplomacy as a path to soft power. *Global Asia, a Journal of the East Asia Foundation*, 7(3), available online at [http://www.globalasia.org/V7N3\\_Fall\\_2012/Zhou\\_Qingan\\_and\\_Mo\\_Jinwei\\_.html?PHPSESSID=6cd6671f43a69b7bea900ab6f2794bbe](http://www.globalasia.org/V7N3_Fall_2012/Zhou_Qingan_and_Mo_Jinwei_.html?PHPSESSID=6cd6671f43a69b7bea900ab6f2794bbe). Accessed 1st April 2013.



will be dedicated to ‘promoting China’s soft power’ by mobilizing and coordinating social resources and civilian efforts for Chinese public diplomacy (Zhang, 2013).<sup>41</sup>

Two features are especially apparent in this public diplomatic approach to the current Chinese soft power building: firstly there is a fast expanding and spreading of the knowledge and information of public diplomacy not only for the outside but also for the inside, where there is an effort to engage in and improve the domestic public recognition of public diplomacy. It is reported on the PDCEC website (2011), that ‘the image of the country will be built by our public’.<sup>42</sup> To develop a people-to-people’s approach was also emphasised at FAOCA (2012a):

Continue to strengthen people-to-people and cultural exchanges and cooperation between the two sides. We will vigorously carry out dialogue between Chinese and African civilizations, and launch a new round of exchanges in culture, *education*, sports, tourism and other fields...<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, as will be described below, cultural diplomacy and the use of human resources contribute significantly to China’s public diplomacy. Diverse types of educational cooperation are becoming increasingly important resources for public diplomacy. A landmark is the spreading of Chinese language teaching through the

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<sup>41</sup> Zhang, Y. (2013) China to boost public diplomacy, exchanges. Available online at: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-01/01/content\\_16073517.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-01/01/content_16073517.htm). Accessed on 1st April, 2013. (in Chinese)

<sup>42</sup> See PDCEC website ‘About us’.

<sup>43</sup> FOCAC (2012a) Beijing Declaration of the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Online at: <http://www.focac.org/eng/ltada/dwjbzjjhys/hywj/t954245.htm>. Accessed 1st April 2013.

This set a basis for the educational exchange: university students, as part of the social elite, will contribute to the soft power production of China. The following sections will continue to discuss this.

establishment of Confucius Institutes (CIs) which play an important role in building the image of China (Bao, 2011; Wu, 2012; Zhou and Mo, 2012).<sup>44</sup> Amongst the list of instruments key to China's public diplomacy, D'Hooghe (2007) included CI and 'student exchange' as the first two instruments, followed by the 'media', 'publications', 'events', 'development aid and business deals', which are very similar to the educational aid approaches discussed in this paper.<sup>45</sup> Bao (2011: 103) describes that the view university tutors towards teaching foreign students is changing, while foreign students are changing their attitudes towards China during their Chinese learning- "we often hear students saying that: 'China is different from what I have imagined'". Bao has pointed out that foreign students are 'valuable resources' for China's public diplomacy (ibid).<sup>46</sup>

These two features are the basis for the following exploration and understanding of the China-Africa cooperation in education and how education is not only offering educational resources but also diplomatic resources in this increasing closer relationship.

### **2.3 Chinese Government Scholarship scheme**

As discussed above educational resources have already been recognised as a valuable part in raising soft power, and not only in China. Taking American

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<sup>44</sup> Bao, W. (2011) A Tentative Study on Public Diplomatic Awareness in International Education of Chinese Language. *Journal of East China Normal University*, (6): 100-104. (in Chinese)

Wu, Y. (2012) Public Diplomatic Value of Confucian Institutes and Chinese Education for International Students. *Journal of Xinjiang Normal University(Social Sciences)*, 33(4):100-105. (in Chinese)

Also see Zhou and Mo, 'How 21st-century China sees public diplomacy as a path to soft power'.

<sup>45</sup> See D'Hooghe, 'The rise of China's public diplomacy'.

<sup>46</sup> See Bao, 'A Tentative Study on Public Diplomatic Awareness in International Education of Chinese Language'.

immigrant and education policies for foreign students as a typical example, Zhou (2012: 44) argued that the subjectivities involved into a diplomatic procedure are not only governmental officials but also publics, including both of the ordinary public and social elite.<sup>47</sup> Based on the above discussion and despite Chinese language which is increasingly being considered as having a key role in China's public diplomacy, the following sections of this paper will consider how the higher educational cooperation (especially enrolling African students to Chinese universities) is bringing broader value to China's public diplomacy. By offering study opportunities to African students especially, China's logic is to win a good image, and more importantly, a lasting relationship with Africa.

As previously mentioned China has a focus in higher education and vocational training in its educational aid to Africa. Generated from FOCAC pledges and fieldwork investigation (described in the next section), the main approaches of Chinese educational aid can be summarised in Table 1 (Yuan, 2011).<sup>48</sup> Moreover in this table the educational approaches, considered as the different instruments of public diplomacy are linked with China's public diplomacy. These approaches can actually be seen as the 'instruments' of public diplomacy and the production of the educational aid can actually be understood as the 'resources' of the public diplomacy. As long as these resources are 'attractive' to certain members of the African public (briefly listed in the middle column of the table), these instruments will help the Chinese government to improve its soft power.

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<sup>47</sup> Zhou, H. (2012) Public diplomacy and China/U.S. Soft-power Strategies. *World Outlook*, (1): 34-47.

<sup>48</sup> Yuan, T. (2011) 'Diploma' Serves 'Diplomacy'? Politics of Chinese Government Scholarships in Tanzania. *Norrag News*, (45): 126.

Table 1: Chinese educational aid as part of its public diplomacy

<b>Instruments (Aid approaches)</b>	<b>Public (Recipients)</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<i>Government scholarship</i>	African students; African scholars	Higher education in Chinese universities
<i>Short-term training</i> <sup>49</sup>	African professionals and officials	Chinese experience in development (e.g. schooling)
<i>Cultural exchanges</i>	African schools; governments	Chinese culture, performance and language
<i>Confucius Institute (Chinese language)</i>	Universities; individuals	Chinese culture, language and values
<i>School construction and donation</i>	African schools	Materials including books and posters
<i>Teacher secondment</i>	Colleges and university students and staff	Experience and knowledge ‘exported’ by person
<i>University cooperation</i>	University students and scholars/staff	Chinese higher education and technology

Within these ‘instruments’ the Chinese Government Scholarship scheme, related to the ‘student exchange’, was mentioned most frequently in official documents, is the instrument with the most evidence on the ground and examined as the main aid approach by China. According to the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) (2011), a non-profit institution affiliated with the Ministry of Education, the Chinese Government Scholarship scheme has been ‘established by Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) in accordance with educational exchange agreements or memorandum of understandings signed between Chinese government and governments of other countries, organizations, education institutions and relevant international organizations to provide both full scholarships and partial

<sup>49</sup> Short-term training is held by government authorised Chinese universities, usually 2 weeks and takes the form of workshop.

scholarships to international students and scholars'.<sup>50</sup> The scheme supports students who come to study in China on undergraduate and postgraduate programs, as well as Chinese language training programs, and general scholar and senior scholar programs (CSC, 2009; 2011).<sup>51</sup> The applicants can apply for the scholarship through 'dispatching authorities, institutions or the Chinese diplomatic missions' (ibid, 2011). Moreover there are also other types Chinese scholarships such as the China-UNESCO Great Wall Fellowship Programme, China-AUN (ASEAN University Network) Scholarship Programme and China-EU Scholarship Programme, but the scholarship mentioned in this paper is the only one referred to in the 'scholarship quota specified according to inter-governmental agreements' (ibid, 2011). Thus one of the most important determinants of this scholarship is its 'governmental' characteristics which are a political feature.

The number of Chinese government scholarships has increased rapidly since the 2006 Beijing Summit (the 3rd FOCAC). It was promised by Chinese government in 2006 FOCAC's Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009) that the number of Chinese government scholarships for African students would be increased from 2,000 to 4,000 per year by 2009 (FOCAC, 2006a).<sup>52</sup> This number increased again in the Sharm El Sheikh Action Plan (2010-2012) of the 4th FOCAC in 2009, as described above, and proposed to be 5,500 by 2012 (FOCAC, 2009).<sup>53</sup> Also in this plan China proposed to train a certain number of school headmasters and teachers over

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<sup>50</sup> CSC (2011) Notice to international students studying in China. Available online at: <http://en.csc.edu.cn/Laihua/dd6ed814b3074388b197734f041a42bb.shtml> (accessed 10 August 2011).

<sup>51</sup> CSC (2009) Chinese government scholarship scheme. Available online at: <http://en.csc.edu.cn/Laihua/11678d1ad1114276a296ca1f3da38f99.shtml> (accessed 10 August 2011). Also see CSC, 'Notice to international students studying in China'.

<sup>52</sup> See FOCAC (2006a) 'Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009)'.

<sup>53</sup> See FOCAC (2009) 'Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Sharm el Sheikh Action Plan (2010-2012)'.

the next three years, and continues to promote the development of Confucius institutes, while also increasing the number of scholarships offered to Chinese language teachers to help them study in China (ibid). In 2012, at the 5<sup>th</sup> FOCAC, China promised again to continue providing training to African personnel and would provide 18,000 government scholarships over the next three years to Africa (Chinanews, 2012).<sup>54</sup>

Chinese government does not provide details of the financial commitment or amounts it promised to African countries on each of these approaches. This unclarity may be for three reasons. Firstly, China's aid does not come in the form of cash, or cost calculable projects (Brautigam, 2009: 124).<sup>55</sup> From the fieldwork investigation the dominant educational aid modality is scholarships; however despite the numbers of scholarship there is no clear figure available on the cost of each scholarship. Figures published by the China Daily (2010) show that China increased the total finance of government scholarships to 6.5 billion RMB in 2010 which includes the finance for African students. There are some monthly living cost for these students provided (in Chinese currency RMB as well) which could possibly help a rough calculation (ibid).<sup>56</sup> The second reason is the more general one that Chinese aid delivery channels are fragmented across several government ministries or institutions. The main authority is the Ministry of Commerce, but various other governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of

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<sup>54</sup> Chinanews (2012) President Hu declared 5 new strategies of China-Africa cooperation. Available online at: <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2012/07-19/4044206.shtml>. Accessed 1st March 2013. (in Chinese)

<sup>55</sup> See Brautigam, Dragon's gift.

<sup>56</sup> The allocations are 1,400 RMB for undergraduate students monthly, 1,700 RMB for master students monthly, and 2,000 RMB for PhD students monthly (China Daily, 2010). China Daily (2010) Chinese government scholarships benefit more African students (in Chinese). Available online at: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/zgrbjx/2010-02/01/content\\_9404154.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/zgrbjx/2010-02/01/content_9404154.htm) (accessed 2 March 2011).

Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Chinese Embassies, and the State Council are involved in the decision making process (Pehnelt, 2007: 2; Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, 2009: 19).<sup>57</sup> Thirdly, as well as the problem of fragmentation, analyzing the size and quality of China's aid program is not a trivial task because of a fundamental lack of transparency (Pehnelt, 2007: 2).<sup>58</sup>

This then lead to the question that, what exactly is the overall return on government's investment in this scholarship scheme, and how? It seems China is not keen on showing an accurate statistics for its aid performance. According to Brautigam (2009: 125), a normal grant-in-kind with a value in Chinese currency and direct donations make for good pictures in the media, which helps build a nice image of China in Africa.<sup>59</sup> As previously described, educational communication can provide 'how to fish' in order to gain more 'fish' for both sides in the future. So we may conclude that the outcomes include a transformation of development experience, a good image of China and lasting relationships. These are achieved through both of the university study and the broader communication by using higher education as rich and sustainable resource. This might be the reason of the 'vague' statistics of the Chinese scholarships- as the 'donor logic' is aiming at a wider environment within higher education and outcomes (based on education but more than education) it can bring. Specifically, this public diplomacy procedure

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<sup>57</sup> Pehnelt, G. (2007) The political economy of China's aid policy in Africa. Report for Friedrich-Schiller-University and the Max Planck Institute of Economics (Jena, Germany). Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (2009) Financial commitments for infrastructure in Africa for 2008. Available online at: [http://www.icafrica.org/fileadmin/documents/2010/2008\\_Financial\\_Commitments\\_Eng\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.icafrica.org/fileadmin/documents/2010/2008_Financial_Commitments_Eng_PDF.pdf) (accessed 12 July 2010).

<sup>58</sup> See Pehnelt, 'The political economy of China's aid policy in Africa'.

<sup>59</sup> See Brautigam, 'the dragon's gift'.

does not directly link government activities to the general public but certain ‘key individuals’. Nye (2008: 102) mentioned ‘the development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels’ provided earlier experience of USA in the practice of student scholarships (also noted in Zhou, 2012).<sup>60</sup> In China, aid and cooperation plans are always carried out by Ministry of Education and Ministry of Commerce, in accordance with Chinese Embassies and authorised Chinese universities. So we can summarise a ‘communication route’ of China’s public diplomacy in providing student scholarships as shown in Table 2. Here the university students and scholars, seen as social elite, would contribute to the delivery of transferred knowledge, experience, culture and value they gained from China to African public. These returning students are working within diverse sections in the African societies, and those who have returned to be teachers in African higher institutions particularly contribute to the following route (there are some interviewees in the following fieldwork section).

Table 2 China’s scholarship public diplomacy communication route



However, two points need to be noticed: firstly the dominant powers are the ministries of foreign affairs of both sides (will be discussed in the next section).

<sup>60</sup> See Nye, ‘Public diplomacy and soft power’ and Zhou, ‘Public diplomacy and China/U.S. Soft-power Strategies’.



Secondly the last category- the public, is an expecting achievement of the public diplomacy. Critiques argue that, ‘although African elites and the Chinese government sing the song of friendship and mutually beneficial south-south cooperation, there is growing resentment at the grassroots level that has so far been ignored’ (Horta, 2009).<sup>61</sup> Therefore the graph showed above is not yet fully achieved, and according to Chinese reflection upon Chinese aid in Africa, some failures in building a positive image in Africa is due to the lack of ‘soft power’, including lacking grassroots communication and exchanges (Chinanews, 2012).<sup>62</sup> The next section will look at what the feedback looks like on the ground. It is of particular interest to see how this is linked to some of the diplomatic features of the Government Scholarship.

### **3. Actual experience on the ground: fieldwork in Tanzania**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted during field work in Tanzania and China over the period July to December in 2008. The key informants in Tanzania were chosen from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance, Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT), Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE) and the Chinese Embassy. Participants from these institutions

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<sup>61</sup> Horta, L. (2009) China in Africa: soft power, hard results-but Africa’s poor don’t see China as a great power, YaleGlobal, Available online at <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/china%E2%80%99s-soft-power-africa-could-have-hard-results>. Accessed 1st April 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Chinanews (2012) Chinese Academy of Social Sciences report interpret criticism on Chinese aid in Africa: due to soft power lagged behind. Available online at <http://www.oushinet.com/172-546-183629.aspx> accessed 1st April 2013 (in Chinese).

This view is based on the recent publication ‘Yellow book of Africa: annual report on development in Africa No.14 (2011-2012)’, edited by Zhang, H., published by Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. According to Chinanews (2012), during the launch of the report He Wenping, a leading scholar from the Academy pointed out that, the lagging behind of soft power caused some misunderstandings of China’s engagement in Africa. China needs effort in promoting more public communications, especially among grass roots.

could be considered as coming from two groups: official people whose duties were related to educational aid, and returning students who studied in Chinese universities with Chinese government scholarships. The university principals were also interviewed. They answered questions mainly including the introduction of the educational aid situation and the personal perception or experience of Chinese education. The names used in this paper are pseudonyms or codes (RTS refers to returning student).

According to the interviewees at the Chinese embassy in Dar es Salaam, there are over 200 universities accepting African students through this Chinese Government Scholarship. These universities are in different cities across China, for instance, Shandong University, Zhongnan University, University of International Business and Economics, China University of Geosciences, Wuhan University of Technology. The subjects that students could study cover a large range and include agriculture, information industry, electronic communication, computer science, management, economic, environment, geology, animal, life science and so on.

During the fieldwork at Dar es Slaam, Chinese government scholarships were mentioned by Chinese and Tanzanian officials and the returning students, as an important vehicle of educational cooperation between China and Tanzania. Both of these groups talked about the student scholarships and provided similar views. It seems that officials from both sides have made a clear agreement about educational cooperation. The main features of the process of distributing scholarships can be seen from the interview data described as follows.

#### *A diplomacy based procedure*

Firstly, the concern of the scholarship is focused on bilateral relations. In terms of the procedure, scholarships are firstly considered as a diplomatic affair and then as an educational affair. In Tanzania, the offer is officially delivered to the Tanzanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and then forwarded to their Ministry of Education, and finally the information is distributed nationwide.

As the secretary Han at the Chinese embassy described:

The two countries' issues always go through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but are carried out by the Ministry of Education. The details of the scholarships, including their number and the different majors, will be advertised in the local newspaper, and in a Swahili and English newspaper. Both of these newspapers have the most circulation in Tanzania. The English paper is the Daily News, and the other is a Swahili newspaper. The universities are also informed of the scholarship information, and they can then organise and recommend some excellent students to apply for the scholarship. So there are individual applications, and applications organised by universities. For example, the University of Dar es Salaam selects and recommends students to us every year.

Kim, from the Tanzanian Ministry of Education, also explained her job during the process of scholarship selection:

My job is associated with the communication of the scholarship. The Embassy of China sends a letter to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and they hand it to the Ministry of Education, after that the information will be published publically. Sometimes we fast track it through coordination

with the office at the Embassy of China. There is a committee for selection called the sub-advisory committee for higher education and training. The chairmanship is in this ministry, but we have members from Zanzibar and other ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Zanzibar coordinating office, the civil service department and director of higher education (of Zanzibar). This committee will sit down and discuss the scholarships.

Both the descriptions provided by Han and Kim illustrate the ‘inter-governmental’ characteristics of the scholarship. It is government centred rather than university centred. Therefore, political motives are always embedded into the educational action. It is even more political when considering how to make the selection of the qualified students nationwide. Kim described that after advising scholarship information nationally especially in the universities, the ‘sub-advisory committee’ evaluates and selects the best candidates for the scholarships. However there was still a lack of a detailed description of the scholarship distribution, either from Chinese or Tanzanian official sources. This might indicate that the increasing number of scholarships might be related to greater access but this does not directly mean more equal access in higher education. The reason is again fundamentally based on China’s logic: the scholarship scheme is not implemented for spreading a sort of educational mechanism, but rather for transferring development experience, forming a cultural impact and building relationships.

Previously mentioned Nye’s discussion on ‘key individuals’ inspires the explanation for the lack of clarity with respect to the distribution of the scholarships. These are politically based and are selective, and are aimed at social

elite - not all the public but a group of selected students who may contribute a lot, either academically or politically, to the 'win-win' outcomes of the China-Africa relationships.

*Three diplomacy based clues*

Under Tanzanian context some specific diplomacy based factors could be found from the text and on the ground. There are three clues in the following discussion: the cultural framework, the discourse of 'two-sides' and the mechanism of flexibilities.

The first is the *cultural framework* for the educational practice. It is confirmed from both of my interviewees and the official website that there are two parts of the scholarship, the bilateral scholarship (the main part of the Government Scholarship scheme) and the unilateral scholarship. The first one is set within the Cultural Agreement signed by the two countries, and the latter is added 'as a follow-up of the Beijing Summit (2006) of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation' (Embassy of the PRC in the United Republic of Tanzania, 2009).<sup>63</sup>

The previous Cultural Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Tanganyika and the Government of the People's Republic of China was signed in 1962. The current agreement is an upgraded Cultural Agreement signed in 1992 between the PRC and the United Republic of Tanzania, describes the essential policy basis for the government scholarship scheme (Embassy of the PRC in the

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<sup>63</sup> Embassy of the PRC in the United Republic of Tanzania (2009) Chinese government scholarship. Available online at: <http://tz.China-embassy.org/eng/ztx/t577997.htm> (accessed 2 January 2010).

United Republic of Tanzania, 2008).<sup>64</sup> The agreement declares, that the two Contracting Parties (PRC and the United Republic of Tanzania) agree, ‘in accordance with the principles of equality and mutual benefit, to promote exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in the fields of culture, education, science, health, sports, publication, the press and broadcasting’. Under the agreement, China promises 100 scholarships to Tanzania every year, however as described by the secretary at the Chinese embassy, ‘it does not mean we will offer 100 scholarships every year. It means if we offer 100, then the next year there 60 that have graduated from Chinese universities, we will add 60 more to the Chinese universities. So we maintain 100 students studying in China every year’.<sup>65</sup>

It can be seen that it is not about getting more students into China, but rather maintaining a certain number of students in China every year, in order to maintain a stable level of educational practice as a part of Cultural Agreement between the two countries. It can be seen from this cultural framework that, educational aid is not a separated practice but embedded into a number of practices including cultural, scientific and media work. As King (2010b: 86) pointed out, ‘ultimately all the many elements of China’s cooperation with Africa are inseparable from the political, economic and trade engagements with Africa’.<sup>66</sup> This blended model of aid, investment, trade, and technology acts as levers for development, while less common in Western approaches, this embeds education into wider bilateral relationships.

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<sup>64</sup> Embassy of the PRC in the United Republic of Tanzania (2008) Cultural relation between China and Tanzania. Available online at: <http://tz.China-embassy.org/eng/ztgx/whjy/t422282.htm> (accessed 13 June 2009).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> King, K. (2010b) China’s cooperation with Africa, and especially South Africa, in education and training. A special relationship and a different approach to aid? *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 13(2), 73-87.

The second clue is *the discourse of 'two-sides' and 'exchange'*, which include both the discourse from official documents and the discourse from the interviews.

According to the Cultural Agreement:

Between 2005 and 2007, the Chinese side offered one hundred government full scholarships to Tanzania each year. The Tanzanian side offered China five government scholarships in 2006 and four government scholarships in 2007 (Embassy of the PRC in the United Republic of Tanzania, 2008).<sup>67</sup>

Although the numbers from each side are not equal, the Chinese document suggests an equal atmosphere between the two sides, which is actually consistent to previously mentioned China's preference of using 'cooperation' rather than 'aid'. The text suggests that it as an example of a two-way 'exchange' rather than one-way 'aid'. It potentially shows that the Tanzanian side would not just be helped but will also contribute. The two-way contribution discourse was also strengthened in the latest FOCAC action plan (FOCAC, 2012b): the articles on educational action plan are started from the perspective of 'the two sides...', for example:

The *two sides* noted with satisfaction that cooperation of higher quality and in more diverse forms on education was conducted between China and Africa since the Fourth FOCAC Ministerial Conference. The *two*

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<sup>67</sup> See Embassy of the PRC in the United Republic of Tanzania, 'Cultural relation between China and Tanzania'.

*sides* agreed to attach more importance to cooperation in education and push for new progress in China-Africa education cooperation...<sup>68</sup>

Compared with the fourth FOCAC action plan which devoted more space to articles under what ‘the Chinese Government offered’ (FOCAC, 2009), the 2012 plan showed this slight change on text, and even weakened the specific description of China would offer.<sup>69</sup>

The third clue is *the mechanism of flexibilities*. At the beginning of this discussion on the diplomatic details another part of the scholarship-the unilateral one was mentioned. This means that besides the 100 student scholarships offered under the Culture Agreement, there are further opportunities for Tanzanian students, as Han introduced:

The other part of the scholarship was decided after the Beijing Summit. It is called the Chinese one-side scholarship. This scholarship is more flexible in number, and is only one way. There are 30 one-side scholarships this year, and this is provided unconditionally by the Chinese government. The benefits offered by the scholarship are the same as the scholarship under the Culture Agreement, and also include undergraduate, master and doctoral levels. These have been issued because of the enlarged aid to Africa since the Beijing Summit.

The unilateral scholarship was described by Han as chances for students who cannot get access to information on bilateral scholarships easily:

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<sup>68</sup> FOCAC (2012b) The fifth ministerial conference of the forum on China-Africa cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2013-2015). Online at: <http://www.focac.org/eng/ltada/dwjbzjjhys/t954620.htm>. Accessed 1st April 2013.

<sup>69</sup> See FOCAC, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Sharm el Sheikh Action Plan (2010-2012).



For example, the scholarship information is easily to spread in Tanzania but not in Zanzibar. So when the Ministry of Education cannot send the information to Zanzibar on time, we will help to by providing some additional scholarships to Zanzibar directly by implementing the one-side scholarship.

However this also revealed that the unilateral scholarship could be implemented using a much more flexible procedure than the bilateral ones. This can be offered to students in rural and marginal areas, but can also be offered as a benefit for people close to the Chinese government. One of the examples was described by the Chinese official, Li:

This year there was a student who was the daughter of a member of the Tanzanian Olympic Games committee. She was also an excellent student, and just finished her study in USA. But she didn't get the bilateral scholarship so we checked her study performance, interviewed her and awarded her the unilateral scholarship.

This case may suggest more specific factors in the aforementioned 'social elite' procedure of public diplomacy: people with political/diplomatic ties will more easily get included as candidates for the unilateral scholarship.

#### *Institutional cooperation*

Thirdly, there are not only selected individuals but also institutions that receive offers from the Chinese government. There is inter-institutional cooperation between China and Africa. The 2009 FOCAC promised 20 one-to-one cooperative

pairs between Chinese and African universities during the followed three years (FOCAC, 2009).<sup>70</sup> This 20+20 Plan was extended in the 2012 FOCAC action plan (FOCAC, 2012b).<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the 2012 plan added that the cooperation would ‘encourage Chinese and African universities to carry out cooperation in regional and country studies and support African universities in establishing China research centres’ (ibid).

During the fieldwork, Kim described that Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT) regularly received scholarships from the Chinese embassy. According to the interview with the principals and staff at DIT, the cooperation between the institute and the Chinese embassy started in the 1990s. Under the agreement between the PRC and the United Republic of Tanzania in 1991, a collaborative project between Xian Highway University (Xi’an Jiao Tong University, China) and Dar es Salaam Technical College (DTC, currently DIT) was set up to develop a Highway and Transportation Engineering Laboratory. In 1993, the laboratory was established through ‘generous assistance’ from China. The main objective of this project was to strengthen the DIT’s highway section by providing equipment, experts and the training of staff in the field of Highway and Transportation Engineering. Four experts from China were dispatched to DIT to assist their counterparts in technology transfer.<sup>72</sup>

Also under the 1991 agreement, there were opportunities for human resource development through which some personnel from the former DTC were trained in

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<sup>70</sup> See FOCAC, ‘Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Sharm el Sheikh Action Plan (2010-2012)’.

<sup>71</sup> See FOCAC, ‘The fifth ministerial conference of the forum on China-Africa cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2013-2015)’.

<sup>72</sup> The information about DIT is taken from a document provided by the principal of DIT during the fieldwork interview.

various fields in China. Most of them were trained at Xi'an Highway University. It is noteworthy that they obtained a high degree in China- mainly PhDs. They went back to DIT after graduation and now teach and research at DIT.

Besides the cooperation in the field of highway engineering, the Chinese government began to target the computer science department at DIT. In June 2000, China entered an agreement to develop a Computer Laboratory at DIT. Under the agreement, the Chinese government provided the necessary teaching facilities to set up a laboratory with fifty micro-computers, provided experts to teaching in computer applications, and offered opportunities to train in China. The project lasted for two years, from December 2001.

Following the successes in implementing this project, it was extended for another two years following the signing of a memorandum of understanding on 11th December 2003. During 2004-2005, China offered DIT 12 short and long term scholarships. During the fieldwork period, there were 3 DIT staff having obtained their master degrees in computer related subjects in China. Also, DIT has received three Chinese experts, supporting teaching and research.

It can be seen that, in Tanzania, DIT has the privilege of having a certain number of Chinese Government Scholarships. In a straightforward procedure, a good number of DIT staff gained postgraduate degrees in China (even in the same universities) only in a few years time and then transfer their knowledge back to Tanzania. This one-to-one cooperative model is different from the Western trend on educational aid-offering General Budget Support (GBS) to the educational sectors or the recipient government (instead of funding 'stand-alone' projects) in

order to encourage more ownership of the recipient countries (Ohno and Niiya, 2004: 7).<sup>73</sup> China is not applied to this situation as it does not have ‘ownership’ issues which may partly based on Western colonial history within a hierarchical aid relationship. This actually has set up an equal basis for China to develop its relations with either individual institutes or directly with governments, and in an effective way. However DIT was the only institute suggested by study respondents at Tanzanian Ministry of Education when discussing institutional resources. Therefore it is not clear either in the texts or from the interviewees how many institutions such as DIT get such stable support from the Chinese government and contribute as a key role to boost the IT learning in the local area.

*Performance of the scholarship: image vs. quality*

The fieldwork in this study demonstrated that on the governmental level the perceptions of these educational practices were positive, and officials from both sides expressed similar opinions. However from a perspective of public diplomacy, it should be considered whether these educational resources were attractive enough for the Tanzanian public? This is linked directly to the performance of Chinese higher education rather than the performance of Chinese government. In the focus group discussion held at DIT with five staff and through one-to-one interviews with Tanzanian individuals (all of them have obtained degrees in China, thus seen as returning students in this study), the informants generally expressed a positive attitude towards to China and Chinese scholarships. Firstly there is the

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<sup>73</sup> According to Ohno and Niiya (2004: 7), under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs) agenda since the late 1990s, there has been a shift from structural adjustment operations to General Budget Support (GBS). According to the IMF (2005) PRSPs were ‘country-driven’ and thus would promote strong national ownership of development strategies including broad and active involvement of civil society (cited in Robertson et al., 2007: 60).

development knowledge they can learn from China as a developing country (which is seen as an old friend and a good example for their home country), and secondly since the bilateral relationship is getting closer, practically it is also good for their future careers. However in terms of the detailed aspects of their university study, the interviewees also expressed some worries about the quality of Chinese higher education. In fact, for the individual recipients, they did not seem to care about the politics of aid. What they did care about was their real lives in China, about whether they could get enough funding, whether they could identify good opportunities for themselves, and whether they can get a good job after their overseas study.

When talked about the advantages and disadvantages of study in China, they expressed happiness about their opportunities to go to China, and described that they would be willing to go again for a higher degree such as a PhD, or else would consider sending their children in the future. When asked about whether their degree in China was important, they all gave positive answers and said ‘Yes, definitely’. They could see the value of a Chinese diploma, and even a broader relation between China and Tanzania.

RTS G1: We learnt a lot in China and from China. Now it is very important that we use what we have learnt to teach and research... Yes we always ask, why can China be so successful in this era? So it is important to study in China. Tanzania is learning from China how to develop the country, and the Chinese are hardworking people.

RTS A: Many Chinese companies are now in this country. Most of them are engineering companies. The parliament building was built by a Chinese company. So maybe for us it is a good opportunity to study there as our government opens a lot of business and receives things such as this scholarship agreement from China. Now we have relations in many fields.

On the other side, when describing factors that they were not satisfied about, they all mentioned the length of the degrees in China- three years for a Master, the funding amount, the teaching quality and the communication. The language seems to bring a series of problems for them. Compared with western education, Chinese lecturers were not very good at speaking English, and the communication with other Chinese students at the universities was also a problem. One of the results of this was that the Tanzanian students wanted to learn more, but the university sometimes treated them as foreigners and required less from them.

RTS G2: According to my experience, the language caused some problems. When the teachers are going to teach the foreign students, they are slightly shy and not very confident. Nevertheless they know how to teach...however their evaluation is also different. Because you are a foreigner, they will just say, ok. But when you are Chinese, the teacher will be stricter.

RTS A: They think you are a foreigner so you do not need to know this. So we cannot get receive knowledge at the same level as the Chinese students.

This reveals some specific issues for the communication takes place in the campus. There is also a gap between what governments focus on achieving and what the individuals actually receive from educational aid. While China is making an effort to increase the number of scholarships, and Chinese universities are trying to become globalised, actually the capacity for higher education may not be sufficient enough for the international students. If China aims to improve its soft power through education in the long run, it might need to improve its international competitiveness with respect to higher education, and make more effort to balance the 'image' of its scholarships with the 'quality' of its scholarships.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Now from a 'diplomatic' perspective the logic and features of Chinese educational aid may be more easily to be understood. It is firstly based on China's construction of fraternal relationships in the foreign aid. Most of the existing literatures are concerning the specific motives of Chinese aid but increasingly find that Chinese aid is not professional, lack of transparency and cannot be easily categorised into a Western model (King, 2010b).<sup>74</sup> The first section of this paper argued that this is because of a fundamental difference in donor's logic: the Western 'catching-up' logic and Chinese 'win-win' logic. Different from Western aims of helping poor countries to reduce poverty and achieve modernisation with accurate targets and financial modalities, what China wishes, is not to 'provide' a 'prescription' (Dale,

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<sup>74</sup> King, K. (2010b) China's cooperation with Africa, and especially South Africa, in education and training. A special relationship and a different approach to aid? *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 13(2), 73-87.

1982) and evaluate it, but to ‘win’ a mutual beneficial relationship in the global political economy and a good image of the current China, and then maintain it.<sup>75</sup>

There has not been much discussion on China’s educational aid compared with the amount of discussion on China’s trade ties with Africa. This paper therefore has explored this in the second and third section. It is found that Chinese educational aid, featured similar to Chinese general aid and closely embedded into the China-Africa bilateral relations. It is involved within a system of producing education as part of public diplomacy in a country’s global strategy rather than a system of producing education as a global target. As this is less on intervention but more on gaining relation, on the ground the Chinese aid is welcomed by the recipient countries. The returning students, as ‘key individuals’, showed their interests and motives of gaining a Chinese diploma, and also revealed specific issues, such as communication language, based on their university lives in China.

The Chinese model of educational aid may provide some new evidence and complexities to the concept of ‘soft power’ which was basically built upon the American experience by Nye. As Dale (2011) addressed, ‘to understand the deployment of soft power, we need to place it in the wider structural context of a global political economy, where access to both material and cognitive means of production are increasingly crucial’.<sup>76</sup> Although higher education is not a new resource for producing soft power, the Chinese educational aid especially its government scholarship, building upon its distinctive ‘win-win’ donor logic and

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<sup>75</sup> See Dale, ‘Education and the capitalist state: Contributions and contradictions’.

<sup>76</sup> This is from prof. Roger Dale’s paper presented on *the International Conference on the Reemerging China and Its Impact on Asia and the United States*, held at Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong, 12-13 Januray 2012.



aid features, may not add new understandings to international education, but would definitely add alternative ideas of maintaining bilateral relationships for long term. Particularly, compared with the orthodox donor-recipient hierarchy, it is challenging the West even the world. It is such a fragmented but fast growing model under huge amount of attention.

On the other hand, how grassroots in Africa can gain equal access to the scholarship is a remained question. It is crucial to ask, within this ‘win-win’ situation declared by China, as well as their educational cooperation (FOCAC, 2006b), can majority of African publics get attracted by Chinese public diplomacy?<sup>77</sup> And can African countries win both diplomatic and educational reciprocities within this mutual beneficial framework? These are the long term lessons for China if the country wishes to keep its international public reputation sustainably.

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<sup>77</sup> FOCAC (2006b) Declaration of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Available online at: <http://www.focac.org/eng/ltda/dscbzjhy/DOC32009/t606841.htm> (accessed 2 March 2012).