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Chinese Language Education in Kenya: A Case Study of Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi

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Research Article

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Abstract

Background/purpose. Cultural strategy is an important part of China's global strategic framework. As China becomes more involved on the global stage, its national strategic interests expand to all corners of the world. One way China has accomplished this is by promoting and propagating the Chinese language in many countries' educational systems. Kenya's education system integrated Chinese language teaching and learning in 2019. It is critical to assess the importance and strategic impact of cultural soft power on Kenya's social, political, and economic development.

Materials/methods. This paper employs questionnaires, interviews, observations, participatory methods, and a literature review approach to elucidate discussions, recommendations, and conclusions.

Results – Few studies have examined the impact of the Chinese language in Kenya, particularly on Kenyans' socio-economic well-being. However, no major study has examined the status, progress, and future aspirations in teaching and learning Chinese language and culture in Kenya.

Conclusion. To achieve the intended results and make the advancement of Chinese language teaching and learning more relevant to people's needs, a clear language policy is required to guide the reorganization, evaluation, and adjustment of its operationalization.

1. Introduction

As China's influence grows worldwide, the Chinese language becomes increasingly important in bridging the gap between China and the rest of the world. Worrachaiyut (2012) argues that there has been a global increase in the study of Chinese. The Confucius Institutes (2006)' constitution and bylaws state that teaching and learning the Chinese language enhances and strengthens people's understanding of the Chinese language and culture, which is central to the institute's core mission of meeting the needs of people worldwide.

Chinese language teaching and learning are carried out by Confucius Institutes worldwide. According to Hamidova et al. (2020), learners' cultural awareness is enhanced through exposure to foreign languages, which explains why the Chinese language has become significantly popular in Kenya.

According to Mbugua & Iraki (2022), China is involved in many areas of Kenya's economic development, making it necessary to have competent individuals fluent in Chinese language and culture. To close the current divide between the Chinese and Kenyan communities, this is essential. To overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and achieve effective communication, Kenyan learners are taking advantage of the current gap in Chinese proficiency to become proficient. This will lead to a better understanding of the cultures of China and Kenya, benefit both countries, and produce people knowledgeable about cross-cultural interactions.

In line with the objectives outlined in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2019-2021), the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi has had a significant impact on Kenyan society and Kenya-China relations. This is especially the case regarding people-to-people and cultural exchanges. It is reported that the Confucius Institute at the University impacts about 20,000 students and members of the Kenyan community annually through Chinese studies, cultural events and activities, students' academic and cultural exchanges, and scholarships. The Confucius Institute has played a pivotal role in line with the AU Agenda 2063 goals and aspirations for a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, with transformed economies in manufacturing, industrialization, value addition, hospitality, and tourism, among others.

As mentioned earlier, learning Chinese language and culture has grown in popularity, with many African students enrolling, leading to linkages between Africa and China, with Kenya as a focal point in East Africa (Kathina et al., 2020). Thus, it is imperative to explore the gains and lessons learnt to inform the future of the language and its sustainability.

The Confucius Institute, established in Seoul, Korea, in 2004, is the world's first institution dedicated to disseminating the Chinese language and culture (Ren, 2012). According to statistical data from the Hanban (now referred to as Centre for Language Education and Cooperation, CLEC), as of December 2014, the distribution of Confucius Institutes worldwide showed Europe with the highest number of Confucius Institutes, with 159, followed by the Americas with 154, Asia with 103, Africa with 44 Confucius Institutes, and Oceania had 21(L. Zhou, 2015).

Almost 10 years later, according to the Centre for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC; formerly known as Hanban), as of December 2023, 498 Confucius Institutes and 773 Confucius Classrooms had been established in 160 nations (regions) worldwide (CIEF, n.d.). These institutions consisted of 284 Chinese partner institutions and 1,306 foreign partner institutions. In 37 Asian countries, there were 124 Confucius institutes and 32 Confucius classrooms; in 45 African countries, there were 61 Confucius institutes. In the Americas, 64 Confucius Institutes and 13 Confucius Classrooms were spread over 29 countries. Oceania had 19 Confucius Institutes and 6 Confucius Classrooms across five countries. The data shows that the number of CIs in Asia and Africa has increased (CIEF, n.d.).

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In Africa, the East African countries have the most Confucius institutes, with a total of 21. About 70% of the Confucius Institutes are in the capital regions and major cities. Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia are the three East African countries with the most Confucius institutes, with Kenya leading with 4. The Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi in East Africa was established on December 19, 2005, as the first Confucius Institute in Africa. As of 2025, 62 Confucius Institutes had been established in 45 out of 54 African countries.

In June 2004, the governments of Kenya and China signed a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of a Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi. This led to the creation of the institute. Established by the China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, this is the first institute of its kind in Africa (University of Nairobi, 2006). According to Homawoo & Conyers (2021), the Chinese government introduced its African policy in January 2006, which recognized education, science, culture, and health as significant components, alongside economic cooperation, political collaboration, and peace and security. In the same year, Kenyan government officials and visiting Chinese educators signed a cooperation agreement in Nairobi to enable more Kenyans to learn Chinese and further strengthen economic and cultural exchanges between the two countries. The establishment of the Confucius Institute allowed more Kenyans to learn Chinese. This way, cultural exchanges between the two countries and ties in tourism and trade would be strengthened, leading to better trade and information exchange. Consequently, Chinese language and culture learning has become one of the most popular programs, with many African students enrolling, leading to linkages between Africa and China, with Kenya as a focal point in East Africa (Kathina et al., 2020).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Chinese Language Education in Africa

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PRC, 2006), the Chinese government introduced its African policy in January 2006. This policy recognizes education, science, culture, and health as critical subfields alongside economic cooperation, political cooperation, peace, and security (China's African Policy, 2006). The activities of Confucius Institutes are presumed, but not officially mentioned, to be included within this category. However, the teaching and learning of the Chinese language in Africa predates the establishment of the Confucius Institute. Kenya is one of 14 out of 54 African countries, including Egypt, Cape Verde, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritius, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, with clear policies, guidelines and frameworks on the rolling out and implementation of Chinese into the education systems i.e., the use of Chinese as a second language (D. Zhou & WU, 2023). This expansion reflects a global trend, driven by China's political and economic importance (Qi & Lemmer, 2013). Confucius Institutes play a crucial role in managing finances, recruiting teachers, providing learning materials, and organizing activities to promote Chinese language learning (Peng, 2024). However, challenges remain in African contexts, including multilingual and multiethnic environments (W. J. Mbugua & Yu, 2014). The success of Chinese education policies in increasing access and quality could provide valuable insights for Kenya's education system, which faces challenges of increased demand and limited resources (Malechwanzi et al., 2016). Overall, the growth of Chinese language education in Africa contributes to the internationalization of education and deepens cultural engagement.

Launching Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classes in over 80% of African countries, including Kenya, reflects this developing trend. This historical process also underscores the significance of language education as a bridge for bringing African nations and China closer together across both culture and economics. In this regard, in addition to the general historical background with China, Bulolo et al. (2022) gives a more detailed analysis of Africa and China's complex histories. The

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historical setting provides a background for the growth of interest and study in Chinese language learning in Kenya and other African countries.

Standing out among the limited prior research on Chinese language education in Kenya, Ngetich (2022) examines students 'perceptions or motivations for learning Chinese. The study functions as a prelude, shedding light on why people want to learn Chinese. This research is also a step toward understanding the attitudes, motivations, and trends of Chinese language learners in Kenya.

Liu & Asavisanu (2024) emphasize the need to enhance leadership competencies among Chinese language teachers at CIs in Kenya to improve vocabulary-teaching outcomes. This aligns with Wheeler (2013) 's findings, which highlight the influence of Kenya's language planning policies on the effectiveness of Confucius Institutes and argue that while Confucius Institutes aim to promote Chinese language skills, there is a disconnect between the skills taught and the marketable competencies required for employment, suggesting a need for more practical language applications in the curriculum, for example, Chinese language skills and technical or professional skills.

Moreover, the linguistic landscape within Confucius Institutes, as analyzed by Fu & Liu (2023), suggests that the environment plays a critical role in language acquisition. Their findings advocate a balanced approach that integrates cognitive and social aspects of language learning, an approach essential to effective teaching methodologies in Confucius Institutes.

Li (2021) explores the broader implications of CIs as tools of soft power, positing that Confucius Institutes are not merely educational institutions but also instruments of China's foreign policy in Africa. This perspective is supported by Procopio (2015), who discusses how Confucius Institutes serve as a means of enhancing China's cultural influence and soft power, particularly in South Africa.

The literature reviewed offers a perspective on Chinese language education in Africa, bringing to light various threads intertwined with diplomatic, economic, and cultural links. Confucius Institutes are the main actors in global efforts to promote the Chinese language and culture, foster educational cooperation, and boost economic development.

3. Methodology

The research gathered and analyzed data through a variety of instruments and methods. It delved into relevant literature, including policy documents, strategic plans, research reports, curriculum designs and syllabuses, student registration and enrollment documents, and class attendance lists, to formulate recommendations. Contributions were submitted by participants in the Confucius Institute, primarily students.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were the primary method for collecting qualitative data. Key stakeholders at the Confucius Institute, including teachers, students, and members of the Kenyan community, were invited to participate. This allowed for flexibility in exploring participants' experiences, perspectives, and insights regarding Chinese language education and the institute's impact.

A structured survey was administered to a broader sample of students enrolled in Chinese language courses at the University of Nairobi. This quantitative method aimed to capture a wide range of student perspectives on Chinese language education. The survey items included students' demographics, motivations for learning Chinese, satisfaction with the Confucius Institute's programs, and perceived outcomes. The survey provided a quantitative overview of students' experiences, preferences, and overall satisfaction levels, complementing the qualitative insights from interviews and observations.

Participants were purposefully sampled and selected based on their involvement with the Confucius Institute. This includes educators with varying levels of experience, students at different

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proficiency levels, administrators overseeing the institute's operations, and community members engaged with its cultural events. This purposive sampling strategy ensured a diverse range of perspectives, enabling a comprehensive examination of the institute's impact. Excel and Python were combined for the interview and survey analysis to get insights. The Excel user interface was used for data entry, basic calculations, and visualization. With more powerful statistical and machine learning libraries, Python allowed us to analyze the 2012–2023 HSK and HSKK data.

4. Results

4.1. The Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi Survey Results

A sample of students enrolled at the University of Nairobi, including those who have completed the University of Nairobi's Chinese language courses, was invited to participate in the survey. Figure 1 shows the distribution of survey participants; Figure 2 shows the distribution by gender; and Figure 3 shows the distribution by educational background.

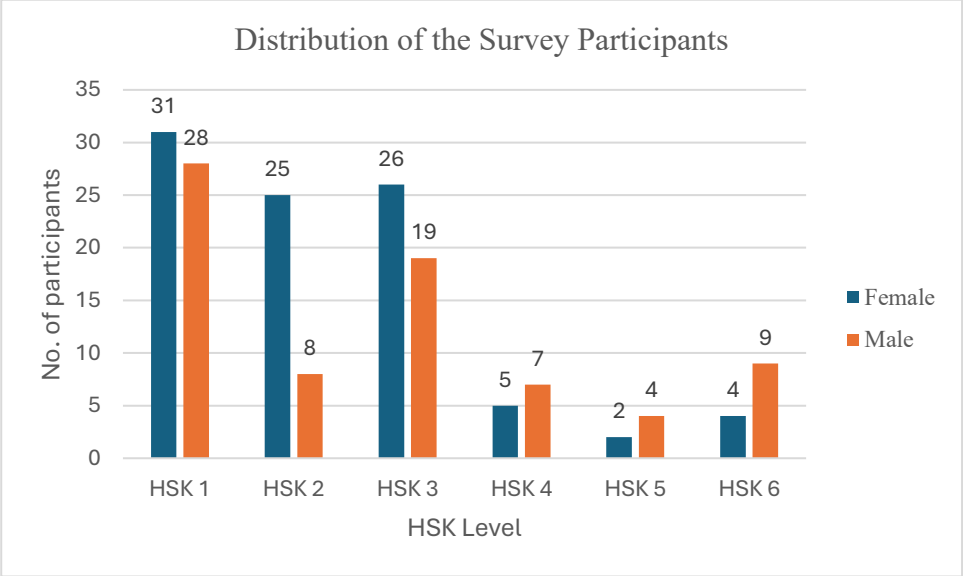

Figure 1. Distribution of the survey participants.

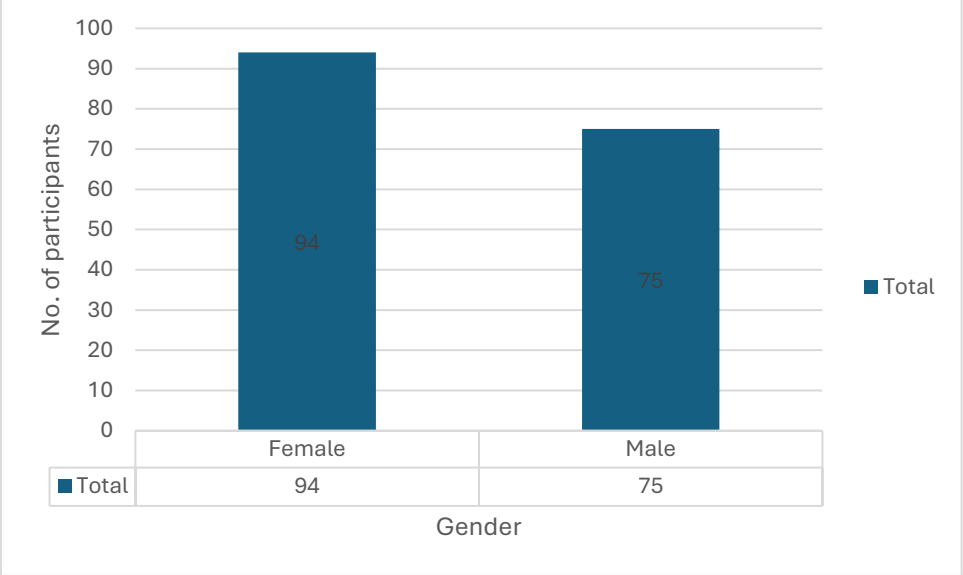

Figure 2. The survey participants in terms of gender.

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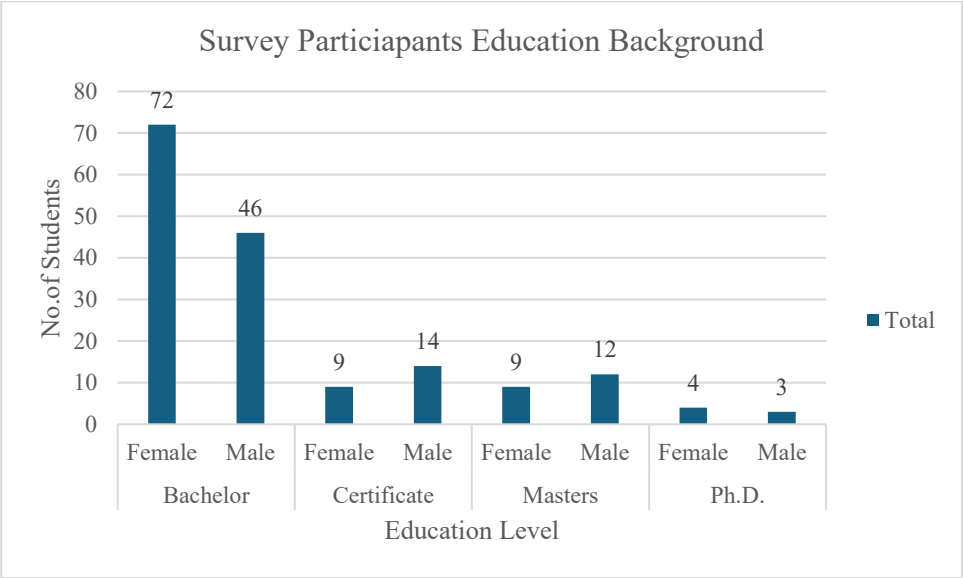

Figure 3. The participants' educational background.

Based on the University of Nairobi's mission and vision, and those of the Institute, the research analyzed the nature of the activities undertaken by the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi by examining the overriding theme in the institute's news posts. The figure below shows the activities of the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi over 2 years (April 2022 to April 2024), including Cultural Exchange, Language Proficiency, Academic Workshops, Chinese Cultural Events, Scholarship and Exchange programme Activities, and Links to Industry. The results show that academic and Chinese language activities take center stage. However, there is a need to improve Kenya-China cultural Exchanges to foster mutual understanding of both cultures and to enhance academic workshops and teacher training.

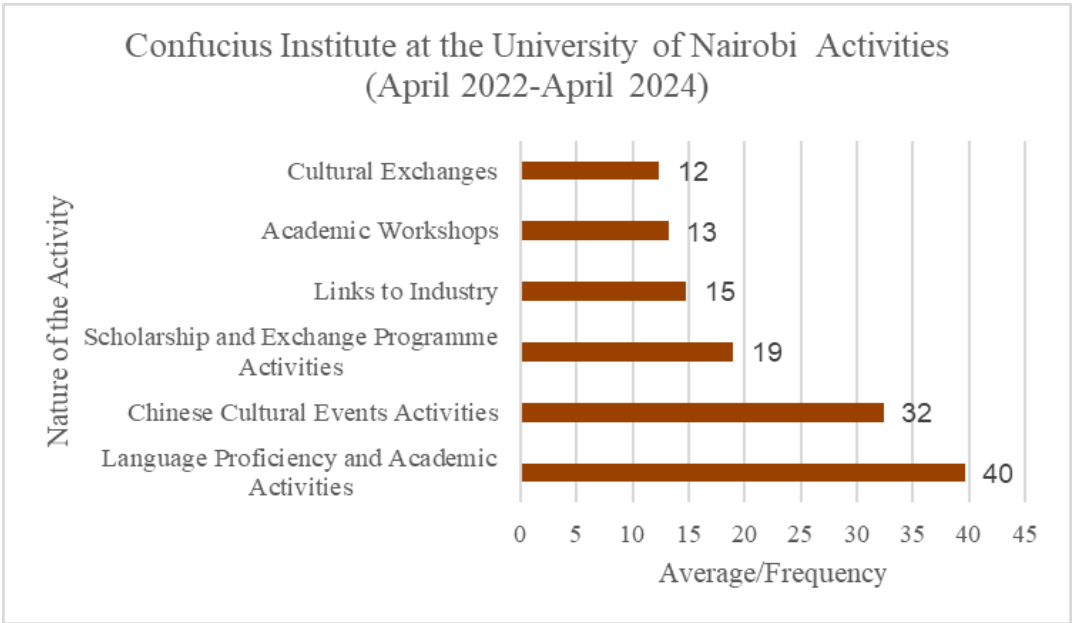

Figure 4. Activities conducted by the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi.

(Source: CIUON Official WeChat Account)

4.2. Chinese Language Teaching and Learning

At the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi, Chinese Language Teaching and Learning (CLTL) is a vibrant and essential part of the larger educational scene. The important aspects of CLTL are thoroughly examined in this section, along with the challenges of teaching and learning Chinese,

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student demographics and motivations, curriculum and pedagogical approaches, teaching materials and resources, and the cultivation of non-native teachers, also known as "local Chinese teachers," in the context of teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL).

4.2.1. Student Demographics and Motivations

Our findings indicate that students have a wide range of reasons for wanting to learn Chinese. In light of the strategic significance of Chinese language competency in a global context, some are motivated by academic or professional requirements. A desire for future prospects in Sino-Kenyan relations, a personal interest, or a curiosity about culture drives some. As important stakeholders, students expressed the following opinions about why they wanted to study Chinese:

Response no. 3 Interest in the language and culture, and interest in China's economic trajectory; it had links to my study area. (a PhD student)

Response 155: Scholarship awards (a female HSK 3 student studying Bachelor of Arts)

Response no. 14: I got to interact with so many Chinese people at my workplace, which created a language barrier, which is what made me join the class. (HSK 2 female student aged 36–45 years)

Response 27: I was doing business with Chinese companies, which required me to study the language to facilitate communication. (A male HSK 2 student aged 36-45)

Response no 110: With the rise of China in the World politics, I was motivated to learn Chinese language, Culture and for career progress, (HSK 1 male student 36-45 from the field of International Relations)

Response no 59: Attaining a scholarship to China and availability of jobs (A male HSK 1 student aged 18-25 years from the field of Education)

4.2.2. Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches

The research found that students gave both native and non-native teachers' knowledge and methodologies of teaching the Chinese language high ratings, as indicated below:

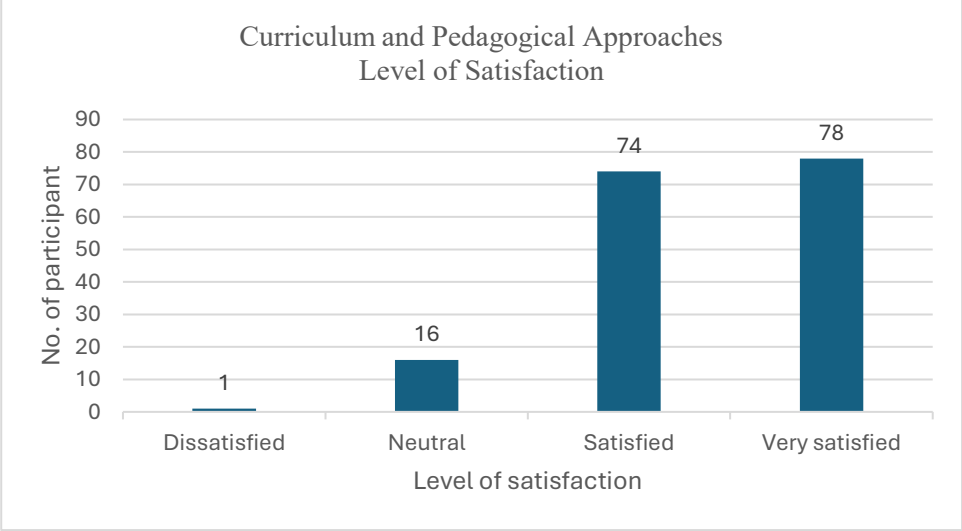

Figure 5. Level of satisfaction with the curriculum and pedagogical approaches used.

4.2.3. Teaching Materials and Resources

These responses encapsulate these sentiments:

Response 168: The learning environment is very nice and have (...has...) adequate resources

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Response 58: By offering customized programs for different proficiency levels, age groups, and learning objectives to cater to diverse learner needs.

Response 7: Learning materials were not enough

Response no 65: No challenges but we need more materials

Response 98: Lack of resources and that we cannot borrow books from the library

Response no 110: Access of reading materials

The research showed that most students are satisfied with the teaching materials adopted by the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi.

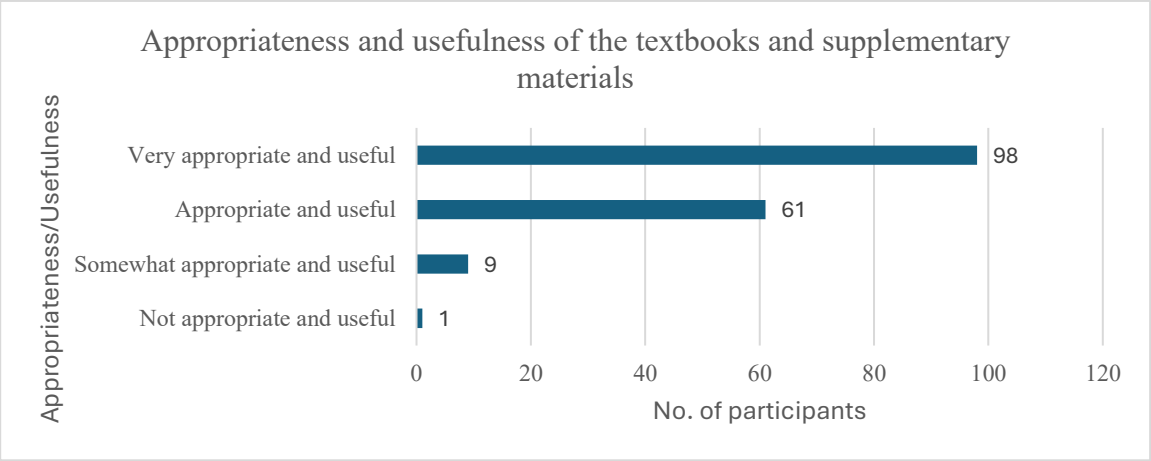

Figure 6. The appropriateness and usefulness of the learning materials.

4.2.4. Challenges in Teaching and Learning Chinese

For instance, regarding the issue of availability, one of the participants, when asked whether they had encountered any challenges when learning Chinese, replied:

"Yes, absolutely 💯, Inadequate learning resources, like Chinese dictionaries. That has been my greatest challenge, I enjoy my Classes a lot but when I study and I come across a new word which I don't know the meaning of, it gets very challenging to find the actual meaning since search engines like Google translate don't have all the words, Pinyin or Characters and this can get challenging and tiresome having to ask (mentions the teacher's name) for word meanings and translation every time." (Response no. 123)

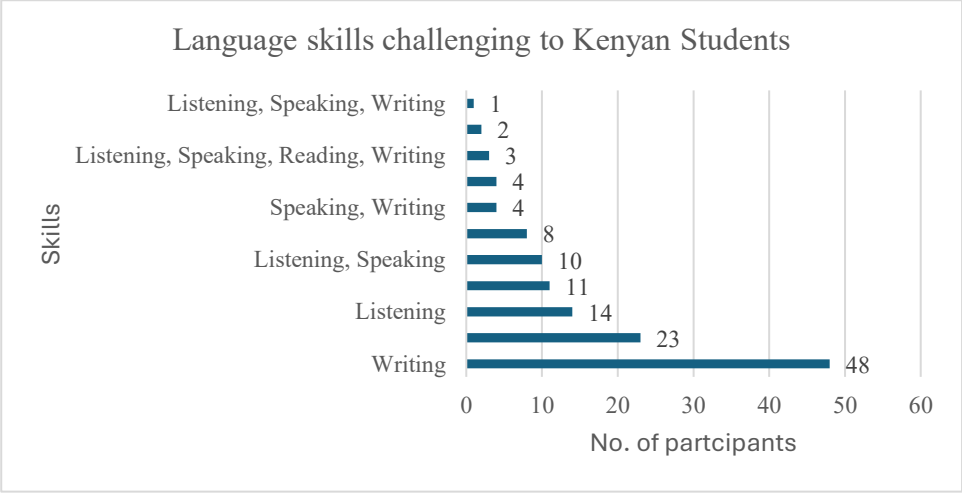

Figure 7. The language skills the students consider challenging to learn.

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4.2.5. The Cultivation of Non-native (Kenyan, commonly referred to as local Chinese teachers) Teachers

The data gathered during the time of this research showed that the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi had only 5 non-native Chinese teachers (with only 2 actively engaged in Chinese teaching) and 10 native Chinese teachers (Revised Regulations and Syllabus for Bachelor of Arts in Chinese, October 2023, Appendix IV: Academic Staff)(Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Linguistics and Languages, 2023).

This research found that many share these sentiments when asked: What challenges, if any, have you faced in learning Chinese at the Confucius Institute? How can the Confucius Institute improve its Chinese language education Programmes? Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with Chinese language education at the Confucius Institute?

Response 147: Let the institution mix native and non-native during lessons, this is what I mean; during my study of HSK 1, I was taught by native Chinese only

Response no. 6: The local teachers are very nice

Response 112: The Chinese teacher should also learn to communicate in Kiswahili for clear explanations

Response 108: Have more of Kenyan lectures

Response no. 9: Employ more local Chinese teachers to teach students; they understand the students better because they faced the same

Response 21: switching of tutors

Response 68: Understanding the teacher since their English is not perfect

4.3. University of Nairobi Confucius Institute HSK/HSKK Analysis Results

Data collected over 12 years (2012-2023) from registered students across various proficiency levels and examination records indicate that the Confucius Institute at the University registered 3645 students for various HSK levels. Kiswahili is the mother tongue of Kenyan students. Regarding gender breakdown, female students dominate at 63%, while male students make up 37%.

Figure 8 shows the UoN Confucius Institute, where the gender distribution reveals a notable imbalance, with more female (女) than male (男) students. This suggests a potential gender disparity within the institute's student population. The data indicates that approximately 63% of the students are female, while the remaining 37% are male. The same gender disparity is observed among the institute's faculty members, with over 70% being female teachers, as reflected within the institute.

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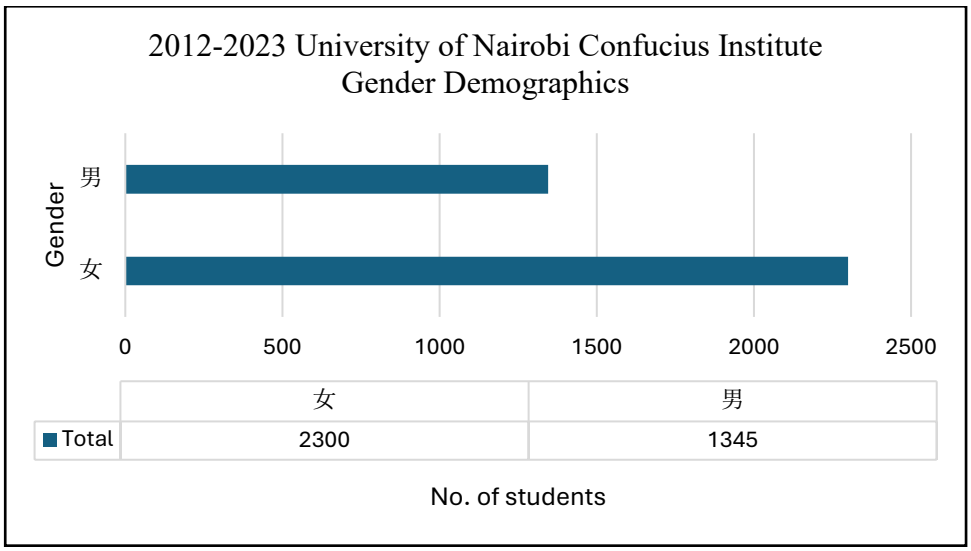

Figure 8. Confucius at the University of Nairobi gender demographics over time (2012-2023).

Figure 9 illustrates student enrollment trends from 2012 to 2023, highlighting fluctuations over the years. Notably, 2023 witnessed a substantial surge in enrollment compared to previous years. Conversely, in 2013, the lowest enrollment figures were recorded. The number of students enrolled in other years remained relatively consistent, indicating stability in enrollment patterns. This trend highlights the dynamic nature of student enrollment, with occasional peaks and troughs, while also suggesting a sustained interest in the Chinese language throughout the analyzed period.

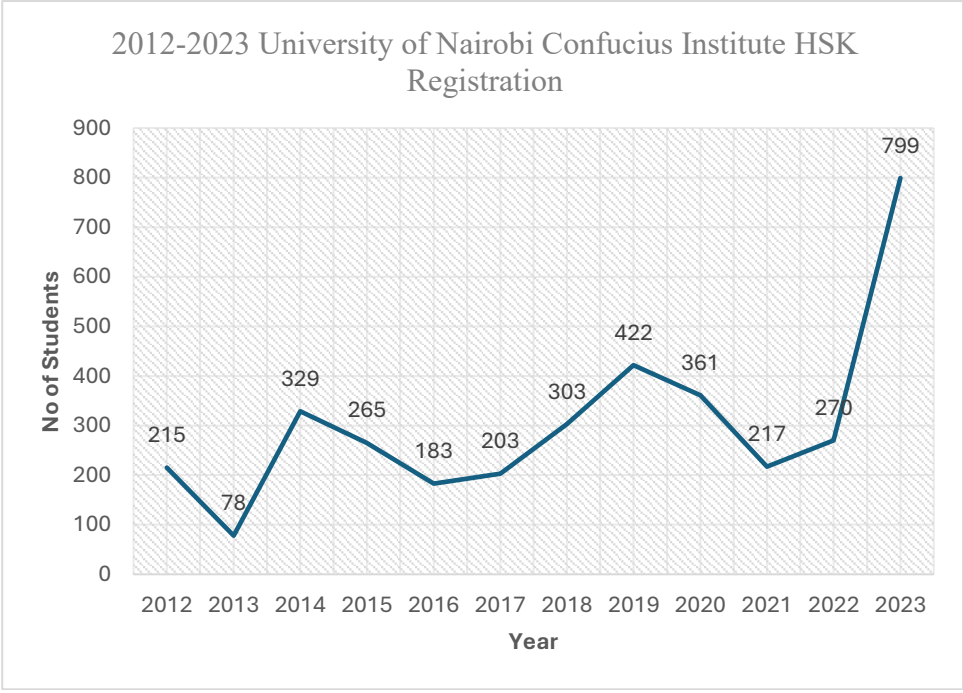

Figure 9. The HSK enrollment trends from 2012-2023.

Figure 10 shows the distribution of ages among students, revealing that the majority are over 18 years old, while those under 18 constitute a smaller proportion, with fewer than 50 individuals. This distribution suggests that the student population predominantly comprises adults, with fewer students taking the YCT exams. The prominence of individuals over 18 years old indicates a higher representation of post-secondary or adult education students in the Institute. At the same time, the smaller number of YCT exam takers suggests a lesser emphasis on younger students.

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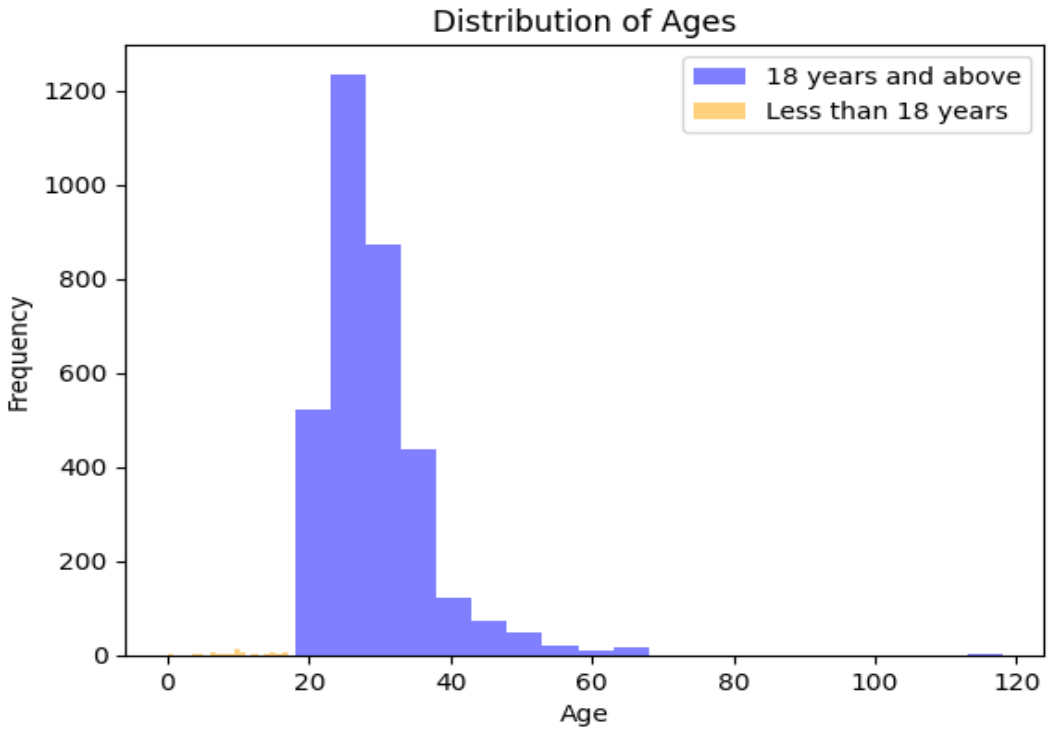

Figure 10. The distribution of ages among students.

Figure 11, illustrates the distribution of mother tongues among students, revealing a notable predominance of Swahili speakers over English and Somali speakers. Swahili emerges as the most prevalent mother tongue, indicating its significant presence in Kenya. Conversely, English and Somali speakers exhibit comparatively lower frequencies. This distribution sheds light on the linguistic diversity within the student population, emphasizing the prominence of Swahili as a primary language of communication and suggesting potential implications for language-based research in the studies dealing with analyzing the Kenyan learner and the acquisition of Chinese as a foreign or second language. However, it is important to note that Kenyan culture is multilingual; the average Kenyan speaks at least three languages (mother tongue, Kiswahili, and English).

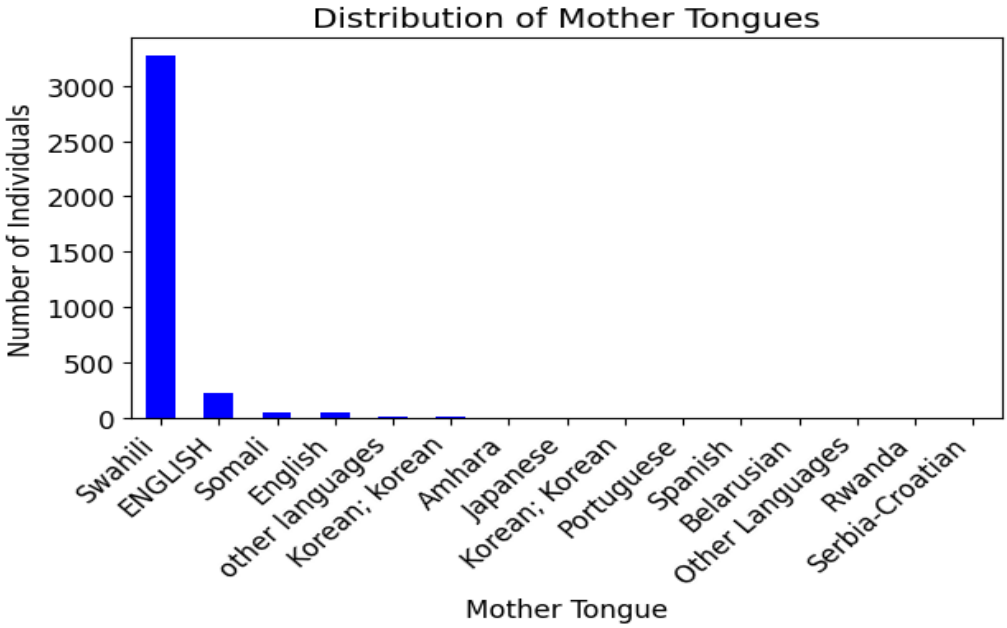

Figure 11. shows the mother tongues among students.

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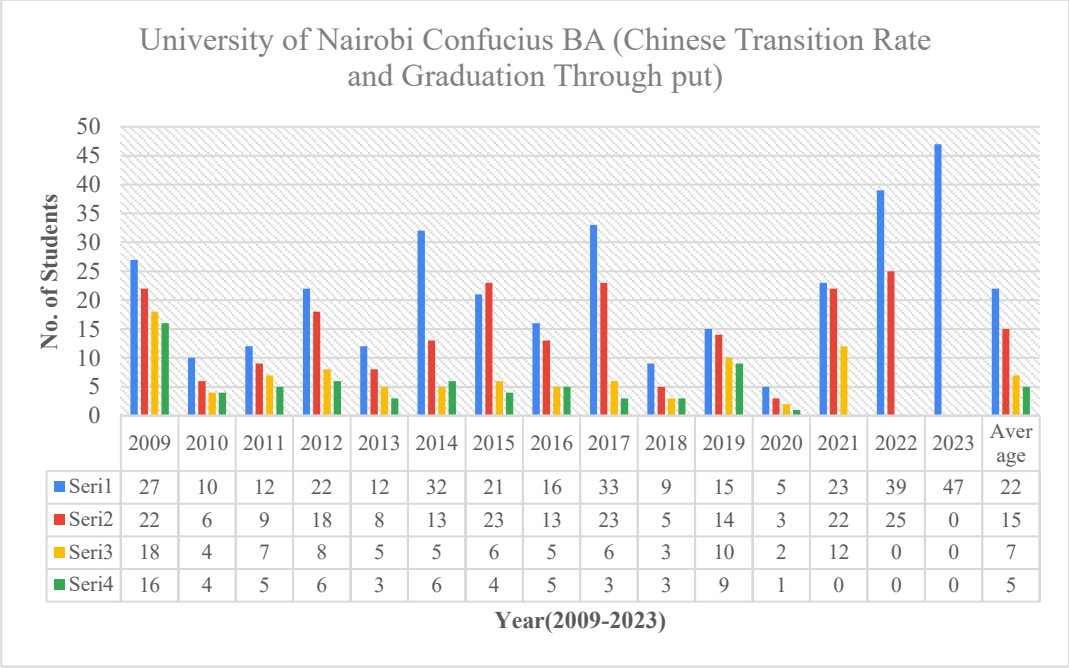
4.4. Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi Transition Rate and Graduation Throughput (2009-2023)

Figure 12 shows the University of Nairobi Bachelor of Arts in Chinese Transition Rate and Graduation Throughput (2009-2023). The data indicates the students who have taken at least 2 courses per semester over the 4 years. However, the students with student registration numbers 2021, 2022, and 2023 are still in their 4th, 3rd, and 2nd years of study, respectively, which was factored into the average calculation. The BA in Chinese has been acclaimed as one of the pioneer bachelor's degrees in Chinese Programmes in Africa, launched in 2009, with the first cohort enrolled the same year. A total of 27 students were enrolled. The analysis found that since its establishment, enrollment over the years has been on a steady increase. On the contrary, graduation throughput has been on the decline. There is a critical need to address this trend so that similar occurrences do not occur in other Programmes, for example, the newly established Bachelor of Education in Chinese launched recently at the University of Nairobi.



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Average
Seri1	27	10	12	22	12	32	21	16	33	9	15	5	23	39	47	22
Seri2	22	6	9	18	8	13	23	13	23	5	14	3	22	25	0	15
Seri3	18	4	7	8	5	5	6	5	6	3	10	2	12	0	0	7
Seri4	16	4	5	6	3	6	4	5	3	3	9	1	0	0	0	5

Figure 12. Transition and graduation throughput.

5. Discussion

5.1. Student Demographics and Motivations:

To tailor teaching approaches to the diverse needs of learners, it is critical to understand the demographics and motivations of students enrolled in Chinese language courses. At the Confucius Institute, students reflect a broad spectrum of individuals, including junior and high school students, undergraduate and postgraduate students, professionals (State Department for Immigration and Citizen Services under the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Kenya Airports Authority, and Kenya Defense Forces), and ordinary community members and partners with whom Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi has signed Memorandum of Understanding.

Our findings indicate that students have a wide range of reasons for wanting to learn Chinese. In light of the strategic significance of Chinese language competency in a global context, some are motivated by academic or professional requirements. A desire for future prospects in Sino-Kenyan relations, a personal interest, or a curiosity about culture drives some. The diverse motivations contribute to a rich and dynamic classroom environment. Instructors at the Confucius Institute are

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cognizant of their students' varied backgrounds and motivations, adapting their teaching methods to cater to these diverse needs. This diversity enriches the learning experience and fosters cross-cultural understanding among students.

5.2. Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches

The curriculum at the Confucius Institute is designed to provide a structured, comprehensive learning experience for students from diverse backgrounds. The curriculum covers linguistic aspects, cultural components, and practical language skills, creating a well-rounded educational experience. However, the curriculum needs to be tailored to suit different proficiency levels, ensuring a systematic progression for learners. The pedagogical approaches instructors employ are fundamental to the success of CLTL. The use of communicative language teaching methods, interactive sessions, and immersive cultural experiences contribute to a holistic learning environment. Instructors at the Confucius Institute need to do more to integrate real-world scenarios and cultural contexts into language lessons, fostering a deeper understanding of the language. Moreover, instructors have leveraged technology, integrating interactive multimedia tools and online resources into their teaching methods. These technological tools facilitate language acquisition and cater to different learning styles and preferences.

The following was observed from “Revised Regulations and Syllabus for Bachelor of Arts in Chinese (edited 2023).” (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Linguistics and Languages, 2023)Under the Mode of Delivery, the syllabus stipulates that “face-to-face mode will include traditional instructional methods such as lectures, class presentations, seminars, and tutorials; open, distance, and e-learning mode with the language laboratories and subscribed online resources available at the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi,..., this mode constitutes the perfect environment to foster asynchronous learning; blended learning mode, which is an educational approach that combines traditional classroom instruction with online, digital learning methods. Blended learning…a mixture of face-to-face and e-learning modes, therefore, constitutes a golden opportunity for synchronous and asynchronous teaching to complement each other to the great benefit of the learners.”

5.3. Teaching Materials and Resources

The availability and quality of teaching materials significantly impact the effectiveness of CLTL. The Confucius Institute uses diverse teaching materials to enhance the learning experience. Textbooks are selected to align with the curriculum and serve as foundational resources. The content in these textbooks often includes texts, language exercises, cultural insights, and real-world scenarios to facilitate a comprehensive learning experience (Revised Regulations and Syllabus for Bachelor of Arts in Chinese, October 2023 Appendix III: Core Texts and Journals)(Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Linguistics and Languages, 2023).

In addition to traditional textbooks, the institute uses multimedia resources, such as videos and online platforms like the Chinese Plus platform (http://www.chineseplus.net/) and apps, featuring authentic materials, including Chinese literature, films, and music, to expose students to real-world language use and cultural nuances. This integration of authentic materials enhances the program's cultural immersion. Language learning apps and online platforms complement traditional teaching materials, providing students with additional resources for self-directed learning. Using various materials ensures that the learning experience remains dynamic, engaging, and relevant to the needs and preferences of the diverse students (Revised Regulations and Syllabus for Bachelor of Arts in Chinese, October 2023, Appendix I: Facilities, Appendix II: Equipment and Teaching Materials) (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Linguistics and Languages, 2023).

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5.4. Challenges in Teaching and Learning Chinese

Wawire (2023), in his discussion of the Kenyan educational context, provides insight into the difficulties learners face. Transitioning to a tonal language with a different orthography, like Chinese, takes a lot of work. Their study shows why specific teaching strategies are needed to address such difficulties. This requires that, in the Kenyan context, we carefully identify and address each problem to design interventions that help students acquire Chinese as a second language.

Despite the successes of CLTL at the Confucius Institute, several challenges have been encountered, making personalized teaching difficult. To address these challenges, instructors need to employ innovative teaching strategies, such as tonal pronunciation drills and interactive character-learning activities. Adapting the curriculum to accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences should be an ongoing process that ensures students' challenges are addressed effectively. The Confucius Institute employed continuous feedback mechanisms and regular assessments, such as formative assessment, and the new Competency-Based Education curriculum system was used to refine teaching and learning methods (Basic Education Curriculum Framework, 2019).

5.5. The Cultivation of Non-native (Kenyan, also referred to as local Chinese teachers) Teachers of TCFL

The cultivation of indigenous (non-native) TCFL teachers is core to the sustainability of the Confucius Institute. The long-term sustainability and relevance of Chinese language education in Kenya is a concern not just for the Confucius Institute, but also for all the policymakers and stakeholders in Chinese education. There have been attempts to cultivate indigenous teachers to undergo training programs in China and locally to ensure they possess the necessary linguistic proficiency, pedagogical skills, and cultural understanding. By cultivating indigenous teachers, the Confucius Institute is making steps towards localization. Indigenous teachers bring a nuanced understanding of Kenyan cultural perspectives, integrating them into the curriculum. Through localization, the Chinese language education program is guaranteed to maintain its cultural sensitivity and relevance within its operating context. Indigenous teachers also act as cultural bridges, enhancing the understanding and connection between Chinese language learners and the broader Kenyan community. Their presence fosters an environment of cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

However, much remains to be done regarding the involvement of local teachers in the institute's outreach initiatives. Indigenous teachers are better placed to actively engage with local communities by organizing cultural events, language workshops, and outreach programs. This community engagement not only promotes the broader goals of cultural exchange between China and Kenya but also demystifies myths and misconceptions about learning Chinese, making it more accessible and relatable. The emphasis should be on building mutual and lasting educational and cultural ties. The presence of local educators improves the sustainability of Chinese language education programs (since they can work for many years, as opposed to Chinese teachers (sent from China as volunteers, directors, etc.) who change after every 1, 2, or 4 years), ensuring that they continue to flourish and adjust to the changing requirements of the Kenyan context. The data gathered during the time of this research showed that the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi had only 5 non-native Chinese teachers (with only 2 actively engaged in Chinese teaching) and 10 native Chinese teachers (Revised Regulations and Syllabus for Bachelor of Arts in Chinese, October 2023, Appendix IV: Academic Staff)(Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Linguistics and Languages, 2023).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi is a testament to the enduring partnership between China and Kenya. The Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi offers a

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dynamic and adaptable Chinese Language Teaching and Learning program that integrates diverse elements to create a comprehensive, culturally rich learning experience. The curriculum, pedagogical approaches, teaching materials, student demographics, motivations, challenges, and the cultivation of indigenous teachers collectively help to ensure the program's success and impact.

The adaptability of teaching methods, integration of diverse teaching materials, understanding of student motivations, and emphasis on indigenous teacher cultivation position the Confucius Institute as a key player in fostering Chinese language education in Kenya. Given the importance of Chinese language education in the global landscape, the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi serves as a model of effective and sustainable language education. Through its multifaceted approach, the institute develops linguistic proficiency and fosters cross-cultural understanding, contributing to broader goals of cultural exchange and cooperation between China and Kenya.

7. Suggestions

Its history, mission, diverse language programs, and faculty collectively contribute to its role as a catalyst for linguistic, cultural, and economic ties between the two nations. As it continues to evolve, the CIUON remains an invaluable asset in the global landscape of Chinese language education, contributing to the shared vision of a more interconnected and culturally enriched world.

The CIUON should enhance commitment to cultural exchange, language proficiency, and academic collaboration to underscore its significance not only for the students directly involved but also for broader Kenyan-China relations. The CIUON should be cognizant of its students' varied backgrounds and motivations, and adapt its teaching methods to meet these diverse needs. The curriculum needs to be tailored and localized to suit different needs and proficiency levels, ensuring a systematic progression for learners. The Confucius Institute at University of Nairobi should work closely with the Kenyan government in the cultivation and integration of local (non-native) TCFL teachers into the Kenyan system, such as in Ministry of Education, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Education, Kenya National Examination Council, the Teacher Service Commission, and universities which is critical to the Confucius Institute's sustainable future, as is Chinese teaching and learning in Kenya in general.

Declarations

Conflicts of Interest. no conflict of interest.

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