

# AFRICAN SCHOLARS: MADE IN CHINA

*AN ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENTS IN CHINA*



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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, China has undergone rapid economic development and modernization that has made it a global power in the economic realm. This newfound power has enabled China to invest heavily in countries in Africa where it is currently the largest trading partner. While simultaneously becoming a world economic powerhouse, China is also making a less noticeable appearance as a leader in world education, becoming third globally in attracting international students with one of the biggest sources of students being Africa. This is partially due to the deal made at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to increase the number of Chinese government scholarships designated to African students with the goal to provide a sustainable solution to Africa's lack of skilled personnel. This goal assumes that African students will go home after graduation to help develop their home economies. Does that actually happen though? Why do some students prefer to find a way to stay in China after graduation versus returning home? To what extent do African economies truly benefit from the scholarships that the Chinese government offers African citizens? Most importantly, are the benefits to China and Africa mutual?

Only recently have researchers begun to see African students as an interesting topic of study. Most research has focused on the experiences of African scholarship students studying in China from their academic quality to their standard of living. Scholarship students generally are satisfied with their scholarships due to the affordability of living in China. In terms of quality of education, many African students feel that they are receiving a more theoretical than practical education and do not have the opportunity to gain industrial experience.<sup>1</sup> Is this the case for most African students studying in China? Does the affordability of living in China and the feeling of the lack of preparedness give them fear of returning home? How does the lack of industrial experience threaten their post-graduation success back home? Interestingly enough, not all African students in China are on scholarship; in fact, there is a considerably large population of self-funded African students in China. Unlike scholarship students, they do not receive a monthly allowance, but like scholarship students, they are not allowed to work in China. Some work illegally, take part-time jobs like language teaching, but their lack of official work status can lead to imprisonment and deportation. What are their sources of income? What challenges do they have with being a student without being able to legally work to provide for their personal needs? Since research tends to focus on the lives of scholarship students, the data surrounding self-funded students is lost and there is no opportunity to gain a wholistic perspective on all African students' experiences in China. Apart from economic factors, both scholarship and self-funded students usually take more time than their American, European and Asian counterparts in assimilating into Chinese culture due to racial prejudice that Africans receive daily in China. Most African students have rated their experience as negative and believe there is no hope for a change in attitudes.<sup>2</sup> However, many African students who come to study in China "plan to permanently settle in the PRC".<sup>3</sup> How popular is the idea of staying in China after graduation? Why do these African students that experience social tension that makes daily life uncomfortable

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdjani, Hannane. "African students in China." *Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch* (2012): 813-822.

<sup>2</sup> King, Kenneth. "China's Aid and Soft Power in Africa: The Case of Education and Training." *Boydell & Brewer, James Currey* (2013): 73.

<sup>3</sup> Bredeloup, Sylvie. "West African Students Turned Entrepreneurs In Asian Trading Posts: A New Facet of Globalization." *The Institute, Inc.* (2014): 38.

still plan to settle in China? Lastly, for those who return home, reverse culture shock could be a danger. When Africans come to China and see the abundance of social facilities and amenities, endless skyscrapers, and quick delivery of anything they want right to their door, it becomes difficult to return to a slower paced society that is not as economically developed as China. Many Africans even adapt to Chinese culture, many speaking Chinese, eating with chopsticks, and even drinking hot water regularly.<sup>4</sup> What are some things that African students fear about reverse culture shock? Does it influence their decision to stay in China after graduation? The answers to these questions will lead this study to find out what students have done and plan to do and how those decisions both impact the Chinese economy as well as the African economies they leave behind. These answers will also show how mutually beneficial these Chinese government scholarships are and if they align with the mission of FOCAC.

This research aims to take the initiative in asking: What are the economic effects of African students studying in China? How are they contributing to the Chinese economy? How do they contribute to their home country's economy while abroad and if they return? Through this study, we will be able to understand the quality of education they are receiving to assess their eagerness and yearn for success in their Chinese academic career. We will also learn about their satisfaction with living in China economically, socially and academically to judge their likelihood of staying in China after graduation. We will also be able to understand the impact they have on Africa's brain economy by influencing others to come to China to study or through collaboration with African universities. In the end, one should understand the current situation of African students studying in China as well as the economic impact that they have on the Chinese and African economies.

## **2. Research Methodology**

The number of African students studying in China has increased significantly over the past 15 years. According to China's Ministry of Education, in 2016, the number of African students studying in China reached over 61,000 students, up almost 12,000 from 2015.<sup>5</sup> At a 23.7% year-to-year growth rate, African students will soon be the largest source of international students in China. Understanding their current experiences in China is very important for better cooperation and adaptation for future generations of African students that choose to study in China.

Since 2014, this researcher has traveled to China to study Mandarin in multiple cities and universities including Shanghai, Dalian and Harbin where she met many African student friends. These students became her main source of help to receive respondents that they were associated with in the academic setting. In addition to friends of friends, many participants were randomly selected. One way of random selection was by unsystematically adding students from African group chats on WeChat.<sup>6</sup> This provided a great source of survey respondents and interviewees all throughout China. Another method used to randomly select was searching for participants in international student groups on Facebook and even one participant was found on Twitter.

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<sup>4</sup> Gonondo, Jean. "Africa and China Higher Education Cooperation." *IISTE Journal of Education and Practice*. (2017): 23.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Education

<sup>6</sup> WeChat is China's most popular social communications app with over 1 billion monthly users. Not only is it used for voice/video chat and messaging, it also has an abundance of capabilities such as making purchases, hailing taxis and even file transfers.

During this case research study, methods of data collection and analysis were both quantitative with online questionnaire surveys as well as qualitative with interviews. With regards to the questionnaire surveys, most of the questions were posed to African students. After the stage of questionnaires, the research will be followed by interviews administered by the researcher in-person, through video/voice chat and through emailed write-ups.

*a. Questionnaire Surveys*

There were a total of 7 questionnaires shared throughout a number of WeChat groups during a 5-day time period. Response rates varied: the highest respondent volume was the first day with 100 students and the lowest volume on the last day with only 40 respondents. We understand that the number of respondents is too few to generalize, so we used the interviews to confirm whether the questionnaire results were an actual reflection of what African students in China felt.

Each questionnaire was structured in a way that it would be easy for someone to answer quickly while also giving the most information possible. Each questionnaire aimed at obtaining information that could apply to all students for the sake of comparison. Survey questions asked a few demographic questions like country of origin and field of study, satisfaction questions and quantitative questions such as income and expenditure amounts.

Each questionnaire was made using SurveyMonkey. This website also kept track of the results in real time to make data collection more efficient. Results from the questionnaires were used to make hypotheses and create more detailed interview questions to examine the reasons behind the answers to the surface-leveled survey questions.

*b. Interviews*

After receiving general responses from the questionnaires, in-depth interviews were given mostly by voice/video call as well as a few in-person and through emailed documentation. These interviews aimed at understanding why students chose to study in China, how students felt about living and studying in China, and how likely they were to return home upon graduation. These interviews were divided into five different sections: undergraduate students, post-graduate students, workers, student leaders, and graduates. Each section had target questions based on the interviewee's status. The largest population of interviewees were undergraduates and post-graduate students, 17 and 18 interviewees respectively. Interviews were recorded using an app called Anchor that many people use to record podcasts. I recorded each interview and allowed each interviewee to decide whether they prefer to be anonymous or published.

### **3. Results**

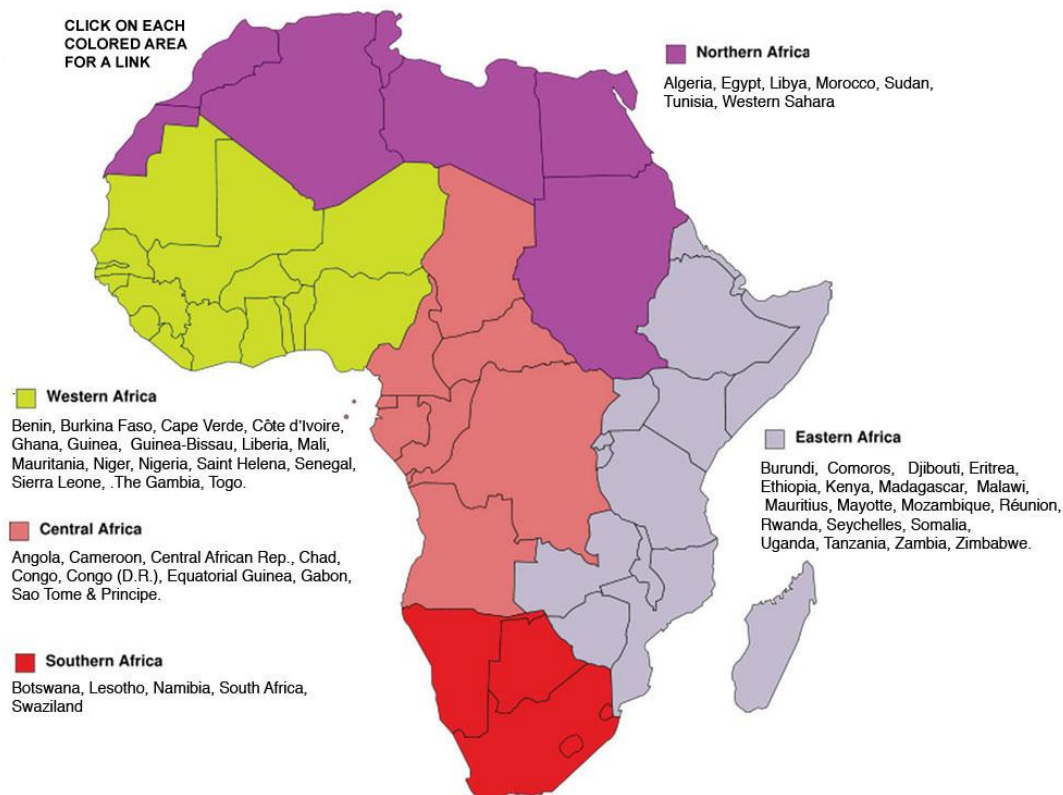
#### *3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

The statistical tabulation and graphs below give demographic information for both survey respondents as well as interviewees. Due to the vagueness of the surveys, demographic information regarding region of origin, source of finance for study, and field of study can be provided. It also should be noted that each survey had a different number of respondents. For interviewees, demographic information regarding gender, age, country of origin, research social category, city of study, and source of finance for study can be provided.

**Table 1: Basic Demographic Information for Survey Respondents**

<b>African Region of Origin</b>	Western Africa	35	43%
	Eastern Africa	21	26%
	Southern Africa	13	16%
	Central Africa	12	15%
	<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>81</b>	
<b>Pay for Education</b>	Chinese government scholarship	18	47%
	Self-funded	17	45%
	Private funds	2	5%
	Home country government scholarship	1	3%
	<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>38</b>	
<b>Field of Study</b>	Engineering	26	28%
	Sciences	24	26%
	Business	23.5	25%
	Language	7	8%
	Information Technology	6	6%
	Politics	4	4%
	The Arts	2.5	3%
	<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>93</b>	

**Picture 1: Map of African Regions from African Travel Magazine** <http://www.africa-ata.org/gold.htm>



**Table 2: Basic Demographic Information for Interviewees**

<b>Research Category</b>	Post-Graduate Students	18	38%
	Undergraduate Students	17	36%
	Workers in China	4	9%
	Student Leaders	3	6%
	Graduates	3	6%
	Chinese Natives	2	4%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Male	41	87%
	Female	6	13%
<b>Region of Origin</b>	Western Africa	20	44%
	Eastern Africa	11	24%
	Central Africa	8	18%
	Southern Africa	3	7%
	Northern Africa	3	7%
	Eastern Asia (China)	2	4%
<b>Region of Study/Work</b>	Northeast China	17	36%
	Eastern China	12	26%
	Central China	6	13%
	Southeast China	5	11%
	West Africa	3	6%
	Northern China	2	4%
	Northwest China	1	2%
	Southern China	1	2%
<b>Pay for Education</b>	Self - Sponsored	15	43%
	Chinese Government Full	7	20%
	Local Chinese Gov. Scholarship	4	11%
	Home Country Scholarship	2	6%
	Partial Scholarship	2	6%
	University Scholarship	2	6%
	Partial Chinese Government Scholarship	1	3%
	Bilateral Scholarship with the Chinese Government	1	3%
	Paid Diploma	1	3%
<b>Field of Study</b>	Engineering (Petroleum, Chemical, Environmental, Software, Electrical)	11.5	33%
	International Economics & Trade	5	14%
	Computer Science (Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Big Data Technology)	4.5	13%
	Medicine	4	11%
	Business (Corporate Management, MBA)	4	11%
	Chinese Language	3	9%
	Interdisciplinary (IR, Public Management)	2	6%
	Journalism & Communications	1	3%



Table 1 gives descriptive statistics about the poll respondents. Since much was not asked of them, little demographics were taken into account. Table 2 gives descriptive statistics on the interviewees ranging from their sexual orientation through their field of study. In the research category section, interviewees were categorized based on their current status with over 70% of the participants being students. Furthermore, since there is no formal list of African countries that belong to a specific region, I used Picture 1 as a source for categorizing students' countries. The countries represented in this study touch each of the 5 regions in Africa. The cities in China that they reside are broken up into many regions due to cultural differences of the regions and geographical location. Majority of the interviewees currently reside in Harbin, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Huangshi, but there was a fruitful range of interviewees across China as well as people currently in Nigeria and Liberia. The majority of students were self-funded students, and all of the Chinese government full scholarship holders were post-graduate students.

Because the poll numbers and source of respondents seemed unreliable, student leaders that represent groups in China that cater to students of their home country were interviewed to test the accuracy of each aspect that the poll respondents were asked about. The three groups represented are the Cameroonian Students Association in China, the Kenyans in Harbin Forum, and Moroccan Students in China. The Cameroonian Students Association has a vibrant community of 2,000 students both members and non-members and has the goal to unite Cameroonian students across China to enhance their quality of life in China. They are able to use a yearly budget composed of member contributions, donations and more to host activities such as sport events, educational workshops and even a gala where they are able to hold elections. The president of the association at the time, Pisso, was able to highlight characteristics based on how Cameroonian students in China as well as himself felt. The second largest group that participated was Moroccan Students in China. Composed of about 160-170 students, this group is run exclusively on social networks, specifically WeChat and Facebook. Their goal is to both help Moroccan students in China when they have issues in China as well as share information with new students and perspective students about what to expect when and if they plan to study in China. The perspective from the leader of the group, Simo, became very important in this portion of the research as there were no North Africans that participated in the polls as seen in Table 1. The last group that participated in this research was the Kenyans in Harbin Forum. With 40 members, they are an intimate welfare organization that is able to welcome visitors from Kenya into Harbin, host activities to promote unity among members as well as help with any academic and social problems that are faced by the members. With the help of the chair of the group, Doctor Logan, we were able to get a more direct perspective from the second-largest participating group in the polls – East Africans. These three group leaders were able to give a more in-depth point of view from their countries' perspectives which could have given the research a more accurate point of view of African students from that country.

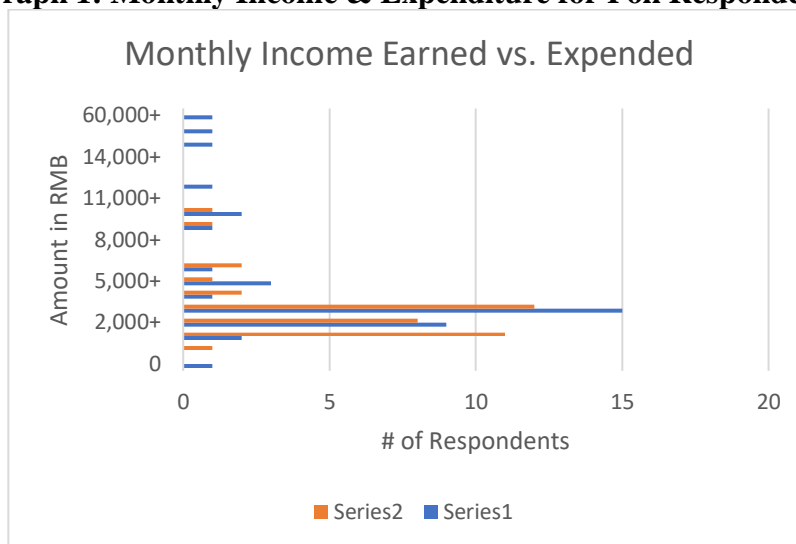
### *3.2 Key Findings*

There are two major ways that African students contribute to the Chinese economy: through direct means such as consumption and entrepreneurship but also indirectly through the brain economy and immigration chain. We will begin with the direct impact then discuss the indirect impact.

### 3.2.1 Direct Impact to the Chinese Economy

One of the biggest components in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is consumption, and that is what college students do a lot of. To assess the students' ability to consume, poll respondents were asked to estimate how much they earn and spend every month. As shown in the graph, the average amount earned per month (blue) by these students was 3,000¥. The amount of monthly expenditure (orange) with the most respondents was also 3,000¥. This lines up with the fact that almost half of the poll respondents (47%) are on the Chinese government scholarship which gives an average monthly allowance of 3,000¥. So, on average, students are spending almost everything they make rather it be on rent, toiletries, and transportation, even nightlife, Taobao<sup>7</sup> and health.

**Graph 1: Monthly Income & Expenditure for Poll Respondents**

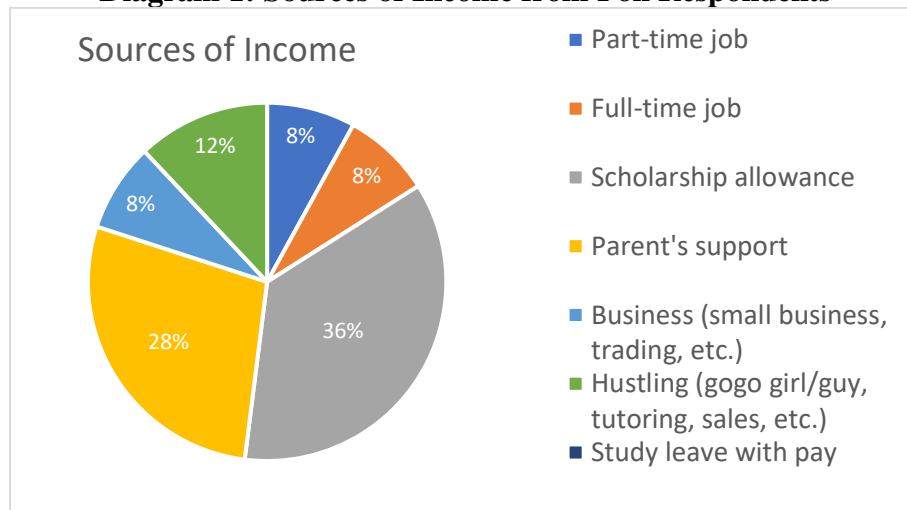


To account for students who make more than 3,000¥ as well as for self-funded students, poll respondents were asked what their sources of income were as shown in Diagram 1. In accordance with the amount of scholarship students that participated, 36% of respondents replied that one source of income was their scholarship allowance. Another large amount of respondents listed that their parents were another source of income. Also, due to the strict laws surrounding student employment, another large source of income was through what is informally known as ‘hustling’. These types of jobs are not official and very temporary, ranging from being a “foreign face”<sup>8</sup> for a new Chinese restaurant to singing at a club for one night. Other examples of such jobs include, but are not limited to: nightclub promoters, teachers, coaches, translators and tutors.

<sup>7</sup> Taobao, known as the Amazon of China, is a Chinese online shopping platform that is the world's biggest e-commerce website. It facilitates transactions between consumers and sellers whether for sale at a fixed price or an auction.

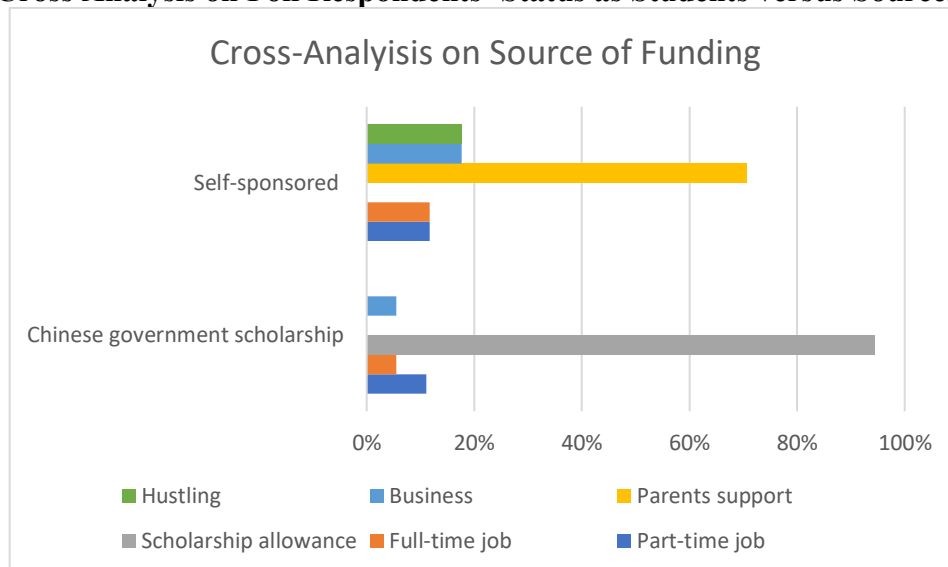
<sup>8</sup> The idea of “foreign face” is used as a marketing strategy by many Chinese companies. In this strategy, foreigners show up to a new restaurant or establishment to make Chinese consumers think that that restaurant or establishment has international recognition.

**Diagram 1: Sources of Income from Poll Respondents**



While doing a cross-analysis concerning the largest two groups, Chinese government scholars and self-sponsored scholars, it shows that self-funded students are more likely to do illegal work and find ways to make money more than scholarship students would. Self-funded students seem to also rely more on their parents for support, increasing money flow from Africa to China. It also should be noted that the great majority of self-funded students in the interviewee pool are undergraduate students. All of the Chinese government scholars were in post-graduate studies. The only source of income that the self-funded students did not have was the scholarship allowance, and this could have placed them in the position to take on jobs or participate in their own work. However, with only 40 respondents on this poll, it is difficult to conclude that for the entirety of African scholars in China. The Cameroonian and Kenyan leaders agreed that the stipend most times is not enough. Many scholarship students spend their allowance quickly which influences them to go take on jobs. This does not mean that their stipend is not enough, but it takes care of the most basic needs and leaves students to leave entertainment for themselves.

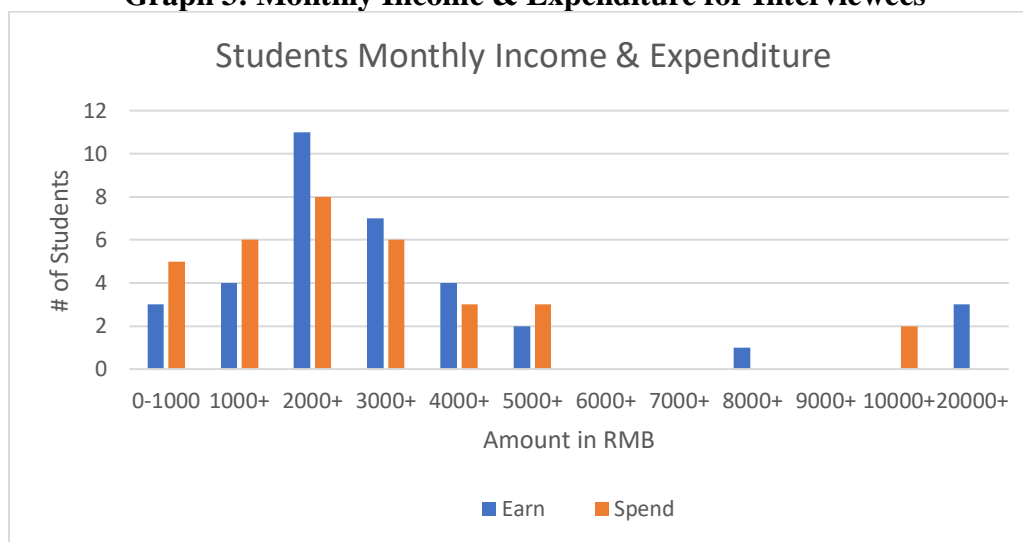
**Graph 2: Cross Analysis on Poll Respondents' Status as Students versus Sources of Income**



The money that flows from Africa to China not only benefits the consumption aspect of GDP, but also the entrepreneurship aspect. Businesses have opened up that specifically target international students coming to China to study and students from Africa have helped fuel those industries eager to come study in China. One new business that targets these students is known as the ‘scholarship agent’. These types of people, whether through an agency, university or individually, help students apply to a scholarship or university by sending in their documents for a hefty price. According to the former president of the Cameroonian Students Association, Pisso, this type of service began when universities used to collaborate with foreign students to help the school get a good percentage of international students. When the students successfully encouraged their family and friends to come study in China, the school would give them a reward such as a percentage off of their tuition. This type of service that agents provide can be especially useful to many African students due to lack of stable internet and facilities in many African countries. About 63% of the respondents of one poll were students on scholarship that study in China, and about 11% used a scholarship agent. The price of these agents range from \$1,000 to \$5,000, equivalent to 6,500¥ to over 32,000¥. For instance, there were almost 50,000 African students studying in China in 2015. If 11% of those students used scholarship agents that were priced at the average price 19,412¥, these mere 5,500 African students just single-handedly created a 106,769,850¥ industry. According to the student leaders, not only are scholarship students using these agents but self-sponsored students as well. Logan, the chair of the Kenyans in Harbin Forum said that he only had one case of a student using a scholarship agent and it was a self-funded student, even advocating “scholarship students don’t use those means”.

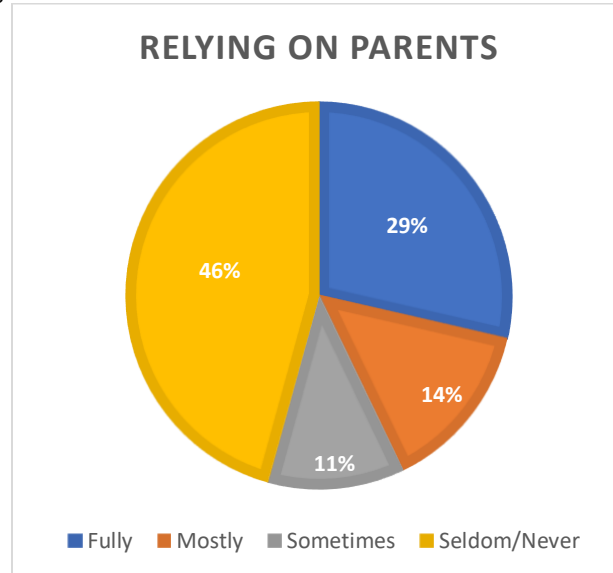
Unlike the polls, almost half (43%) of the interviewees are self-sponsored students. Based on information obtained through interviews, their monthly income seems to be lower than scholarship students as they do not receive a monthly allowance from the Chinese government. Income levels center around 2,000¥, with almost equal levels both lower and higher than 2,000¥. Under Chinese law, students are not allowed to have official work. Based on my economic understanding, this not only can limit the amount that scholarship students can make, but it also can lessen the standard of living for self-funded students who already faces higher tuition fees for being an international student.

**Graph 3: Monthly Income & Expenditure for Interviewees**



Interviewees participated in a variety of things as well to receive money that many Western students in China participate in such as teaching English, babysitting and being a foreign face. Many have their own small businesses that help them make money through school or can send products from China back home for profit. Some are very against working at all, as they are nervous about the consequences they may face. Those students tend to rely on their parents more. Below is a diagram that highlights the amount of students who rely on their parents and how often. Although the graph shows that 46% of the students don't rely on their parents, 54% get some type of assistance from their parents. All of them did not report exactly how much they receive on a monthly basis, the ones that did reported an average 3,190¥. Many mentioned that the amount is not fixed and usually is whenever they need more money. Based on these statistics, parents of African scholars could be giving more money for their students to live in China than they would if they were back home. That is only based on these small numbers, though, and could change with a larger population. However, considering the cost of living internationally versus home, these parents could be spending much more on their student studying in China than home. This also accounts for the fact that these students cannot legally work in China whereas they could have that opportunity back home. Throughout Africa, though, unemployment rates are very high. Many students who have earned money through teaching English, exporting goods back home and the like, can see coming to China as a better opportunity to make money that they could eventually send back home to make up for the loss that parents take when their parents send money to China.

**Diagram 2: Interviewees' Reliance on Parent's Funding**



Interviewees were also asked about scholarship agents, and it became evident that not only do scholarship students use agents, but self-funded students do too. There weren't many who did use an agent but the few that did and the fewer that knew the price knew how expensive it was to use this service. Five students were able to give me prices of their agents: \$800, \$150, \$2,000, \$1,500 and "a lot". One of them had a very reliable experience but some did not. One student mentioned how the documents were sent in too late by the agent; while he planned for them to be sent in September during the application season, they were actually sent in November which delayed him in his acceptance and start. One student paid \$800 (5200¥) to receive a partial

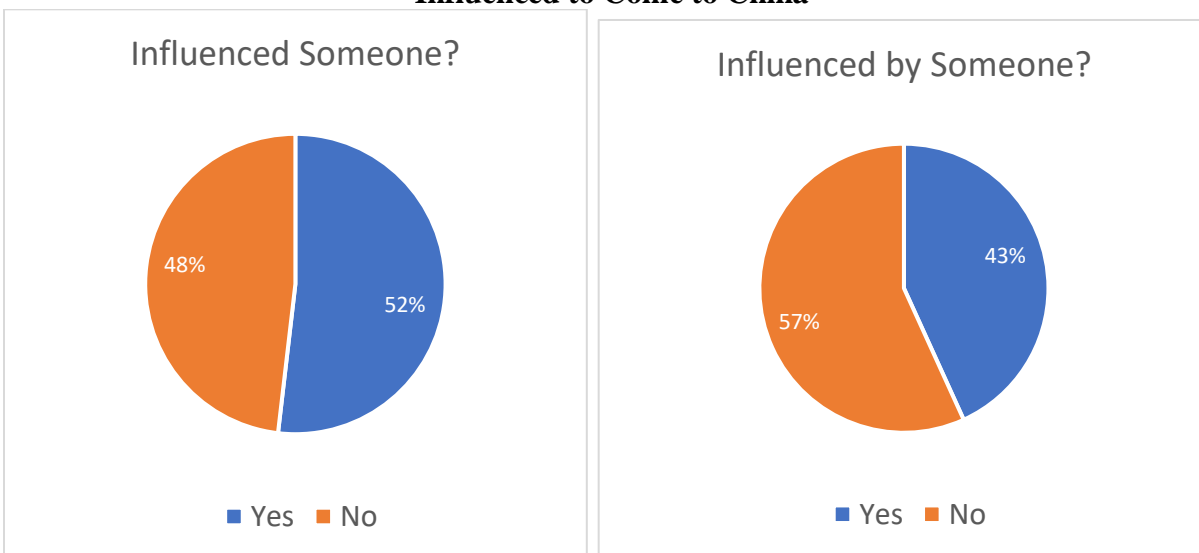
scholarship that he still has to pay 8,000¥ a year for. It seems that the more expensive the agent, the better the scholarship you get.

There was even a student interviewed who was also a scholarship agent. His income only comes in for September and March application periods, but earning about 1,000-2,000¥ per student makes him about 7,000-10,000¥ for each application month. Some African students are able to use this as a means of making pocket money but also as a business for themselves. Some African students are said to even work in agencies in China and are assigned to help applicants from Africa. The population for this issue of scholarship agents is very small in this study and cannot represent the entire population of African students in China, but it is a very important topic that merges entrepreneurship and consumption.

### 3.2.2 Indirect Impact on the Chinese Economy

Not only does consumption and new industries fuel the economy, but also indirect means like chain migration and personal feelings about home influence people's decisions about what they want to do in a country. The departure of African students from Africa to study in China has assisted in making China the third most popular destination for international students around the world but it also could have promoted brain drain throughout Africa. Countries throughout Africa such as South Africa and Ghana have had a long history of brain drain. Brain drain, or human capital flight, is when educated people leave their own country for better opportunities and higher standards of living in other countries. This can both diminish the amount of skilled workers in a country and decrease consumer spending in that country.<sup>9</sup> There are many causes of brain drain, but one is through chain migration. In chain migration, people are more likely to move where they know people and each new immigrant will influence people they know to move with them. To see how deep chain migration is in China amongst African students, I asked poll respondents if they were influenced by someone that was in China to come to China. I also asked if they have influenced people from home to come to China. Below are the results:

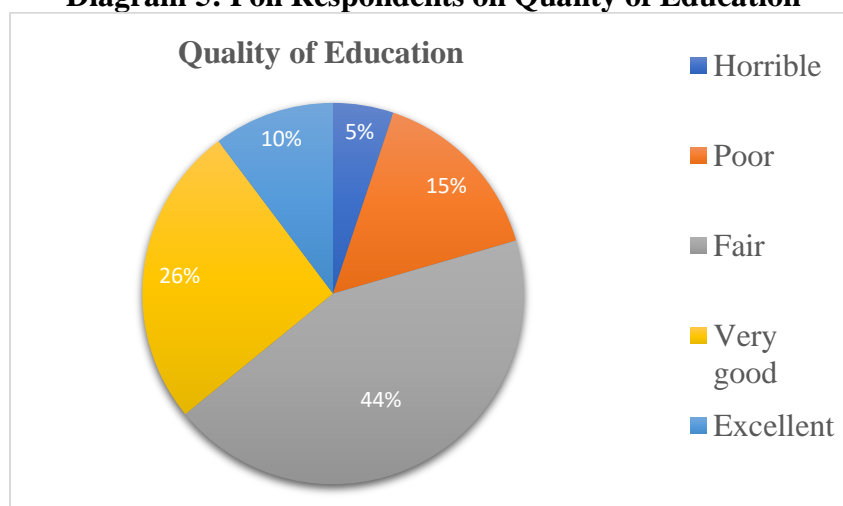
**Diagram 3: Poll Respondents Influence to Come to China | Diagram 4: Poll Respondents Influenced to Come to China**



<sup>9</sup> Staff, Investopedia. "Brain Drain." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 25 Apr. 2018, [www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brain\\_drain.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brain_drain.asp).

Over half of the respondents (51%) have influenced someone in Africa to come to China. Most answered between 1 and 5 people. Almost half (43%) have been influenced by someone to come to China. The act of influencing someone to live in another country for better opportunity is a component of chain migration. It indirectly increases consumption and skilled labor in the receiving country while the sending country takes the loss of potentially skilled labor. Even though some of these are students that have not been trained yet, they still are a valuable asset to a country's labor force. Even though those statistics are very unstable due to the uncertainty about who answered the polls, there is much evidence that point to a strong culture of chain migration such as strong African migrant communities in Beijing, Yiwu and Guangzhou.

**Diagram 5: Poll Respondents on Quality of Education**

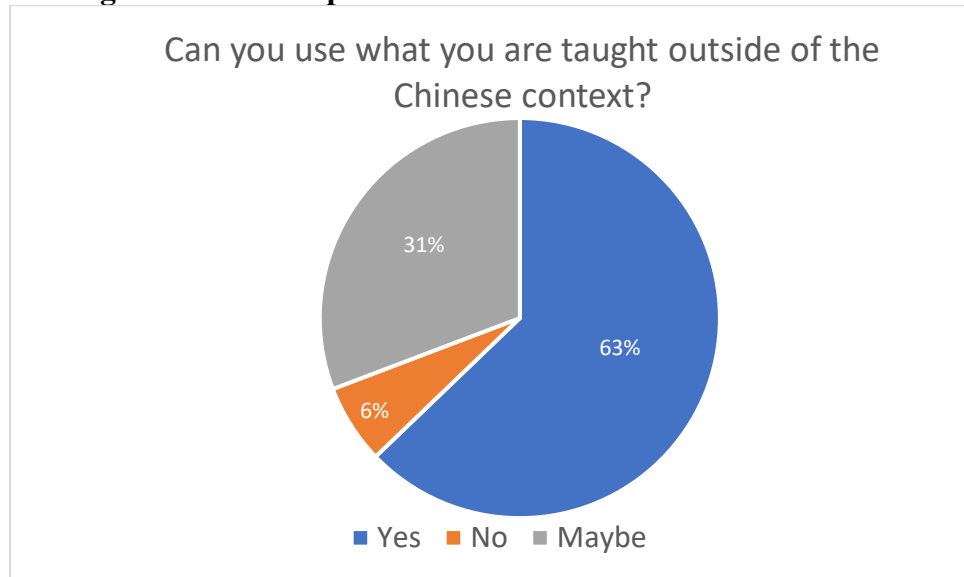


Some students also could feel dependent upon China due to their educational efforts. To check their dependency, we asked about how they felt about the quality of education they were receiving. As shown in the graph above, a large amount of students believe that the quality is only fair. The next largest group said very good, and the next was poor. These results can be based on what school the students attend in China as well as their previous educational experience which can be further explored in the interviews. To confirm, we asked the student leaders to compare the universities in their countries versus the Chinese universities their members attend. Both Simo from the Moroccan Students in China group and Pisso agreed that schools back in their countries are run better than Chinese universities for different reasons. Simo argued that obtaining a bachelors in Morocco is equivalent to obtaining a masters in China. Pisso noted both language barriers and cultural barriers in the classroom, especially between post-graduate students and their supervisors. While in Cameroon (and many other countries) your supervisor/research adviser has interest in creating a bond with you and understanding your research in depth, Chinese supervisors seem uninterested and "you have a feeling that this is some sort of formality where they want you to finish up and go home". Logan from the Kenyans in Harbin Forum also mentioned the language barrier, especially towards undergraduate students. He suggests that it will be more beneficial to come to China to study a post-graduate degree due to the advanced technology and facilities.

Immediately after asking about the quality of education, we asked if students believed that their major could be used outside the Chinese context. As shown in the chart below, 63% of the students felt certain that they could use their education outside of China which does not bind

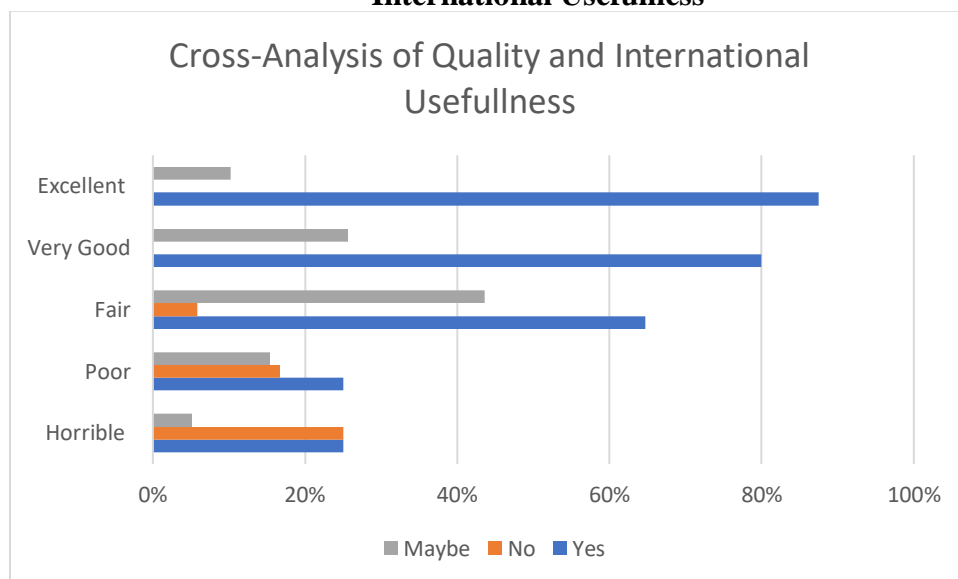
them to the country based on their educational efforts. The 37% of uncertain student's, though, could be confused about what they can do after graduation.

**Diagram 6: Poll Respondents on the International Usefulness of Degree**



To see the dependency on what people thought about their quality of education paired with their belief of their degree being useful outside of China, we did a cross-analysis of the two results. In the chart below, it shows that as the quality of education increases, the belief in the international usefulness of the degree increases as well. This shows that the lower students thought about the quality of education, the less likely they believed that their degree was useful outside of China.

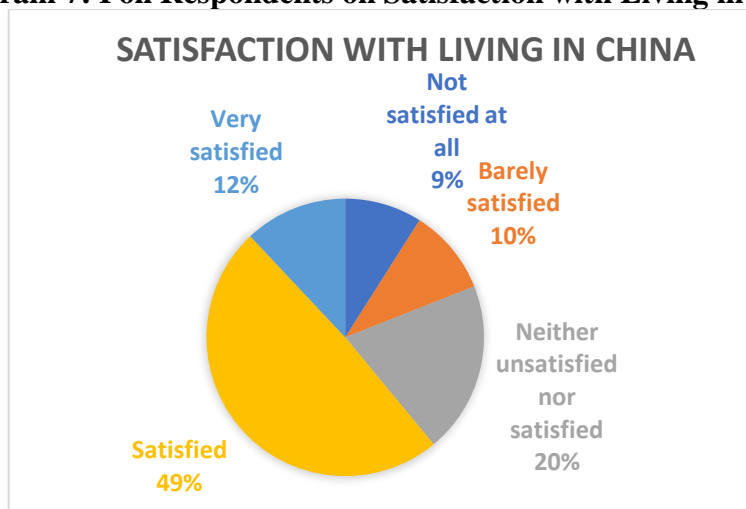
**Graph 4: Cross Analysis of Poll Respondents' Feelings About Quality of Education and its International Usefulness**





Some students may not feel dependent on China, but they might be satisfied enough to stay after graduation. We asked about their general satisfaction with living in China and there were 100 respondents, making the results vibrant and diverse, yet still unable to apply to the whole African student population in China. Almost half of the respondents are generally satisfied with living in China. The other half of the respondents were split up randomly with another large chunk being in the middle, neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, better yet, content. With about half of the students being satisfied with living in China, we expected that those students would also be more willing to stay in China after graduation. The student leaders also agreed that this might be 50/50, heavily depending on where the student comes from and their purpose for coming to China. The advantages that they all agreed on were the economic parts, mentioning low cost of living and plenty of opportunity, but one student leader highlighted a “glass ceiling” in the job market in China. For students that want to come to create a corporate lifestyle, it will be difficult; there are certain industries that are open to foreigners. The common dissatisfaction came from cultural elements such as food and social life. Many students through interviews said that they feel like a foreigner in China no matter how long they stay. This makes home even more attractive than staying in China. Since these students still remain in China, it seems that the economic opportunities are what motivate them to stay.

**Diagram 7: Poll Respondents on Satisfaction with Living in China**

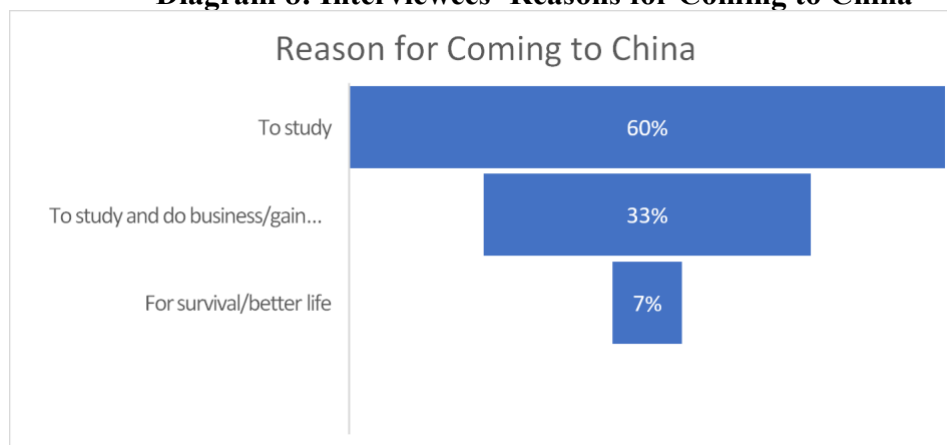


From interviewees, their indirect impact on the Chinese economy was understood on a deeper level. They were able to explain themselves which opened more doors for conversation and greater data collection. We were able to ask the students about their primary reason for coming to China. In the graph shown below, the majority said that they came just came to study. Some even acknowledged the affordability of Chinese education. A medical student at Anhui Medical University said: “[China] offers affordable education in the field of my interest whereas back home it is very expensive.” Another large group is interested in both studying and gaining experience. China’s development in the world economy had been a common trend in answers given by students. One masters student from Ghana even said he came to China to “be a part of the growth”. Some people didn’t know that they would want to participate in the market as well. A masters student at Zhejiang Normal University who has been in China for 6 years (studied bachelor’s degree in China as well) said: “When I first came [to China], it was just to study, but after these many years and having seen what is here and what is lacking at home.... Plans have

changed and ambitions too. I am still adjusting. I don't have a final plan yet." This kind of mindset could be more common than we think.

Not only can their satisfaction with living in China influence how they feel about staying in China, but also how they feel about living in their home country after graduation. This is where the student leaders became extremely important because they were able to give an in-depth analysis about the current situations in their countries and how that might influence if students would want to go home after graduation. Logan reassured us that Kenya is currently a politically stable country, the economy is comparatively good, and that it is socially diverse. According to him and the people he knows, many Kenyans tend to go home after graduation not simply because they want to, but because of the opportunities that arise for them generally are in Kenya instead of China. He also believes that the students would be more satisfied living in Kenya for many reasons. Simo from the Moroccan Students in China group also reassured us that Morocco is a stable country, that it is easy to find a job and to have a good salary. However, he noticed that some people do not want to go back immediately, instead, have a few years of experience and then return home. Pisso from the Cameroonian Students Association informed us of the civil unrest currently in Cameroon. Although most of the Cameroonian students here are from Francophone area, other issues such as economic stagnation and high unemployment rates have concerned the diaspora, according to Pisso. While the sociopolitical issues might affect someone from the Anglophone area not to return home, the economic issues might prevent both Anglophone and Francophone students from returning home, especially after experiencing the more developed lifestyle in China. Common issues like these can result in a large population of students staying in China after graduation as well as influencing their loved ones to join them. Even with economically stable countries like Morocco, students still want to make business connections and stay in China after graduation due to the fact that they have adapted and seen the economic lifestyle that they could experience if they stayed rather than left.

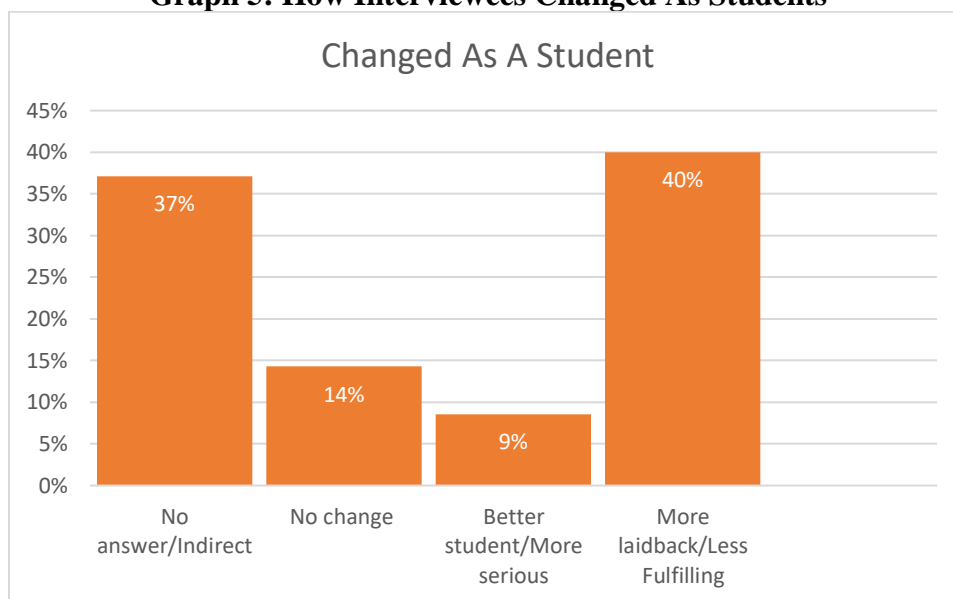
**Diagram 8: Interviewees' Reasons for Coming to China**



When students from Africa come to China, it is a different world. Unlimited skyscrapers, reliable facilities and even quick delivery right through one's phone can really change student's perception about life and could convince them to stay in China and convince others to come to China. Many students that were interviewed went to highly ranked high schools and colleges in Africa. Many described themselves as "serious students" due to the rigor of schooling back home. We asked them how they have changed as a student from back home until now. Although

there was a large percentage of students that didn't answer or had a very indirect answer, a larger percentage of students still felt have a more laidback experience. One student admitted: "I've never been a good student. I think I'm worse now because I always stay home." The inability to work coupled with taking fewer classes than a Chinese student would take seem to be an underlying factor in the way that African students experience their schooling here in China. Another student who was actually a very serious student in high school and now studies computer science at Liaoning University of Technology said: "Serious but not as serious as I was before; I'm a bit relaxed and I think I'm beginning to have this mentality that school isn't a determinant of how I'm going to live my life or how much money I'm supposed to make and stuff; Before, I thought the only way to be successful was through schooling or through education but that mentality changed so I'm beginning to spread my attention over other things besides schooling alone." This is similar to the statement made by another student who had initially came to China to study. There are many different things that these students are exposed to when they come study in China. But when those distractions are coupled with an easier academic path, their attention can be divided and their interests more broad. A great number of post-graduate students even mentioned that the content they are learning now, they had already learned back in undergraduate in Africa. Most students, though, brought it down to motivation to study. One student who obtained a specialist degree in Russia said, "I don't know if I should blame anything on the system but I don't have stable improvement, that's why I'm studying Chinese. When you learn Chinese, that's definitely an improvement. You had to do more on your own, exams were not so difficult. At a point, I thought I was tired of studying. There was no pressure, no motivation." This change seems to be linked to how they have experienced China. This link is both in their everyday life as well as their academic career. Since many students feel less pressured in their studies and take up other things, it could prolong their stay in China.

**Graph 5: How Interviewees Changed As Students**

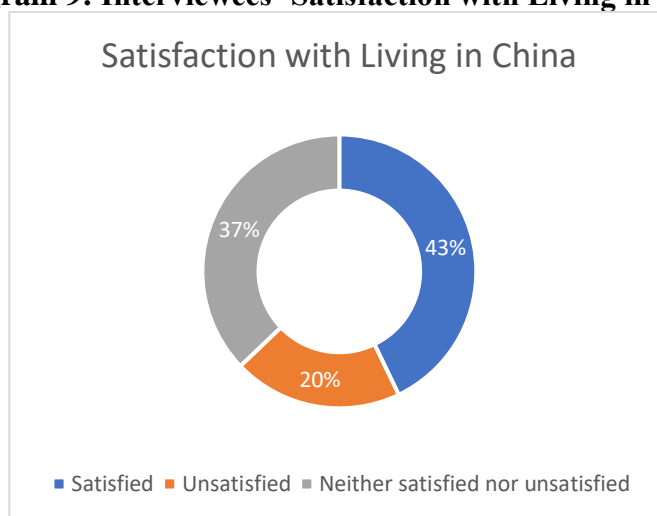


For interviewees, we were also able to look deeper into how they felt about their quality of education such as how their professors taught them and how they felt their education compared to Chinese students'. When asked directly about the quality of education, there were a

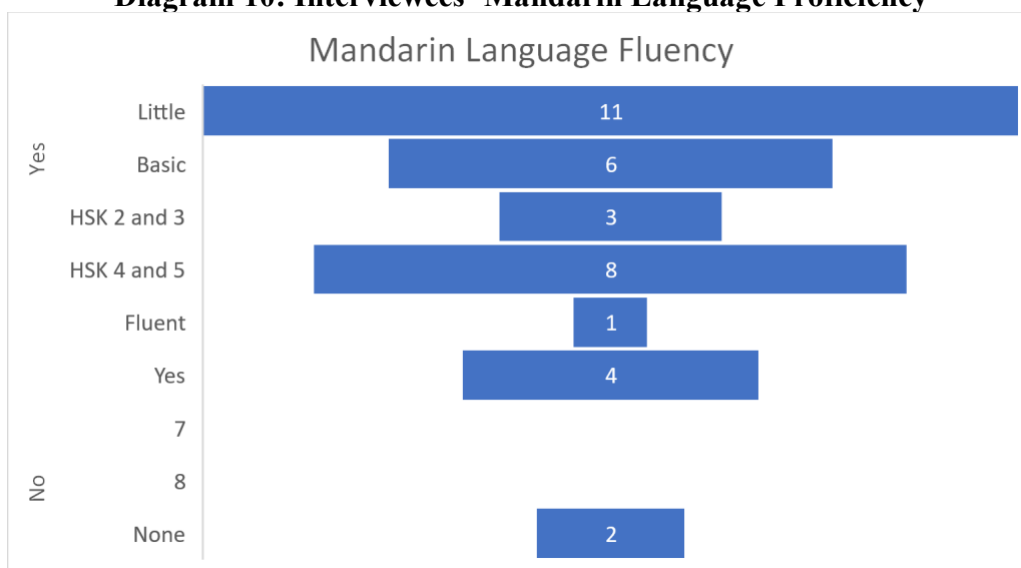
range of answers – 47% giving favorable comments and 53% giving unfavorable comments. Even the students that gave favorable comments had issues with the system. The most prominent positive trend amongst all of the students was the abundance of resources and facilities that Chinese universities offer. A PhD student at Beihang University commented: “PhD is a great experience because of the machines and facilities available for us.” Many students, especially engineering, computer science and technology students have expressed gratitude in the technology that they have come across in China versus back home. However, almost every student, whether they gave favorable or unfavorable thoughts about the quality of education, the main issue seems to be the language barrier presented. Most of the students are studying in English but are taught by Chinese English speakers that usually have trouble explaining themselves in English. The students that get the most out of an English speaking education seem to be, one, from English speaking countries in Africa, and two, go to more prestigious universities that can hire international lecturers such as Shanghai University, Harbin Institute of Technology and the like. Even being from an English speaking country in Africa, being able to get sufficient information from the professors seems nearly impossible. An undergraduate student from Dianji University said: “Some teachers come to say their English is poor then they don’t teach. I’m not learning. There is only PPTs.” This seems to be a common trend among students – relying on PowerPoints for self-study and receiving little to no help from professors due to the language barrier. It also should be noted that most of the favorable comments came from post-graduate students. Only 4 out of the 17 undergraduate students gave favorable comments. This is notable because these are also the main source of self-funded students in this study. These students are getting money from Africa sent to China to pay for education expenses and living expenses, yet, their education seems not to be satisfactory nor preparing them well enough for post-graduation success. This can lead to wasted funds and unnecessary money coming from Africa to China. Fortunately, though, there were no students who were uncertain that their degree could be used outside of the Chinese context. But, even if this is the case, based on the comments given by the students, the education is not preparing them well enough to be competitive globally in the job market. This could not only be a waste of money, but a waste of time and effort by the students to pursue a cheaper education in one of the world’s fastest growing economies.

Even with this unsatisfactory quality of education expressed by the students, they are still encouraged by their friends and family in Africa to come study in China. This could also be from the satisfaction they get from living in China. Based on the chart below, 43% of the students gave a satisfactory answer about living in China. As interviews were conducted, it seemed that satisfaction with China seemed to be closely related to one’s knowledge of the Chinese language and culture. 91% of students speak Chinese, with about 56% only speaking a little or basic Chinese. These students who only spoke a little Chinese were more likely to dislike China or feel socially abandoned. The students that did cultural or language immersion programs were more likely to like China more and to feel more comfortable. The students that spoke Chinese were also more likely to have family members that would come study to China after them than the students that were unsatisfied and didn’t speak Chinese.

**Diagram 9: Interviewees' Satisfaction with Living in China**



**Diagram 10: Interviewees' Mandarin Language Proficiency**



This is an important factor as the number of Chinese-speaking Africans is increasing due to the increased amount of Confucius Institutes in Africa and the language access they have in African schools. The next generation of African students are more likely to have more students speak Chinese as Chinese language is beginning to be offered in many schools all over the continent. There is also a great number of Confucius Institutes throughout Africa – more than 50 throughout the 54 countries. This has increased the amount of African students overtime interested in coming to study in China as well as stay in China because their language skills are sufficient and they will be able to live a more satisfying life. The main source of satisfaction for African students was the economic stability. Many students said they feel comfortable and that they have a better standard of living than they would in Africa. However, the main source of unhappiness came from the social climate of China. Many students highlighted how difficult it was to have a friendship with Chinese people and how many Chinese were very ignorant towards them as Africans. Although the social situation can be difficult, satisfaction levels seem to pay

attention to economic factors more. It seems that one can look past social tension when their economic situation is comfortable.

### *3.2.3 Direct Impact on African Economies*

Since students are studying internationally, they have less of a chance to directly impact their home economies. The only direct ways that they can impact their home economies is through the act of remittance and having businesses back home.

Remittance payments are funds an expatriate sends to his or her country of origin. These payments have played a large role in the economies of small and developing countries and comprise a substantial amount of the flow of capital between countries. Not only can the receiver use it to consume or make a business, but it also encourages more people to open bank accounts which helps promote economic development.<sup>10</sup> Based on the economic situation of many students, they are unable to send money home. In turn, they are getting money from their homes and using it to promote economic development in China. There are some students, though, that have families and the ability to send money home. Out of the 35 students in the study, only 4 send money home to their family – 3 on a monthly basis. These 3 students send 10,000¥, 5,000¥ and 2,500¥ home a month. Since there were only 47 interviewees, this figure cannot be generalized throughout the entire population of students that go to school in China. However, due to the inability to work in China and many students being self-funded, there are limited ways to earn money and that money might be used for daily life in China rather than helping out back home. Therefore, remittance may not be an effective source of funding to help African economies from the student perspective.

Another source of direct impact on African economies is through holding capital or owning a business. Only 4 out of the 35 students had businesses back home, 2 are still successfully running while the other 2 fell out of business when the student came to study in China. For one of the successful businesses, they are able to get their equipment from China which leads to cheaper costs for the company. There are also a number of students who export things home, yet the money that they make does not lead back to their home economies. Instead, it is used to consume in China. There are not enough students in this study to conclude for the entire African student in China population. The small numbers, though, show how the students most likely do not present a large direct economic impact to the African economies.

### *3.2.4 Indirect Impact on African Economies*

On the other hand, there are many ways that African students can indirectly impact African economies. The methods looked at in this study are knowledge transfers and expectations to go home. There were also graduate students that returned to Africa that were interviewed to see their impact on their selective country's economy.

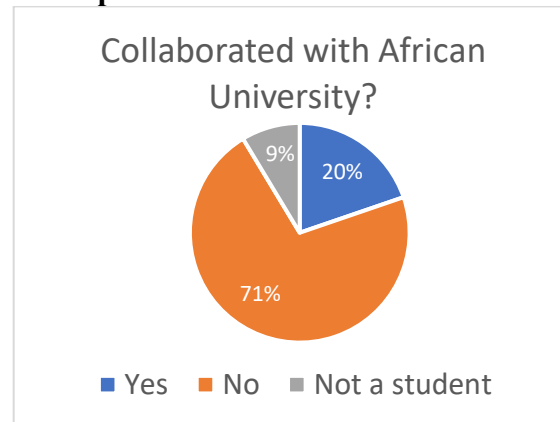
Knowledge transfers impact the brain economy of a country. If an expatriate gains knowledge that they could not have inside their country, they become a huge asset because that knowledge can be used to further develop their country. Being in China with new technologies and studying at university, it can be expected that the students are learning a lot that they can send back to their countries. This is especially true for post-graduate students who do in-depth research that they can, in turn, publish and use to teach people. Both the poll respondents and

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<sup>10</sup> Staff, Investopedia. "Remittance." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 13 Mar. 2018, [www.investopedia.com/terms/r/remittance.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/remittance.asp).

interviewees were asked if they had ever collaborated with an African university during their duration in school in China. A great majority of both the poll respondents and interviewees responded no. The knowledge they gain, then, is either not put to use or put to use in the Chinese context, whereby not benefiting their home countries. There are a few students in the interviews that have done some type of knowledge transfers though that could help with the development of their individual countries.

**Diagram 11: Poll Respondents' Collaboration with African Universities**



One recurrent way that students are collaborating with universities and industries back in Africa is through the medical field. One undergraduate medical student from Ghana travels home during summers to gain practical experience – something that is seemingly impossible for African students in China. He mentioned: “If I work in China, maybe not in medicine because of the language and other ethical issues that we have with the people here.” Due to this, he has to go all the way home to gain practical experience that will prepare him for the exams he will take back home to be a medical doctor. Another student named Alladoumbaye Ngueilbaye was the only student interviewed that presented an economic benefit to his home country through the research he pursued. While pursuing his masters at Harbin Institute of Technology, Alladoumbaye used his home country [Republic of Chad] as a case study to assist medical professionals to predict the heart disease status based on clinical data using the Naïve Bayes Algorithm.<sup>11</sup> He said: “They don’t have the devices to prevent heart disease [in his home country]. It’s based on their knowledge or experience. There’s no machine for heart disease.” The student collaborated with a clinic from back home to collect all symptoms for heart disease as well as doing more research on the disease. Although the system cannot be used at the clinic due to a technological resource shortage, the student still saw a need in his country and filled it through the knowledge that he received in Chinese university. This type of research that fills a gap from back home could be more common, but there were not enough participants in this study to assess that fact nor is there a system that keeps track of the research done by African scholars in China.

The most important, indirect way that African scholars in China can benefit their home country’s economy is by returning home after graduation and participating in the job market to

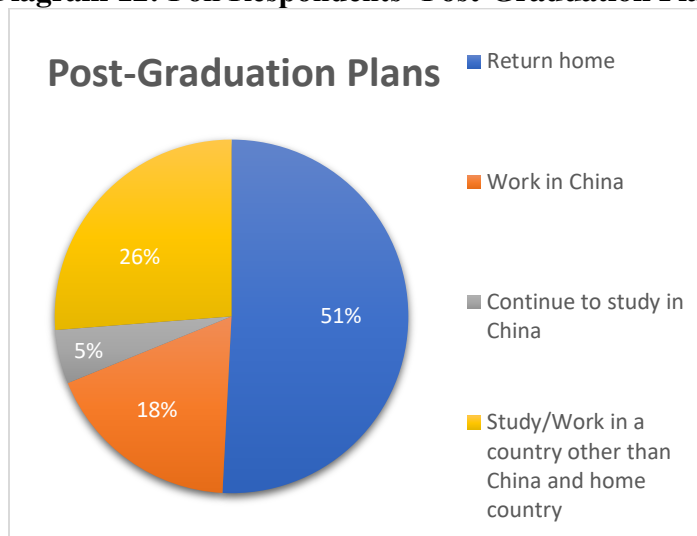
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<sup>11</sup> Ngueilbaye, Alladoumbaye & Lei, Lin & Wang, Hongzhi. (2016). Comparative Study of Data Mining Techniques on Heart Disease Prediction System: a case study for the " Republic of Chad ". International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR). 5. 6-391. 10.21275/v5i5.NOV163704.

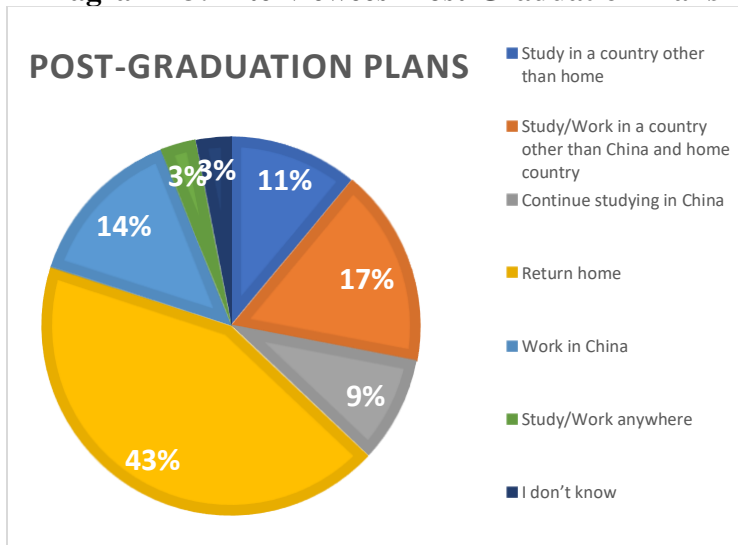


become both consumers and intellectuals. Both poll respondents and interviewees were asked what they plan to do after graduation. There was more of a variety of answers from interviewees than poll respondents due to the freedom of speaking versus choosing an answer, yet both showed a promising amount of students wishing to go home after graduation. Over half of the poll respondents (51%) and almost half of the interviewees (43%) reported that they plan to return home after graduation, mostly to work and very few to continue studying. Based on the

**Diagram 12: Poll Respondents' Post-Graduation Plans**



**Diagram 13: Interviewees' Post-Graduation Plans**



information gathered throughout the research, for so many to plan to go home can be quite surprising. This means that they should be able to go home and contribute to the economy as expected, but this may be easier said than done. Unemployment rates are very high throughout the continent and returning home could be a challenge at first. Also, due to the way the students reported the quality of education in China, their lack of industrial experience puts them at the end of the line when it comes to the job market. Many students mentioned how since they have a degree from China, people will look at them more highly but some students mentioned how even



though that is the case, the lack of experience still is a huge weakness. When asked about the advantages and disadvantages of going home, Jephil, a masters student from Burundi, reported: “I would not be very helpful in the working industry because of my lack of experience in terms of work and technical issues.” He even was able to label himself as “a liability in the working industry” due to his lack of experience that the company will have to take time and effort to train. For this reason, he plans to continue studying in China after his masters, contributing more to the Chinese economy instead of Burundi. That could also be the reason why 14% of interviewees and 18% of poll respondents plan to stay in China to work after graduation.

Many interviewees that plan to work in China after graduation reported that they would work to gain experience and earn money before going home where they will be more competitive in the job market rather than someone who goes home immediately after graduation. With this in mind, these students will be consuming and providing intellectual capital to China. Another huge chunk of students plan to go to another country other than their home or China to work or study. Students reported many reasons for this: to experience a new place, to receive quality education, to earn money before going home, and more. The trend between these students, though, is that they were done with the social tension in China. Overall, though, it seems that students will not benefit their home countries’ economies in the short-term as 49% of poll respondents and 54% of interviewees do not plan to immediately return home after graduation. When they return after gaining experience, they could become a valuable source to their home countries, but considering that possibilities such as making families, adapting, investing and the like can influence someone to stay in a country longer than they expect, time can only tell if these students can be valuable to their home countries’ economies in the long-term.

To assess how students have immediately become valuable to African economies after graduation, we interviewed three graduates from West Africa. The first graduate is from Nigeria and currently is an assistant construction project manager. He lived in China for three years to complete a master’s degree in business administration (environmental management) at Dalian University of Technology. He had a full scholarship with no outside work or financial support from his parents. Although he reported to have a good quality of education, he had no industrial experience and did not feel prepared for post-graduation work and life. The person felt satisfied in China, but left one month after graduation. Now he has been back home for a year and does not feel satisfied with his decision to return home so he plans to come back to China to work or study. Another piece of dissatisfaction for this graduate is that he does not feel economically comfortable in Nigeria, and listed that there are little to no employment opportunities back home. When asked if he would go to China if a Chinese company in Africa offered him a job there, he said that he would go immediately.

The second graduate is from Ghana and currently works in project management and business development in Liberia. He spent three years at Harbin Engineering University studying for a master’s degree in mechanical engineering on a bilateral scholarship that required him to return home after graduation. The allowances were enough to sustain him without him having to work in China. In terms of quality of education, he reported that the practical work was satisfactory, yet there was a communication barrier in the lectures that made learning ineffective. In terms of his satisfaction with living in China, like current students, he felt good economically yet there was a problem with the social tension – even labeling it “socially traumatizing”. He left immediately after graduation and has been in West Africa for a year now, beginning with a job in Ghana then moving over to Liberia. He returned to Africa only because he could not find a job

opportunity in China, but when asked if he would go back to China if there was a job offered to him now, he was hesitant, saying, “it’s a 50/50 thing”. Currently, he feels economically okay and does not do much of what he studied in masters. Instead, he has combined what he learned in undergraduate and graduate studies to form his career. He reported that an advantage of going home after graduation is that being able to speak Chinese gives him “an edge” over others.

The third graduate is from Nigeria and is currently a university lecturer at Baze University in Abuja. He studied at Chongqing University for five years in China doing a master’s on a full scholarship and PhD on a partial scholarship in telecommunication engineering, receiving financial support from his family. He felt that the quality of education he received was good but that it only partially prepared him for post-graduation life and work. He was fully satisfied in China and left immediately after he passed his oral defense. He has been back in Nigeria now for four years and is happy with his decision to leave China most likely because he never intended on staying in China. When asked about advantages and disadvantages of returning home, he reported that the career opportunities, family and being home were the advantages. He noted things such as lack of infrastructure and lawlessness to be disadvantages of being home, which seem to be influenced by his time in China. Even when asked if he was given a chance to go back to China to work, he directly answered no.

All three graduates are employed so they are contributing to West Africa’s economies through consumption and intellect. It seems that their time in China also made them look at their homes a bit differently in terms of societal structures and economic stability. This is a very small number, though, so their situations cannot be generalized to all African graduates of Chinese universities. This is especially true because all of the students that were interviewed that had just graduated had not secured a job back home yet. They were just eager to go home and see their families and to get back into their country. These results have shown that China, in terms of consumption and brain gain, have benefited more than the African economies have. The numbers in this study are small though, so they cannot be used to generalize the actions and thoughts of all African scholars studying in China, but it does give a glimpse as to how a small population of these students feel and how that may have bigger implications on how mutually beneficial the economic relationship between China and Africa can be in the education aspect.

### *3.3 Secondary Findings*

#### *3.3.1 Workers in China*

Not only do African peoples come to China to study, they also come to work and do business. This means that not only is there a great economic impact on China’s economy through education, but also through the workforce. We interviewed four workers to understand their perspective and the ways that they contribute to the Chinese economy.

The first employee that we interviewed is from a South African country, graduated from Chinese university with a post-graduate degree, and was on the Chinese government scholarship. Currently, he teaches English at a university in Xinjiang and will soon teach classes related to what he studied in his post-graduate career. He received his bachelor’s degree in the UK and worked there for a year, but compared to China, he has more satisfaction and happiness here. He noted how even though the salary is slightly lower here in China due to the cheaper cost of living, he is able to save a lot more and has more flexibility in his schedule than in the UK. He also sends money home on a monthly basis, bringing revenue into Africa. Although he does not own any property in China, he plans to invest if he finds the right tools. He also owns property back home that he rents out, bringing some revenue in from Africa. Nonetheless, he has no plans

to return home, but would take an opportunity in a different country in Africa if it was offered to him.

Kablu is the second employee we interviewed. He is from Kenya and currently does performing arts with a Kenyan acrobatic company throughout many cities in China. He has been in China for 6 years and likes it, especially the culture. With a wife and child back home, he sends funds through WeChat for them to access. He does not feel too comfortable economically and does not own any property in China or business back home. He does not speak Chinese but has plans to do business here while he is still here – maybe through exporting goods back home. This desire has prevented him from wanting to go back home to Kenya, instead he wants to take advantage of the opportunities in China that he has to make more money. Even when asked if his company was going back to Kenya or any country in Africa, he said he would stay in China so he could make that business and build more capital. As his reason for coming to China was to make more money, and even in China not making enough, it seems only inevitable that he would want to continue business here alongside his work.

Dudu is the third employee we interviewed. He is from Togo and currently is a music producer. He is an interesting case because he came to China to study, but instead decided to work due to the larger desire to work based on the opportunities he received in China when he came. After receiving his bachelor's degree back home, he came to China to study Chinese language before entering a master's degree program. When he finally began a program about a couple of years into being in China, he had already taken up music producing and found it more interesting and economically beneficial than going to class so he discontinued his studies to pursue more work. Living in China for six years now, he is mostly satisfied – mainly due to his economic standing. He works in a company with all Chinese people and one other foreigner and noted that his salary is actually higher than his fellow Chinese employees. He lives comfortably, but still wants to make more money. He sends money home every once in a while, but it should be noted that his parents did fund him while he was in school, bringing in more revenue from Africa than what was sent back. He currently has no plans of going home to stay due to the fear of not finding a good job and wants to continue his work outside of China when he gains more experience.

The last employee is actually both a student and a worker. From the Congo with initial intentions to study, he discontinued his studies in medicine due to lack of interest and expanded a consulting firm from the Congo to China. Coming to China, he knew it had a lot of potential and kept his mind open – that's what made him successful in opening the consulting firm. He has been in China for six years now, is married and will soon have a child. He loves China due to the fact that he can meet people from all around the world, that there are many opportunities and that the people are friendly. He feels relatively comfortable economically and mentioned how with the money he earns here, "you could buy land in Congo". With that in consideration, he is very satisfied with his life now. Interestingly enough though, even though he likes it here, he realizes that there may be challenges when he starts his family. He does not want his child to grow up here due to the social anxiety that might undertake the child for being different. He is open to relocation anywhere – whether it be home in the Congo or his wife's home in Zimbabwe. He could also be a valuable asset to African countries as he realizes that he can use ideas that he has from seeing what is in China to further develop countries in Africa.

One thing we noticed about the workers is that they do not own property in China. This could be due to the stipulations that foreigners have to meet if they want to own property or invest, but there are no deep investments happening with these workers in China. They still are contributing

through consumption especially through the real estate, mobile phone service and transportation industries. This is in both big and small cities alike. Another thing is that they do send money home. Remittance, as mentioned before, can be a great asset to developing countries' economies as it promotes consumption and encourages people to open bank accounts. In this way, workers seem to provide a more direct impact on African economies than students do. The number of workers from Africa in China might be considerably less than the amount of students, though, but this cannot be proven by this research. The last thing we noticed is that every worker is satisfied with their life in China compared to only about half of the students. This could be due to their economic standing, their freedom since they can legally work, and the like. Through this happiness, some even do not desire to go back home and will continue to contribute to the Chinese economy. In my opinion, though, their remittances do not make up for the economic benefit that they are giving China.

### 3.3.2 *Chinese Participants*

Understanding what Chinese people think about Africans as people as well as their contribution to the Chinese economy is important to understand so that the development of this research does not lie on assumptions about Chinese thought. Although only two Chinese people were interviewed and their thoughts cannot be used to generalize about the entire country, they provide much insight into what Chinese people of their status might be thinking about Africans and Africans' contribution to the Chinese economy.

The first interviewee is Scarlet who is a Chinese professor in Beijing. Hailing from Xinjiang, she teaches courses on Africa inspired about her friend that had spent many years working in African countries. There are not many African students in Xinjiang, but she was able to meet an African friend through her Chinese friend. She is also friends with a few African research students at the university she teaches at that she sees on about a weekly basis and usually interacts with them in classrooms, lectures and seminars. Because Scarlet speaks English, it is usually not difficult to communicate with African students except the students that cannot speak English very well. When asked are Chinese people welcoming to Africans, she mentioned how people in Beijing were not welcoming in general, regardless of nationality or skin color. However, in her hometown, she feels that the Chinese people are welcoming to Africans based on the time when her African friend visited. When asked about African students being separated from Chinese students in dorms, she said "of course they should be put together" so they can learn to understand one another but in terms of classroom separation, she admitted that it is difficult for Chinese professors to teach in English (the main concern that African students brought up). She noticed how beneficial Africans are to the Chinese economy and says that there are a lot of similarities between Chinese and Africans. The only specific difference given is that young people are more respectful to their elders more than Chinese are and mentioned that is something that Chinese people can learn from Africans. She has been to Ethiopia and Kenya to find materials for a book and tried to apply for an exchange program but the administration of her university did not allow it. Finally, when asked about the lack of Chinese students studying in Africa, she said "so far, this has never been their option". When Chinese students go abroad, she explained, they want to go to a university with a high rating and that has good facilities so their focus is always on places like Europe, North America and New Zealand. This draws attention to the fact that African universities do not promote themselves as much as Western universities, making people less knowledgeable about their facilities, affordability and other

things that they offer. Serious public relations can promote awareness in the international community to make African universities an option rather than an unheard of fascination.

The second interviewee was a Chinese student at Harbin Institute of Technology. From Harbin, he was only exposed to Africans through the media and eventually in college. He doesn't normally speak with them, mentioning that it is not easy to speak with them due to language barriers and cultural differences. He did mention though that "Generally, if the other person is comparatively outgoing and actively wants to get to know me, I will be very enthusiastic". He mentioned that Chinese people welcome Africans because of their similar historical backgrounds and intimate communication and cooperation in a variety of aspects. On the other hand, he does not like that the international students and Chinese students are separated by dorms to give international students better dorm environment because it discriminates against Chinese students a little bit. In terms of academics, he thinks that both Chinese and international students have the same good education and internship opportunities, even saying that only using the excuse of being an international student to get or lose an opportunity is "immature". Like the teacher interviewed, he recognizes that Africans help the Chinese economy but unlike her, he has never been to Africa and doesn't have plans to go at the moment because "the scenery doesn't appeal to me and for security reasons". When asked about the opportunity to participate in an exchange program with an African university, he said he wouldn't do it because it's far, he can't adapt to the lifestyle, safety reasons compared to developed countries and infrastructure isn't too complete. He mentioned that Africans can teach Chinese people things such as art and culture and wisdom of the world (处世智慧) whereas Chinese people can teach Africans things like scientific technology and national policy systems. He also mentioned that some similarities between Chinese people and African people are that they strive for a better life by virtue of their own efforts, and that both are guardians of world peace. The differences only lie in lifestyles due to the differences in culture and history.

Based on these two Chinese participants, we were able to understand that Chinese people recognize the economic benefits that Africans bring to the Chinese economy. Both also notice how rich China is to the African economies through their investment in infrastructure and education. In terms of social exchange with Africans, the dorm situation seems to be an unsatisfactory topic for the Chinese participants but also as a trending topic in recent Chinese news. It is seen as unfair, whereas the international students interviewed see it as a thing they deserve due to higher costs and new environment. Also, it seems that if the student or professor does not know English very well, they will not interact with the African students. This could threaten the social stance of many Africans in smaller Chinese cities that do not have a large international presence. Both participants mentioned interesting cultural exchanges that could be made, and since the teacher is more intertwined in the African community than the student, she has been able to actually participate in those exchanges through food, language and even actually going to Africa. The student, who is less familiar with African people and has never been to Africa like many Chinese people, was not interested in going to Africa at all. Both the teacher and student mentioned the lack of complete infrastructure that would prevent many Chinese students from attending African universities. Where this can be a valid reason for why many Chinese students do not go to Africa to study, most reasons lie on their perception of Africa. Safety issues, inability to adapt to the environment, distance from home, and ranking of university are reasons that come from personal feelings instead of concrete evidence. Based on these two participants, it is evident that ethos trumps logos in deciding to study in Africa whereas logos trumps ethos when Africans decided to study in China. This highlights the one way

educational exchange between China and Africa – it cannot be decided based on two Chinese participants so that conclusion is only based on what these two have said.

#### **4. Discussion**

Our results show the direct and indirect ways that African students studying in China contribute to both the Chinese economy and African economies. Through direct means, students participate in consumption through scholarship allowance or funding from their family back home. The cheaper cost of living could influence them to consume more than they normally would back home. Many are also contributing to the job market by taking on jobs in entertainment, teaching and the like. Though it may be nerve wrecking, students are still eager to make money. Does this mean that the scholarship allowance is not enough? How does the Chinese government expect the students to receive more funding if they cannot work? Indirectly, some students tend to like China and a common trend seems to echo the satisfaction with the economic opportunities that China offers. These things influence students to stay in China longer after graduation which continues to bring an economic benefit to China. All this while their parents fund them through the process, bringing in more money from Africa than is traveling back. Are parents spending more money on their child in China than they would if they went to university back home?

Through these main findings, we were also able to assess different things about the African students' experiences in China. The quality of education seems not to be as well for foreign students than Chinese students, mainly due to the language barrier. Some schools could find it unnecessary to invest in native English speakers because they know that international students will come anyway. The ease of entering into a university in China could also be the reason why these universities take less notice in their foreign education programs. Does this hurt African students more than it is benefiting them? Also, the main source of dissatisfaction with living in China was the social climate. Many students feel the tension of always feeling like a foreigner in China, no matter how well their Mandarin proficiency is nor how long they have lived in China. However, many students still opt to stay in China after graduation instead of returning home. What other reasons could there be for them to stay in China? This question is especially important because one has to return home to obtain a work visa to work in China. What process do they undertake?

In the end, it can be proven that the FOCAC mission of creating mutually beneficial opportunities between China and Africa is not being upheld. Even though this research is not as large and not the last step in this subject, it has shown that there is tremendous economic benefits for China compared to Africa. Students do not have the yearn to go home and even the students that do go home do not face a developed economy that is similar to China's. This is due to many reasons like high unemployment rates, strict admission and economic stagnation. When China encourages students to go home after graduation by taking away their visas, they do not fully take into account what the students are going back to and why that is not ideal based on the experiences and exposure they have had while living in China for those years. It also highlights the one-way traffic of African students coming to China to study and not the other way around. While scholarships and opportunities encourage African students to seek educational and business opportunities in China, Chinese students have not been encouraged to seek those same prospects in African countries. In this, not only is economic opportunity gained for China, but also soft power such as cultural exchange is more prominent. China shares their culture and

lifestyle more with African students whereas African students and people do not have that same opportunity because the main source of Chinese in Africa is for business and cheap labor.

Previous research has highlighted the socio-cultural advantages and disadvantages of African students studying in China. With a growing influx of African students coming to China, the low quality of education and unsatisfactory daily interactions with Chinese people have been highlighted throughout much research. Yet, no one has shown how although these feelings do exist, they have created an economic gain for China. Many Chinese universities have not invested in their foreign education programs, yet foreign students pay more to go to these universities than Chinese students. This is one of the biggest signs of profit from Chinese universities from international students. With the increase in Chinese government scholarships to Africans, though, the economic implications have automatically been ignored in research due to the fact that students have a comprehensive scholarship. Many African students studying in China are self-sponsored, though, so when those students are overlooked (as they have repeatedly in research projects on this subject), their economic contribution to China overlooked as well.

With these findings, many efforts of change can be implemented. The leaders in FOCAC can look into their system further and analyze if the deals that are being made are actually mutually beneficial or only just surface-level mutual. In regards to the educational realm of FOCAC, students ideas can be taken into account to better assess the type of education they are receiving. More funding can be put into foreign education programs to increase the quality of education – hiring native English speakers, training Chinese professors in Western education culture and more. Also, providing more work study opportunities for students can lead to better opportunities for students to receive both a source of income (especially self-sponsored students) as well as some experience that may be useful for them to be competitive in the job market when they return home.

There have been many strengths and weaknesses in this study that future researchers should take into consideration. Some strengths of the research is that the participants represented both large and small cities in China. This gives much diversity to the research in terms of satisfaction with living in China as well as standard of living in China. Another huge asset to the research is that there was a large pool of interested people who wanted to participate in any way. Many could not due to schedule conflicts, but their interest allowed me to have a number of African students from all over China give their perspective and support.

There were many limitations in this research, though. In terms of method, one limitation was the week-long poll period taken. We noticed how as the days went on, the number of respondents decreased. Had we have had one long poll and sent it out during the week, there would be much more accurate data that could have the same amount of respondents and consistent information for each. The student leaders were helpful in confirming the results, though, so the polls were still a useful asset to the research and proved to be representative of students' feelings.

One of the biggest limitations in this study was that all of the polls and interviews were conducted in English. This has hindered much information coming from many areas of Africa that speak other languages such as French, Portuguese, Swahili and more. Even the people who participated who had first languages that were not English, they were not able to express themselves as much as interviewees from English speaking countries. The study was also dominated by Ghanaians. It is proven, though, there is a large population of Ghanaian students in

China,<sup>12</sup> yet it does skew the results to their point of view over others which should not be the case.

Another big limitation was the timing of the study. During the time of the study, students were taking final exams, returning to their home countries or getting their travels and things together for summer break. This made it difficult to host many interviews. For future researchers, choosing a time that is not around exams is the most ideal for students to really give their all to the researcher. That flexibility can increase the amount of students that participate and the quality of their answers. Even during the school year, it is easier to meet up with groups and their leaders to have more in-depth conversations about the research as well as do some observation studies. Also, this study had a time limit of 2 months which put a ceiling on the amount of people I could interact with as well as the amount of time to write an in-depth analysis.

The biggest limitation of this study was that it was conducted in a high-surveillance country which could cause harm to the researcher as well as the participants. It limited the amount of information that could be obtained, the questions that could be asked and the platforms that could be used. There is no way to combat this, but knowing this can guide future researchers to use different methods to receive the information that they want. Future research on this subject is very important to educate and inform people of the economic benefits that Africans have on the Chinese economy. Future research should focus on both scholarship and self-funded students to receive a holistic view of students' academic experiences in China.

#### *4.1 Suggested Perspectives for Future Work*

This research focused on African students studying in China but there are many different topics that can follow from this research topic. Instead of focusing on African students studying in China, one can study the effects of Chinese students studying in Africa. This point of view has rarely been acknowledged and can be a huge contribution to the educational exchanges between China and Africa. In addition to that, research on educational exchanges (both formal and informal) between Chinese and African universities can be very important as well. This topic can highlight the opportunities that both students and teachers have to interact in each other's environments. This also focuses on the availability of resources that both Chinese universities and African universities have to accommodate international students and faculty to further enhance their educational experiences. Another topic that this research opened doors to is African students in China that have not reached college yet. These can be children in pre-school, middle school, or even high school and how their experiences have been growing up and studying in China. It would be fascinating to know how their perspective differs when they finally reach college versus an African student who comes from Africa. A final topic could examine the mechanisms for Africans who graduate from Chinese universities that wish to return home. This type of research would need a lot of information from diplomats and ambassadors to see what systems are in place by African governments that help African graduates who want to return home to settle. This not only encourages students to go home after graduation, but also informs them of ways that they can get their life started post-graduation.

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<sup>12</sup> Chinese Embassy in Ghana. "Chinese Ambassador to Ghana H.E. Mdm. Sun Baohong Held a Reception for the 2017 Chinese Government Scholarship Students." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, August 18, 2017.  
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## About the Author

Brandy Darling is a fourth-year, undergraduate student at Connecticut College in the United States. She double majors in Economics and East Asian Studies with a minor in Applied Statistics. She will also receive a certificate in International Studies from the Center for International

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