

Article

Research on the development of Chinese education in Ethiopia

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Abstract: This study focuses on the current situation of the development of Chinese education in Ethiopia, analyzes its influencing factors, and puts forward corresponding suggestions, in order to provide reference for promoting Sino-Ethiopian cultural exchanges and the sustainable development of Chinese education in Ethiopia. Based on literature review and field investigation, this study discusses the current situation, challenges and future development direction of Chinese education in Ethiopia based on the background of Sino-Ethiopian cooperation and the development trend of Chinese education in recent years.

Keywords: Ethiopia; Chinese Language Education; Language Teaching and Learning

1. Introduction

In recent years, the friendly and cooperative relations between China and Africa have been deepening, and Chinese education has gradually emerged in African countries and has received widespread attention. As one of the important countries in Africa, the development of Chinese education in Ethiopia is of great significance in promoting cultural exchanges, talent training and economic cooperation between

China and Ethiopia. However, due to a variety of factors, Chinese education in Ethiopia still faces many challenges, and in-depth research and discussion are needed to seek strategies for sustainable development.

2. Research Methods

Literature analysis and field investigation were mainly used in this study. By combing through relevant literature, including domestic and foreign academic papers, policy documents, news reports, etc., this paper comprehensively understands the development process and current situation of Chinese education in Ethiopia. At the same time, combined with field visits to Confucius Institutes, Chinese majors and related educational institutions in Ethiopia, interviews with local Chinese teachers, students, administrators, etc., to obtain first-hand information and gain an in-depth understanding of the development of Chinese education and existing problems. In the process of data collection, in order to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, in addition to recording the content of the interviews, the teaching results of relevant educational institutions were quantified, some teaching courses were sampled, and an in-depth study of Ethiopia's education policy documents was conducted.

3. Literature review

In recent years, there has been an increasing number of studies on Chinese education in Ethiopia. Zhou Dehuan and Wu Yinghui (2022) pointed out that formal Chinese education in Ethiopia began in 2009, and the Confucius Institute for Vocational Education and the Confucius Institute at Addis Ababa University are the main Chinese education institutions in the country. However, at present, the degree of localization of Chinese education in Ethiopia is low, mainly concentrated in the higher education stage, and there are problems such as shortage of teachers and lack of teaching resources. In addition, due to the foreign language education policy and political situation in Ethiopia, the spread of Chinese in the basic education stage is restricted to a certain extent. According to a 2021 statistical report by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, only 1.2% of foreign language courses at the basic education level in the country offer Chinese courses.

4. The development of Chinese education in Ethiopia

4.1. Getting Started (before 2009)

In the early days, Chinese education in Ethiopia was mainly carried out sporadically by the private sector, such as Chinese training courses offered by some private institutions. In 2005, the “Chinese Youth Volunteer Overseas Service Program” selected volunteers to volunteer in Ethiopia for the first time, and some volunteers opened short-term Chinese interest classes at Kotbi Normal College and Addis Ababa University, opening a precedent for local Chinese education. At this stage, the number of participants in Chinese education is small, according to incomplete statistics, only about 200 students participate in relevant Chinese learning activities, and the teaching content is mainly based on basic Chinese vocabulary and simple daily expressions.

4.2 Development stage (2009-present)

In 2009, the first Confucius Institute for Vocational Education in Ethiopia was established, marking the beginning of the country’s Chinese education in a stage of regularization and sustainable development. Since then, the Confucius Institute at Addis Ababa University was inaugurated in 2013. The two Confucius Institutes have actively expanded cooperation and set up Chinese teaching sites and Confucius classrooms to gradually expand the influence of Chinese teaching. Up to now, the two Confucius Institutes have set up a total of 15 Chinese teaching sites, covering 5 major cities and 6 Confucius classrooms in Ethiopia, with a cumulative enrollment of more than 12,000 students.

5. Current situation of Chinese education in Ethiopia

5.1 Chinese education in Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms

Up to now, Ethiopia has opened 2 Confucius Institutes, 6 Confucius Classrooms,



and 1 Chinese teaching site. The Confucius Institute for Vocational Education features “Chinese Vocational Skills” training, and its teachers are responsible for teaching compulsory public Chinese courses and some professional courses in vocational education colleges, and also offers a series of short-term training courses for different groups. In 2022, the academy’s short-term training courses attracted more than 300 participants from local businesses and government departments. The Confucius Institute at Addis Ababa University cooperates with government departments and enterprises to provide various Chinese training courses for special purposes and compile relevant teaching materials, among which the “Practical Handbook of Chinese in the Transportation Industry” compiled in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport of Ethiopia has been applied to the training of local transportation industry personnel.

5.2 Chinese education in colleges and universities

Since the beginning of Chinese education, there are three universities in Ethiopia that have offered Chinese majors, namely Addis Ababa University, Makere University and Awasa University. Among them, Awasa University offers a bachelor’s degree in Chinese teacher training. Ethiopia-China Vocational and Technical College (now Ethiopian Technical University) also has a relatively complete Chinese curriculum, which lays a language foundation for students to enter Chinese-funded enterprises after graduation.

6. Influencing factors of Chinese education in Ethiopia

6.1 Policy factors

The curriculum framework for basic education in Ethiopia has not yet introduced foreign language subjects other than English, which is not conducive to the development of Chinese at this stage. In addition, the unstable situation in some parts of Ethiopia poses risks to the development of Chinese education, and so far, Confucius classrooms and Chinese majors in all regions of Ethiopia except the capital Addis Ababa have been suspended. According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Education’s 2022 policy document, the curriculum at the basic education level is



mainly focused on major language subjects such as English and Amharic, and Chinese has not yet been included in the curriculum system.

6.2 Faculty factor

At present, Chinese education in Ethiopia is mainly undertaken by Chinese teachers and volunteers, but due to term restrictions, the teaching staff is highly mobile. At the same time, local Chinese teachers are extremely scarce. Chinese teachers are not able to meet the needs of Ethiopian colleges and universities for vocational and technical Chinese courses.

6.3 Instructional resource factors

Chinese education in Ethiopia has the problem of lack of teaching resources, and currently mainly uses teaching materials published in China, and lacks local Chinese teaching materials. The limited number of Chinese books provided by relevant schools and poor network conditions limit the effectiveness of online courses.

7. Challenges in Chinese education in Ethiopia

7.1 There is a shortage of teachers

The number of local Chinese teachers in Ethiopia is small, and the professional background of Chinese teachers deviates from the actual local needs, resulting in limited teaching effectiveness. At the same time, the mobility of teachers is large, which affects the consistency of teaching and the learning effect of students.

7.2 Teaching resources are scarce

At present, Chinese education in Ethiopia basically relies on textbooks published in China and lacks localized teaching materials. The existing textbooks are not sufficiently suitable for the actual situation of local students in terms of content and difficulty, and some of the textbooks focus on general Chinese teaching, which is difficult to meet the special needs of local vocational education. At the same time, the



number of teaching auxiliary resources such as books and multimedia materials are limited, and the poor network conditions also limit the effective use of online teaching resources. In a survey of local students, 68% of students said that the content of existing textbooks did not fully match their learning needs.

7.3 Cultural differences and cognitive biases

The cultural differences between Ethiopia and China are quite large, and local students have limited understanding of China, which may lead to difficulties in understanding some vocabulary, grammar and cultural phenomena closely related to Chinese cultural background when learning Chinese. In addition, some locals have a biased understanding of China and Chinese, confusing Chinese with traditional Chinese skills or special skills, such as some people mistakenly believe that learning Chinese is directly related to learning martial arts or Chinese medicine, which may affect students' overall understanding of Chinese learning and learning motivation.

7.4 Uncertainty about social needs and employment prospects

Although the increasing number of Chinese-funded enterprises in Ethiopia has provided some employment opportunities for students studying Chinese, the overall employment prospects of Chinese in the country are still unclear. Some locals are worried about the low return on employment of Chinese learning, and it is difficult to find a job after learning Chinese, resulting in a weak willingness to learn Chinese. In addition, Chinese enterprises have increasing requirements for the Chinese proficiency of local employees, but there is a gap between the local Chinese education level and the needs of enterprises, which also affects students' learning enthusiasm.

8. Countermeasures and suggestions for promoting the development of Chinese education in Ethiopia

8.1 Strengthen the construction of local teachers

Establish a local teacher training system, such as setting up undergraduate and



master's programs in Chinese education in Ethiopian universities to cultivate local professional teachers. Provide further education opportunities for local teachers, and regularly invite Chinese experts to Ethiopia to hold teaching training, academic lectures, etc., to improve the teaching level and professional quality of local teachers. At the same time, special scholarships for local teachers are set up to encourage local students to learn Chinese and engage in Chinese education, so as to attract and cultivate more local Chinese talents. In the next three years, it is planned to offer undergraduate majors in Chinese education at two major universities in Ethiopia, and set up special scholarships to sponsor 30 local students each year.

8.2 Enrich and optimize teaching resources

Develop localized teaching materials, combine local culture, educational background, student characteristics and actual needs of Ethiopia to develop Chinese teaching materials suitable for the local area. The content of the textbook should cover basic Chinese knowledge, Chinese culture, vocational skills and Chinese, etc., and pay attention to practicality and interest. Increase investment in teaching resources, set up a special fund for the purchase of Chinese books, multimedia equipment, etc., and enrich the teaching resource base. In addition, strengthen the construction of online teaching platforms, optimize the online teaching environment, and improve the utilization rate and teaching effect of online courses.

8.3 Promote cultural exchange and awareness-raising

Through various forms of cultural exchange activities such as cultural exhibitions, theatrical performances, and folk activities, the charm of Chinese culture is displayed to the Ethiopian people in an all-round way, so as to enhance their understanding and love of Chinese culture, and eliminate cultural cognitive biases. Strengthen cooperation with local media, publicize the importance of Chinese learning, China's achievements in social and economic development, and China-Ethiopia friendship and cooperation through TV programs, newspaper columns, social media and other channels, improve the social awareness and influence of Chinese education, and stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning.

8.4 Expand employment channels and cooperation

Strengthen close cooperation with Chinese-funded enterprises, establish a long-term and stable cooperation mechanism, jointly formulate talent training programs, and ensure that the content of Chinese education meets the actual needs of enterprises. Chinese-funded enterprises can provide internship opportunities, employment positions and career development planning guidance for students studying Chinese to enhance students' learning motivation and employment confidence. At the same time, it actively expands cooperation with local government departments and social organizations, strives for more policy support and resource investment, and creates a good social environment for the development of Chinese education.

9. Conclusion

Chinese education in Ethiopia has made remarkable progress in the past decade, and educational institutions such as Confucius Institutes and Chinese majors in universities have played an important role in cultivating a certain number of Chinese talents and promoting cultural exchanges between China and Ethiopia. However, it still faces many challenges, such as insufficient teachers, lack of teaching resources, cultural differences and cognitive biases, as well as uncertain social needs and employment prospects. In view of these problems, this paper puts forward countermeasures and suggestions such as strengthening the construction of local teachers, enriching and optimizing teaching resources, promoting cultural exchanges and cognitive improvement, and expanding employment channels and cooperation, aiming to provide a useful reference for promoting the sustainable development of Chinese education in Ethiopia. In the future, with the deepening of Sino-Ethiopian friendship and cooperation, Chinese education in Ethiopia has broad prospects and is expected to play a greater role in promoting cultural exchanges, talent training and economic cooperation between the two sides.

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