

ADDING VALUE TO AFRICA-CHINA RELATIONSHIP: UNIZIK CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE COMMUNICATING CHINA TO THE WORLD

BY

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Abstract

The Confucius Institutes (CIs), a window into China for many people, have been a major conveyor of Chinese language and culture since 2004 when the first CI was established in Seoul. Before their establishment, the world had little acquaintance with both the Chinese language and Chinese culture. The language was not spoken by the vast majority of non-native speakers who can speak it today. Similarly, general awareness of the culture was limited to things like kung fu and chop sticks. Africa is, perhaps, the region where the existence of the CIs is being felt the most. Due to the aggressiveness of certain CIs in that continent, the Chinese language and culture have become popular with Africans. This paper is about the role of the Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University in communicating China to Nigerians. Established twelve years ago, that CI (popularly known as UNIZIK CI) is the leading purveyor of the Chinese language and culture in Nigeria.

Keywords: Confucius Institutes, Chinese language and culture, Africa, UNIZIK CI.

1. Introduction

One of the 'wonders' of the twenty-first century is the breakneck speed at which barriers between nations and peoples are crumbling, courtesy of that astounding phenomenon called globalization. Among the factors driving that phenomenon are the language/culture institutes being used by big/world powers to extend the reach of their global influence. France became the first country to use such instruments of soft power in 1883 when it established Alliance Francaise. Other major language/culture institutes, in the chronological order of their establishment, are: Italy's Societa Dante Alighieri (1889), Portugal's Instituto Camoes (1924), the UK's British Council (1934), Germany's Goethe-Institut (1951), Spain's Instituto Cervantes (1991) and China's Confucius Institute (2004). The lingo-cultural imperialism of those countries that have established such institutes is one of the factors threatening mother tongues with extinction in different parts of the world. Writing about this in his work on the linguistic imperialism of the English language, Phillipson (1992, pp. 7-8) says:

The English linguistic invasion has been so pervasive that some governments, representing both small linguistic communities, for instance Slovenia... and large ones, for instance France..., have adopted measures to stem the tide and shore up their own languages, particularly in the area of neologisms and technical concepts. Such measures, which are likely to be only partially successful, reflect an anxiety that essential cultural and linguistic values are at risk.

China is the latest world power to add a language/culture institute to its soft power toolbox. The first Confucius Institute (CI) was established in Seoul in 2004. Currently, there are over five

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**The Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University

hundred CIs in different parts of the world. The CI memorializes Confucius (551-479 BC), the most famous of the sages that lived in ancient China. Confucius, who lived during the Spring and Autumn Period, left behind a philosophy that has influenced morality and politics for about three thousand years, not only in China but also in neighbouring countries such as Japan, the Koreas and Vietnam. Most of his sayings have been collected in *The Analects of Confucius*. The CI is second only to Alliance Française in terms of number; there are currently over 500 CIs as against 1,016 Alliance. The CI was established to address certain fundamental needs:

- To start with, China must have felt the need for a new image after the Cold War. China's image during most of the Cold War was one of a country that was perennially on a war footing. Its revolutionary diplomacy sought to foment socialist revolution throughout the world (Clubb, 1978, pp. 425-450). However, with the end of the Cold War, there was the need for the country to acquire an image befitting its status and role in the post-Cold War international system. All the big powers were sufficiently aware about the criticality of soft power after the Cold War, hence the increasing popularity of soft power since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of the Soviet behemoth.
- The other need was the need to improve communication between China and the rest of the world for whom China had become a one-stop workshop.
- The third need was the need to mainstream the Chinese language into the post-Cold War scheme of things with a view to making it commensurate with the country's new status as a world power. Until the end of the Cold War, the Chinese language, though one of the five
- working languages of the UN since its founding in 1945, was a marginal language in the international scheme of things.
- Lastly, the decision to launch the CI could be said to be a critical component of *zou chu qu* ('Go Out' Policy or 'Going Global' Strategy) launched by former President Jiang Zemin in 1999 "to promote Chinese investments abroad".

As Chinese investors ventured overseas, Beijing must have felt the need to reduce the communication difficulties they were bound to encounter as they sought to gain a foothold in overseas markets. Many Chinese firms are major beneficiaries of the CI programme, and are supporting the programme in their overseas bases. For example, China Construction and Civil Engineering Company (CCCEC) in 2018 donated two boreholes to the CI at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and one to the Confucius Classroom (CC) at Federal Polytechnic, Oko. Similarly, different Chinese firms sponsor the annual Chinese Bridge Competition (CBC) involving the CIs in Nigeria.

Unlike the other language institutes, the Confucius Institutes are located within university campuses. Confucius Classroom (CC) and Confucius Teaching Point (CTP) may be sited at a university college or primary school under a partnership between Chinese universities and foreign universities or colleges; or between the CIs and local universities, colleges or primary schools. Thus, the three CIs in Nigeria, for example, are sited at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, University of Lagos and Ado Bayero University. Similarly, the CCs and CTPs established by the CIs are sited in educational institutions. For example, those by UNIZIK-CI which are sited at the Federal Polytechnic, Oko; Enugu State College of Education (Technical),

Enugu; the Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu; Nnamdi Azikiwe University Secondary School; Nnamdi Azikiwe University Primary School; and the University of Port Harcourt – CTP may be established to serve a diasporic Chinese community. Every CI is established jointly by a Chinese university and its foreign partner; for instance, UNIZIK-CI was established under a partnership between Xiamen University (China) and Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

This requirement for Hanban-supported language centres to be sited inside schools, as explained by the Chinese Director of one of the CIs in Africa (interview, 1 April 2020), is intended to curtail expenditure, guarantee sustainability and availability of basic infrastructure as well as insulate the CIs from corruption/fraud and diversion. Hanban (the Confucius Institute Headquarters) is a not-for-profit organisation (*Constitution and By-laws of the Confucius Institutes*, Article 12). Hanban does not directly supervise the CIs; rather, supervision is left to the Chinese universities that contrived the partnership. Partnership with foreign universities is highly sought after by Chinese universities. Once a foreign partner is found, the Chinese university approaches Hanban for permission to establish a CI. Such universities view foreign partnership as a privileged role in the *zouquchu* ("Go abroad") project, priding themselves as exporters of Chinese language and culture. The CIs were mentioned among the vehicles for executing the "Going Global Cultural Diplomacy" in the text of the "Twelfth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development" announced on 6 February 2012. One of the core requirements for CI application is "That there [must be] a demand for learning the Chinese language and culture at the applicant's location" (*Constitution and By-laws of the Confucius Institutes*, Article 19b). Each CI is run by Lectors comprising Directors (who head the CIs), teachers (who may head the CC and CTP as coordinators) and volunteers (who are still doing a first degree or do not yet possess a master's degree).

Africa is among the regions where Chinese language study is mushrooming. It is also the region where the CI project is encountering the least opposition (King, 2018). The first CI on the continent was established at the University of Nairobi in 2005, just a year after the first CI was opened in Seoul. The choice of Kenya is understandable. Kenya can be described as 'China's Africa operational base'. It hosts Xinhua, CGTN (China Global Television Network), etc. But the continent has only one of the ten model CIs in the world – the model CI established in 2016 at the University of Zambia. Model CIs are turnkey CIs built and furnished by Hanban. The CIs have been integrated into the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), seeing that it is through them that China now disburses most of the scholarships it announced during FOCAC meeting.

This paper is about the Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. The Institute (UNIZIK-CI) has emerged as one of the most important quasi- State actors in Nigeria-China relations. Its alumni, whose number is growing with leaps and bounds and now runs into hundreds, will undoubtedly become important actors in China-Africa relations in the foreseeable future. The paper discusses the role of the CI in the development of cultural and migration exchange between China and Nigeria, as well as its role as a powerful channel for communicating China to the world.

2. Unizik Confucius Institute: Widening The Footprints Of Chinese Language And Culture In Nigeria

The effort to make the Chinese language a critical component of Nigeria's relations with China began about twelve years ago and should be attributed to the gust in economic interaction

between Nigeria and China during the Obasanjo presidency. The three universities involved in the race to establish the first CI in the country were: Ado Bayero University, Kano (BUK), Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK) and the University of Lagos (Unilag). The odds favoured BUK. However, the first CI established on its campus was still-born. The Chinese Embassy must have factored in three essential realities when it accepted to establish the CIs:

1. The decision to establish what would have been the country's first CI at BUK must have been influenced by the fact that the university has been the preferred destination for most Chinese travelling to West Africa to study the Hausa language. Hausa is one of the few African languages (the only Nigerian language) that are taught at Peking University and spoken on China Radio International. The Chinese Language Centre (not a CI) at BUK was only established in 2019.
2. The CI at Unilag would serve the large Chinese diaspora in Lagos and neighbouring Ogun State. Also Lagos is the economic nerve of the country, with many Chinese firms or indigenous firms with Chinese employees.
3. The CI to be sited at UNIZIK would serve the communication needs of thousands of Igbo traders who travel to China yearly. After all, the *Constitution and By-laws of the Confucius Institutes* (Article 19b) requires applications for the permission to establish a CI to demonstrate, inter alia, that "there is a demand for learning the Chinese language and culture at the applicant's location".

It can be said, without fear of contradiction, that Chinese is now the fourth most widely studied foreign language in Nigeria, after English, Arabic and French. The language is now being avidly studied in primary and secondary schools as well as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. It has been included in the primary and secondary school syllabus in Lagos. It is also being offered in many private schools and language centres in places such as Abuja, Enugu, Lagos and Nnewi. It is also conspicuously displayed on banners by Chinese firms at their construction sites. Nigerians are learning Chinese for a multiplicity of different reasons.

Picture 1: The Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK-CI)



China's presence in UNIZIK in particular, and Anambra State and Nigeria in general, is rapidly expanding, with positive outcomes. In addition to the HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) Certificate Programme of the UNIZIK-CI, various other programmes and services are now available, to the mutual benefit of China and Nigeria:

- Four-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree programme in Chinese Studies, part of which is one-year immersion in China in the third year of the programme. Unlike the HSK which is focused on the Chinese language, the BA programme has expanded what is taught about China to include Chinese History, Politics, International Relations, Economy, Philosophy, etc.
- Course on "Chinese Language" taught as part of the MBA (Master of Business Administration) Programme at the UNIZIK Business School. This enables Business Executives (many of whom are already doing business with China or intend to do so) to

learn Chinese, and those who desire deeper knowledge of China and Chinese language and culture also enroll at the Confucius Institute.

- Confucius Institute Outreach: the Confucius Classroom (CC) at Federal Polytechnic, Oke in Anambra State (established in 2012); the Confucius Teaching Point (CTP) at UNIZIK High School; the Confucius Teaching Point at UNIZIK Primary School; the Confucius Teaching Point at Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu in Enugu State (established 2015, but currently inactive); the Confucius Teaching Point at Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu in Ebonyi State (established in 2018, but currently inactive); the Confucius Teaching Point at the University of Port Harcourt (established in 2019); the Chinese Language and Culture Centres (established by the Chinese Embassy but partially affiliated to the Confucius Institute through HSK) at the Chinese Cultural Centre in Abuja, Imo State University and the University of Nigeria.
- “Chinese Half Hour”: This was a 30-minute phone-in programme by UNIZIK-CI on UNIZIK FM – the community/campus radio station of Nnamdi Azikiwe University which is received within the university community and far beyond. Although this popular programme has been discontinued, it played a major role in fostering interest in Chinese language and culture and China itself.

These are popular and well-patronized programmes and services. The course on “Business Chinese” at UNIZIK Business School will understandably become particularly popular because of the nature of the Igbo people who are the indigenes of Anambra State where Nnamdi Azikiwe University and its Confucius Institute are domiciled. The Anambra Igbo person in particular, and the Igbo of South-East Nigeria generally, are highly entrepreneurial, and Igbo business men and women can be found in all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, as well as in most countries of the world – and increasingly in China in recent years. The Igbo, who have a high migratory propensity, constitute the majority of Nigerian diaspora in Guangzhou as well as the largest African ethnic group in that city (Elochukwu, 2019, p. 137). Due to their ubiquity in that city, many Chinese erroneously think that every black person in that city is Igbo (Elochukwu, 2017, fieldwork observation). It is not surprising, therefore, that knowledge of China, as well as Chinese language and culture, is becoming quite popular among the many persons and companies in Nigeria already doing business or wishing to do business in/with China. Similarly, the benefits from the BA Degree programme are immense for Nigeria and especially for the young people studying for the BA Degree, many of them on scholarship from Chinese Government.

2.1. Unizik-Ci As An Agent Of Culture

Generally, the Confucius Institute is a powerful channel of communication for China and the Chinese way of life. It is, first and foremost, a State vehicle for the globalization of the Chinese language. But as we all know, language and culture are inseparably linked. As the *Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes* (Article 1) clearly state:

Confucius Institutes devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese language, to enhancing understanding of the Chinese language and culture by these peoples, to strengthening educational and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and

other countries, to deepening friendly relationships with other nations, to promoting the development of multi-culturalism, and to construct a harmonious world.

As noted by Wang (2018), "In addition to promoting language learning, Confucius Institutes also engage in culture sharing." Consequently, as Nigerians learn the Chinese language, they are consciously or unconsciously imbibing Chinese culture too.

The UNIZIK Confucius Institute has emerged as a major permeable membrane for the diffusion of culture between Nigerians and Chinese. The CI, which is playing a very important role as a cauldron for the mingling of Nigerian and Chinese cultures, was established in 2008 and in 2015, the Chinese Embassy opened the first Chinese Cultural Experience Centre in Nigeria at the same Institute. Its students come from different ethnic groups in Nigeria, and this has produced a very unique local cultural mix; because of its location, the Igbo culture predominates in the mix.

Here in Nigeria, the CI is giving Chinese teachers, who are disseminating the Chinese culture, the opportunity to learn African culture first-hand through immersion – enabling them to become knowledgeable about such core Igbo cultural activities as "*Iri Ji* (new yam festival) and "*Iwa Oji* (kolanut ritual), *AkwamOzu/IkwaOzu* (funeral ceremony), *Igbankwu* (traditional marriage ceremony), *Ofala* (celebration of Royalty), *Echichi* (traditional title conferment) and *NkuputaNwa* (child dedication). The lecturers consciously and unconsciously imbibe these and other aspects of the local culture, while imparting their own culture to the locals. They also come face-to-face with the culture during classes and when they go shopping at the local open markets. The current Director of the Institute (Prof. Yu Zhangbao) was given a traditional chieftaincy title *EziOyi of UNIZIK* (Good friend of UNIZIK) by the Student Union Government in 2019 in recognition of his role in increasing the number of scholarships received from China. One of the lecturers, Yang Song (widely known by his Igbo name, Ifeanyichukwu), who has spent eight years in Africa (two in Zimbabwe and six at UNIZIK), is on the verge of completing his PhD at UNIZIK on Igbo chieftaincy institution.

Chinese culture is not taught as stand-alone courses, but is embedded in the language courses or taught as extra-curricular activities. The CI is helping the lecturers overcome the culture shock they encounter while living in Africa. Culture shock is, perhaps, the major challenge for lecturers, especially those of them who are young or have left their country for the first time in their lives. Commendably, the lecturers are taking the challenge in their stride, adapting to the host environment, rolling back the frontiers of cultural exchange and making new friends for their country, as noted by Peters and Zhang (2011) about young Chinese migrants generally:

about 7,000 young Chinese are seeing the world, many for the first time. They are eager but a little homesick, discovering new foods and new ideas, and making new friends for themselves and for China. Most of all, they are sharing their language and their culture and building the foundations for better understanding.

The students at UNIZIK-CI also learn Chinese cuisine, paper-cutting, opera, martial art, massaging, etc. To deepen the learning of Chinese culture, the CI has hired a local *wushu* student to teach martial art. The student (the only Ninja Master in the country) was given a six-month scholarship by the Embassy to improve his skills at a university in China. The major

objective in teaching the students Chinese culinary skills is to empower students who may want to set up Chinese restaurants or work as cooks in firms with Chinese staff. Local cooks can reduce the need to bring cooks from the home country for Chinese firms. Experience of Chinese culture in Nigeria helps to mitigate the problem of culture shock for Nigerians who get the opportunity to travel to China. Nigerian students who have an acquaintance with Chinese culture before going to study in China are agents of African culture, providing their hosts with the opportunity to learn African culture first-hand. Thus, they are vehicles for culture-mix – imbibing the host culture and disseminating their own African culture. This they do in diverse ways. For instance, in Xiamen whose Xiamen University has as many as seventy alumni of the UNIZIK Confucius Institute, the alumni have a cultural music band that has been invited to perform at local and international events in Fujian and other Provinces. Also, some students have broken into the Chinese entertainment industry, hosting TV and Radio shows like “Happy Chinese”.

Picture 2: The Chinese Cultural Experience Centre at UNIZIK-CI



2.2. The Institute as an Agent of Migration

The Confucius Institute at UNIZIK is playing a similarly important role in human movement between Nigeria and China. Due to its alumni population, it rightly deserves a respectable mention in the literature of Nigerian (African) diaspora in China. Nowadays, many Nigerians go to China for long-term or short-term visits/stay. Students, like traders, make good migrants. Their role in the formation of diasporas has been duly acknowledged in migration literature. For example, in their works on African diaspora in China, Bodomu (2009, p. 5), Bock-Huffer and Yuan-Ihle (2014, p. 581) and Le Bail (2009, p. 9) note that those African students who transmuted into traders after their education in China were instrumental in the emergence of the trader sub-population of African diaspora in China – just as the core of most African diasporas in the West was formed by students who stayed back after their study.

The UNIZIK-CI is expanding the size of Nigerian (African) diaspora in China by facilitating migration from Nigeria through scholarships and other forms of cultural interaction. The number of Nigerian students who settle in China after their studies, to set up in business or employment, is increasing rapidly – a number of them have landed well-paid jobs in China, working in pharmaceuticals, oil companies, etc. Similarly, Chinese teachers at the Confucius Institute are helping in the formation of Chinese diaspora in Nigeria. The alumni are dispersed all over China, but the largest concentrations are found at Xiamen University and

Hebei University. From their original universities, the alumni disperse to other universities for their second degree study or relocate to commercial cities (such as Yiwu and Guangzhou) to set up in business. Some use their stay in the country as a springboard for their second wave of migration, migrating to North America and Europe. With savings from living allowance, teaching English in kindergarten or primary/secondary schools or other sources, some alumni have broken into the world of small-scale export business. Some alumni are hired, trained and then sent back to Nigeria or some other African countries by their Chinese employers. Alumna who got married to Nigerian businessmen residing in Guangzhou or other commercial centres benefit their spouses with their knowledge of the language and acquaintance with the host culture.

Picture 3: Send-Forth for the 134 Recipients of the 2019 Scholarships



Picture 4: UNIZIK Professors during a Visit to China in 2016, Facilitated by UNIZIK-CI



Prof. Okunna (squatting, fourth from right) & other UNIZIK Professors after descending from China's Great Wall (长城). The Chinese say: 不到长城非好汉 "Consider him not a man

(hero), he who has not been to the Great Wall."

2.3. THE INSTITUTE AS A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION

From whatever perspective it is looked at, the Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University has established itself as a powerful channel for positively communicating China to Anambra State and Nigeria in particular, and Africa and the world in general. As a channel of communication, the Institute is particularly potent because of its ability to serve as a tool for **'edutainment'** by combining education/academics with its many and varied entertaining cultural activities. Such activities are its China's National Day celebration.

Picture 5: CI Students Entertaining Delegates from Xiamen University



The CI sits on a strategic part of the university's main campus in Awka, in a place that makes it highly conspicuous. It is arguably the most visible evidence of foreign presence on the campus. The presence of the lecturers at university events – symposia, inaugural lectures, etc. – truly adds an international flavor to such events and powerfully communicates the China-in-Africa phenomenon to all and sundry. Without doubt, local perception of China has shifted positively since the CI was established.

All told, the UNIZIK Confucius Institute is adding a lot of value to the Africa-China relationship. Before its establishment twelve years ago in 2008, local knowledge and awareness of China, and virtually everything Chinese, were severely limited among Nigerians. Such knowledge and awareness were practically unheard of years ago in the 1960s, '70s, '80s and even '90s when some Indian teachers could be sighted as teachers in secondary school classrooms, but sighting any Chinese was a rarity; for movie watchers, such 'sightings' probably revolved around those Chinese films that featured icons like Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. Today, this situation has changed and shifted beyond the screen to include physical acquaintance with hitherto obscure aspects of China and its culture. Chinese culture is no longer an abstract phenomenon in Nigeria, courtesy of the environment the Confucius

Institute has created for the local community to experience the culture first-hand. This, undoubtedly, is of immense benefit to China. As Yang and Hsiao (2012) have noted, "the mission and goal of CIs is... straightforward: to improve and reshape the image of China." Browsing Chinese social media sites (such as Weibo, Wechat, etc) for news about China, is now popular among the students. Also, owing to their knowledge of the language, they can now watch Chinese television channels such as China Global Television Network (CGTN) and CCTV 4. These media outlets, scholarships and employment opportunities are positively shaping their perception of China.

At the same time, the CI is moulding Chinese perception of Africans. For example, the Chinese Director of UNIZIK-CI has repeatedly confessed his admiration for the Igbo man's genius for entrepreneurship which he compares with that of the Chinese. He is also astonished by the ease with which the students have been passing HSK and excelling in their world competitions in China – in 2017, an alumnus beat all co-competitors, including native speakers, to emerge the best in teaching Chinese. A year later, a third-year student of Education at UNIZIK came fourth in the world and first in Africa at the Chinese Bridge Competition. Last year, an 18-year-old high school leaver of the CTP at UNIZIK High School came first among African competitors at that year's junior CBC that took place in China. Chinese lectors at UNIZIK-CI publish stories about the CI's global and local events in Chinese social media outlets, some of which are based in Nigeria or run by residents in West Africa. Such stories serve as a window into Africa and an effective channel of communication for millions of Chinese at home.

3. CONCLUSION

The learning of Chinese at UNIZIK-CI (and, of course, at the two other CIs in Nigeria) is a necessary consequence of globalization, and is seen in this paper as a powerful channel for the communication and globalization of China Power. As Odinye (2015, p.1) has noted, "[T]he relevance of the learning and teaching of Chinese language in some Nigerian educational institutions cannot be overemphasized. In an advancing global world with increasing interdependence, knowledge of other languages becomes indispensable." As its ecological footprints increase and as its non-economic influence increases, China will become more aggressive in promoting its language and culture. Every great power will do the same. Britain, France, Portugal, Germany, Spain and Belgium did it some three hundred years ago. For Nigeria, deeper economic ties with China will invariably increase the need for Nigerians to learn the Chinese language and culture. Already, the CI at Nnamdi Azikiwe University is making four critical contributions to Nigeria's relationship with China:

- It has emerged as a hub for the dissemination of the Chinese language and culture in the country.
- It is feeding migration between Nigeria and China. Every year, it adds about one hundred students to the Nigerian (African) diaspora in China.
- It is providing the opportunity for cultural exchange between the two countries. Its students in China provide the opportunity for their Chinese hosts to learn about African culture first-hand without having to travel to Africa. Similarly, it is an ecology where

African and Chinese cultures interface, giving all concerned the rare opportunity to learn each other's culture first-hand.

- It has become a unique channel of communication between the two countries. So far, it can be said that its existence has fostered a symbiotic relationship which has benefitted Nigeria and China equally. For example, it is creating opportunities for self-actualization for Nigerian youths through scholarships and employment; at the same time, it is reducing communication obstacles and overhead expenditure as well as creating local manpower for the Chinese firms in the country.

From every indication, the prospects are very bright for the UNIZIK Confucius Institute to keep occupying its central position in the global and national efforts to add value to China-Africa relations, thus remaining a powerful tool for communicating China and its way of life to the world. Given the tremendous progress UNIZIK-CI has made in the last decade, its founding fathers and 'general overseers' (UNIZIK Vice-Chancellors – Prof. Ilochi Okafor who initiated the Institute, Prof. Boniface Egboka his successor, immediate-past Vice-Chancellor Prof. Joseph Ahaneku, and current Vice-Chancellor Prof. Charles Esimone) and Nigerian Directors (predominantly Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Academic) can hold their heads high with pride and beat their chests in celebration of the Institute's contributions to the strengthening of China-Nigeria relations. This is particularly true of the immediate-past Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Joseph Ahaneku, whose close association with the Institute has been the longest, beginning with his position as the Nigerian Director of the Institute in his capacity as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) from 2010 and all through his tenure as Vice-Chancellor. Also worthy of mention is the Nigerian Director of the Institute and current Vice-Chancellor (Prof. Charles Esimone) who has also had a very long relationship with the Institute, beginning also from his position as immediate-past Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). The Institute's Chinese Director (Prof. Yu Zhangbao) as well as the present Deputy Director (Dr. Anas Elochukwu) and Prof. Carol Arinze-Umobi (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Administration/former Nigerian Director) have equally been pillars of support to the Confucius Institute in their various capacities.

4. Recommendations

UNIZIK-CI, which has emerged as one of the forces driving the learning of Chinese language and culture in Nigeria, should leverage on its commanding role to facilitate the establishment of a Centre for Igbo (or African) Studies at Xiamen University or Hebei University where it has its largest concentration of UNIZIK-CI alumni. This will reciprocate its own establishment at UNIZIK. The Chinese need to learn much more about Africa, the continent to which it is exporting much of its manufacture and from which it is sourcing many of the raw materials it needs for its factories. Having achieved most of its objectives, namely the dissemination of Chinese language and culture, the CI should now consider expanding the scope of its activities to include the study of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), as well as courses on Doing Business with the Chinese, etc.

In addition, UNIZIK-CI could do with more visibility locally. This could be achieved through various types of content in the mass media. In this regard, the popular enlightenment programme on UNIZIK 94.1 FM ("Chinese Half Hour") should be revived and strengthened.

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