

Examining China-Nigeria Cooperation on Development of Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper examines the contributions of China-Nigeria cooperation to the development of education in Nigeria. The study utilizes secondary data sourced from government documents, print resources, and online publications. Through content analysis, the literature was focused on the study's key themes. The findings indicate that the Chinese government has significantly contributed to the Nigerian education sector through financial aid, facilities development, capacity-building programs for teachers, and the provision of instructional materials. These contributions have not only addressed infrastructural deficiencies but have also enhanced the quality of education by incorporating modern teaching methods and materials. Furthermore, the collaboration has

facilitated cultural exchanges, which enrich the educational experience and foster mutual understanding between the two nations. The paper recommends that the Nigerian government strengthen its bilateral relations with China to further support and develop the tertiary education sector. By leveraging these international partnerships, Nigeria can continue to improve its educational infrastructure, teacher training programs, and overall quality of education, thus fostering a more robust and competitive academic environment.

Keywords: China, Education development, Nigeria.



Introduction

Nigeria and China established formal diplomatic relations in February 1971, the same year the communist People's Republic of China obtained the right of place in the UN Security Council; 1971 simultaneously coincides with the expulsion from the United Nations of the nationalist government in Taiwan, which previously occupied the seat. China's permanent presence in the Security Council meant that from 1971, it started to enjoy the use of veto and participates effectively in the deliberations of the UN Agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the specialized fields, like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). China's foreign policy has centered in promoting relations with many countries; it asserts its sovereignty over Taiwan and rebukes any country that accepts diplomatic dealings with the later (Richard, 2019).

China in 1971 as the two states established their diplomatic bilateral relations. The five principles contained in a press release issued by Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Information in April 26, 1971, include: mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other internal affairs; sovereign equality; and peaceful coexistence (Federal Ministry of Information (FMI), 1971; Richard, 2019). Nigeria-China relation is seen by some analysts as an era of progression and expansion since 1971. Nigeria's geo-strategic importance particularly in Africa has made China to look for "amends for its relative disinterests in the country in previous decades" (Srinivasan, 2008; Richard, 2019). Also, Kirby outlined the basis of China's foreign policy towards Africa which by extension can be adapted to Nigeria: to foster sincere friendship and become each other's reliable "all-weather friend"; to treat each other as equals, respect each other's sovereignty and refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs; to seek common development on the basis of mutual benefit; to increase consultation and cooperation in international affairs; and to look at the African situation in a realistic and sympathetic way (Kirby, 1995; Richard, 2019).

China's aid and other engagements in Africa have been relatively on the rise since the turn of the millennium, following the establishment of forum for China – Africa cooperation. China has always emphasized that it has a different ideology than most Western countries regarding its foreign policy through the win-win cooperation with other countries and avoidance of any traits of 'interference' towards another nation. In other words China's investment in Africa has never had a political condition this is because China's preference for dialogue and partnership over confrontation and alliance has created greater resonance, unlike the West's way of investment, which for decades has deprived Africa of real economic independence (Omoruyi, Yao, Abah & Mvuh, 2017). China has also promoted the idea of a mutually beneficial partnership with Africa, in which both parties gain from the relationship through the resource for infrastructure development agreement. The —win-win cooperation between China and Africa – has being under criticism by Western media, academia, and governments.

Educational exchanges between china and African countries according to Nordtveit (2009) and Chidiebere and Hui, (2018) have been initiated by China shortly after the end of the colonial era in the 1960s. Programs initially focused on student exchanges⁴ and teacher visits but the Cultural Revolution which took root in 1965 eventually brought these early attempts to an end. Ties were again in view of omoruyi et al, (2017) and Chidiebere and Hui, (2018) resumed in the 1980s and an increasing number of African students came to China in order to pursue their studies. It is especially during the last decade that educational cooperation has increased more rapidly following China's increased economic engagement with Africa countries. At the political level, the first Sino-African Education ministerial meetings took place in Beijing in 2005 which resulted in the —Beijing Declaration signed by 17 African countries



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(Sino graduate 2012). The declaration contained according to Chidiebere, and Hui, (2018) and Nordtveit (2009) a common commitment towards educational development and laid a special focus on primary education, vocational and technical education. Furthermore, the declaration recognized that —the relevance of education to economic development is more significant in the process of pursuing economic development, eliminating poverty and mutual benefit, and the intention to pursue multilateral consultations around common issues (FOCAC 2005). During the 2006 FOCAC summit on China-Africa Cooperation, four main areas of cooperation have been announced by the Chinese government: (i) setting up rural schools in Africa, (ii) increasing the number of Chinese Government Scholarships, (iii) providing professionals and educationalists of various institutions in Africa, and (iv) the establishment of Confucius Institutes (CI) for Chinese language teaching and the encouragement of teaching African languages in Chinese universities (FOCAC, 2006).

The China-Africa Cooperation Forum is a platform established by China and friendly African countries for collective consultation and dialogue and as a cooperation mechanism among developing countries. The characteristics of the Forum are twofold. First, it is to strengthen consultation and expand cooperation within a pragmatic framework and second, to promote political dialogue and economic cooperation with a view to seeking mutual reinforcement and cooperation. The Forum, which was established at Ministerial level, has held four sessions in Beijing, China, from 10-12 October 2000; in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 15-16 December 2003; again in Beijing, from 4-5 November 2006; and in Sharm El Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, on 8 November 2009. The 2006 session was at the level of Heads of State and Government to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Africa and China (African Union, 2023).

The FOCAC is a strong partnership, which has gestated over a long period of time. It is doing very well and has the potential of bringing various advantages to the two sides. In many areas, the partnership has delivered some concrete outcomes that are beneficial to Africa although Africa needs to utilize the partnership to the fullest in terms of the potential of the available market and the business opportunities. There is also need to align the partnership to the strategic objectives of the African Union. The magnificent new AU Conference and Office Complex built by the Chinese government free of charge to the AU and commissioned in January 2012, is testimony to the real value this partnership brings to Africa (African Union, 2023).

The implementation of FOCAC has significantly influenced the trade and investment landscape between China and Africa. Trade volumes have increased, with China emerging as Africa's largest trading partner. Chinese investments span diverse sectors, including infrastructure, energy, telecommunications, and manufacturing, contributing to Africa's socio-economic development. Beyond economic cooperation, FOCAC emphasizes cultural exchanges and people-to-people interactions. Cultural exchange programs, and youth initiatives foster greater understanding and mutual respect between Chinese and African societies and Educational scholarships. By promoting cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and Educational scholarships, FOCAC aims to forge lasting bonds between the peoples of China and Africa and specifically Nigeria. This paper seeks to examine the contributions of China-Nigeria cooperation to the development of education in Nigeria.



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Concept of Education

Education has long been recognised as a fundamental instrument of economic growth, social development, and technological advancement. Governments are therefore required to commit significant resources to ensure its provision and accessibility for all citizens (Olatunde-Aiyedun & Ogunode, 2021). Education serves as a vehicle for individual growth and national transformation, akin to the role of blood in sustaining human life. Without adequate education, development becomes difficult to achieve. Globally, education is acknowledged as a key measure of socio-economic, political, cultural, and technological progress, as well as skill acquisition (Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2024). It fosters a culture of productivity by enabling individuals to discover and apply their creative potentials to improve existing skills and techniques, thereby enhancing personal and societal efficiency (Obasanjo, 2012).

Education is a means of teaching or training people to be useful to themselves and the society they live. By this, recipients have to be productive and discover their creative abilities, which can be used to perform specific tasks to attain self-actualisation (Sagaya, n.d). It is the key to upward mobility that lead to the progressive modernization of societies. Education indeed empowers any nation to rise to the challenges of social, cultural, economic and technological change (Oyebade, Oladipo & Adetoro 2008). Education is said to be a means of developing human resources by cultivating appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes without which the nation cannot harness resources to industrialise and take part in the global knowledge economy (Durosaro, 2012).

Contribution of China Education Development in Nigeria

Since Nigeria's independences, the People's Republic of China has been playing critical roles in the development of education in Nigeria. Some of the contributions includes; provision of financial aids, facilities development, and capacity-building programme for teachers and provision of instructional Materials.

Financial Aids

People's Republic of China has assisted Nigeria in the development of education by providing financial aids to fund education programmes. Premium-times (2020) quoted that the former Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, who noted that Nigeria has received \$26.94 billion Development Assistance funds from International Donors between 2015 and 2020. Mr Agba made this known while briefing the House of Representatives Committee on Civil Society and Development Partners on Donor Funds Receipts, Transfers and Disbursement to Government Agencies, Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations in Nigeria. Breaking down the figure, Mr Agba observed that the amount comprised \$ 2.34 billion received in 2015, \$1.15 billion gotten in 2016 and \$ 774.93 million collected in 2017. The minister said that \$22.02 billion was obtained in 2018, while \$655.64 million was received in 2019 and \$5.64 million got in 2020. According to him, these donations come from the European Development Fund (EDF) and the United Nations Development Systems (UNDS). He explained that some of the funds also came from China through the Bilateral Agreement between the Government of Nigeria and the Peoples Republic of China signed since 1972. Mr Agba said some funds came from Japan Activities in Nigeria via the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). He said that others came from the Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the German International Cooperation (GIZ). According to him, the ministry does not receive donor funds, hence cannot transfer or disburse what is not received. He said that Nigeria does not currently qualify for budget support because it is not classified as very poor but as a lower middle-income country that is only



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qualified for projects/programmes support. “The implication of this is that Donors do not give us the funds for management, rather Donors work with the sectoral stakeholders to fund the project directly after identifying the needs by the MDAs/States in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. “For the purpose of clarification, the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning is responsible for coordinating Nigeria’s multilateral and bilateral economic cooperation including development aid and technical assistance programmers by signing of cooperation agreements. Adepegba (2022) reported that the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Nigeria has pledged to promote education exchange and cooperation between China and Nigeria. The Charge d’Affaires of the Chinese Embassy, Mr Zhao Yong, spoke during the presentation of the Oct. 1st China-Nigeria friendship award to outstanding secondary school students and teachers in Abuja said this had always been the top priority of the embassy. The award to the teachers and students in the Federal Capital Territory was the third edition and the 15th in the “Oct. 1st Award” series, which started in 2018. A total of N6m was presented to 12 FCT secondary school teachers with each receiving N.5m cash while 120 students from 12 schools each received N10,000. Mr Zhao Yong noted that fund was also donated to schools for procurement of teaching facilities, including power generators. Adekunle, (2022)

Facilities development

Facilities development in educational education is another critical programme of the China’ government in Nigeria. The Embassy of China in Nigeria and other companies of China in Nigeria have been contributing to the facilities development in different educational institutions in Nigeria. This facilities development occurs in almost all the forms of Nigerian educational systems. For instance, at the basic education, Taiwo (2023) reported that the Chinese Consul-General, Lagos, Yan Yuqing, has reiterated the commitment of the People’s Republic of China towards assisting Nigerian government to develop its education sector. The Chinese Consul-General disclosed this during the commissioning of renovated China-Nigeria Friendship Model Primary School, Igbesa in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State. The projects sponsored by the Chinese Consulate and Ogun-Guangdong Free Trade Zone included a block of classrooms, cafeteria, as well as donation of educational materials to the pupils of the school. Yuqing said, “Chinese admire that education is the foundation of national development in the long run and strong weapon to fight poverty. All modern countries in the world do not fail to attach importance to education. As the largest developing country in the world, China has made remarkable achievements in all aspects of social development. “Ten years ago, in 2012, four China-Assisted Primary Schools were commissioned in Nigeria, including the one at Nyanya, which was built by the Chinese government and donated to Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Administration. Since then, each year, the Embassy has given support to these schools. It has now become a high-quality school and so many parents living around Nyanya hope to send their children to study at that school.” At the secondary school education, Odoh (2022) reported that the Chinese government has vowed to sustain its active involvement in the educational advancement of Nigeria. Former Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Cui Jianchun, made this known during the commissioning of an upgraded Chinese Center in Junior Secondary School, Area 11, Garki, Abuja. Mr Cui, who was represented at the event by Deputy Ambassador, Mr Zhang Yi, said the Chinese government would continue to support the educational development of Nigerian children because it is the foundation of social progress and national development. Odoh (2022) also reported that the Managing Director stated that EEC in 2018 donated to Government Girl’s Secondary School, Dutse, Abuja and 150 students successfully completed their industrial training at an EEC project called Maiduguri Custom Flyover between 2020 - 2021. At the tertiary education, Oyeleke (2017) reported that



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in a bid to tackle the challenges posed by inadequate supply of potable water in the University of Lagos, the Chinese Consulate in Lagos has donated modern borehole to the university. The Consul General of China in Lagos, His Excellency, Mr. Chao Xiaoliang, said the project was executed under the framework of 'China-Africa People-to-People Friendship Action.' He said the project, which is located within the Faculty of Education, was meant to enhance water supply on campus. This, he said, would make the university environment more conducive for teaching and learning. Xiaoliang explained that the 'China-Africa People-to-People Friendship Action' was aimed at fostering better relations between Chinese companies and their host countries. He noted that the donation was in furtherance of the consulate's corporate social responsibility initiative in Nigeria. He said, "CGC began operation in Nigeria 34 years ago, that is 1983. Ever since then, we rapidly grew into business, including consultancy, investment, infrastructure, logistics and trading with its footprint across. Also, Ojuroungbe, (2024) reported that the Chinese Consul-General, Lagos, Yan Yuqing, has reaffirmed China's commitment to supporting the development of Nigeria's education system. The Chinese Consul-General said the embassy remains "steadfast in its support for education in Nigeria, as it is an important pillar for the country's future development." The Chinese Consul-General, Lagos, Yan Yuqing noted this during the launching of the free Chinese Online Classroom Project donated by the Ogun-Guangdong Free Trade Zone in the Igbesa area of Ogun State. Yuqing, while revealing that the project was in collaboration with the Chinese Ministry of Education, said the Free Trade Zone Online Chinese Classroom was a significant milestone in the cultural and economic collaboration between Nigeria and China. She added, "The online class aims to foster cultural exchange and strengthen Nigeria-China relations by offering Mandarin Chinese learning opportunities to tertiary students and interested individuals. With a focus on technology transfer, career enhancement, and global preparedness, the project signifies OGFTZ's commitment to facilitating a positive environment for Nigerian and Chinese businesses". On his part, the Deputy General Manager of China-Africa Investment FZC, Kevin Liu, explained that the programme's key component is to equip the university undergraduates and widen their chances in skill acquisition and economic empowerment. He added that apart from the involvement of the academy environment, the locals who are interested in learning the Chinese language will also benefit from the programme. Also, Chinese-consulate donated a borehole facility to university of Lagos to support infrastructure facilities in the university. Mr Wan AS reported by Odoh (2022) noted that EEC which specialises in the construction of roads, bridges, railways, public and municipal construction, environmental protection, water conservancy, power construction, and Industrial and civil buildings has participated in several public works in Nigeria which include the provision of clean water, renovation of schools, building of community sidewalk and rural roads, provision of stationery, books, and sports wears to local schools as well as internship and on-site lectures for engineering students.

International institutions operating in Nigeria have significantly contributed to the development of infrastructure facilities in educational institutions, as observed by Ogunode, Ayeni, and Ogwuche (2023). This contribution has manifested in various forms, including the provision of modern classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, which are essential for enhancing the quality of education. The involvement of these institutions has not only alleviated some of the infrastructural deficiencies plaguing Nigerian educational institutions but also fostered an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. According to Adams, Zubair, and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022), these contributions are pivotal in bridging the gap between the current state of infrastructure and the ideal standards required for a robust educational system. They argue that the collaboration between international institutions and local educational bodies



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has led to the establishment of state-of-the-art facilities that support advanced learning techniques and research initiatives, thereby positioning Nigerian institutions to compete on a global scale.

Moreover, Ogunode, Jegede, Olamoyegun, Akinjobi, and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022) further highlighted the positive impact of international institutions on the infrastructural development of Nigerian educational institutions. They noted that these institutions have provided not only physical infrastructure but also technical expertise and financial resources that have been instrumental in driving educational reforms. The infusion of international standards and practices into the local educational framework has facilitated the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies and the improvement of curriculum content. This has resulted in an overall enhancement of the educational experience for students and has equipped educators with the necessary tools to deliver high-quality education. The collective efforts of these international institutions have also extended to the training and development of academic staff, ensuring that they are well-versed in contemporary educational practices and can effectively utilize the new infrastructural facilities. This holistic approach to educational development underscores the critical role that international partnerships play in transforming the educational landscape in Nigeria. By addressing both infrastructural needs and capacity building, these partnerships have created a sustainable model for educational improvement that can be replicated across various levels of the educational system.

Capacity building

Chinese government in Nigeria has supported capacity development of teachers in all the forms of education in Nigeria. Omoruyi, Yao, Abah & Mvuh (2017) maintained that to promote Africa's independent educational development by strengthening its capacity to create its own cultural and human resources, China is offering scholarships to Africa in many areas: sciences, engineering or technology fields, reflecting the demands from the African countries to build up necessary skills. Chidiebere, (2018) observed that even though China and Nigeria have vastly different historical experiences and cultural traditions, China has been remarkably successful in its efforts to promote China-Nigeria education cooperation. In 2008, Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Akwa, Nigeria, established a Confucius Institute to teach the Chinese language to Nigerian students. As business linkages between China and Nigeria have grown speedily in recent years, the institute was a successful project. Its success was acknowledged on June 29, when the Chinese embassy in Abuja announced the establishment of Nigeria's first Chinese Cultural Research Center. The embassy also pledged to create an Igbo language institute in China to encourage Chinese university graduates to work for Chinese companies in Nigeria. In 2009, University of Lagos established another Confucius Institute. Following the demand and the deepening cooperation between Nigeria and China, the Chinese embassy in 2016 opened a Chinese learning Centre in Abuja as a sister institute of Nnamdi Azikiwe University with affiliation to Xiamen University in China. Chidiebere (2018) asserted that in terms of scholarship allocation, each year, the Chinese government awards 40 scholarships to Nigerian students to study in China. This scholarship includes undergraduate, master and doctorate studies. These scholarships cover areas such as mining, industrial fishery, medicine, accountancy, commerce and distribution, renewable energy, environmental sciences, network and telecommunications, management of agricultural co-operatives, computer science, communication and information, electricity, international relations, international business law, and Chinese language.

Currently, about 237 Nigerian students are said to be studying in China under government scholarship.



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This is also in line with President Xi Jinping pledges to enhance development experiences by offering occupational training courses for African youths and training young talent in agricultural science, increasing the Chinese government scholarships from 30, 000 in 2015 to 50,000 in 2018 for Africa and invite 2,000 young people from Africa to visit China. Sule (2022) submitted that the Chinese Embassy has played a significant role in the advancement of education in the territory since the commencement of bilateral ties between both parties. His words, “Following the establishment of bilateral relationship some years back, the board has continued to enjoy a lot of support from the embassy to improve our educational activities in the school system. Some of these benefits include the establishment of the China Assisted Primary School in Nyanya, distribution of learning materials to a lot of our schools, the provision of scholarship awards to pupils and students of primary and secondary schools respectively, and the establishment of the Chinese centre here in this school and the provision of training opportunities to many of our teachers and Board staff in China. Ogunode, Ukozor, and Agbo, (2024) noted that international organization has assisted to provide capacity building training for teachers in Nigerian schools.

Provision of instructional Materials

The China-Nigeria cooperation has had a positive impact on the provision of instructional resources to Nigerian schools. Musa (2018) reported that Wan Lianyu, Managing Director of the Eighteenth Engineering Company (EEC), a Chinese firm, facilitated the upgrade of educational centers and provided books and furniture to schools. The firm's director remarked that this project was part of their corporate social responsibility and aimed to strengthen cultural exchanges between China and Nigeria. Additionally, Mohammed and Ogunode (2024) noted that Chinese companies have renovated schools and donated learning materials to enhance education. For example, the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), with support from the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria, renovated and donated learning materials to the China-Assisted Model Primary School in Nyanya, Abuja. Anyagafu and Uwandu (2018) also reported that the government of the People's Republic of China in Nigeria, through its consulate in Lagos, donated equipment worth about N12 million to the Bethesda Home of the Blind to improve the quality of education for visually impaired students. Ogunode, Ukozor, and Agbo (2024) revealed that international organizations in Nigeria have significantly contributed to the provision of educational resources. The impact of such contributions is evident in various aspects of educational enhancement. For instance, Ojelade, Aregbesola, Ekele, and Aiyedun (2020) demonstrated that audio-visual instructional materials positively affect the teaching of science concepts in secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja. Their study in *The Environmental Studies Journal* highlighted the importance of modern instructional materials in improving student comprehension and engagement.

Furthermore, Olatunde-Aiyedun and Ayo (2023) explored the effectiveness of word processing on student learning outcomes in science education. Their research, published in the *Best Journal of Innovation in Science, Research, and Development*, compared direct, inquiry-based, and project-based instructional approaches. They found that innovative instructional methods, supported by adequate resources, significantly enhance student learning outcomes. The integration of these instructional materials not only modernizes the educational experience but also aligns with global educational standards, preparing Nigerian students for competitive academic and professional environments. These efforts, supported by international partnerships, underscore the critical role of instructional resources in advancing education in Nigeria. By providing essential tools and modern facilities, these collaborations help bridge the educational resource gap and promote sustainable educational development. The combined insights from these studies and



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reports illustrate the multifaceted benefits of international cooperation in enriching the instructional landscape of Nigerian schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has assessed the contributions of China to the development of education in Nigeria, utilizing secondary data collected from government documents, print resources, and online publications. Through content analysis, the literature was narrowed down to align with the study's themes. The findings reveal that the Chinese government has significantly contributed to the Nigerian education sector through the provision of financial aid, development of facilities, capacity-building programs for teachers, and the supply of instructional materials.

To further enhance the educational development in Nigeria, it is recommended that the Nigerian government strengthen its bilateral relations with China. This enhanced cooperation could foster further advancements, particularly in the tertiary education sector, by facilitating increased support and resource exchange. By leveraging these international partnerships, Nigeria can continue to improve its educational infrastructure, teacher training programs, and overall quality of education.

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