

Extended Abstract  
**Systematic and Non-systematic Facilitation and Restriction  
for African Student Mobility from Africa to China**

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With the fast-growth African student population from 1,384 in year 1999 to 61,594 in year 2015 to choose China as their destination for higher education, China has surpassed the United Kingdom and the United States becoming the second most popular destination for African student migrants after France in year 2013. The share of African students in the total foreign student population in China has grown from 3.1% to 12.5% during 1999-2015. In this way, African students have become the second largest non-Asian foreign student population in China, after students with European origin. This report focuses on unveiling the history, development and current limitation of China-Africa higher education student mobility under the frame work of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in both Systematic and Non-systematic way, respectively in education, labor market, health care and social media sector. The Chinese national government, provincial local government and African country government offer scholarship to attract African student to study aboard in China since the Forum initiative in 2000. In addition to the national policy support for African students' study in China, both central government and local governments in China developed and revised the work-permit administration policy in 2016 and 2018 to support African students in China after graduation in order to start their careers in the Chinese labour market. Yet in practice, there are immigration regulation, social welfare policy boundaries and potential system-inequality in health insurance and job market for African student migrants in different areas of China. The national government, local government and university level for facilitation for the support education and integration for African student in China is way behind to fulfil the need as the growth of the number of African student in China. The working-permit and entrepreneurship supporting policy for Bachelor graduates is still limited in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong area. And even in these areas the local department instructions, the universities and employers are not well informed about the procedures of such career support for African students. In addition, the health care system with health insurance and emergence medical treatment procedures are differ in support level in the practice by local policy and universities. Moreover, as the digital space in China is divided from outside by the Great Fire Wall set by the government to block the IP address within China to access several social network websites and search engines, the African students need to install a VPN on their devices to get access to use digital space to connect to their family and friends in their country of origin. We also explore in this paper how such digital boundaries influence the integration and mobility of the African student in China.

To better understand the migration process, the research will be build further upon these theories.

- (1) According to the **Modern World System Theory**, economic inequality between countries was the driving force of international migration. The hypothesis is then that the larger the gap of GDP per capita between China and the African country of origin, the larger the number of African students will choose to study in China.
- (2) Based on the **Brain Circulation Theory**, Internet Communication Technology (ICT) plays

an essential role in obtaining information, circulating knowledge and bridging the global network communication, leading to information exchanges between China and the country of origin for African students, providing more efficient, boarder and more easy accessible resources for both online and offline language program, scholarship application, Chinese university application for African students. Therefore, the hypothesis is that the higher the percentage of individuals' internet use in the country of origin, the larger the number of African students who choose to study in China.

(3) As argued by Borjas (1990) in the **Self-selection Theory**, higher-educated immigrants tend to self-select to migrate to host countries to get higher quality of education in order to get higher rates of return to education. The income inequality between high-skilled professionals and low-skilled workers in their country of origin has incentivized the student to pursue higher quality of education. And the limitations of either the number, quality or high-cost of their university education in their country of origin have motivated them to pursue higher education outside their home country. In addition, China provides scholarship opportunities to further reduce the cost of migration for African students. Hence, the hypothesis is that the higher the GINI index of the country of origin and the larger the number of scholarship expectations, the larger the number of African students willing to study in China.

(4) The **Migration Network Theory** proposes that various special relationships based on kinship and friendship between migrants and their relatives and friends in the original country are a combination of a series of relationships, which can be kinship ties, township ties, romantic relationships, etc. (Greenwood 1971; Nelson 1976; Massey et al. 1987). It emphasizes the role of network relations in immigrants' departure and arrival communities. And with further connection of online migration network through social networking sites and social media(Haythornthwaite, 2002; Komito, 2011; Dekker and Engberson, 2012), the channel for the student mobility connection has been enlarged.The internet firewall created by the Chinese government serves as a boundary, which provides a advantage in research to divide the online social networks between home country and destination country(China) for African students in China, which provide the possibility to investigate the different influence of their home country social network and their local social network in China on their migration decision making and integration path to the local community and labor market in China.

The analysis would be based on both Macro-Level Data for historical trend and policy research, and Micro-Level Data for case studies of social network analysis.

#### (1) Macro-Level Data

Macro-Level Data would be based on the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and China Ministry of Education Statistics data for African student study in China from 2005 to 2014, as well as the China Sixth Population Census 2010. Country of origin, age, gender, major and education level of African student would be analysis, and would be compared to their counterpart in their country of origin in order to see the self-selection pattern of migration. In addition, the policy background and relation between China and African counties during this period would be included in the model.

#### (2)Micro-Level Data

I will further explore in Micro-Level Data on Africa student mobility and social integration in utilizing mixed methods, including structural surveys, in-depth interview, social network analysis, and agent-based model. The survey and in-depth interview will cover demographic background, motivation, education, health, future mobility plan and the number of ties on both online and offline of social networks. The data survey and interview data will be collected based on the proportion of African migrants resident group and African university students in three major destination cities for in China: Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. The proposed sampling method in this data collection process is respondent-driven sampling, with the initial wave of

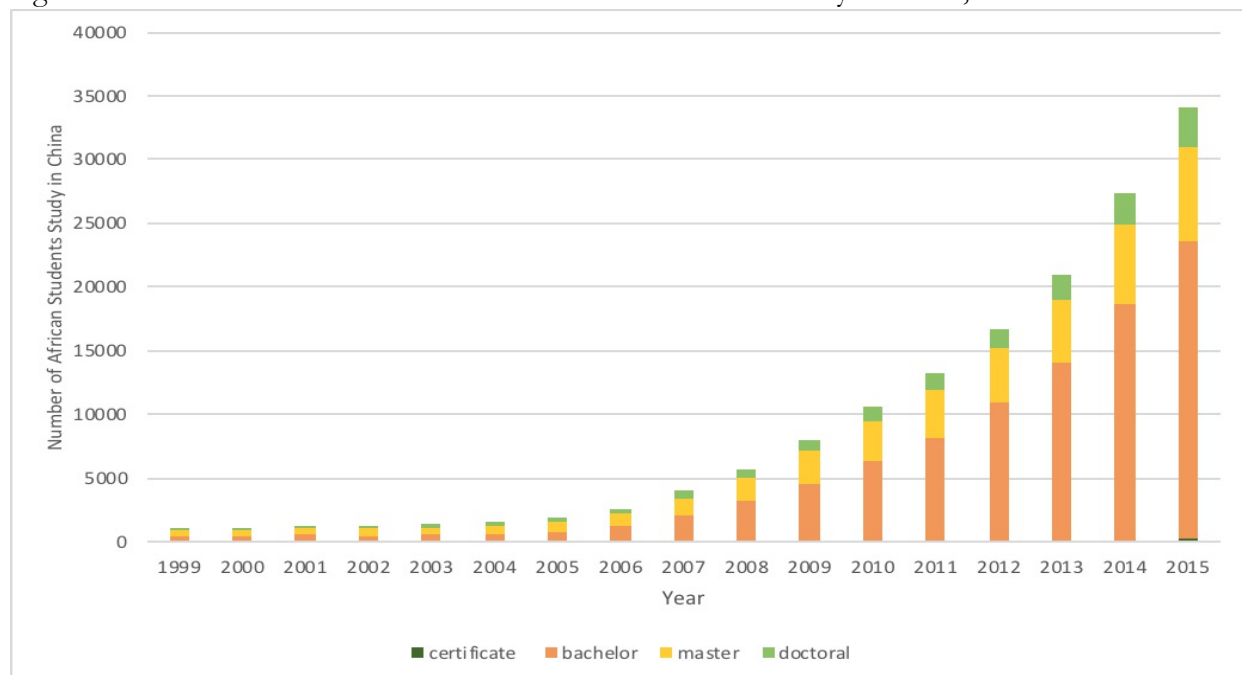
respondents collected from the African Foreign Students Associations in each university and later waves of respondents based on the initial waves' social networks.

### Quantitative analysis: Facts and figures of African student migrants in China

These policy initiatives have had important consequences and triggered a large number of African students to come to study in China. The collected data allowed for establishing interesting trends and figures relating to the African student population in China. As shown in Figure 1, the number of African students has grown very fast during the past decades: with an annual growth rate of 30%, the number of Africans studying at Chinese universities increased from 2,757 in year 2005 to 61,594 in year 2016.

Given these growth rates, Asia has become an important destination for African students. In year 2013, there were 380,689 students in global mobility worldwide (UNESCO, Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Student Statistics, 2013). African students represented more than 10% of this global student mobility, which is twice as high as the world average. In terms of countries of origin, half of the African student mobility was accounted for by seven countries: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Zimbabwe and Kenya. The Northern African countries Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia clearly take the lead and account for 21% (UNESCO, Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Student Statistics, 2013).

Figure 1. The Evolution of The Number of African Students Study in China, 1999-2016

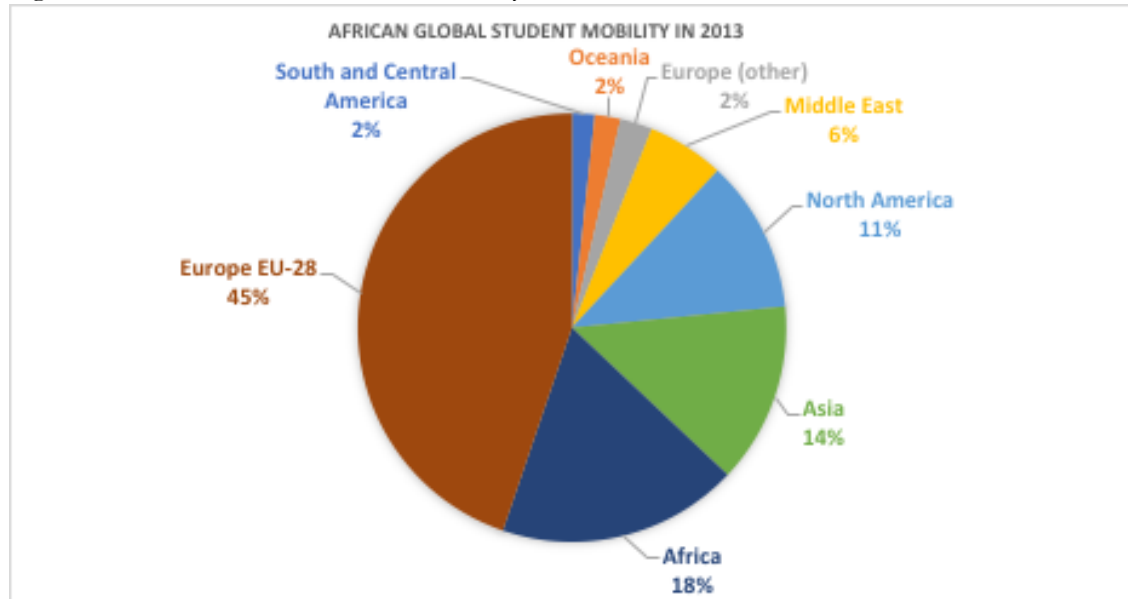


Source: China Ministry of Education Statistics, calculations by authors

Figure 2 shows that, in terms of countries of destination, almost half of the Africans student migrants choose Europe as a destination to pursue their studies in year 2013. Strikingly, Asia ranked the second most popular non-African destination for African student migrants, accounting for 14% of the global African student mobility. Among these African student migrants in Asia in 2013, 62.59% of them choose China as their destination to study. China attracted 8.8% of the total African student global mobility in 2013. China surpassed the United Kingdom and the United States and has become the second most popular destination for African student migrants after France since year 2013. Among these African student migrants in Asia in year 2013, 62.59% of them choose China as their destination to study. China attracted 8.8% of the total African student

global mobility in year 2013. Table 1 clearly shows that China surpassed the United Kingdom and the United States and has become the second most popular destination for African student migrants after France.

Figure 2. African Global Student Mobility in 2013



Source: UNESCO Statistic & China Ministry of Education Statistics, calculations by authors

Table 2. Linear regression analysis of the inflows of student migrants from Africa to China by country of origin, 1999-2015

<b>Dependent Variable</b>				
Number of African student in China by country of origin per year 1999-2015				
<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Model 1 (OLS)</b>	<b>Model 2 (OLS)</b>	<b>Model 3 (FE)</b>	<b>Model 4 (RE)</b>
China-Africa GDP per capita Gap	0.039*** (0.0044)	0.0027 (0.0060)	-0.0295** (0.0110)	-0.01135 (0.0091)
China-Africa Trade Volume	0.009*** (0.0027)	0.0059** (0.0024)	0.0054* (0.00259)	0.00787** (0.0026)
Internet Usage	16.534*** (1.4052)	3.159* (1.7274)	9.0179*** (1.9340)	5.2121** (1.9392)
GINI Index	5.057*** (1.7262)	-0.2032 (1.6603)	12.5215*** (3.0227)	7.0682** (2.6041)
Policy Goal of number of Scholarship Under FOCAC framework		0.1036*** (0.0082)	0.0892*** (0.00951)	0.1061*** (0.0088)
Education Language Other than English				

French	-88.5966***	-	15.8513
	(29.74614)	-	(71.0026)
Portuguese	-171.4466***	-	-75.88592
	(44.6051)	-	(107.8137)
Spanish	58.50153	-	-151.1834
	(115.9087)	-	(247.4054)
Arabic	-120.3252***	-	-72.96495
	(39.7292)	-	(91.2253)

### ***Control Variable***

Population at Age 15-24 of Country of Origin	0.0000255***	0.0000253***	0.00019***	0.000045***
	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)
Constant	-239.223***	-153.603*	-1332.83	-599.5162
	(82.3535)	(84.36032)	(144.5019)	(134.9176)
Number of Observations	826	820	820	820

*\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01. \*\*\*p<0.001*

Hausman Test FE V.S. RE: Prob>chi2 = 0.0000

### **Regression analysis**

To better understand this migration process, table 2 presents the results of the regression analysis.

Model 1, including the economic elements and controlling the population aged 15-24 in the country of origin, shows that all macro-level economic factors are positively and significantly related to the number of African student migrants in China. The GDP gap between China and the African home country was significantly and positively correlated with the number of African students in China: the larger the GDP gap, the higher thus the number of African migrant students in China, conform the World System Theory of Wallerstein (2014) stating that economic inequality between countries is a very important driving force of international immigration. The annual trade volume between China and the country of origin was significantly and positively correlated with the number of African students in China as well. The increased trading activities opened the window, bridged the communication channels and accelerated the brain circulation. Similarly, the percentage of individual's internet usage in the country of origin was significantly positively correlated to the number of African student in China. The wider the scale of internet use in the home country, the faster and easier the circulation of knowledge, economic, technologic and cultural exchange, the easier the information flow, the admission process and preliminary language training; all facilitating student migration to China. The GINI Index was significantly and positively correlated to the number of African students in China as well. A higher GINI index can indicate higher rewards from educational training, therefore higher-educated personal and highly-skilled professionals in Africa are more likely to apply for educational opportunities in China.

Model 2 involves additional variables, in the first place the number of scholarships foreseen under the FOCAC framework and the education language in the African home country. Both these educational elements influence the coefficients of the economic variables in the model. The correlations of the gap in GDP per capital and the GINI index in the country of origin are no longer significant, while the number of scholarships under the FOCAC framework was significantly and positively correlated to the number of African students in China. A larger expectation of scholarships support obviously reduces the migration costs, and in other well higher the rate of educational return. Therefore

higher-educated personal and highly-skilled professionals in Africa were more likely to be motivated by the scholarship opportunity to study in China. The result of Model 2 also indicate the significance of the language barriers while studying aboard. French, Portuguese and Arabic speaking African countries were significantly providing African students. Students from non-English speaking countries were in other words less likely to choose China as a destination to study compared to those from English speaking countries in Africa. Most courses in Chinese universities are indeed taught in Chinese or English, so that non-Chinese and non-English speakers would foresee more difficulties when choosing China as migration destination. Hence, under the FOCAC framework China send out Chinese teachers to local African universities and established Confucius Institutes to offer short language learning programs to help African students to learn Chinese. In 2017, there were already 48 Confucius Institute had been established in 38 countries in Africa (Chinese Study Institute (Hanban) 2018).