“Nihao Kenniya!” Promoting Intercultural Communication between China and Kenya: The Role of Confucius Institutes

**Thematic area: Humanities and Developmental Studies**

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Abstract

The Chinese language is increasingly becoming popular because of the pride of place that China occupies globally. The popularity of the language has been rapidly facilitated by the establishment of the Confucius Institutes, which are mandated with the responsibility of introducing Chinese language and culture to non-Chinese population. The question is: has this move enhanced cross-cultural communication between Chinese and non-Chinese people. Kenya has three Confucius Institutes at the University of Nairobi, Egerton University and Kenyatta University. These three institutes offer various Chinese courses to Kenyans interested in acquiring competence in Chinese and understanding Chinese rich culture. Students who excel in these courses get a chance to proceed to China for further studies. The paper seeks to explore the role of Confucius Institutes in promoting intercultural communication between China and Kenya. 831 students of Chinese at Confucius Institute at Kenyatta University formed the target population. A sample of 120 students, selected randomly, filled in a questionnaire that was designed to help in assessing the role of the Confucius Institutes in facilitating cross-cultural communication. Data were analysed qualitatively and the results interpreted and discussed. The general finding is that Confucius Institutes are a bridge between China and Kenya and they are a useful vehicle in promoting understanding between Kenyan and Chinese cultures.

Key words: intercultural communication, Chinese language, Confucius Institute, Chinese Culture