Student Migration from Cameroon to China.
Government Rhetoric and Student Experiences

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Séverin Aléance KAJI

Supervision committee

Prof. Dr. Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne (First supervisor)

Prof. Dr. Michael Bollig, University of Cologne (Second supervisor)

Prof. Dr. Honoré Mimche, University of Yaoundé II (Third supervisor).

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Séverin Aléance Kaji

Abstract

This study examines China-Cameroon educational cooperation with focus on student migration from Cameroon to China. Student migration is approached from the perspectives of the states and Cameroonian students currently studying in China and those who have graduated and returned to Cameroon.

Government rhetoric about student migration is one of the main topics of this thesis. Cameroonian authorities view student mobility to China as a means of 'learning from China' in sophisticated domains. This is in line with the Chinese government's official rhetoric which portrays the training of African students and professionals as a 'knowledge sharing' strategy under a 'Cooperation in Human Resources Development and Education'. It is within this framework that China has stated its commitment to assist Africa in Human Resources Development (HRD). I argue that discourses of 'knowledge sharing' and 'learning from China' do not translate into reality, due to structural and legal challenges students face during their training in China on the one hand, and the lack of a stringent student migration policy in Cameroon, on the other hand.

This dissertation also contributes to the soft power debate. Beyond the official framing of the China-Africa educational cooperation as a measure of developmental support, the Chinese government (like many other countries in the world) unofficially resorts to education as a soft power resource. I engage with this debate using students´ satisfaction with social and academic experiences as the precondition for education to become an effective strategy in China's soft power or image-branding endeavor. I argue that despite China´s investment in a generous scholarship scheme and favorable student visa policy which have attracted an impressive number of African students and professionals in general, the outcome in terms of soft power is seemingly still limited. Despite their excitement with and praise for the quality of social facilities and the university infrastructure in China, Cameroonian students are dissatisfied with their overall academic and social experiences.

Finally, the research endeavor assesses students' migration motivations and expectations in comparison to that of the states. I argue that the two categories of stakeholders have divergent and contrasting expectations. Whereas the Cameroonian state views student migration as a means of transferring Chinese knowledge and know-how to Cameroon, the majority of the students (be them scholarship holders or self-funded students) do not necessarily prioritize acquiring knowledge and returning to Cameroon. The line between the economic and academic

dimensions of their migratory projects is blurred. Enrolling in a Chinese university is not synonymous with having a sustainable academic project for a career prospect. It is rather embedded in a broader migration project of which the ultimate aim is to improve on one's chances toward financial security and social mobility. Despite their dissatisfaction with the quality of education and social life in China, they appreciate and take advantage of resources and opportunities offered by the local economic environment. Furthermore, the Chinese language skills acquired during their stay in China increase the chances of the returnees in the labor market in Cameroon.

Acknowledgments

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List of acronyms

BMD : Bachelors-Masters-Doctorate

CI: Confucius Institute

CSC: China's Scholarship Council

CSAC: Cameroonian Student Association in China

DAAD: German Academic Exchange Service

FOCAC: Forum on China Africa Cooperation

HRD: Human Resources Development

HSK: *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (Chinese Language Proficiency Test)

IOM: International Organization for Migration

MTCSO. Master in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages

OAU: Organization of African Union

PRC: People's Republic of China

ZJNU: Zhejiang Normal University

Chapter One: General Introduction

1.1   On the Paths of Sako: Medical Graduate from China, and Translator in a Chinese Wood Company in Cameroon

Sako received me at his parents' house in a popular neighborhood in Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon. It was April 2017, nine months after his return from a 6-year study stay in China. Sako was twenty-seven years old and graduated from medical studies at a university in Changsha, the capital city of Hunan province in southern China. By the time we met, Sako was working as a translator in a Chinese company which specialized in the wood industry.

Sako finished high school in Cameroon in 2009, passing his baccalaureate with distinction. As he dreamt of being a physician, he wrote the competitive entrance examination into the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences in Yaoundé, the oldest and most coveted medical training school in Cameroon. As he was not admitted, he decided to enroll at the University of Yaoundé I, or more specifically, at the Department of Biochemistry. Sako did not have any migration intentions until his mother told him about the scholarship opportunities for China at Cameroons' Ministry of Higher Education. His mother had learned about the scholarship opportunities through her network of friends. After making enquiries about the requirements, he finally submitted his scholarship application, not only for China but also for Russia and Tunisia.

The application for China was successful. Initially, Sako was somewhat hesitant about the possibility of studying in China. He found the Chinese language, the medium of instruction of his program in China, very complex and hard to learn. Nevertheless, he finally convinced himself that taking a one-year Chinese language course, as provided in the scholarship scheme, would give him the essential linguistic knowledge required for his training. Before arriving at this decision, Sako was also influenced by his family members. His father, for instance, who also used to work in the medical sector often emphasized the high quality of the training equipment and facilities in Chinese universities. Such arguments, Sako acknowledged, persuaded him to take the step, finally leaving for China in September 2010. As a cooperation scholarship holder, his flight was paid for by the Cameroonian government which also pays a scholarship supplement to the grantees during their stay in China, according to the terms of the

educational cooperation between Cameroon and China. Sako graduated six years later and returned t.o Cameroon with a feeling of unfulfilled expectations in terms of career prospects.

Right at the beginning of our conversation which was in French, upon introducing the focus of my research to Sako, my first question to him was: "How would you quickly assess your study stay in China, considering your initial expectations in terms of knowledge and skills?" As Sako remained silent, I thought that my question was probably not precise enough, and hence tried to reformulate it this way: "How was the training in China and what did you bring back…?" Before I finished the question Sako interrupted me saying:

> "I have gained weight! [laughing and touching his biceps]. Luckily, I am already taking shape back. To be more serious, I would say my language skills have considerably increased. When I arrived in China, my English was very basic but now I speak well. It means that I now speak three languages: English, French and Chinese. With regard to Medicine, I do not count myself a physician. I still have a lot to learn. I did not get a comprehensive training in China." (Interview with Sako, Yaoundé, April 2017, translated from French).

I asked Sako about what in his opinion influenced the quality of his training. The first element he mentioned was his low command of the Chinese language. It is important to note that foreign students in China, including those enrolled for English-taught programs (graduate or postgraduate), are required to learn Chinese for one year prior to the start of their major courses. Chinese is the main language of instruction for undergraduate programs such as the five-year Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (BMBS) which Sako was to take. Sako explained that right from the start of his major course, he realized that the Chinese he was learning for one year was only adequate for everyday life interactions and far different from the specialized medical vocabulary, which is why "it was very hard for foreigners to follow lectures in class", he said. As a coping strategy, he explained, foreign students requested the university administration to be allowed to continue attending Chinese language courses parallel to their major. However, the university rejected their request, arguing that the scholarship scheme does not financially support additional language course for the grantees. Another reason given by the university was that there was an overlap between the schedule of Chinese language and the majors.

In a bid to demonstrate the language challenge, Sako argued, "Imagine that you ask the lecturer a question about a disease being studied. You see that he is doing his best to explain but you do not understand him because of language issues. Finally, he [the lecturer] would take out his mobile phone, type the name of the disease on it and show you to go and search it in

English on the internet". At some point, Sako thought of giving up on the medical training and registering for computer science which, he believed, required less Chinese language skills. However, the scholarship scheme did not authorize such a switch. Sako continued with the medical training program, hoping that the situation will be improved on. "In the first year, we understood nothing but thought that things would be better in the second year. In the second year, it was the same and we thought that through the treatment of clinical cases during the internship we would address the gaps in our theoretical knowledge", Sako lamented.

It is important to note that the internship was scheduled in the fifth and last year of the training. In the meantime, Sako confided in me that they just managed "to pass their exams by cramming and practicing exercises on as many old test papers as possible just to avoid the cancellation of the scholarship". He further explained: "Most of the times, writing exams was more about identifying the character you had got familiar with, by repeatedly practicing exercises. It was quite easy to have the average required to pass a course which was sixty out of hundred". Sako succeeded in reaching the final year of his study which was basically the internship on which he had placed much hope, viewing it as the ultimate opportunity to bridge the gaps in his training. However, after nine months of internship at the hospital, he did not see a real improvement in his skills, due to many reasons which he explained as follows:

> "The role of the internship is to help students become aware of their own weaknesses so that they can invest themselves in addressing them. But during the internships at the hospital we, the foreign students, were abandoned to ourselves. Our Chinese classmates were assigned tasks while we were left free. Maybe because they [internship supervisors] thought we had language problems. It was then up to us to join our Chinese classmates or to sit there doing nothing. When you joined them, the language still remained a problem because when you asked questions in English, the Chinese did not really answer because they thought that their English was not good and they found it uncomfortable and embarrassing to make mistakes. Also, unlike the Chinese classmates, the foreigners were never included on the list of on-duty personnel. Maybe it was because they thought that it was useless because we did not understand anything [in Chinese] or maybe because our insurance did not cover us outside the university. So, for the whole internship period, we used to come at 8 a.m. and leave at 3 p.m." (Interview with Sako, Yaoundé, April 2017, translated from French).

Sako was disappointed with the situation because, as he further explained, being on-duty at the hospital constitutes a significant learning setting in the sense that at night, the students are among themselves and can share individual experiences and learn from each other. Also, at night the workload of the doctors considerably reduces, thus enabling them to better attend to interns, answering their questions and addressing their concerns. During the day, the doctors do

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not have time for students' questions because there is a considerable number of patients they have to take care of. "They always said that they will explain the cases to us later but nothing ever happened, or a doctor would just tell you that the case x or y was tuberculosis and that is it. And when you asked how he got to the results, he simply told you to go and read (…) books, most of which were in Chinese." (Interview with Sako, Yaoundé, April 2017, translated from French).

The last point he raised with regard to the internship was his interactions with Chinese patients. He said he observed that the Chinese were most often reluctant to allow themselves to be touched by him, which he interpreted through the lens of his skin color.

"The Chinese consider Blacks[1] as inferior human beings. In the Chinese mentality, Black people live on trees and do not attend schools. That is the side of Africa CCTV, surprisingly the government media which is shown to Chinese people and which influences their perception of Blacks. Consequently, Chinese patients were often very uncomfortable with me touching them. Of course, I often felt very embarrassed." (Interview with Sako, Yaoundé, April 2017, translated from French).

Assessing the impact of the nine-month internship, he said that only his path at the surgery unit of the hospital was worthy in terms of skills acquisition. He recounted, "I met a Chinese professor who had studied in the US for some time and who really took the time to explain everything to me. I think it was because he could speak good English. Unfortunately, the stay at this specific unit only lasted for one month."

Sako returned to Cameroon with the intention of doing an internship in local hospitals, so as to fill the gaps in his training. After one month, he received a first internship position for two and a half months in Yaoundé, which he assessed as follows, "What I have learnt in the weeks here was by far more than what I learnt during my first academic year in China." Toward the end of the internship, one of his friends informed him about a job opportunity with a Chinese company. The friend in question had also returned from China and had also studied Medical Sciences. Sako decided to take the job because, he justified, internships in Cameroon are not remunerated, yet he had to sustain himself and to support the household. His father had died while he was in China and his mother had since been the sole provider for the family. I further

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[1] I have opted for capitalizing the terms 'Black' and 'White' in this thesis in order to emphasize their social and historical construction and the political meanings they entail rather than using them as descriptive adjectives

asked Sako whether, by working as a translator, he was not running the risk of forgetting what he had learnt as a medical doctor. He remained silent for a while, and then said:

> "To be honest with you, my situation seriously worries me. My family expects me to get a job in a hospital, yet I cannot take care of human lives for the moment. I still have a lot to learn. I do not know how to explain to my family that I cannot treat [a patient] after six years of medical studies in China." (Interview with Sako, Yaoundé, April 2017, translated from French).

He considered finding another scholarship to go and improve his medical skills. I asked him if he could still accept a scholarship for China. He said, "I will never advise anyone to study medicine in China in Chinese. I could only return to China if the program was in English."

The story of Sako, which fully or partly reflects the majority of the Cameroonian students involved in this research, raises several issues. On the one hand, the story offers insight into students' migration motivations, decision-taking processes, expectations, as well as the variety of actors and institutions involved in student mobility from Cameroon to China. On the other hand, and most importantly, the narrative highlights the social and academic experiences of Sako. These experiences constitute the main focus of this dissertation.

1.2   Scope and Aim of the Research

This dissertation focuses on the Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation and specifically student migration from Cameroon to China. I approach student mobility from the perspectives of states (Cameroon and China as sending and receiving countries respectively) and students. For analytical reasons, the student category here includes both those who were still studying in China and those who had either graduated and returned to Cameroon, or perhaps also lived on in China. I take students' academic and everyday life experiences in China as well as the professional trajectories of former students as an entry point for examining the Cameroonian and Chinese governments' discourses on and expectations from student migration. While the Chinese government portrays the recruitment and training of African students in general as a 'knowledge sharing' strategy under the framework of cooperation for human resource development for Africa, Cameroonian authorities view student mobility to China as a means towards 'learning from China' in sophisticated domains. Through students' narratives on their migration motivations, academic experiences and assessment of the quality of training in China, I aim to examine how China′s "knowledge sharing" intention translates into action, that is, how states organize the knowledge 'sharing' and 'learning' process and how it is received by students.

From the theoretical standpoint, this dissertation also draws on students´ social and academic experiences in China in contributing to the soft power debate which has emerged in the literature as the dominant analytical framework for the analysis of China´s engagement in the education field in Africa. Soft power theory, which this dissertation critically interrogates, postulates that through student recruitment, the Chinese government hopes to enhance a positive image of China among foreign students so as to make them develop a preference for China, an attitude through which Chinese leaders can capitalize in their economic expansion in Africa. Student migration is thus part of the mechanism of the attraction or charm offensive, aiming at 'winning the hearts and minds' of African students (Haugen 2013; Sautman 1994; Sautman and Hairong 2009; Shambaugh 2015; Shao 2012; Zhang 2016). I contribute to the soft power debate using student satisfaction as an entry point. I contend that students´ satisfactory social and academic experience in China is a precondition for the success of student recruitment as China´s soft power strategy. In other words, students can only develop a preference for China if and only if they have a positive judgement of their overall experience in China which then nurtures in them "a sense of giving something back" (Hart 2017).

It is important to note that for the analysis of students´ migration motivations as well as their social and academic experiences, this dissertation draws on my "ethnographic self as a resource" (Collins and Gallinat 2010), given my background as a Cameroonian and my experience as an international student. Before my ongoing doctoral studies in Germany, I did part (one and a half years) of my Master's program in Norway. Also, for my extended fieldwork in China, I registered as a Chinese language student at Zhejiang Normal University and shared the study experience with many of the participants in this study. This path is significantly relevant for a more in-depth understanding of students' narratives on the quality of education, visa policy, university regulation, social interactions, accommodation system, and lived social experiences through which their level of satisfaction in China is to be gauged.

1.3   Research Questions

This dissertation is structured around two questions linked to the two research foci presented above.

RQ1: How effective is student migration as a strategy for the Cameroonian government to learn from China in sophisticated domains? What is Cameroon practically learning from China in view of the management of outward student migration in Cameroon, the academic experiences of the students in China and the professional paths of the returnees in Cameroon?

RQ2: How much soft power does China have among Cameroonians trained in China? In other words, do the academic and social experiences of the students lead to developing a preference for China as a country?

1.4   Contextualizing Student Migration from Africa to China: The Case of Cameroon

The African student population in China increased from 1.600 in 2000 to 12.436 in 2009. In 2015, African students in China numbered 49.792, of whom 41.322 were self-sponsored and 8.470 scholarship holders (Gu 2017; Li 2018). The Cameroonian student population in China grows at the image of this general mobility trend from Africa. In 2016, China´s ambassador to Cameroon said that there were "1700 young Cameroonians studying in China"[2]. A report by the official newspaper of the Cameroonian government in August 2017 informed the reader that the Cameroonian student population in China numbered 2900[3] (Cameroon Tribune, August 21st, 2017)[4]. In his article on the educational cooperation between Cameroon and China, Nordtveit (2011: 102) observes that China emerged by 2009 as the most important donor of scholarships to Cameroonian students. This reality seemingly holds true for the African continent as a whole, following Teferra´s (2014: 11) argument that from 2014, Chinese scholarships to Africa were of "an astonishingly high figure, dwarfing scholarship programs offered to African students by any other country."

An important point to highlight with regard to the presence of African students in China in general is that despite a generous scholarship scheme, self-sponsored students dominate in the African student population in China. Concerning this, King (2013) observes that

> "[i]n 2011, there were almost 300,000 foreign students in China, the very great majority of whom were actually self-supported. Exactly the same is true of African students in China; while the China scholarship numbers in 2011 were just over 6000, the self-supported students were more than double, at over 14000. In other words, China is

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[2] See the website of the Chinese embassy in Cameroon, http://cm.china-embassy.org/fra/zxxx/t1423148.htm . Last accessed, 18 November 2018.

[3] These figures are necessarily conflicting. However, even if we consider the lowest (1600), it will still be undeniable that student migration from Cameroon to China is growing at an unprecedented rate, compared with some of the so-called traditional destination countries in the West. For instance, according to a report by Campus France (2017), Cameroonian students were estimated at 1725 in Belgium, 1268 in the United States of America, 765 in Canada, 603 in the United Kingdom in 2015. France and Germany remain the major destinations for Cameroonian students with about 4775 and 6301 in 2015, respectively (Campus France 2017).

[4] The newspaper is quoted by "Actu Cameroon", an online newspaper, and is available at https://actucameroun.com/2017/08/22/cameroun-cooperation-academique-quarante-boursiers-gouvernement-chinois-soixante-de-linstitut-confucius-route-chine/. Last accessed, 18 November 2018.

evidently an attractive destination for international study, including by Africans, quite apart from its scholarship provision."[5]

The increasing migration of African students to China is the result of several factors. The first to be mentioned is a generous scholarship scheme: beside the Chinese government, there is a wide range of institutions which separately fund African students in China. These institutions include Confucius Institutes, local governments, universities, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chinese embassies and private Chinese companies. To take but the case of Chinese government scholarships for African students, it is important to note that their number was 2000 per year between 2003 until 2009 and this increased to 4000 yearly from 2009. Since 2012, the Chinese government grants 5500 scholarships to African university students (FOCAC 2006, 2009).

Another factor influencing the increasing presence of African students in China is the fast university admission procedure with relatively easy requirements[6]. The increasing influx of students specifically from Cameroon is also to be seen as a consequence of a growing migration brokerage market in Cameroon, the presence of the Confucius Institute in Cameroon; a knock-on effect (connection between scholarship students and their network of relatives and friendship in Cameroon). To these factors should be added another important one, which is rather political: a favorable Chinese student visa policy. While visa policy has been tightened in the traditional destination countries in the West, requirements for study visas for China are rather easy to fulfil (see Chapters 3 and 5). Given that visa policy is part and parcel of countries´ political will, it can be argued that, as with scholarship students, the presence of self-sponsored African students in China is the result of a political decision.

From a pan-African standpoint, Cameroon occupies a particular position in the trend of student migration between Africa and China in general. Cameroonians were among the first African students who arrived in China in 1956. This group of eleven also included students from Malawi, Kenya and Uganda. The presence of Cameroonians among these first nationalities of students is the results of the political ties which existed between the two countries. China supported the revolutionary movement led by the Union des Populations du Cameroon (UPC) in 1955 against the colonial administration in Cameroon and later on against the authoritarian

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[5] The article of King is available at https://norrag.wordpress.com/2013/07/15/the-red-threads-of-chinas-education-and-training-cooperation-with-africa/. Last accessed, 13 November 2018.

[6] My own admission procedure took only two days and scanned copies were accepted for application documents, which is not the case in countries like Germany.

rule of the president of the newly independent Cameroon (Ngwe 2015, Cabestan 2011). One form of the support was to train human resource for the future independent state (Ngwe, 2015). Cameroon and the People's Republic of China (PRC) established diplomatic relations in March 1971 and signed a cooperation agreement on the 27th of August 1984 (Republic of Cameroon, 2005). The agreement concerned the sectors of education, sport, radio broadcasting, public health, science, editing and press (Republic of Cameroon, 2005). In November 1989 the "Sino-Cameroonian discussions on education" took place from the 7th to 11th of November 1989 (Republic of Cameroon 2005, 2015). These two events culminated in the establishment of a Chinese Language Training Center at the Institute of International Relations of Cameroon in 1996, making Cameroon one of the first countries in Africa to teach the Chinese language. As the language center became a Confucius Institute in 2007, Cameroon became the second African country to host a Confucius Institute after Kenya. Finally, this thesis also considers a pan-African perspective by applying extraversion theory to analyze the management of student migration by African governments, including Cameroon and Rwanda. However, as the analysis will show, the two cases vary considerably, and extraversion theory only proves adequate in the Cameroonian case only.

1.5   State of the Art

Against this background of fast growing student mobility derives the question of why China engages in the educational sector across Africa. More specifically, why do Chinese authorities not only open the doors of local academic institutions to African university students but also facilitate their entry by means of various scholarship programs?

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was established in 2000. FOCAC is the official forum for consultation and dialogue between the People's Republic of China and African states[7] with which it has diplomatic relations. The advent of FOCAC was by turn viewed as symbolizing the institutionalization of intensified interactions and "exponential growth in Sino-African relations (Taylor 2011: 1), representing a "new cooperation model" (Li et al 2012) or the beginning of a "new strategic partnership" (Niu 2013) between Africa and China. As from 2000 China-Africa cooperation has significantly expanded and currently covers several domains, ranging from trade, media, medicine, military, culture to education (PRC

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[7] Swaziland - Eswatini since April 2018 - is the last African state with which the PRC currently does not have diplomatic relations, since it recognizes Taiwan.

2006; FOCAC 2000). Consecutively to this unprecedented turn, China-Africa relations have come under the spotlight of the media, policy makers and social scientists. The number of media reports, collections and single-author monographs on China-Africa ties provides evidence for this.

This dissertation contributes to this body of literature, especially that which addresses the educational aspect of China-Africa relations. The literature on China-Africa education cooperation deals with a range of subjects. Some scholars have focused on the genesis and the evolution of the enrolment of African students by Chinese universities (Li 2018; Hevi 1963). Others have studied the social life and the trajectories of African students in China (Bredeloup 2014a, 2014b; Hevi 1963; Bodomo 2014; Gillespie 1999) and the academic experiences of the students (Haugen 2013; Gillespie 1999; Ferdjani 2012). Most relevant for my research are those scholars who have theorized China's motivations to engage in the educational sector in Africa (Allison 2012; Antwi-Boateng 2017; Bodomo 2009c; Haugen 2013; Hartig 2016; King 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Li 2018; Li and Funeka 2013; Niu 2009 2013, 2014; Niu and Liu 2016; Nordtveit 2011; Rein 2014; Rønning 2016; Rotberg 2008; Shao 2012; Taylor 2011; Zhang 2016).

Niu (2009, 2013, 2014) for instance depicts China's commitment in the field of education in Africa as contributing to the development in Africa. China´s education cooperation with Africa as a "development assistance" initiative which she describes as "demand-driven" or functioning on "response mode" since China´s engagement in Africa results from the requests formulated by African leaders. Similarly, Niu and Liu (2016: 288) describe educational opportunities for African students in China as China´s will to promote capacity building or human resource development in Africa: "Scholarship provides African students opportunities to study in China. They also cultivate talents in all fields that make contributions to African development […]". Emphasizing its "humane" feature, the authors argue that China´s aid to education for Africa is departing from a "pro-ideology" rationale that prevailed in the past, while preserving "the continuity of the philosophy of solidarity" (ibid: 294).

Li and Funeka edited the "Forum on China –Africa Cooperation. The Politics of Human Resource Development" in 2013The volume emphasizes capacity building as the primary goal pursued through FOCAC which they view as "a platform for African and Chinese policy-makers to strengthen Sino-Africa[n] relations" (Li and Funeka 2013: 1), especially in a context where Africa is considered to be facing human resource challenges. In his contribution to the volume, Monyae (2013: 13-14) contends that among the factors that "underlie Africa profound economic malaise […] the most fundamental is [its] severe lack of [human] capacity". This

implies the necessity to invest in building adequate skills, which he believes cannot be fulfilled by African leaders, considering the shortage of their financial resources. FOCAC, the author concludes, highlight "China´s strong commitment […] to foster human development resource" for Africa (ibid: 13). This argument is in line with that of Li and Funeka in their conclusion to the volume entitled "The way forward for FOCAC and human resource development 2012-2015". The authors present China´s engagement in offering training possibilities to Africa as a contribution to the enhancement of development in Africa, as the reason for the low level of development in Africa is said to lie in its inadequate human resources which, moreover, constitutes a cause for concern of African leaders:

> "African governments are under a lot of pressure to address the lack of human resource on the continent. This lack is severely impeding the continent´s growth, be it through lack of service delivery in the public sector, or in various sectors such as mining and rural development […]. Needless to say, the human resource development initiated under FOCAC provides welcome relief for most African governments […]." (ibid: 97).

It is worth mentioning that the foregoing depiction, mostly (but not only) by Chinese scholars, echoes the discourse of the Chinese government regarding China´s commitment in the educational sectors across Africa. China's various African policy documents present China-Africa relations in the field of education as a "cooperation for pursuing human resource development" (PRC 2006: 6), aiming at "capacity building", "talent training" "skills transfer" and "sciences and technology cooperation and knowledge sharing" (FOCAC 2015: 7). Overall, China´s African policy documents describe Africa-China educational cooperation as a platform for knowledge sharing between the two ends. China´s commitment is justified by its will to assist Africa in building adequate human resources, the lack of which is one of the major reasons why "Africa still faces many challenges on its road of development [in spite of its] vast expanse of land, rich natural resource and huge potential for development" (PRC 2006: 2, also see FOCAC 2009).

Obviously, China's intention and initiatives for education in Africa, to borrow from Shao, are "warmly welcomed by African […] governments" (Shao 2012)[8] considering the discourse developed in response to the Chinese educational offer. In Cameroon, as in many other African countries, there has been an emergence and gaining ground of what I would coin a 'discourse of learning from China' stemming from expectations of the educational cooperation with China

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[8] Shao´s article is available at http://www.polity.org.za/print-version/blackboard-cooperation-chinas-role-in-educating-africa-2012-07-03. Last accessed 10 February 2018.

in terms of knowledge transfer. During field work in Cameroon in 2016, I spoke with officers from the Ministry of Higher Education, in charge of the selection of applicants for Chinese government scholarships. About the selection criteria, one of the officers, namely from the 'Scholarship and Allowances Services', told me that "the selection of grantees takes into consideration "national needs in key sectors such as mining, engineering technology etc." (Interview with an official of the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education, Yaoundé, October, 2016, translated from French).

This corroborates the words of the Cameroon's Ministry of Higher Education to the media on the occasion of the farewell ceremony organized in Yaoundé for the hundreds of recipients of the Chinese government and Confucius Institute scholarship for the 2017/2018 academic year. In his speech (to which I will turn in chapter 4 focusing specifically on the Cameroonian perspective of China-Cameroon educational cooperation) the Minister encouraged the grantees to drink from China's "technological and scientific udder" so as to return and contribute to the development of their country.

Such a discourse reflects a general concern of the Cameroonian authorities regarding national human resources. In 2009, the Cameroonian government issued its "Cameroon vision 2035", a forward-looking development document analyzing the prerequisite for Cameroon to become an "emerging country" by the year 2035. The document emphasizes the need to invest in human capital formation in "the fields of health, science and technology, among others" (Republic of Cameroon, 2009: 25). Yet, official reports (Republic of Cameroon 2004, 2009b) as well as scholars (Djouda Feudjio 2009, Gaillard et al 2013, Simeu Kamdem and Schamp 2014) point to the fact that Cameroon´s higher education is facing structural and financial challenges which prevent national universities to deliver as contributors to local development.

Scholars of international student migration and knowledge economy suggest that in a context of limited local knowledge-production capacities, countries usually rely on other countries to train their human resources in specific fields (Gürüz 2011; King 2013; Mimche et al 2016). Outward student migration is thus one of the strategies towards this end. The case of China as presented by Liu (2007: 133) is illustrative of outward migration as a means in building national manpower. The author suggests that in the preparation for the reconstruction of China after the 1937-1945 war of resistance against Japan, "1,566 students were sent abroad […] and

were mainly enrolled in engineering and science, in order to enable China to develop the skills base for the period of post-war State reconstruction".[9]

It is certainly in this respect that one of the general resolutions of the academic cooperation forum held in January 2015 in Yaoundé planned for a "submission to friendly countries and donor organizations the training needs of Cameroon", and also to "devise a mechanism to ensure the return to Cameroon of scholarship holders at the end of their studies" (Republic of Cameroon 2015: 30).

According to Gürüz (2011), China has moved from its status as a simple "knowledge user" (like many African countries) to a knowledge-producer country. This shift is viewed as the result of several policies in the domain of higher education (see chapter 4) which aimed at developing world class universities in China by upgrading their standards through substantial state funding. China´s efforts are to be understood in the light of the current global context of a global knowledge economy or an era of "economic growth driven through science, technology and innovation" (Coate and McLabhraim 2008: 198). China´s position as a super power is attributed to its knowledge production capacities and the quality of its human resources (Brandenburg and Zhu 2007; Gürüz 2011; Mok 2000) for which universities play a vital role (Brinkley 2009; Gürüz 2011; Powell and Snellman 2004; World Bank Institute 2004). Hence, enrolling Cameroonian students can lead to transferring China´s know-how to Cameroon.

As suggested earlier, far from being a Cameroonian reality, the discourse of "learning from China" is rather quite common among other African leaders. Many scholars discuss this perception and expectation of the Chinese government by African leaders as Sino-Optimism (Adem 2016; Antwi-Boateng 2017; Corkin 2014). Sino-Optimism conceives of Chinese engagement in Africa in general as a strategic development opportunity and "a welcome departure from the zero-sum game of past colonization" (Antwi-Boateng 2017: 179). As Adem (2016: 7) depicts, Sino-Optimism in Africa "refers to the conviction or expectation that China is a force for good in Africa" and that "China would like to see Africa succeed".

Sino-Optimism is the antithesis of Sino-Pessimism which views the presence of China in Africa as a second scramble for natural resource of the continent. For Nwoke (2007: 31) for instance, the economic and political engagement of China in Africa "is nothing but the inter-

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[9] Similarly, I met a group of students from Malaysia at the University of Cologne, studying mechanical engineering through the financial support of their government.

imperialist rivalries to dominate and control the pillaging of the continent, and the exploitation of its people and resources". Overall Sino-Pessimists maintain that the goal China's cotemporary investment in Africa is to colonize the continent.

The second frame through which China-Africa educational cooperation is approached by scholars is soft power. Soft power advocates view China´s commitment as a means to win the hearts and minds of African students (Shao 2012; Sautman and Hairong 2007; Taylor 2009). This perspective will be discussed at length in the sections to follow, granted that soft power constitutes the main theoretical framework of this dissertation, complemented by a mid-range theory: extraversion.

1.6   Theoretical Orientations: Soft Power and Extraversion

Soft power theory and extraversion theories constitute the theoretical framework of this thesis. While soft power theory forms the general framework, extraversion is rather a mid-range theory, as it applies solely to the analysis of the rationales of the Cameroonian government as a distinct actor in student migration between Cameroon and China. The following sections present an overview of the main postulates of the theories and explicates how they apply to this research. Extraversion will be further discussed in chapters 4 and 9, exposing the Cameroonian government´s discourse about and expectations of its educational cooperation with China; while soft power is additionally conceptualized in chapter 3, dedicated to the ways in which the Chinese government accounts for its engagement in the educational cooperation with African states in general.

1.6.1   Extraversion

The concept of extraversion was coined by Bayart (2000) in "Africa in the world: a history of extraversion" wherein he analyzes the place of sub-Saharan Africa in the world system. The nature of the relationship between sub-Saharan Africa and the external world is central to the conceptualization of extraversion. This relationship according to Bayart is that of dependence. Yet, Bayart argues against the postulates of the dependence theory which has emerged as a mainstream frame in the interpretation of how Africa relates to the rest of the world. Dependence theorists claim that Africa is the "limbo of the international system, existing only at the outer limit of the planet which we inhabit" (ibid: 217). More importantly, for the dependency theorists, the situation of "limbo" results from the isolation and marginalization of Africa by dominant groups in the world system. In other words, Africa has been put and

maintained in "limbo" and thus, "made dependent on the other part of the world". Therefore, dependency theory advocates view Africa as a victim of the capitalist and developed states.

Through the concept of extraversion, Bayart criticizes such an explanation. To him Africa, being in "limbo", is "more than ever […], a nonsense" or a "simplistic view". If Africa is in limbo, he argues, "it is above all in the limbo of the intellect" which conceives it (ibid: 217). However, despite his criticism of this postulate of the dependency theory, Bayart in his conceptualization of extraversion does not fundamentally preclude the idea of Africa´s dependence. In other words, Bayart does not deny the existence of a relationship of dependence between African and the rest of the world. The borderline between the dependency theory and the extraversion analytical framework lies in the process and the actors of the "*mise en dependence*" of the African continent: While advocates of the dependence theory contend that the dependence of Africa has been planned, perpetrated and maintained by the dominant actors of the world system, Bayart rather claims that Africans have always constituted active players in the process of their "*mise en dépendance"*. Bayart argues precisely that "[A]fricans have participated in the process which has led to the insertion of their societies as a dependent partner in the world economy" (ibid: 220).

China's expertise is increasingly imported by the Cameroonian government in several fields, which legitimates its expectation of learning from China in sophisticated domains (see Chapter 4). Yet, beyond the discourse, there is practically no intention to resort to student migration to reduce the situation of dependency. I contend that the management of Chinese scholarships by the Cameroonian government (see Chapter 9) contributes to the perpetuation of a dependence relationship with China. Outward student migration from Cameroon to China leads to a "diversified dependency" (Taylor 2014) instead of what Altbach and Peterson (2008: 7) refer to as a situation of "a reduced-dependence".

The second postulate of Bayart is that elites in Africa permanently adopt extraversion as "mode of action" which means not only seeking external responses (such as the so-called development aid) to internal challenges, but also "a keen appetite, and sometimes voracious one, for borrowing from abroad, [as] the formidable demand for education", among others (ibid: 263). Borrowing from abroad per se is not automatically a practice of extraversion. In the domain of education for example, it is rather a common practice for countries to send students abroad for training in specific fields. There is extraversion only when outward student migration occurs in a context where local universities and research institutes are in crisis; this means solely attributing responsibility to the external world to train the human resource needed for local

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national development goals. In this sense, as Bayart assumes, "the external environment [is] thus turned into a major resource" on which African elites rely in addressing local structural challenges (ibid: 218-219). Overall, extraversion as a "mode of action" is all about appealing to the external to resolve local problems, which implies the absence of self-reliance. Drawing on the presentation of the state of higher education and research institutes in Cameroon (Chapter 4), I contend that the expectation of the Cameroonian government to learn from China is a practice of extraversion.

1.6.2 Soft Power

Nye (2004) defines power as the capability to affect and influence the behavior of others in order to achieve one's desired outcomes. According to Nye, this influence can be achieved through several means: coercion, threat, payment, attraction and co-option. While coercion, threat and payment are used in the case of hard power, attraction and co-option are means of soft power. Nye (1990, 2004, 2008a, 2008a, 2011) then coined the term soft power as a theory and also a practice in international relations. He defines it as "[…] the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment. It arises from the attractiveness of a country´s culture, political ideals, and policy" (ibid 2004: x). The author further indicates that "when [a country´s] policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, [its] soft power is enhanced" (ibid). Therefore, soft power is the opposite of hard power which means threatening with military force or economic sanctions. Hard power rests on a policy of "carrot and stick". The use of soft power in interstate relations became prominent when the "strength of war" or the military threat as well as economic sanctions proved costly and ineffective. States then turned to the "second face of power" or attractive power (Nye 2004).

Since the coining of the concept, soft power has been used as synonymous with attractiveness, image-branding. Therefore, soft power consists of building a positive image of the country so as to make it appealing or "to make the world love it", to borrow from *The Economist*[10]. In this regard, soft power resources are assets likely to produce attraction and include culture, political values and government policies. When well-managed, these resources

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[10] See the report by The Economist (2017). "China is spending billions to make the world love it". Can money buy that sort of thing?". Available at https://www.economist.com/china/2017/03/23/china-is-spending-billions-to-make-the-world-love-it.. Last accessed, 9 September 2018.

lead to "the ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interest in ways consistent with its own" (Nye 1990: 168).

Kurlantzick´s "Charm Offensive. How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World (2007) published in 2007 offers a background to how and why soft power became part of China´s diplomacy. The book suggests that the use of military strength or hard power by China in the mid-1990s in managing issues with the neighboring Asian countries backfired. For instance, as the author points out, when China used military threat against countries like the Philippines, the latter in return condemned China and further strengthened their relationship with China´s opponents like the United States. Overall, Chinese authorities realized that hard power led to mistrust across the region and thus turned to peaceful development as the driver of its foreign policy. Accordingly, Jiang Zemin (the President of the People´s Republic of China from 1993 to 2003) took the resolution to "establish a publicity capacity to exert an influence on world opinion that is as strong as China's international standing" (ibid: 3, also see Zhang 2016). Through this turn in its way of relating to the world, the Chinese leader aimed at achieving several goals among which is "forming a desirable image of the state" in the outside world and "exerting influence on the policy decisions of foreign countries" (ibid: 62, citing Aoyama 2004).

Likewise, in his speech during the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2007, then President Hu Jintao said, "we must […] stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation [and] enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country" (Hu 2007). According to Nye[11], this speech was the "most interesting turning point" in China´s soft power agenda and marked the beginning of what Kurlantzick (2007) aptly coins as a "charm offensive". Many scholars, including Chinese scholars, underline the role Africa plays in China´s diplomacy turn. According to Zang (2016: 9), "Africa is an important frontier where China could test and cultivate its new identity as a rising power along with its newly found soft power in the making". Similarly, He Wenping (2007: 28)., member of the Think Tank on Africa from the Chinese Academy of Social Science, argues that "Africa is perhaps the most important testing ground for the promotion of Chinese soft power".

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[11]See Nye´s interview to ChinaPower podcast on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6nkFbQ_3LY&feature=youtu.be&start=6&autoplay=1&rel=0. Last accessed 9 September 2018.

1.6.2.1   "Soft power with Chinese Characteristics" in Africa: Education as a Resource

Zhang (2016) uses "soft power with Chinese characteristics" to emphasize the difference between the Chinese government´s conception of soft power and Nye´s original coining. To illustrate, the author quotes Wang Guoqing, a former Chinese vice minister of the Information Office of the State Council, for whom "soft power refers to a nation gaining influence through its economic power, attractive culture and diplomacy" (Wang, 2010 quoted by Zhang 2016:4). As one can see, the definition replaces Nye´s "political value" by "economic power". Overall, Chinese soft power is broad, as Kurlantzick (2007: 6) observes that "for the Chinese, soft power means anything outside of the military and security realm". This resonates positively with Walker and Ludwig´s (2017: 8) claim that

> "in the decade since Hu's exhortation, China has spent tens of billions of dollars to shape public opinion and perceptions around the world, employing a diverse toolkit that includes, but is not limited to, thousands of people-to-people exchanges, wide-ranging cultural activities, educational programs (most notably the ever-expanding network of […] Confucius Institutes) and the development of media enterprises with global reach".

Focusing on the specific case of Africa, Rønning (2016: 65) argues that "China's development assistance to Africa, which takes many forms - loans and direct economic support, health, agriculture, education, training, academic cooperation, infrastructure construction, culture, and media - is an important element of the Chinese soft engagement with Africa." This takes us to analyzing China´s soft power resources or mechanisms in Africa. It is about the means the Chinese government resorts to in its effort to shape a positive image of China in Africa, which is what Kurlantzick (2007) terms "tools of influence".

There is an important body of literature on China´s soft power in Africa by scholars from different fields. The analysis of China´s soft power resources in Africa predominantly emphasizes the role of economic support, media and Chinese language and culture promoted through Confucius Institutes (Leslie 2016; Li 2016; Zhang et al 2016; Kurlantzick 2007; Fartig et al 2016; Rotberg 2008; Taylor 2011; Rawnslay 2016; Rønning 2016; Fartig et al 2016; Rein 2014). However, there are limited contributions, including by Chinese, African and Westerners specifically connecting training or education and China´s soft power strategy in Africa (King 2013a, 2013b; Li and Funeka 2013; Li et al 2013; Haugen 2013; Bodomo 2009c, 2014, Nordtveit 201; Shao 2012; Antwi-Boateng 2017; He 2007, 2009, 2012; Benabdallah 2017; Fijałkowski 2011; Allison 2012; Bredeloup 2014a, 2014b).

He (2007: 28) for instance, analyzing the efforts of the Chinese government towards enhancing soft power in Africa, argues:

> "these efforts have come in mainly two forms: bringing Africans to China and sending Chinese to Africa […]. To this end, China has promised to up its efforts in human resource training for Africa. Invitations have been extended to a variety of African specialists (party and government cadres, economic management personnel, middle- and high-ranking military officers and professional technical personnel) to visit China for opportunities to learn both professional and technical skills […]".

Similarly, King (2013b) points out that "[a]rguably, HRD [Human Resource Development] cooperation is part of China's soft power cooperation with Africa rather than the 'hard power' of infrastructure development, trade, or material resources"[12]. Haugen (2013:1) also sees the recruitment of Africans as a means for China to expand its soft power, as "China actively recruits African university students in order to increase soft power".

1.6.2.2   Education and Soft Power: Malign or Benign Soft Power?

Overall, the underlying question in the Chinese soft power debate in connection with education seems to be that of why is it important for the Chinese government to cultivate a positive image of China among African students in general. Two lines of argument emerge, from the literature, which are in a way consistent with the categories suggested by Walker and Ludwig (2017) who distinguish between "malign" soft power and "benign" soft power. The difference between the two variants lies in the motivation for states´ engagement in soft power activities. The malign conception draws on what Large depicts as "a new language critical of Chinese soft power (2008: 49), especially by Western scholars who consider China´s engagement in the educational sector in Africa as a ploy for China´s neocolonialism in Africa (Bond 2006; Brautigam 2009; Michel and Beuret 2009) or the enhancement of "neo-liberalism with Chinese characteristics" in Africa (Harvey 2005). In this sense, China´s engagement for education in Africa, specifically student mobility, simply prepares ground for its economic objectives. In other words, the recruitment of African students in China is part of the Chinese government´s strategies to penetrate African states with the aim of targeting their natural resources whose extraction is thus viewed as the primary driving force for the current Chinese engagement in Africa (Alden 2005; Downs 2007, 2004; Konings 2007; Taylor 2009; van Dijk

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[12] See the article of King on 'The Red Threads of China's Education and Training Cooperation with Africa', available at https://norrag.wordpress.com/2013/07/15/the-red-threads-of-chinas-education-and-training-cooperation-with-africa/. Last accessed 11 October 2017.

et al 2009). Cabestan for instance points out that "China […] allows more Africans to learn Chinese and to study for free in China: while their numbers are still relatively small, these former students undeniably favor the expansion of Chinese influence and the spread of its economic success in Africa"[13]. Bredeloup (2014b:160) also correlates student mobility between African and China with China's intended "smooth territorial expansion" in Africa in the future as she argues:

> "Student circulation between Africa and China has taken a new upswing since China became interested in African soil and subsoil. The Chinese authorities multiply their diplomatic visits to the African continent, at the same time as they increase their scholarship offers to students, giving priority to short-term scholarships for specializations in the fields related to their own interest in Africa" (author's translation).

In a nutshell, malign soft power advocates the use of soft power interchangeably with Chinese capitalism, specifically from the perspective of what some scholars refer to as the "China Threat" analysis (King 2013; Large 2008). This aspect of soft power resonates positively with what Walker and Ludwig (2017) also coin as "sharp power"[14] to stress "China's expansionist or aggressive behavior" (Large 2008: 49).

Analyzing the production of soft power, Vuving (2009: 9) argues that "benignity comes […] when you behave in non-threatening or non- confrontational ways to others. The opposite of benignity is harmfulness, aggressiveness, and egoism". Benign soft power emphasizes what Rawnsley (2016: 25) describes as "preferable and nonaggressive form of statecraft". Benignity as an analytical frame is mostly adopted by Chinese scholars who tend to dissociate China´s engagement in education in Africa with potential strategies to achieve an economic interest (He 2009; Li 2007). Li (2007: 83) for instance, criticizing the malign perception of Chinese soft

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[13] The full arguments of Cabestan on the connection between China's economic expansion in Arica and the training of African students is available at http://afrique.latribune.fr/politique/leadership/2017-03-23/le-soft-power-made-in-china.html. Last accessed, 12 June 2018.

[14] In their article *From 'Soft Power' to 'Sharp Power': Rising Authoritarian Influence in the Democratic World,* Walker and Ludwig (2017:13) argues that "What we have to date understood as "soft power" when speaking of authoritarian regimes might be more properly labeled as 'sharp power'". They use "sharp power" to designate the forms of influence that even though not hard in the sense of military force cannot be considered soft either. They apply use the notion to analyze the influence techniques of the states which they view as autocratic (with China and Russia as examples). These techniques include manipulating the audience as well coercing and purchasing loyalty, which culminates in exploiting partner institutions. They compare soft power and sharp power as follows: "Above all, the term "sharp power" captures the malign and aggressive nature of the authoritarian projects, which bear little resemblance to the benign attraction of soft power". It is important to note that the article of Walker and Ludwig is rather highly political. It is pushed in a report where contributors belong to organizations presented in as "dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world".

power in Africa, claims that "Sino-African relations were established long before China's demand for raw materials caused it to shift from a net […] exporter to importer in 1993". They argue that China´s investment in media and the training of African human resources are simply meant "to cultivate the attraction of its language, culture, value and diplomacy in Africa […] (Li and Funeka 2013: 81), "Chinese culture of solidarity" (Niu 2016) or its "spirit of co-development" (Li 2007).

From the benignity perspective of soft power, China´s engagement in the educational sector in Africa is strictly disinterested, that is, without any political or material expectations from the beneficiaries of the Chinese government´s offers. In this respect, Ma Yue, the co-director at Rhodes University's Confucius Institute (CI) in South Africa claims:

> "We promote academic related activities of teaching language and culture (both in a narrow and broad sense) that will facilitate students´ understanding of the Chinese language and culture, so that they may understand China better and hopefully find a career that may utilize their knowledge acquired from us." (as quoted by King 2013 a: 184).

Even though Ma Yue further acknowledges that the CI´s activities are aimed at enhancing soft power, he underlines what sets China´s soft power apart as follows: "(…) But what is lacking in our approach is the "soft power" of the original (Nye) definition: we have no intention to get people to do something we want them to do. We offer an educational service but we have no intention to control or intention to gain anything from them." (as quoted by King ibid: 185).

Thus, benign soft power is all about attractiveness, improving China´s national image. Put otherwise, student recruitment as a soft power activity aims at "brand-building" (Allison 2012) and students recruited from Africa are therefore considered or expected to be future "painters of China´s image in Africa" (Benabdallah 2017). The purpose is also to "win the trust, love and support" (Ma Yue as quoted by King 2013 a: 183) from African students; which is why Chinese politicians are delighted with the fact that upon returning from China, "many African students still think of China as their second home" (China´s Ministry of Education comment in 2005, cited by King 2013: 188).

Some scholars view the differentiation between "malign" and "benign" aspects of Chinese soft power irrelevant and rather consider them two sides of the same coin. Allison (2012) for instance argues that "by training a new generation of Africa's best students, China hopes to […] exponentially increase the number of people who feel that they understand China and would orientate themselves in China's direction – a necessary complement to China's

ambitious economic engagement in Africa"[15]. Allison actually draws on an interview with Li Anshan, one of the leading Chinese scholars on China-Africa educational cooperation who is also presented[16]as the Academic Consultant to the Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs of the State Council. According to Li,

> "The benefit [of the scholarship programs for African students] is image, image-building up among Africans. If there is a better image about [the] Chinese government and its support of education among youth, then young people can come to work for Chinese companies and spread good messages to their community" (as quoted by Allison 2012).

In this dissertation, I adopt the argument of Allison. While I contend that the recruitment of African students is an important element in China´s soft power tool box (Kurlantzick 2007), I also claim that China´s knowledge sharing or Human Resource Development intention cannot be dissociated from its overall geostrategic and economic positioning in Africa. In so doing I distance myself from any Manichean view of the Chinese educational aid to Africa. I postulate that soft power is not necessarily opposed to 'knowledge sharing' and 'Human Resource Development'. China can share its knowledge with Africa through African students and at the same time successfully win the hearts and minds (Sautman and Hairong 2007, Shao 2012) of the students involved in the sharing/learning mechanism. Henceforth, my endeavor in this dissertation is less concerned with aligning myself with one or another of the perspectives of soft power exposed above, than with analyzing their effectiveness on the ground level. To put it otherwise, I am concerned in this dissertation with how much soft power China has among Cameroonians studying or having studied in China. How do they love China or what is their overall image of China?

1.6.2.3   On the Outcome of Soft Power Strategies: The Power of the "Power Receivers"

"How much soft power does China have in Africa?" This question, the headline of an article by Rønning (2016), is the focus of recent analyses of China´s soft power activities in Africa. Concerning education, specifically, and training as soft power resources, King (2013a: 185) in his book on China´s educational aid and soft power in Africa raises the following question:"How are we to assess [China´s scholarship and professional training] in terms of

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[15] The article of Allison is available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/31/china-africa-students-scholarship-programme. Last accessed, 22 May 2018.

[16] For more details on Li Anshan, see Li and Funeka (2013: i).

cultural diplomacy or soft power? In other words, how is the Chinese government being successful in building a positive image of China among recruited African students?"

This question to which this dissertation fully contributes has received very limited attention. One of the pioneering articles in this regard is by Li and Funeka (2013). Analyzing the impact of education as a Chinese soft power mechanism, they claim that

> "[t]here is no doubt that China´s soft power objectives of human resource development in Africa have reached a major milestone in a very short period […]. China practically runs one of the world´s largest short-term training programs, with the plan to bring 30000 African to China between 2012 and 2015. China is also one of the very few countries to increase the number of full scholarship for African to study at its universities. A total of 18000 anticipated between 2013 and 2015" (Li and Funeka 2013: 97).

From the perspective of these authors, the effectiveness of soft power depends on the amount of money invested in human resource development, the scope of the scholarship scheme or specifically the number of African students and professionals recruited or sponsored. This is what Rawnsley (2016) views an instrumentalist perspective of Chinese soft power, featuring a confusion of soft power mechanisms or resources (welcoming and sponsoring students and professional, easy visas) with what Nye (2004) and Hayden (2012) consider the outcome of soft power activities which is a positive image of China, a positive discourse about China. Yet, Haugen´s "study argues against interpreting the increasing African presence on Chinese university campuses as unambiguous evidence for China's growing soft power (Haugen 2013:16). I agree with Haugen´s argument for the reason that the instrumentalist perspective of soft power conceives of students as passive agents, not to say political tools or instruments at the mercy of states in their soft power agenda. In this view, states, or otherwise the "source of power" (Nye 2004, Hayden 2012, Rawnsley 2016) are considered dominant actors in the power relationship. Such a perception is at the same time simplistic and misleading because the achievement of attraction, which is the core element of soft power, depends on the attitude of "power receivers" (Rawnslay 2016) or "receiving audience" (Nye 2004) that is, the agents targeted through soft power activities.

In this dissertation, I rather adopt an attitude which Rawnslay (2016) coins as "soft power agnostic", consisting in approaching "power receiver" (students in this case) as the master of the game of power. The key assumption here is that the success of a charm offensive depends on the willingness of the target audience. The target audience is considered the "most powerful actor in the whole soft power process" (ibid: 21) because they are free to accept, interpret and internalize the message of the source in the way they want. This implies that any charm

offensive can only produces expected effects if and only if the people intended to be attracted or seduced are receptive to the messages and other actions put in place by the "source of power". Soft power, Nye argues, "depends more than hard power upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers [and its effects] depend heavily on acceptance by the receiving audience" (Nye 2004:11). In this respect, the increasing presence of African students resulting from generous scholarship schemes on the one hand and a favorable student visa policy do not automatically lead to the shaping of a positive image of China among African students.

1.6.2.3 Soft Power and Student' Study-Abroad Experience

The attitudes and responses of the receivers (students in this case) to the source of power (states) are in turn shaped and informed by their overall experience both as foreigners and students in the host country. This implies that student enrolment can only reinforce soft power if students feel attracted "for reasons beyond trade, job market or job opportunities" (Huang and Ding cited by Rawnslay 2016: 29). This brings into play the issue of student satisfaction as a central element to the enhancement of soft power among students. The argument is that what matters is not the number of students recruited or scholarships granted but the fact "that the students enjoy their experience" (Haugen 2013) in the host country. As Haugen (ibid: 4) summarizes, "[…] economic investments in scholarships for foreigners provide no guarantee for the enhancement of soft power; students who are dissatisfied with their study-abroad experience are unlikely to adopt the values of their host countries".

The study-abroad experience is shaped by a variety of factors including social interactions between local and foreign students, the quality of training, the attitude of the nationals of host countries towards immigrants, availability of job opportunities, the health system, visa/immigration policy, the nature of the relationship with the university staff; the accommodation and banking service, the support from the international student office, etc. (Altbach and Peterson 2008; Atkinson 2010; Campus France 2017; Elliott and Shin 2002; Haugen 2013; Lam 2007; Verbik and Lasanowski 2007). A positive stay-abroad experience is important not only for the reputation of the university but also for the image of the host country (Verbik and Lasanowski 2007). Furthermore, satisfied students engage in positive publicity, and are willing to maintain contact with the host country. Additionally, according to Hart (2017), a positive experience generates amongst international students "a sense of giving

something back" to the host country long after their return home"[17]. The desire to give something back is the only guarantee for what the author refers to as a "return on investment" for countries investing in recruiting international students.

With Cameroonians as case study, this dissertation contributes to the soft power debate, using student satisfaction as an entry point. I gauge the level of Cameroonians, drawing on their narratives of their university and social experiences, specifically the quality of education, the management of foreign students (for example accommodation and scholarship payment), social interactions, visa renewal policy, regulation on student jobs and internships.

The theoretical innovativeness of the dissertation is twofold. First, it brings together the two analytical frameworks of soft power and extraversion; and adds a decidedly anthropological perspective by focusing on the perspective of students and their (mixed) migration endeavors. Secondly, the mid-range theories of how to assess student satisfaction goes beyond analytical approaches developed in educational sciences, and adds a holistic anthropological perspective that sees students' migration projects to encompass several dimensions that go also beyond the study experience (e.g. acquiring extra-curricular skills, accumulating economic wealth, etc.).

1.7   Main Arguments and Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into ten chapters. Chapter two offers an insight into the methodology of the research; it presents data collection methods and the conditions of fieldwork in China and Cameroon. The Chapter also reflects on how being a Cameroonian influenced my positionality during fieldwork and the implications of doing research 'at home' that is, in a context where I was seen as part of the group under research.

Chapters three and four are dedicated to states (Cameroon and China) as distinctive actors in student migration from Cameroon to China. Chapter three offers a historical overview of student migration to China from Africa as a whole and presents the Chinese government's official discourse and the unofficial intentions of its commitment in the field of education in Africa. Arguing that the Chinese government (like other countries in the world) is using education as a soft power resource, the chapter exposes some operational concepts of soft power

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[17] The article of Hart is available at https://www.acu.ac.uk/about-us/blog/soft-power-governmentfunded-scholarship-schemes-how-measure-impact. Last accessed 11 September 2018.

and introduces the issue of student satisfaction which I consider a prerequisite for the effectiveness of education as a soft power mechanism.

Chapter four presents the facets of the Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation through the lens of what I term the 'discourse of learning from China'. It looks into the Cameroonian government's perception and expectation of outward student migration. In addition, the chapter deals with some structural elements informing the expectation of the Cameroonian government to learn from China. These elements include among others the situation of the Cameroonian higher education. The chapter argues that learning from other countries is a common practice used by states to improve on their knowledge production capacities and build adequate human resources (Gürüz 2011; King 2013, British Council and DAAD 2014; Gribble and Tran 2016). However, as the chapter further contends, the current situation of infrastructural and financial deprivation of universities and research institutes in Cameroon suggests that the rhetoric of 'learning from China' accounts for the failure of Cameroon´s higher education system as a contributor to national economic growth. In this sense, the expectation to learn from China is to be seen as a practice of extraversion (Bayart 2000), the continuum of a dependency attitude (Taylor 2014; Teferra 2013) by which African states permanently rely on the external world to resolve local challenges.

Chapter five approaches student migration from Cameroon to China from the perspective of students. It digs into students' migration motivations and expectations in comparison with the Cameroonian government's hope to learn from China. Through the concept of *bush falling*, the chapter situates student migration in the general context of international migration from Cameroon. The chapter shows that studying in China is differently and even contradictorily perceived by the Cameroonian government and the students. For the former, student migration to China is presented as a means for knowledge transfer between China and Cameroon. For the latter, acquiring knowledge is not necessarily the priority in their migratory projects. Living and studying in China is in most cases motivated by the financial incentives associated with the scholarships and other envisioned money-making opportunities in China.

Chapters six, seven and eight concern issues of student satisfaction as a precondition to the effectiveness of education as a soft power mechanism. The approach to measuring student satisfaction by focusing on administrative, social and academic challenges is the contribution of this dissertation to the respective debates within educational studies. The level of satisfaction among Cameroonian students in China is assessed considering three variables. Chapter six specifically focuses on the management of foreign students in China as a fundamental element

that shapes students' overall experience and their attitudes towards China. The management of foreign students is discussed from two perspectives: university regulation (accommodation system, class attendance, etc.) and the immigration law (specifically with regard to visa renewal policy, regulation on student jobs and internships, etc.).

Granted that the student experience encompasses non-academic aspects (Altbach and Peterson 2008), chapter seven continues with the analysis of student satisfaction from the perspective of their social life. For comparison purposes, the chapter starts with a historical background to the life of African students in Mao and post-Mao China so as to illustrate how their social experiences influenced the expansion of communism in Africa which was the main goal pursued by the Chinese government through the enrolment of African students. The second part of the chapter discusses the lived experiences of Cameroonian students in modern China through the lens of soft power. It is about how everyday life experiences inform Cameroonian students' attitude toward China as a soft power sender. Their social life is discussed considering a set of elements, including social interactions and race issues.

Chapter eight ends the discussion on student satisfaction by shifting the focus to the quality of education as entry point. Specifically, the chapter is concerned with how Cameroonian students in China assess their training. In addition to students, the chapter includes a perspective of an African lecturer in China which particularly looks into the quality of English-taught study programs. The chapter suggests that Cameroonian students have a mixed perception of the quality of training in China: While all students admire and praise the quality of the university infrastructures, the majority are dissatisfied with the quality of the training. The chapter offers an insight into what the research participants considered as the causes of low quality of education in China, including language barriers, lax examination conditions, limited opportunities to acquire practical knowledge, limited quantity and quality of lessons, etc. Drawing on the academic experiences of the students, the chapter concludes that the effectiveness of China´s intention of 'knowledge sharing' and the Cameroonian government´s hope of 'learning from China' is debatable in practice.

Chapter nine is an appraisal of the Chinese government's 'knowledge sharing' intentions or human resource development project for Africa on the one hand and the Cameroonian government's expectation of making student migration a means towards transferring Chinese knowledge and know-how to Cameroon, on the other hand. The chapter argues that the ineffectiveness of knowledge transfer between China and Cameroon through education is partly the result of the states' practices in the management of student migration. Therefore, the chapter

engages with how the Chinese government through its immigration law and specifically legal provisions for academic internship in China impacts the university training of foreign students in China and the 'knowledge sharing' mechanism. Furthermore, the chapter also discusses through the lens of the extraversion analytical framework how the Cameroonian government handles student migration and how it influences the process of 'learning from China'.

Chapter ten summarizes the main findings, supplemented by the theoretical contribution of the thesis. For a practical use of the research findings, there is also an implicit reflection on the conditions for a win-win student migration between Cameroon and China.

Chapter Two: Fieldwork Settings and Research Methodology

This dissertation draws on a total of fourteen-month ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Cameroon and in China between March 2015 and July 2018. This chapter describes fieldwork conditions and the data collection process. More precisely, the chapter introduces the research field sites and justifies their selection, presents the research participants and the anthropological methods applied in the field. The chapter also reflects on the implication of these methodological choices from the perspective of doing "anthropology at home".

2.1   Research Context and Research Participants

This section presents the sites where fieldwork took place as well as the categories of people involved in the research.

2.1.1   Research sites: China and Cameroon

This research project approaches student migration from Cameroon to China from the perspectives of both sending and receiving countries. The design consisted of various categories of research participants, geographically situated in China and in Cameroon. In Cameroon, the participants were workers from public institutions (Confucius Institute, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Secondary Education and Chinese Embassy in Cameroon), migration brokerage agents, students returning from China, and Chinese language learners in Cameroon. In China, the research participants were students (Cameroonians and other nationalities), university personnel (administration staff members as well as lecturers and researchers), former Cameroonian students and officials from the Cameroonian Embassy in China.

Fieldwork in China lasted for about eight and a half months, and the main field site was Jinhua, complemented by five other Chinese cities, including Beijing, Guangzhou, Changsha, Wuhan and Hangzhou. The reasons why these cities became part of the research will be presented in the section describing fieldwork conditions. An important detail to underline is that beside my main research site and the five complementary cities, Cameroonian students participating in this research also came from four additional Chinese cities, namely Jiujiang, Shanghai, Zhuzhou and Yichang. I met students from these cities within the framework of the activities of the Cameroonian student associations in China. The research involved Cameroonian students from a total of ten cities in China.

In Cameroon, I only conducted fieldwork in Yaoundé, where I was able to find all the categories of the research participants I had targeted.

2.1.2　Research Participants

The participants of this research are very diverse and can be grouped into two broad categories: students and non-students. Details on the numbers of research participants from each category are provided in the section below on methods of data collection.

2.1.2.1　Students

The categories encompassed three sub-groups: Cameroonian students in China, Chinese language learners in Cameroon and students of other nationalities in China.

Cameroonian students in China

This category is composed of everybody not only enrolled at a Chinese university but also those who considered themselves first and foremost to be students. This second criterion is very important, as some Cameroonians in China had enrolled at the university not because they had an academic project but because it constituted an easy way to secure a Chinese visa for their business. Haugen (2013), in her typology of African students in China, refers to this category as "traders-turned-students". Those falling within this category were identifiable. They were generally self-sponsored and some often clearly presented themselves as businesspersons and were also known as such within student communities. "Traders-turned-students" were mainly found in Guangzhou and Jinhua as the result of the business opportunities these cities offer. This category was somewhat neglected when gathering information on some aspects of the research, namely those related to the quality of education in China.

Students of other nationalities in China

This group of research participants included students from Nigeria, Russia, Rwanda, Togo, Congo, Ghana and Egypt. I included these students not only for a somewhat comparative perspective but also for the purpose of data triangulation.

Chinese language learners in Cameroon

These are students registered at the Confucius Institute in Yaoundé. This group of research participants was particularly useful as a way of grasping the perception of China in Cameroon, as well the migration motivations of those who intended to migrate to China.

2.1.2.2 Non-students

This category includes administration staff members, returnees, lecturers and researchers, migration brokers and former students.

Administration staff members

These are workers at the public institutions researched in Cameroon and China. The institutions are universities and research institutes in China, the Chinese Embassy in Cameroon, the Cameroon Embassy in China, the Confucius Institute in Yaoundé and Cameroonian ministries.

Lecturers and researchers

This category encompasses lecturers at a university and/or workers of a research institute in China and the Confucius Institute in Cameroon.

Migration brokers

Migration brokers are Cameroonians serving as intermediaries between legal institutions involved in migration procedures (embassies, banks, foreign universities, etc.) and aspiring migrants[18]. Migration brokers involved in student mobility from Cameroon to China fell into two categories: agencies and individual brokers.

Former students

Former students are Cameroonians who graduated from a Chinese university in China and either returned to Cameroon or stayed on in China.

2.2 Methods of Data Collection

I used a set of complementary methods to collect data presented in this dissertation. These are participant observation, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews.

2.2.1 Participant Observation

In most of the research sites in China, there was a network of Cameroonians often forming an association[19]. Most importantly, Cameroonians in these cities usually had meeting spots such

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[18]For a detailed depiction of migration brokers and their activities in Cameroon, see to Alpes 2011.

[19] There were other African nationalities in the cities which I visited. But what set Cameroonians apart within the African student communities was their strong tendency to form an association when there are about ten students in the same city. This practice is probably a cultural reproduction, considering that being part of an association is almost a social norm in Cameroon.

as bars, restaurants, specific night clubs, student dormitories, sport stadia, just to name a few. During my exploration stay in Guangzhou, a friend introduced me to some of these gathering places around Xiaobei, the so-called Chocolate-City (Li et al 2009, Castillo 2014). In most of the settings, "without even having to ask questions" (Munck 2009: 183) I learnt very much on issues directly connected to my research focus. From then on, it became clear to me that "being there" (Gertler 2004) and ready to "follow the people" (Cook and Harrison 2007) were the most effective methods to generate information. In these different informal settings, participants shared daily experiences and information of different natures, discussed and commented burning topics mostly affecting their lives in China, such as new visa policies, university requirements and regulations. Some also attended gatherings to expose their individual problems, so as to seek help from fellow Cameroonians.

Combined with informal conversations, as described below in the section on extended fieldwork, participant observation was significantly effective for gathering information on the students´ image of China as a receiving country, their migration motivations, daily lives and academic experiences, as well as many other aspects enabling me to gauge their level of satisfaction with living and studying in China. For instance, to get a deep insight into students´ opinions on education in China, university regulations, visa issues, self-consciousness, daily life challenges and coping strategies, there was no substitute for the inevitable "*commentaires*" (social chit chat) after football matches and student association meetings, in bars and other party places. The observations were conducted in French, English or Pidgin English, depending on the sociolinguistic profiles of the participants and the settings.

In the field, I combined participant observation and interviews. Through initial observation, I identified the relevant topics to discuss and explore through interviews.

2.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Altogether, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 136 research participants (47 females and 89 males) from all of the categories listed above, as summarized in the table below.

Table 1: Overview of research participants interviewed by category and location

Categories of research participants		Interview location and number of interviewees				Total
		Cameroon		China		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
Students	Cameroonian students in China	/	/	47	32	**88**
	Students of other nationalities in China	/	/	08	01	
	Chinese language learners in Cameroon	03	02	/	/	
Non-students	Cameroon Embassy Staff in China	01	/	03	00	**48**
	Chinese Embassy Staff in Cameroon	00	01	/	/	
	Lecturers and researchers	/	/	06	03	
	University administration staff in China	/	/	04	02	
	Staff of Confucius Institute in Cameroon	02	01	/	/	
	Ministry officers in Cameroon	04	01			
	Former students	09	09	00	02	
	Total	**09**	**14**	**66**	**33**	**136**

There are a few important remarks to make regarding the composition of some categories of research participants. The first is that a key informant associated with the Cameroon Embassy in China was the former ambassador of Cameroon to China from 1988 to 2008. He published a book on his twenty-year experience in China, with a chapter on China-Africa relations. He welcomed me at his home in Yaoundé where he lives since he retired. The main focus of our discussion was on the issue of knowledge transfer between Cameroon and China, addressed from the perspective of the management of Chinese government scholarships by the Cameroonian government.

Furthermore, university administration staff in China were from different services such as international student offices and other faculty units in charge of foreign students, the focal point of Hanban (the Chinese government's institution in charge of creating and funding Confucius Institutes worldwide), and programmes specifically aimed at nationals of developing countries[20]. The majority of the interviews with university administration staff, lecturers and

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[20]An example is the International Master of Public Administration in Chinese Governance (IMPA) hosted by Sun Yat-Sen University. For more details about the programme, see http://civilservice.govmu.org/English/Documents/Circulars/2017/Annexes%20to%20circular%20letter%2038/2

researchers in China took place during the exploration phase of my fieldwork between March and April 2015. The ministry officers in Cameroon were from the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Secondary Education. The research participants from the Confucius Institute in Yaoundé were Cameroonians (02) and Chinese (01). All former students in Cameroon had studied in China, mostly on Chinese government and CI scholarships.

The majority of the interviews were carried out with the category presented as Cameroonian students in China, who also constituted the largest group of research participants. In total, I conducted interviews with 79 Cameroonian students (47 males and 32 females) from seventeen different academic institutions as indicated in the table below:

Table 2: Overview of Cameroonian students interviewed by university

University	Location	Number of research participants
Central South University	Changsha	03
Donghua University	Shanghai	01
Zhejiang Normal University	Jinhua	22
Hunan University of Technology	Zhuzhou	01
Zhejiang University of Technology	Hangzhou	08
Jinhua Polytechnic	Jinhua	10
University of International Business and Economics	Beijing	03
Changsha Medical University	Changsha	02
China University of Geosciences	Wuhan	06
Jiujiang University	Jiujiang	03
Sun Yat-Sen University	Guangzhou	03
Zhejiang Sci-Tech University	Hangzhou	05
South China University of Technology	Guangzhou	06
China Three Georges University	Yichang	01
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	Wuhan	03

%20Master%20of%20Public%20Administration%20in%20Chinese%20Governance.pdf. Last accessed, 10 March 2018.

China University of Petroleum	Qingdao	01
Nanjing University of Finance and Economics	Nanjing	01
Total number of research participants		**79**

It is important to note that the high number of students from Zhejiang Normal University results from the fact that the greater part of my fieldwork was carried out in Jinhua as it was my main research site for the reasons provided earlier. Another important precision is that for each city, the research participants included student association leaders, and this offered the opportunity to discuss some issues from a community perspective. Based on the observational data, I elaborated a thematic file, correlating topics and individuals. Individuals were either those actively involved in a scene observed, people from whom I learnt about specific issues in an informal setting, or people mentioned in specific stories. Thus, the selection of the first interviewees was target-oriented.

In terms of financial status, the interviewees can be grouped into two main groups: scholarship holders and self-sponsored. The group of scholarship holders is also very diverse as China's scholarship scheme includes several scholarship programmes funded by different institutions (see Chapter 4). Generally, two sub-groups of scholarships can be distinguished: Chinese government scholarships and Confucius Institutes (CI) scholarships.

Table 3: Overview of Cameroonian students interviewed by financial status

Categories		**Number**
Scholarship holders	C I Scholarship holders	22
	Chinese government scholarships holders	19
Self-sponsored		38
Total		79

2.3   Entering the Field in China

This section focuses on fieldwork conditions in China. It includes the factors that influenced the choice of each research site and the phases of fieldwork on the one hand, and how I negotiated my access to Cameroonian communities and recruited the research participants in different locations, on the other hand. My fieldwork in China between March 2015 and July 2019 was carried out in three phases: exploration, extended, and follow-up.

2.3.1   Exploration Fieldwork

The exploration field trip lasted from March to April 2015, and I visited four Chinese cities: Beijing, Guangzhou, Jinhua and Hangzhou. The first step was Beijing. I chose Beijing as a research site because it hosts not only part of Cameroonian student network in China but also the Cameroon Embassy, one of the institutions I intended to research. Researching the Cameroon Embassy was fundamental in order to collect statistical data and other general information related to Cameroonian students in China, as well the role of the embassy in student mobility and student life.

I was introduced to the field by my research supervisor. For the exploration phase, we travelled together, as she was involved in other research activities in both China and Hong-Kong. She had personal contacts at the Cameroon Embassy in Beijing from her previous research visits. One of these, who happened to be the President of the *Amicale des Camerounais en Chine* (ACAC), the association of Cameroonians in Beijing which includes different social categories (students, diplomats, and businesspersons), invited us to attend the monthly meeting of the association scheduled at his private home. About twenty people attended the meeting and at the end of the agenda items, the president of the association gave us the opportunity to introduce our research topics so as to discuss with the audience, of which most were students. The meeting was an opportunity for me to set up a network of informants. At the end of the gathering, my supervisor and I were invited to partake in an event organized at the Cameroon Embassy in Beijing for the celebration of the International Women's Day. This was a great occasion to introduce my research focus to some staff members of the Embassy. This was also a significant step in my research, in term of accessibility, as, even though I was 'at home', my position still had "to be negotiated" (Cook 2005) and being introduced made this process easier and faster. During the short stay in Beijing, besides participant observation, I conducted interviews with two students and one officer of the Cameroon Embassy. I also kept close contact with many of the students whom I met when I returned to China for extended fieldwork.

The second step of the exploration trip was Guangzhou. I included Guangzhou into the research sites for different reasons. The first one was that it hosts the largest African (and thus Cameroonian) population in China. As a consequence of the high presence of Africans, the city of Guangzhou, as I discovered while doing desk research, was under the spotlight of the media, scholars and photographers. The reports emphasized issues of race and social representation, which suggested Guangzhou to be the appropriate venue in which to focus on the aspect of my project related to the social experiences of the students. Second, I chose Guangzhou for its

status as a business site, and thus a suitable location in which to observe the study-business nexus.

Before my travels to China, I made friends with a Cameroonian student based in Guangzhou. I contacted him using an email list of Cameroonians in China provided by my supervisor. I will refer to the friend as Brado. I met Brado on the same day of my arrival in Guangzhou and through him, I accessed the Cameroonian student community in the city. He provided me with the contacts of a few students and through a snowball effect, I reached out to a great number of students, including the then president of the student association as well as two former students working in Guangzhou. Brado introduced me to different places and settings in Guangzhou, where I carried out participant observation, especially around Xiaobei where many African students and traders congregate. These places included specific bars and shops, and the Cameroonians attending these places were of different categories in terms of age. The kind of topics often discussed also suggested a difference regarding participants´ priorities (studies and/or business) in China.

Brado also took me to the meeting of the Cameroonian student association in Guangzhou. About thirty people attended the meeting and, since it was the first session of the year, each participant had to introduce him/herself by giving his/her name, duration in China and subject studied. I was also given the chance to introduce my research topic. Self-presentation suggested a blurriness of the boundary between studies and business in the migratory project of the participants and also enabled a categorization of Cameroonian students in Guangzhou.

The member hosting the meeting had his birthday on the same day and intended to celebrate it. Almost all the participants stayed on for the party which went on into the late night. The party constituted a wonderful opportunity for informal conversations, which in turn permitted me to collect a great deal of information on students' migration motivations, livelihood strategies, business-study combination and discourse on being Black in China. I also succeeded in conducting an interview with one participant during the course of the event.

As underlined earlier, the majority of interviews with the members of university administration staff and researchers in China were conducted during this exploration phase. It was a successful step, thanks to the presence and the implication of my supervisor in the sense that I accessed all the research participants through her networking. In Guangzhou, I had interviews with two staff members of Sun Yat-Sen University. The first was from the international students' office and the discussion focused on several topics including, among others, the accommodation of international students, regulation on class attendance and its

implications on student visas, regulations on student jobs and internships, and student visa renewal requirements.

The second interview was with the coordinator of the School of Governance. I also had conversations with three other staff of this school. It was necessary to research this specific institution because it hosted the International Masters of Public Administration in Chinese Governance (IMPA) which is specifically aimed at students and professionals from developing countries. The relevant information gathered was that the IMPA programme was established in 2011 and is sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce which is also in charge of the selection of the applicants. One of the objectives of the programme, the director said, is to enable the participants to learn about China´s model of governance. A particularity in the designing of the programme is that it provides for a follow-up of the graduates upon their return to their home countries. It is precisely the teaching staff members of the programme who are supposed to visit former students in their respective countries to see how they are making use of the knowledge acquired during the training. However, this measure has not yet been put into practice due to the heavy workload of the staff, as the former director indicated. Globally, the interviews and conversations with staff of the School of Governance were particularly enlightening, as they offered much insight not only into the scope of China-Africa educational cooperation, namely the Human Resource Development discourse, but also the extent and the complexity of China's scholarship schemes.

For this exploration stay in Guangzhou, I conducted a total of twelve semi-structured interviews and the interlocutors included six Cameroonian students (of whom one was the president of the Cameroonian student association in Guangzhou), one former Cameroonian student, three university staff members (of whom one was a Cameroonian university lecturer), one Ghanaian and one Nigerian student.

After Guangzhou, I moved to the city of Jinhua, which I chose as the main research site for several reasons. Jinhua is home to Zhejiang Normal University (ZJNU) which has a collaboration partnership with the University of Yaoundé 2 in Cameroon. One of the outcomes of the collaboration is the establishment of the Confucius Institute in Cameroon in 2007 by ZJNU, which also provides the institutions with Chinese language teachers (Chinese nationals). Another result of the result of the cooperation, perhaps indirectly, is ZJNU becoming the destination of the majority of Cameroonian students going to China on CI grants. Furthermore, my exploration field trip highly influenced the choice of Jinhua as the main research site in the sense that it was the occasion for me to realize the central role of ZJNU in China-Africa

educational cooperation. When I arrived in Jinhua, I learned from a research participant that the university frequently hosted meetings and events involving delegations from Africa.

This was proved right when I returned to Jinhua for my extended fieldwork between March and August 2016. On the university campus or in one of the numerous restaurants in the surrounding of the university, I often came across Africans who from their outfits and physical appearance did not look students. Whenever I approached them to find out what had brought them to China, I was always given same answer: we are here for a seminar.

Photograph 1 Banner for the "Seminar for Think-Tanks from Anglophone African Countries" in Jinhua (Photo: Severin Kaji, Jinhua, June 2016)

The number of banners across the university campus attested to the variety and the high frequency of these seminars. The above suggests ZJNU to be the backbone of China-Africa education cooperation, namely the training of African professionals. One of the events that took place while I was in Jinhua was the "Seminar for Think-Tanks from Anglophone African Countries" for which a delegation had come from Cameroon. The delegation from Cameroon was composed of staff from the Ministry of Higher Education and public universities. I had the chance to talk to a few of them about the objectives and the sense the outcome of the meeting in terms of impact on China-Africa educational cooperation.

ZJNU in Jinhua also hosts the Institute of African Studies (IAS), presented as one of the influential institutions in China´s African policy for its advisory work to Chinese policy-makers. The research foci of the institute are Africa economic, education, history and politics. In addition, the institute offers post-graduate programs and enrolls students from Africa and Cameroon specifically. As my supervisor knew most of the researchers from the institute, she introduced me to them via e-emails, which greatly facilitated my access to the institution. I had

several interviews with the staff members, including the director with whom I discussed Africa-China relations as a whole.

One of the very insightful interviews was with Shu Zhan who had been working as diplomatist in Africa[21] for about thirteen years. He joined the Institute of African Studies upon retirement and his job as he described it, consists in "mainly doing research and helping the institute set up contact with Africans and also foreigners in other countries doing African studies" (interview with Shu Zhan, Jinhua, April 2015). Shu Zhan critically assessed China-Africa education cooperation, both from the perspectives of soft power and skill transfer. We had another interview during my second visit to Jinhua. Niu Changsong was another researcher I met from the institute. Her main research focus is Africa-China educational cooperation. By then, her ongoing research project was on the issue of satisfaction of African students at ZJNU, which we discussed at length, in connection with the topic of China-Africa education cooperation as whole. We met and discussed for each of my three visits to China and through our exchanges, I received statistics on African students at ZJNU.

Thanks to this network, I was also introduced to the head of the international student office of ZJNU with whom I discussed issues related to international students and specifically Africans at ZJNU. We talked about admission requirements, regulations on student jobs and academic internships. Our conversation also focused on the management of scholarship students and university accommodation. I had a second interview with him when I returned to Jinhua for the extended fieldwork. During this exploration phase in Jinhua, I also carried out interviews with eight Cameroonian students as well as participant observation within the Cameroonian student community. According to the list I obtained from the leaders of the student association, there were about forty Cameroonian students in Jinhua. It is important to note that these are students considered members of the student association. Yet there were many other students who did not register for the association. This implies that the Cameroonian student population in Jinhua was above forty, making them the largest group of foreign students in Jinhua, according to an official of ZJNU.

Hangzhou was the last step of the exploration trip in China. My main reason to visit Hangzhou was to meet Tony. We knew each other from Cameroon and I maintained close

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[21] As a diplomat, Shu Zhan has been secretary, councillor and ambassador in several Eastern and Southern African countries, especially Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Rwanda, South Africa and Namibia. He has also been a visiting scholar in Zimbabwe and South Africa. He had been retired for 3 years at the time of our meeting in April 2015.

contact with one of his relatives. In Hangzhou, like the other cities I visited, there was a Cameroonian student association. I attended one of their meetings in which twenty students participated. At the end of the meeting, I was given the opportunity to present my research topic and objectives. The moment turned into a focus group discussion setting, in which the audience spoke about their migration motivations, the quality of education in China, their livelihood strategies as well as the issue of race. Important information I gained from Hangzhou was the contact of a few migration brokers in Cameroon, through whom most of the self-sponsored students in Hangzhou obtained their university admission and their visas. Thanks to these contacts, I succeeded in meeting some of the brokers during my fieldwork in Cameroon.

In all, the exploratory field trip helped me become acquainted with the Chinese context, have an overview of the situation at ground level and establish personal contacts for my extended fieldwork. Furthermore, the exploratory field trip gave me an initial opportunity to collect primary data that was useful for refining my research design and improve on the tools for further data collection.

2.3.2 Extended Fieldwork: "Following the People", Informal Conversation and Active Participation

The extended fieldwork in China took place between March and August 2016. My main research site was Jinhua, a small city in the Zhejiang province of China. Research participants often called Jinhua a village in comparison with other Chinese mega cities like Shanghai, Beijing and so on. Jinhua had two higher education institutions: Zhejiang Normal University and Jinhua Polytechnic. Based on my personal observation and the statistic from the Cameroonian student association leaders, they enrolled between fifty and sixty Cameroonians.

What set Jinhua apart from other big cities I visited was that Cameroonian students lived concentrated in the neighborhoods of the two institutions which were about twenty kilometers away from each other. The Cameroonians in Jinhua formed two sub-groups: The largest was based at ZJNU and was mostly composed of Francophones while the second one at Jinhua Polytechnic consisted of Anglophones in the majority. As I speak both French and English, I could easily engage with both groups. The fact that I also speak Pidgin English, used as a lingua franca within the Anglophone group, was an asset.

During this extended fieldwork phase, I enrolled for a Chinese language course at ZJNU. This was not only because of the importance of the language for everyday life interactions during my stay, but also for the purpose of participant observation. Being a student was the best

way to document issues like admission requirements and procedures, university regulations and visa renewals, among others.

In Jinhua, as I progressively became part of the community, I was included into several Wechat groups, each of which had a specific purpose. For instance, there was a group created by the Cameroonian association in that city (Camer Jinhua) which aimed at sharing relevant information within the Cameroonian community in the city. Almost all the members (at least the active ones) of this main group were Francophones as only a few Anglophones had joined the student association. There was another Wechat group involving mainly Anglophones Cameroonians, the majority of whom were based at Jinhua Polytechnic, where they were enrolled. I joined the football team of Cameroonian students in Jihnua and there was a Wechat group for football players. There was also a Wechat group for 'party people'. As a Chinese language student, there was a Wechat group for our class, which lecturers used for sharing useful information. I also joined the Wechat group of the Cameroonian Students Association in China (CSAC) which includes, at least supposedly, Cameroonians from all over China. These communication platforms were a source of important sets of information about the kind of challenges students faced in their daily life and the coping strategies, the quality of education in China, their appreciation of China-Africa relation as a whole, the management of Chinese government scholarships by the Cameroonian government, and so on. Globally, from certain issues discussed in these Wechat groups, followed elements accounting for student satisfaction which, as argued earlier, is an important factor in the effectiveness of education as a soft power resource.

Photograph 2 Vibrant nightlife in Beímen on a Friday during summer (Photo: Severin Kaji, August 2016)

2.3.2.1 *Beímen* and *Luojiatang*

In Jinhua, I rented a room in the area known as Beímen[22] in the neighborhood of the west gate of ZJNU. It is rather a very congested area, in which student hostels, restaurants, hotels, shops, and bars adjoin each other. *Beímen* is also known for its vendors who occupy the street from nightfall through to around midnight, selling street food and beers to customers hosted in tents. In *Beímen,* there was also a small night club owned by a Chinese but mostly frequented by Africans. The night club mostly opened at the weekends but sometimes on weekdays during holidays, in response to the demand of the students. There was another famous bar in Beímen attended by all international students, which also only opened on the weekends.

For this set of reasons, *Beímen* was busy until very late, making it a good place for informal conversations. The fact that students mostly gathered there in groups created the conditions of an informal focus group discussion when the topics argued over were relevant for my research. This was also the case with another hot spot known as Luojiatang located in the neighborhood of the north gate of ZJNU.

Part of my extended stay coincided with the summer holidays and, as students were "bored[23]" as they often said, these hot spots became livelier at nights as students often moved from one to another.

In summer, Jinhua was particularly hot and temperatures rose up to forty degrees. There was a tendency among students to stay indoors during the day, coming out after dusk. Life usually took up its course again with a meeting at the football field.

2.3.2.2   The football Field: A Social Space

As soon as I arrived in Jinhua in April 2015 for my exploration fieldwork which lasted for three weeks, I quickly noticed that football played a central role in the daily life of Cameroonian students and Africans in general. The football field was a social space beyond its recreational function. On the second day of my arrival, a friend took me to the football field on the campus of ZJNU to watch a game between Cameroonian students and the "the rest of Africa" (a football team composed of students from other African countries. We arrived in the field a few minutes before 11 a.m., the time at which the match was scheduled and there were

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[22] *Beímen* in Chinese literally means west gate.
[23] By being bored, students mostly emphasized the lack of job opportunities in Jinhua.

already about twenty male students seating on the steps, the majority of whom were Cameroonians, my friend told me as we approached.

Photograph 2 Football team of Cameroonian students at ZJNU (photo Camer Jinhua, Jinhua July 2016)

While waiting for the start to the game, a participant narrated a story about a motorbike accident between a Cameroonian student and a Chinese lady in the city and how the case had been handled by the local police. Globally, the audience in their comments to the incident particularly emphasized the partiality of the Chinese police. These reactions were in line with the perception of the Chinese police by Cameroonians in Guangzhou. As the game went on, people continuously arrived to watch, including female students. My friend informed me whenever a new Cameroonian came along. At the end of the game, the players joined us on the steps and we sat there for about an hour, commenting about the game and also talking about other topics from which relevant information emerged for understanding their social life and thus the attractiveness (soft power) of China as a receiving country.

When I returned to Jinhua one year later in March 2016 for extended fieldwork, I joined the football group. During the holiday break, we played football almost every afternoon. The games mostly involved only Cameroonians but other Africans often participated and the scenario was that described above: after the game, the players and spectators usually joined and spent time on the field for *commentaires*. These were shared moments of conviviality which featured stories, jokes, anecdotes and teasing; a help in understanding how Cameroonian students interpreted and made sense of university regulation, study-related challenges, social life, as well China´s presence in Africa in general training. Plans to meet later at night either in

one of the hot spots or at a member´s place was taken in the football field. I also sometimes initiated a gathering in my room, often to watch football.

Overall, just by 'being there' on a regular basis, I learnt about new topics and or followed up on old ones.

2.3.2.3   The Moderator: Active Participant Observer

In May 2016, the student association in Jinhua organized a picnic in a park in the framework of the Cameroon National Day celebrations. The idea, from what the president of the association explained to me, was for the students to gather in a park and to discuss a topic related to Cameroon as a nation. The president of the association not only appointed me the moderator of the discussion but also asked me to suggest two topics. One of the topics I suggested was "Studies in China: Vice or virtue for an emerging Cameroon. Insight into the academic opportunities, existing challenges and potential solutions". I suggested this topic because a few days earlier, the president of the mother Cameroonian association (Cameroonian Students Association in China-CSAC) had shared a document from Cameroon´s Ministry of Higher Education entitled "priority subjects for Cameroon". The document was a mere listing of study subjects and the president of CSAC wrote the following accompanying massage: "Fellows countrymen, let make good use of the opportunities China is offering us".

I also proposed the topic for the reason that it was an integral aspect of my research. Twenty-five students participated in the discussion which interestingly turned into an appraisal of China´s "knowledge sharing" and Cameroon´s "learning from China" discourse. For about one and a half hours, the participant addressed several issues: learning difficulties, the management of scholarship students by the university, the content and quality the training, the management of scholarship by the Cameroonian government (selection of the candidates, follow-up), access to practical knowledge in China (the internship issue), expectations from the Cameroonian Embassy in China in terms of solutions to daily life and academic challenges. With regard to the quality of training in China, the participants also discussed the students´ sense of agency or self- reliance.

During the discussion, I noted down key points of each interesting intervention and the names of the participants, so that I could schedule a face-to-face interview to address the topics in detail. Chapters focusing on the students´ assessment of the quality of training in China drew in part on the discussion.

2.3.2.4 'Polytech', the Second Cameroonian Community in Jinhua

In the jargon of Cameroonian students in Jinhua, Polytech "stands for Jinhua Polytechnic, the second university of the city of Jinhua which also hosts African students from different nationalities, including Cameroonians. Jinhua Polytechnic is located about twenty minutes away (by e-bike) from Zhejiang Normal University. Cameroonians at Jinhua Polytechnic numbered about twelve, mostly Anglophones (ten) and of which only three females. The majority of them came to China through someone based in China, and often students at Jinhua Polytechnic, which is probably one of the explanations for their high number in this specific institution.

In the Cameroonian students´ vocabulary in Jinhua, the Polytech is used to refer to a residential area for African students, namely Cameroonians, in the city. The labelling is due to the fact that at Jinhua Polytechnic (unlike Zhejiang Normal University) students are not authorized to live outside the university campus. Hence, all Cameroonian students there lived in the university accommodated on campus. They were accommodated on the fifth floor, together with other African students mostly from Rwanda. I made friends with three of the students there, which is why I often visited the Polytech. Through these students, I was introduced to the rest of the group of Cameroonians, as well a few Rwandans at Jinhua Polytechnic. I was regularly welcomed in the room of one of the three friends and other fellows often came there for cooking or simply talking. At Jinhua Polytechnic, I had interviews with two Cameroonians students, administered a research questionnaire and also gathered insightful data through informal conversations.

2.3.2.5 Complementary Field Sites: The Cases of Wuhan and Changsha

As indicated earlier, beside the city of Jinhua which was the main research area, there were complementary research sites, namely Wuhan and Changsha. I visited Wuhan in late May 2016 within the framework of the activities of the Cameroonian student associations. The Cameroonian student association in Wuhan (Camer-Wuhan) organized a two-day event for the celebration of Cameroon National Day and invited student associations from other cities. As a member of the student association in Jinhua (Camer-Jinhua), I joined the group of students travelling to Wuhan. In Wuhan there were also students coming from Changsha, Shanghai Hangzhou and Nanjing. I had the chance to carry out interviews and mostly enriching informal conversations.

I also visited Changsha twice in the course of the research. The first time was in July 2016 to attend the general assembly of the mother Cameroonian Student Association in China (CSAC). CSAC organizes a general assembly every year to elect a new executive bureau. For each general assembly, the Cameroonian Embassy in China is represented by a delegation, often including the ambassador, as was the case in Changsha. The general assembly is a time of reunion as it brings together Cameroonian students from different Chinese cities. It is also attractive for the activities it includes, such as football competition and the gala night which the main item is the 'CSAC miss' contest. In Changsha, I was appointed to chair the commission for the election of the new CSAC executive bureau.

Photograph 3 Gala night of the general assembly of CSAC in Changsha (Photo: CSAC, Changsha, July 2016)

In Changsha, all participants were hosted in the same hotel, which rendered contact-making easier. I rented a single room where I could welcome the potential research participants. During the two-day long event, I was able to conduct interviews with seven students from five different cities. Four of the seven interviewees were association leaders in their cities and thus could provide an overall picture on students´ life and experiences in their different communities.

Participating in the events was a determinant moment in my research, as talking to students from other cities broadened my research perspective. For instance, it was through interviews and informal conversations in Changsha that I became aware of a migration brokerage network bringing medical students from Cameroon to China. I also learned about the challenges medical students were specifically faced with in China. My second visit to Changsha

was in early August 2016. I returned there to meet three research participants whom I had met during my first stay and who were willing to participate in the research but who did not have the necessary time. This second stay lasted only for a day and was fruitful in that I succeeded to conduct interviews with the three students.

2.3.3 The follow-up Fieldwork
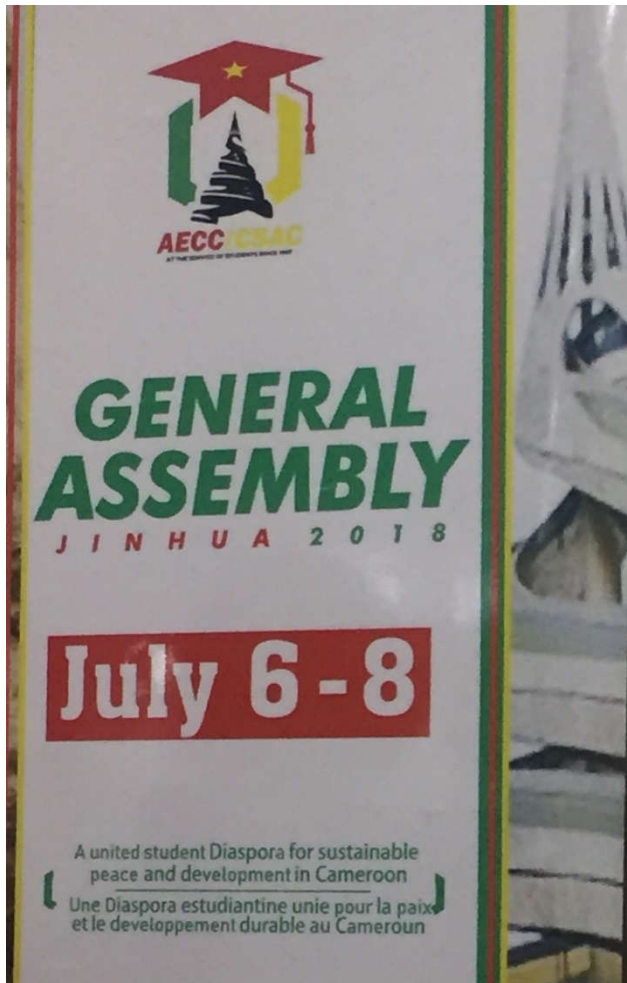
Photograh 4 Flyer of the 2018 General Assembly of CSAC in Jinhua (Photo, Séverin Kaji, Jinhua, July 2018)

My last and shortest field trip to China was in July 2018. It lasted two weeks, during which I visited Beijing, Jinhua and Guangzhou. The aim of the visit was to follow-up on earlier research findings. For instance, data from previous fieldwork in China suggested a remarkable staying intention among Cameroonian students in China. Considering the complexity of the Chinese immigration law, the objective of the visit was to find out how many Cameroonian students had succeeded to maintain themselves in China upon graduation on the one hand, and their professional path (what they do in China) in comparison with their initial field of training, on the other hand.

At the institutional level, I intended to assess the potential measures put in place by the Cameroonian Embassy in China to solve the academic challenges raised by Cameroonians, specifically with regard to internship issues, which officials from the embassy (and also from the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon) acknowledged as one of the biggest challenges faced by the students. With regard to these potential measures, it is important to note that in 2016, the Cameroonian government appointed two cultural attachés at the Cameroonian Embassy in Beijing, mostly in charge of student affairs. Introducing the two attachés to the student community during the general assembly of CSAC in Changsha in July

2016, the Cameroonian ambassador presented their appointments as proof that the Cameroonian government was working towards finding sustainable solutions to students´ problems. The choice of the date of my travel to China was highly influenced by the calendar of the CSAC. I intended to take part in its 2018 general assembly, organized in the city of Jinhua in July (see the photograph above). I attended the event and had the chance to meet the majority of the students with whom I had spoken during my previous stays, some of whom I had maintained close contact with on social media. The participants came from a range of Chinese cities and even though I did not carry out formal interviews, I collected rich data through informal conversation and often just through the *commentaires* here and there. During the two weeks, I also visited Guangzhou to meet some research participants for follow-ups.

Overall, Cameroonian students in China and former students (including those wo returned to Cameroon and those who stayed on in China upon graduation) who participated in this research amounted 100. They attended sixteen higher education institutions located in ten different cities, as indicated in the table below:

Table 4: Universities attended by Cameroonian students and former students

University	Location	Number of participants		
		Currently studying	**Former students**	**Total**
Central South University	Changsha	03	03	**06**
Donghua University	Shanghai	01	01	**02**
Zhejiang Normal University	Jinhua	22	10	**32**
Hunan University of Technology	Zhuzhou	01	0	**01**
Zhejiang University of Technology	Hangzhou	08	0	**08**
Jinhua Polytechnic	Jinhua	10	01	**11**
University of International Business and Economics	Beijing	03	01	**04**
Changsha Medical University	Changsha	02	02	**04**
China University of Geosciences	Wuhan	06	0	**06**
Jiujiang University	Jiujiang	03	0	**03**
Sun Yat-Sen University	Guangzhou	03	01	**04**
Zhejiang Sci-Tech University	Hangzhou	05	0	**05**

South China University of Technology	Guangzhou	06	01	**07**
China Three Georges University	Yichang	01	0	**01**
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	Wuhan	03	0	**03**
China University of Petroleum	Qingdao	01	0	**01**
Jiamusi University	Jiamusi	0	01	**01**
Nanjing University of Finance and Economics	Nanjing	01	0	**01**
Total		**79**	**21**	**100**

It is important to emphasize that this table includes two categories of research participants, namely Cameroonian students enrolled at Chinese universities, and former Cameroonian students (in China and Cameroon) with whom I had not only semi-structured interviews but also informal conversations on different research foci.

Statistically, four institutions dominate the research sample, namely Zhejiang Normal University in Jinhua (32 participants), Jinhua Polytechnic (11 participants), Zhejiang University of Technology (8 participants), and South China University of Technology in Guangzhou (7 participants). Regarding the status of these academic institutions, it is important to indicate that there are several university rankings produced by Chinese organizations. The two most regarded of these national rankings are those elaborated by the Chinese University Alumni Association (CUAA) and the China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Centre (CDGDC) which is affiliated with the Ministry of Education of China. None of the four institutions dominating in the research sample appears in the rankings of the thirty best universities in China, compiled by the Chinese University Alumni Association (CUAA) in 2015.[24] However, South China University of Technology appears in the rankings between 2010 and 2014. In a nutshell, the table suggests that the majority of research participants were not

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[24] The university ranking compiled by the Chinese University Alumni Association (CUAA) between 2010 and 2015 is available at https://www.studyinchina.com.my/web/page/cuaa-top-ranked-chinese-universities-/

enrolled in first class universities in China. As a matter of fact, their description of the quality of the training cannot be generalized to all Chinese universities.

2.4   Fieldwork in Cameroon

Fieldwork in Cameroon was conducted in two phases. The first and longest took place between July and November 2015 and the second between March and April 2017. I conducted fieldwork in Yaoundé, where all the institutions I intended to research are located. Other categories of individuals which the research involves were also available in Yaoundé. Globally, I collected data from institutions, migration brokerage agents, returned graduates and Chinese language learners from the Confucius Institute.

Institutions researched in Cameroon included the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Secondary Education, the Chinese Embassy and the Confucius Institute in Yaoundé. At the Ministry of Higher Education, research participants were from the 'Cooperation Unit', the 'Scholarship and Allowance Bureau' and the 'Sub-Department of Equivalence'. In the interviews, we focused on several topics, including the terms and domains of China-Cameroon educational cooperation, the selection criteria for the cooperation scholarship, the professional path of students returning from China, problems faced by Cameroonian students in China and eventual responses from the ministry, the issue of equivalence of Chinese degrees in Cameroon, and most importantly, the expectations of the Cameroonian government from its cooperation with China in the field of education.

The only research participant from the Ministry of Secondary Education was the national inspector in charge of Chinese teaching. What sets her apart is the fact that she had studied in China for two years on a Chinese government scholarship. From a rather critical perspective, she looked into the management of cooperation scholarships (namely the selection criteria), the academic path of Cameroonian students in China. At the Confucius Institute in Yaoundé, I conducted an interview with its Chinese co-director[25], the administrative responsible of the institution (a Cameroonian) and a teacher (a Cameroon who also studied in China for a Chinese government scholarship in late 1998). I also registered for the Summer Camp organized by the institute between July and August 2015.

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[25] Confucius Institutes worldwide have two co-directors. The first one is from the country hosting the institution and the deputy is from China. In the case of Cameroon, as my personal observation suggests, the Chinese deputy director is responsible for coordinating the activities of the institution.

Photograph 5: Group photo for the closing ceremony of the 2015 Summer Camp at CI in Yaoundé. (Photo, Severin Kaji, Yaoundé, August 2015).

At the Chinese Embassy in Yaoundé, I conducted an interview with the cultural attaché in which she preferred to exclusively look into the role of student migration in enhancing mutual understanding between Cameroonian and Chinese students. I also spoke with the former ambassador of Cameroon to China from 1988 to 2008 who had also published a book with a chapter on China-Africa relations. In our conversation, he underlined what in his opinion should be improved for Cameroon to benefit from the Chinese government scholarships as a means to learn from China.

The returnees constituted the largest category of research participants in Cameroon. They were eighteen altogether who had studied in China on Chinese government scholarships (09), CI scholarships (08) and a provincial scholarship (01). We discussed their academic and social experiences in China, so as to gauge their level of satisfaction with their overall experience in China. Interviews with returnees also put an emphasis on their career path (in which sector they worked and the employing companies) as it constitutes a determinant element in the analysis of the states´ discourse of human resource development.

In Cameroon, I also spoke with two migration brokerage agents. The first one, whom I contacted during my first stay in China, has an agency in Yaoundé. I visited the agency as a potential candidate for a student visa for China. With the second agent, I had a short phone conversation. I found his number on his flyer posted on a traffic sign on the street in Yaoundé.

My aim with the brokers was to find out the king of arguments which is used to sell the destination China, as well as the fees they charge for their service. I also serendipitously met another broker in a bar at the student quarter in Yaoundé. He was with a customer and I followed their conversation in which he portrayed China as the new land of opportunity. I also managed to have an improvised conversation with him. In Cameroon, I interviewed Chinese language learners from the CI class in Yaoundé to learn about their motivations to learn Chinese and their migration intentions.

2.5   Concluding Remarks: The Challenges of Doing Anthropology 'at Home'

This dissertation falls within the so-called 'anthropology at home' manner, in that I conducted fieldwork in Cameroon and studied Cameroonians in China. Peirano defines anthropology at home as "the kind of enquiry developed in the study of one´s own society, where "others" are both ourselves and those relatively different from us, whom we see as part of the same collectivity" (Peirano 1998: 123). In its original coinage, anthropology at home designated the fact of doing fieldwork in one´s home, the home of the researcher. The definition of home thus foregrounded the geographical location, distinguishing between home and abroad (Peirano 1998; Collins and Gallinat 2010). Thus, doing anthropology at home was conceived of as contrasting with doing fieldwork abroad (Peirano 1998). However, "at homeness" has become a highly contested notion, for its tendency to "equate culture with place or nation" (Greenhouse 1985) or "locality" (Appadurai, 1996). Accoding to Appadurai, "the localizing strategies of traditional ethnography" are irrelevant and cannot even survive because locality has become fragile as a result of what he coins as deterritorialization (Appadurai 1996: 52). Appadurai uses the terms deterritorialization to underline the fact that under the effect of migration, "groups are no longer tightly territorialized [and] spatially bounded. [Consequently] the many displaced, deterritorialized, and transient populations that constitute today's ethnoscapes are engaged in the construction of locality" (Appadurai 1996: 196-198). In this view, the notion of home is more an invention than anything else. Considering the fragile feature of location, the membership or sameness criteria becomes more influential in defining "at homeness" in defining doing anthropology at home. In this respect, doing anthropology at home simply implies researchers being members of the group under study, the membership deriving from their national citizenship (Greenhouse 1985).

Another issue regarding the way of practicing anthropology was the assumption that "doing anthropology at home was a straightforward matter" (Collins and Gallinat 2010: 8). I

argue that while doing anthropology in a social context that is supposed to be the researcher´s may present advantages in terms of access, language and field practicalities, it also has considerable challenges. Doing anthropology at home is thus just a different context of a single discipline (Peirano 1998) and in fact, the researcher is always bound to the core requirements of anthropological methodology, such as positionality and reflexivity.

2.5.1   Positionality and Reflexivity in China: « *L´homme de Toutes les Sous-sections* »

Despite my background as a Cameroonian, I was an "outsider" or a "stranger" to the Cameroonian community in China. This required me to work toward establishing affinity and familiarity, in the absence of which I could have remained a "newcomer". For this purpose, I had to continuously negotiate and renegotiate my role as a researcher by means of "going out" and "staying out", which Bernard (2006) considers skills in the "craft" of participant observation. In Jinhua, for instance, where my extended fieldwork took place, it quickly became clear to me that far from being a homogeneous group, the Cameroonian community was composed of what some research participants described to be "*sous-sections[26]*" that is, sub-groups constituted on the basis of gender, way of life, affinity, or language.

In terms of ways of life, while the common feature of Cameroonian students, especially that of men, was their propensity for nightlife, there was a visible difference in terms of where and what to do. For instance, some students opted for indoor gatherings (drinking, playing games and talking), while others preferred hanging out, often moving from one hot spot to another. Furthermore, there also often existed latent opposing camps, resulting for instance from a leadership concern in the student association. Love relationships also resulted in division, especially between female students. In one way or the other, I was informed of the oppositions, often by persons involved in such relationships, as they wanted to have my opinions so as to see my side. I succeeded in remaining neutral, which earned me the attribute of "*l´homme de toutes les sous-sections*" (meaning the man of all subgroups).

The setting described above was very challenging and tricky, and made me aware of the consequence of my interactions with the research individuals (England 2015) in the process of data collection, and the necessity to remove myself from over-immersion (Bernard 2006). This

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[26] In the Cameroonian jargon, "sous-section" is essentially a political term, used to designate the smallest representation of a political party on the ground. It could be translated into English as branch or unit. In the students' vocabulary, sous-section means subgroup.

term refers to my positionality. Positionality, here, means the ways in which researchers position themselves in the field and are positioned and perceived by the "researched". Research participants perceive the researcher through contested attributes in relation to gender, ethnicity, age, attitudes, and origin. Positionality is also and foremost about the relationships between the research participants and the researcher, which are informed by power differences and can be of different natures (England, 2015).

My positionality within the student community in China was informed by three important elements. The first was my relationship with others. By being open-minded, out-going and considerate, I succeeded in cultivating close contact with the majority of the research participants, regardless of their gender. Yet, my quick and close contact with some female research participants led to friction and tension with some male students who probably perceived me as a potential rival. However, the situation was quite easy to handle.

My age was also an influential factor for my positionality in the field. I was often addressed as *le grand frère* (literally means the big brother) or *le big*. In the Cameroonian lingua franca, people often use these terms to show politeness and respect when greeting or addressing persons who are elder or considered to be. Furthermore, beyond the age difference emphasized, these expressions are used as a sign of esteem and consideration for the person addressed. However, there are often expectations attached to these attributes since a 'big brother' is socially viewed as someone on whom the 'small brother' can rely when in difficulty. In this respect, *le grand, grand-frère* and *le big* could be viewed as part of what Bayart in his conceptualization of extraversion (through the lens of which I discuss the attitude of the Cameroonian government towards student migration to China – see chapters 1 and 4), coins as "the grammar of extraversion" and specifically "financial extraversion". That is, viewing as a part of the solution to their problems. Besides being a form of respect in calling me "le grand", "grand-frère" and "le big", this is at the same time a way of implicitly telling me that I bear responsibilities. For instance, there a was time in Jinhua when the payment of the scholarship was delayed and, as a result, a couple of students would come to me and ask for money for food. In group settings in a restaurant or a bar, some students often openly expected me to pay for their bill, which was also an illustration to the extraversion attitude. It is important to note that some of the students often invited me and paid for food or drinks and had the bill on them. Even though what I offered was far higher than what I received, I would not necessarily talk of what England (2015) terms as an "exploitative" relationship, granted that I had the choice to accept or refuse the demands. Furthermore, asking or accepting something from somebody could also be seen as a sign of friendship and esteem.

The financial constraint of my research 'at home' in China resulted from the activities of the student association. For instance, there were often fundraising events organized in cases of illness of members, the death of a parent of a member, or when a member had problems paying his/her school. As a member of the group, I had to contribute. Thus, another challenge of doing anthropology 'at home', especially in my case, is financial. As already indicated, right from the first contact, when with the research participants (individually or in a group), I always made it clear that I was in China for research purposes for my PhD, focusing on Cameroonian students in China. However, the relation with the research participants was not simply that of researcher-researched. It was a socially-embedded relationship which had a high economic cost as the result of a perceived difference in economic power between us.

Being based in Germany and the presence of my supervisor in the field also influenced my positionality in the field in China. The fact that I lived in Germany certainly initially reinforced the expectation for me to bear financial responsibility, as raised above. This was probably the result of the association of Germany (Europe in general) with more wealth accumulation opportunities, in comparison with China. These perceived opportunities constitute one of the reasons why China is still a second choice destination for the majority of Cameroonians. Furthermore, coming from Germany, coupled with the presence of my supervisor in the field, nurtured what Bayard in his coining of extraversion refers to as "the relationship of intermediation" (Bayard, 2000: 264). Some research participants expected me to play the role of intermediation, so as to help them achieve what Bayart views as one of the "classic methods of extraversion": emigration.

As chapter 5 of this dissertation suggests, China as a destination was a choice by default. Most travelled to China because they had been unsuccessful in their attempts for the West. Consequently, for some students, China was a transient step in their journey to Europe. While some students simply asked for advice about admission within universities and the visa policy in Germany, other students expected me to assist them in their visa application for Germany. When I was leaving China, a few students even entrusted their university admission application to me to mail to their friends and relatives in Germany. The presence of my supervisor in the field reinforced the expectations. Through her, I was viewed as having connections within the administration system of my university in Germany.

2.5.2   A Fieldwork Experience in Cameroon

I also faced accessibility challenges during fieldwork in Cameroon, 'at home'. The most challenging was to negotiate an interview with some officials, especially from the Ministry of Higher Education. It later turned out that this was due to lack of trust and their political positionalities. For instance, one of the officials from the 'Cooperation Unit' with whom I had

the most unpleasant fieldwork experience during the course of the research. After a long and harassing process, he finally accepted my demand for an interview. As I introduced the topic and objectives of my research, his question to me was: "what do you want to argue in your research indeed?" This question was certainly not for clarification but rather a concern about my analytical posture on Cameroon-China cooperation. He probably positioned me as a critic.

2.5.4 Ethical Consideration

To ensure that the practice of informed consent was respected during fieldwork, I clearly revealed the topic and aim of the research right from the first encounter with potential research participants. In Jinhua, where I did my extended fieldwork, every Cameroonian individual knew that I was there for my PhD research. I remember that a student there invited me to his birthday party but jokingly specified that I should come "without a notebook and pen". This is because I always had a notebook in my back pocket and often took notes during discussions in informal settings. This attests to the fact that I was positioned in the field as a researcher. Some information collected was sensitive and thus bore potentially damaging consequences for the research participants. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I use pseudonyms and also refrain from providing other background details likely to reveal the identity of the research participants. This is why I sometimes intentionally leave out details about the name of the institutions or departments to which research participants belonged, or their positions within the institution. It is important, however, to insist on the fact that anonymity and confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed, especially in the context of research aiming at a small group within which people often know each other.

Chapter Three: China´s Rationale and Discourse on the Training of African Students and Professionals: Between Friendship Rhetoric and Soft Power Intention

This chapter pursues two main objectives. The first is to expose the shift in the Chinese government´s rationale and discourse in its commitment to the field of education in Africa. The second objective draws on my theoretical argument that the Chinese government is using education as a tool for expanding its soft power in Africa. In this respect, the chapter aims at operationalizing the concept of soft power by exposing the elements which enable discussion on its effectiveness among African students trained in China.

In this chapter, I contend that the Chinese government´s political rhetoric with regard to its relationship with African countries encompasses two dimensions: official and unofficial. The official rhetoric is intended to shape and influence the way China´s activism in the African education field should be viewed on the international stage. The unofficial discourse on Sino-African educational cooperation is domestic and considers China´s engagement in Africa as a means to gaining influence and expanding its soft power on the continent, which in turn contributes to China´s economic intentions in Africa.

The chapter begins with a historical overview of the student migration trend from Africa to China, followed by a presentation of the political discourse and rationale of the Chinese government concerning its educational cooperation with Africa as a whole. The last part of the chapter is an exposé on some operational concepts of soft power and a note on student satisfaction which I consider, as underlined in the introductory chapter, to be a prerequisite for the effectiveness of soft power activity.

3.1   Historical Overview of Student Migration from Africa to China

Student migration between China and Africa is not as a new phenomenon as the unprecedented number of publications on the issue, in the recent years, might suggest. It is the oldest component of Africa-China educational cooperation. Given that the literature suggests the establishment of FOCAC as a benchmark in student migration between the two ends, I shall distinguish two phases in student migration from Africa to China: the pre-FOCAC era and the FOCAC era.

3.1.1 Pre-FOCAC era: 1956-1999

Student mobility between Africa and China started with the signing of the agreement of cultural cooperation between Egypt and China in April 1956 (Li, 2018). In the framework of Egypt-China educational cooperation, four students and four lecturers from Egypt went to China while seven students and one lecturer from China visited Egypt (Li 2018, Nordtveit 2011). This marked the beginning of the migration of students to China from Africa. In 1957 a group of eleven African students arrived in China. They originated from four countries including Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda and Malawi (Li 2018). According to Li (2018), a total of twenty-four African students visited China during the 1950s. In 1960, China welcomed another group of 95 African students, the largest group since the start of the enrolment of African students. African students in China numbered 118 for the academic year 1961-62 and came from Uganda, Kenya, Cameroon, Ghana, Somalia, Zanzibar, Mali, Chad, Guinea and Sudan (Hevi, 1963)[27].

Student migration to China stopped with the Cultural Revolution initiated by China in 1966 (Li 2018; Nordtveit 2011). The international isolation of China led to the disruption of diplomatic relations with many African countries (He 2006, Nordtveit 2011). Education cooperation between Africa and China in fact completely stopped, only re-starting again in 1972 when a group of Zambian and Tanzanian students moved to China under the framework of the Tanazania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA) project designed by China. The group of railway technology trainees were joined by another thirty-seven African students in 1973 (Li 2018). This marked the resumption of the enrolment of foreign students by China, and sixty-one African students arrived in China in 1974. African students in China numbered 144 by 1976 and 121 in 1978. They originated from twenty-one African countries (Li 2018).

The number of African students in China dropped significantly to 30 in 1979, 43 in 1980 and 80 in 1981. These decreases were a consequence of the economic crisis China was experiencing (Nordtveit 2011; Li 2008). However, the enrolment of African students took a remarkable turn in the early 1980s, coinciding with the beginning of the so-called "opening up"

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[27] Emmanuel Hevi was from Ghana and was among the students who arrived in China in the early 1960s. In 1963, he published "An African Student in China", an autobiographical book in which he shares his experiences as an African in China from a racial and academic perspective. Hevi´s book is one of the pioneering and most referenced on the presence of African students in China.

policy initiated by China, whereby their number increased steadily from 1981 through to 1988. This increasing dynamics had been disrupted in 1989, when the number of scholarships granted to African students dropped to 249 from 325 in 1988. The slowdown lasted until 1995, with African students amounting to 256. Many scholars view the decrease as a consequence of the racial tensions between African and Chinese students (see Chapter 7) which culminated in the "1988-89 Nanjing Anti-African Protest" (Crane 1994; Li 2018; Sautman 1994; Sullivan 1994).

However, 1996 marked the beginning of what Li (2018) describes as a "period of rapid development", considering that the Chinese government granted 922 scholarships to African students. The author explains the "leap" through the lens of expanding China-Africa diplomacy. An indication of the expansion is the first visit of a Chinese president to sub-Saharan Africa in 1996. Jiang Zemin visited six African countries, during which he suggested five proposals for sustainable and all-round cooperation between Africa and China, driven by the principles of "sincere friendship", "solidarity" and "common development" among others. As a result, "the visit and policy brought about a great increase of CGS [Chinese Government Scholarships] for African students" (Li, 2018:13). It is important to note that until 1988, African students in China were scholarship holders, all funded by the Chinese government. The first self-sponsored African students only arrived in China as from 1989 and their number grew at a remarkable speed: from two in 1989, they were 248 in 1999, amounting to a total of 1384 African students in China.

Table 5: African Students in China (1976-1999)

Year	Scholarship	Self-Financed	Total
1976	144	0	144
1977	142	0	142
1978	121	0	121
1979	30	0	30
1980	43	0	43
1981	80	0	80
1982	154	0	154
1983	230	0	230
1984	247	0	247
1985	314	0	314
1986	297	0	297

1987	306	0	306
1988	325	0	325
1989	249	2	251
1990	252	6	259
1991	272	15	287
1992	267	20	287
1993	225	58	283
1994	220	246	466
1995	256	721	977
1996	922	122	1040
1997	991	224	1215
1998	1128	267	1395
1999	1136	248	1384
Total	8351	1929	10280

Source: *Author's compilation based on Li 2018*

3.1.2 FOCAC Era

The establishment of FOCAC in 2000 marked the strengthening of the Africa-China partnership. As "promoting Africa-China educational cooperation became an important issue" (Li, 2018:13), there was an unprecedented diversification of China´s engagement in the field of education for African countries. China´s Ministry of Education (2003) distinguishes seven modalities of educational cooperation between Africa and China: high-level educational exchange; the exchange of students; cooperative educational programs; professional seminars and workshops in China; Chinese teachers' active involvement in teaching in African countries; Chinese language teaching and research in Africa; African studies and the training of professionals in China (see King 2013; Nordtveit 2009, 2011). To these modalities should be added the construction of rural schools in Africa, an engagement taken by China in 2006 during the FOCAC meeting in Beijing (FOCAC 2006).

One of the results of this turn and which is relevant for this research, was the intensification of student mobility from Africa to China. As China´s African policy documents suggest, FOCAC meetings often constituted occasions for the Chinese government to increase the number of scholarships offered to African students (Li 2018); the first, third, fourth, sixth and seventh editions of FOCAC being perfect illustrations of this. The following sections

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summarize the Chinese government´s commitments in the field of education during FOCAC meetings, with an emphasis on those with a direct impact on student migration.

The first edition of FOCAC was organized in October 2000 in the aftermath of the China-Africa ministerial conference in Beijing and was attended by the heads of African states and about eighty ministries of foreign affairs, international trade and economic development from forty-four African states. The "Program for China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social Development" published after the gathering was the summary of the new resolutions taken concerning Africa-China relations. The document includes a section on "Education and Human Resources Development" in which China states its engagement as follows:

> "The Minister[s] agree to expand co-operation in education and human resources development. The Chinese side pledges to (…) grant more scholarships to African students to study in China, continue to send teachers to Africa to help local institutions of higher learning improve their disciplines and specialties […]; and establish an African Human Resource Development Fund and gradually increase financial contribution to the Fund for the training of professionals of different disciplines for African countries." (FOCAC 2009a).

This quote indicates that education cooperation was very broadly approached and the particular point on the number of scholarships remained unspecific. However, according to some observers, the first edition of FOCAC has had a visible impact on student mobility. Shao (2012) for instance, indicates that the number of Chinese government scholarships to African students "drastically increased from a few hundred in 2000 to 1,200 in 2005".

The third edition of FOCAC took place in Beijing in 2006. The new goals and perspectives of the cooperation between China and Africa were published in the "Beijing Action Plan 2007-2009". Sections highlighting the steps taken by China to assist African countries in the domain of education indicate that the Chinese Government decided to "increase the number of Chinese government scholarships to African students from the current 2,000 per year to 4,000 per year by 2009 [and also] provide annual training for a number of educational officials as well as heads and leading teachers of universities, primary, secondary and vocational schools in Africa" (FOCAC, 2006b). With regard to human resource development, the document informs that the Chinese government offered specific training for "15,000 professionals for African countries in the next three years" (FOCAC 2006b).

The fourth ministerial conference of the FOCAC organized in November 2009 was hosted by the city of Sharm El Sheik in Egypt. During the conference, the Chinese government took new steps concerning education in Africa. Those with a direct impact on student mobility

included the commitment to " [a]dmit 200 middle and high-level African administrative personnel to MPA [Masters in Public Administration] programs in China in the next three years [and] continue to raise the number of Chinese governmental scholarships and increase the number of scholarships offered to Africa to 5,500 by 2012 (FOCAC 2009b). Another important resolution was the "(…) implementation of the 20+20 Cooperation Plan for Chinese and African Institutions of Higher Education to establish a new type of one-to-one inter-institutional cooperation model between 20 Chinese universities (or vocational colleges) and 20 African universities (or vocational colleges)". As a result of this new dimension, Zhejiang Normal University in China established a partnership with the University of Yaoundé 1. Hence, specific scholarships were offered to students from the University of Yaoundé 1 to study at Zhejiang Normal University.

The sixth FOCAC meeting took place in Johannesburg in South Africa in 2015 and fifty African countries were represented by the heads of states as well as ministers. It was another occasion for the Chinese government to reassert its engagement to increasingly support African countries in the education and human resource development fronts. The "Johannesburg Action Plan" indicates that the Chinese government decided to "[…] offer 2,000 degree education opportunities in China and 30,000 government scholarships to African countries, welcome more African youths to study in China [and also] provide Africa with 40,000 [vocational] training opportunities in China […]" (FOCAC 2015).

The seventh edition of FOCAC took place in Beijing in September 2018. The resolutions taken by China to support education and human resource development in African included the increase of the number of scholarships for African students and professionals. The Beijing Action Plan (2019-2021) reads the following: "China will carry out a tailor-made program to train 1,000 high-caliber Africans. China will provide Africa with 50,000 government scholarships and 50,000 training opportunities for seminars and workshops and train more professionals of different disciplines for Africa […]" (FOCAC 2018).

Figure 1: Change in number of Chinese Government Scholarships to Africa during 4 FOCAC editions
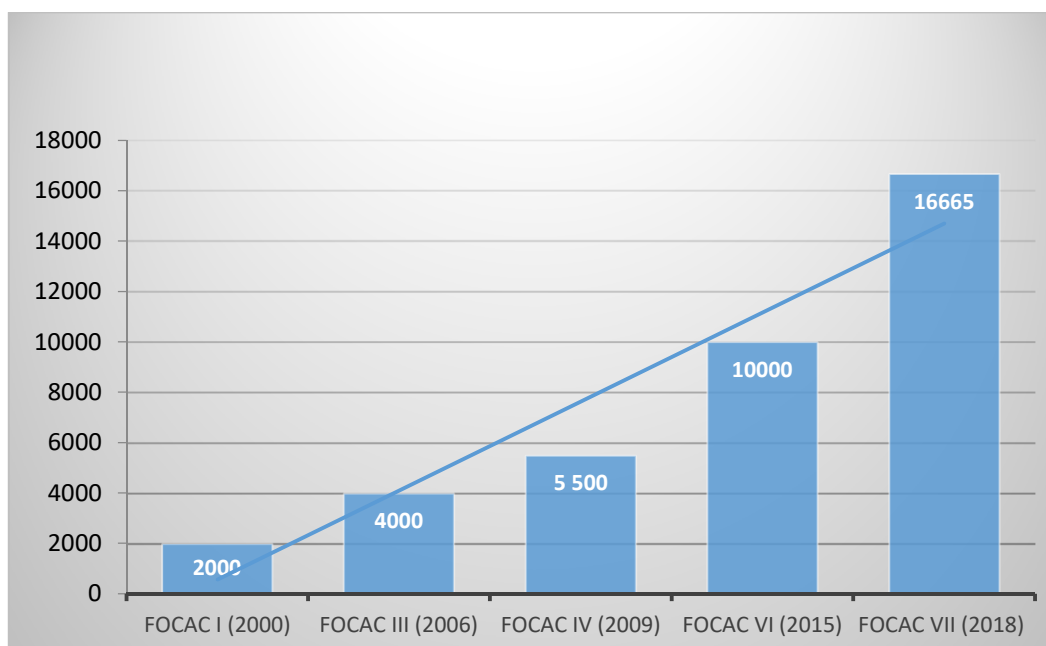
Source: *Author's compilation based on FOCAC documents*

As the foregoing suggests, the number of scholarships granted to African students since the advent of FOCAC has continuously increased. Furthermore, with FOCAC being a highly political gathering, the scholarship schemes and therefore student mobility is a political issue. Besides the provision of funding for scholarships by the Chinese state, the favorable visa policy (which in part triggered the interest of students to move to China on private funds) is undoubtedly a political decision.

With the effect of word of mouth and of networking, the increase in the number of scholarship holders goes hand in hand with the growth in number of self-sponsored African students in China. In 2000, the African student population in China numbered 1388 (of which 1,154 were scholarship holders and 234 self-sponsored), growing to 2,757 in 2005. Li (2018) views 2005 as a "turning point" in the student mobility trend whereby, the number of self-funded students surpassed that of scholarship holders. In 2011, there were 20,744 African students enrolled at Chinese universities. The remarkable fact regarding this specific year is that the number of self-sponsored students (14,428) was more than double that of scholarship holders (6,316). In 2015, African students in China amounted to 49,792, of which 41,322 were self-financed, thus quadrupling the number of scholarship holders, namely 8,470.

Table 6: African Students in China (1996-2015)

Year	Scholarship	Self-Funded	Total
2000	1154	234	1388
2001	1224	302	1526
2002	1256	390	1646
2003	1244	549	1793
2004	1317	869	2186
2005	1367	1390	2757
2006	1861	1876	3737
2007	2733	3182	5915
2008	3735	5064	8799
2009	4824	7609	12433
2010	5710	10693	16403
2011	6316	14428	20744
2012	6717	20335	27052
2013	7305	26054	33359
2014	7821	33856	41677
2015	8470	41322	49792
Total	63054	168149	231203

Source: *Author's compilation based on Li 2018*

As stated in the introduction, this dissertation focuses on how to account for China´s increasing educational engagement in Africa. There are two lines of argument dividing scholars of China-Africa relations: education as a soft power strategy and training African students as knowledge sharing mechanism. The soft power explanatory frame has emerged in reaction to the discourse of "knowledge sharing" mostly advocated by Chinese scholars whose stands also echo the opinions of the Chinese politicians and policy makers who have developed a specific rhetoric or vocabulary to justify their educational engagement in favor of African states.

The following section offers an insight into how the Chinese government presents its engagement in Africa.

3.2 China-Africa Educational Cooperation Viewed from China: The Official and Unofficial rhetoric

The discourse of the Chinese government on its motivations and intentions for Africa is found in the official and semi-official government statements, the different China´s African policy documents and the literature on China-Africa cooperation as a whole. Drawing on this set of sources, the discourse of the Chinese state on its engagement in Africa is twofold: official and unofficial.

3.2.1 The Official Discourse: Knowledge Sharing and People-to-People Cooperation

The official discourse here fundamentally refers to how China publicly presents its cooperation education with Africa in the international scene. In other words, it is about declarations by Chinese officials and political authorities in their attempts to account for their interest and their engagement in educating Africans. The official discourse corresponds to what Jönsson (2016: 82) terms a state's "lingua franca of diplomacy", made of "a series (…) of expressions and idioms that, however amiable they may seem, convey a message that their counterparts clearly understand."

This official narrative derives from policy documents and speeches by Chinese politicians, which are taken up to a great extent by Chinese scholars. The main policy document to mention is *China´s African Policy* paper published in 2006 by the Chinese government to "present to the world the objectives of China´s policy towards Africa and the measures to achieve them" (People's Republic of China 2006). However, there is a range of documents which complement the latter, namely the so-called "Declarations" and "Action Plans" usually released in relation to FOCAC meetings, as the previous section suggests. From these documents, China-Africa educational cooperation pursue two objectives: knowledge sharing and enhancing mutual understanding and people-to-people cooperation.

3.2.1.1 Knowledge Sharing in the Name of All-Weather Friendship

In this section, I draw specifically on *China´s African Policy* paper (2006) which offers an insight into what could be termed the vocabulary of China-Africa relations. Analyzing the content of the eleven-page document shows that it entails two categories of key words and expressions. The first group depicts the nature of the relationship between African and Chinese people. It emphasizes what is otherwise referred to as a "friendship metaphor" (Sautman and Hairong 2007; Strauss and Saavedra 2009; Strauss 2009; Brautigam 2009, 2015) and the

dominant terms are "friendship" (seven times) "friendly" (seven times); "*solidarity*" (two times) and "*amicable*" (one time). This specific vocabulary is also reflected in the speeches of various political leaders of China. For instance, in his address at the opening ceremony of the Beijing FOCAC Summit in 2006, the then president Hu Jintao used the terms "friendship", "friendly", "friend", "brother" and "brotherly" nineteen times.

The second category of terms and expressions used in China´s African policy paper is related to the patterns or the nature of the partnership between Africa and China as political entities pursuing common development goals. Seemingly, the term aid is absent from this vocabulary, in contrast to the West aid discourse. According to King (2013: 144) this results from the fact that China does "not want to present itself to Africa as a donor [but] much more as the largest developing helping, to the extent it could manage, the continent with the largest number of developing countries". The concept with the highest occurrence is "cooperation" (78 times) surrounded by a vocabulary composed of terms portraying the pattern of partnership envisaged with Africa such as: "mutual" "equal", "equality" "support", "share", "sharing", "win-win", "complementarity"; "each other"; "help", "assistance". The same cooperation concepts are also largely recurrent in the speeches of the Chinese political authorities.

As regards education, China´s engagement is depicted in the aforementioned White paper through a lens of concern for the development of the African continent. For instance, a section reads that despite "(…) a long history, vast expanse of land, rich natural resources and huge potential for development… [Africa] still faces many challenges on its road of development" (People's Republic of China 2006). This situation, as the document claims, is due to several factors among which is the lack of adequate human resources resulting in turn from limited investment in the field of education by African states. Therefore, it is in the name of "South-South cooperation" among "developing countries" or "the common destiny and common goals [that] have brought Africa and China together", that China offers to "continue to support Africa in its effort to achieve stability and economic revitalization in the region and therefore raise its international standing" (ibid.). Overall, China´s diplomatic jargon in the field of education includes expressions such as "skills transfer", "technical assistance", knowledge sharing", "capacity building", "human resource development", in the name of "South-South solidarity" or "South-South cooperation". Politically, education cooperation is also presented as an outcome of "South-South solidarity" in the name of which China set up a "knowledge sharing" platform in favor of its African friends (King 2013).

Some scholars view the current rhetoric of China as a continuity of the past, claiming that the framing dates back to the Mao era. One of the most insightful in this respect is Strauss´ (2009) article "The Past in the Present: Historical and Rhetorical Lineages in China's Relations with Africa", exploring the Chinese government´s rhetoric on its historical involvement with Africa. The author draws on China´s official and semi-official speeches on China-Africa affairs from 1963 to 2006. The article is especially built around speeches held during official visits and political gatherings. These include among others Zhou Enlai's address during his great Africa tours of 1963–65, Jiang Zemin's speech during his African tour of May 1996; and official speeches held at the 2000, 2003 and 2006 editions of FOCAC.

Strauss indicates that between 1963 and 1965, Enlai visited eleven African countries and, in the public statements he made to different audiences, "two core themes were repeated, with varying degrees of emphasis throughout: China's imagined fraternity with African anti-colonial and developmental struggles, and China's support for Africa in overcoming these challenges, both morally and practically" (Strauss 2009:782). Enlai also stressed China and Africa's general "shared experience of suffering from imperialist and colonial aggression" (ibid: 782). This specific rhetorical framing has been replicated by successive Chinese political leaders until the present FOCAC era. On the basis of official speeches during FOCAC meetings, Strauss describes the current discourse of China on its involvement with Africa as "old framings and expanded content" (ibid: 791). For the author, while "long-standing rhetorical framings" have remained unchanged for the most part, new content has been added as a result of the intensification of China-Africa ties:

> "The official speeches that legitimate and publicize FOCAC continue to contain calls for intensification of investment, aid and bilateral arrangements within the rhetorical framings first propagated in the Mao era: the resort to analogous histories of colonialism and national liberation, the universal desire for development, the invocation of principles of absolute sovereignty and equality, mutual aid, and the kind of unconditional, no-ties assistance that is implicitly presented as separate from and better than the West's. These older, largely unchanged rubrics provide the frame for very different, rapidly 'thickening' content" (Strauss 2009: 791).

Among the new items incorporated in FOCAC official statements and documents is the increasing commitment to assist Africa in Human Resources Development (HRD)". Hence, the Chinese government´s resolution taken in the very first edition of FOCAC in 2000 to "establish an African Human Resource Development Fund and gradually increase financial contribution to the Fund for the training of professionals and [students] of different disciplines for African

countries" (FOCAC 2009). In this regard, the enrolment of African students as well as the training of African professionals falls under the umbrella of what is termed in China´s African policy documents as "Cooperation in Human Resources Development and Education" (People's Republic of China 2006).

In the light of the above, China´s official rhetoric on Sino-African educational cooperation can be summarized as a benevolent initiative drawing on a win-win principle in "which a poor is helping a poor" (Niu and Liu 2016) in the development process (King 2013; Li 2006; Niu 2013, 2015). Student mobility is thus part of a skills transfer scheme initiated by China in the name of solidarity, "all-weather-friendship" and good brotherhood (Li 2007; Taylor 2004) to assist Africa in finding "important measures to address the problems [it is] facing" (Zhang 2009: 220). In a nutshell, China´s engagement for education in Africa is officially depicted, to borrow from Strauss (2009) as "altruistic".

3.2.1.2 Educational Cooperation as a Means to Enhance Mutual Understanding and People-to-People Cooperation: The Bridge Explanation

From the various China's African policy documents, one of the objectives of China through educational cooperation with African countries is to enhance "mutual understanding" and "people-to-people exchange". This is intended "to promote understanding, trust and cooperation between people from the two sides" (People's Republic of China 2006; Shao 2012). Therefore, as also indicated by my interviews with Chinese university staff, the enrolment of African students by Chinese universities is to be seen as a desire to bring closer African and Chinese students who are unknown to each other, considering the geographical and linguistic distance between the two groups, on the one hand, but also their different physical traits or ethnicity on the other hand.

The necessity of bringing African and Chinese people together can partly be justified by the interaction between the two categories in the past. As will be outlined in chapter 7 discussing social interaction between Africans and their Chinese counterparts, the first African students in China from the early 1960s to the late 1980s reported a spartan and puritanical environment (Sautman 1994) characterized by racism, discrimination as well as violence and conflict across university campuses (see Dikötter 1994; Gillespie 1999; Hevi 1962; King 2013; Okouma Mountou 2008; Sulivan 1994). The Chinese political authorities attributed the situation to cultural misunderstandings (Sautman 1994) between African and Chinese students. As a result, promoting cultural and mutual understanding was viewed as essential for the perpetuation and

the deepening of "the traditional friendship" between Africa and China. To meet this objective, as China´s African policy White Paper indicates, the Chinese central government proposed the establishment of initiatives that could "serve as a channel for collective dialogue and cooperation between Chinese and African youth […] help boost their cooperation and exchange and lay the groundwork for China-Africa from generation to generation" (FOCAC 2009).

Theoretically, this political intention led to the coining by Bodomo of what he terms the "bridge theory of migrant-indigene relations" (Bodomo 2009, 2012, 2014). The author postulates that the migrant groups constitute "a link, a contact, and indeed a bridge", connecting place of origin and the host community. From this perspective, African students in China are considered as "bricks for future bridges connecting Africa to China" (Bodomo 2014: 30). Upon return to their home country, Bodomo assumes, Africans will share their Chinese experiences in their network of friends and relatives. This perception is shared by many Chinese scholars. For instance, analyzing the role and contributions of students to the perpetuation of Sino-African relations, Li (2018: 22) claims: "African students become the bridge between Africa and China" For the author, while Africans in China learn the Chinese language, culture and "work ethic", they also transmit African culture, values and skills to Chinese students.

Despite the domination of these "old rhetorical framings" (Strauss and Saavedra 2009:554) in the official account of the Chinese government, the discourse used domestically to and by officials and semi-officials suggests a latent function (Merton 1957) of China´s engagement in Africa. I refer to this as China´s unstated agenda for Sino-African education cooperation.

3.2.2   China´s 'Unstated' Agenda: Winning Hearts and Minds Across Africa

The term 'unstated' here is used to designate something that exists but which is not publicly and explicitly expressed or acknowledged. The assumption here is that beside the human resource development discourse abounding in the Chinese government's official coverage of Africa-China educational cooperation, there are other reasons motivating China´s option: winning the hearts and minds of Africans (Haugen 2013; Sautman 1994; Sautman and Hairong 2009; Shambaugh 2015; Shao 2012; Zhang 2016). This 'unstated' agenda of China is referred to in the literature as soft power and cultural diplomacy. The use of the term 'unstated' is informed by the fact that soft power (both as a concept and as a political objective) is absent from Chinese official political rhetoric and more precisely, from its African policy documents. Similarly, even though the term is progressively being used among politicians as well as policy

makers in China, there is still a tendency to publicly distance oneself from the concept as a political goal (also see King 2013). In any case, as King observes (2013: 187), "the formally stated objectives do not preclude there being cultural diplomacy reasons" for China´s educational commitment in Africa.

There is an internal or national discourse in which soft power appears more or less explicitly as a political goal to be achieved in Africa, including through the enrolment of students. King (2013) for instance, argues that even though Chinese authorities do not openly use soft power when assessing the influence of its scholarship schemes in Africa, they are delighted by the leadership positions that former Chinese scholarship grantees have taken up in Africa after their stay in China. King further informs the reader that Chinese university alumni are viewed by the Chinese Ministry of Education as proof of the increasingly apparent "effectiveness and the impact of the Chinese government scholarship" (quoted by King 2013: 188). Satisfaction results especially from the fact that "[a]lthough they [alumni] have their own home countries, many African students think of China as their second home" (as quoted by King 2013:188). This political rationale is more explicit in the "Studying in China Plan" of China´s Ministry of Higher Education, underlining the objectives pursued through the internationalization of Chinese higher education. The document suggests that by attracting foreign students, the Chinese authorities expect "to cultivate international personnel who are well-versed in Chinese and friendly toward China" (see Kuroda 2014: 448).

However, it is important to note that using education as political instrument is not a Chinese specificity. The cases of Germany and the UK are perfect illustrations. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is the national agency for supporting academic cooperation in Germany, funded by various ministries of the German government. On the website of DAAD, German government scholarship schemes are presented as pursuing six main objectives, of which two are interesting for a soft power analysis. The first objective listed is to "educate future leaders, who are connected internationally and act in a globally responsible manner" while the sixth is to "stimulate interest in Germany, its culture and language and preserve language diversity in research and academia.[28] In an interview to the *Times Higher Education* in 2014, Sebastian Fohrbeck, then director of internationalization and communication at the DAAD emphasized this last objective: "The aim is to gain long-term

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[28] Details on the goals of DAAD are available at https://www.daad.de/der-daad/ueber-den-daad/portrait/en/29145-motto/ . Last accessed 15 November 2018.

friends of Germany throughout the world" (Grove 2014) he said when asked why Germany was seeking to increase the number of foreign students studying in Germany.

Similarly, the UK´s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) presents Chevening, the UK Government's international awards scheme as follows: "Chevening offers a unique opportunity for future leaders and influencers from all over the world to develop professionally and academically, network extensively, experience UK culture, and build lasting positive relationships with the UK".[29]

In this dissertation, I take it as given that the Chinese government´s engagement in the field of education in Africa, especially in the enrolment of university students, is to make China attractive so as to further turn the students into Chinese ambassadors to their respective countries. It is about using its diplomas to serve its diplomacy (Yuan 2011). Taking Cameroonian students as a case study, I am rather concerned with whether or not China is being successful in using education as a soft power strategy. In other words, I aim to find out how many hearts and minds China is winning among Cameroonian students trained in China.

3.3   Measuring Soft Power through Education

This section aims to underline how education can effectively serve as a soft power strategy. For a better understanding, I first define the three central notions in conceptualizing soft power.

3.3.1   Operationalizing Soft Power: Scope, Mechanism and outcomes

The conceptualization of Hayden (2015) suggests an operationalizing approach to analyzing how states´ soft power is translated into practice. The author offers an analytical framework entailing three primary aspects: scope, mechanism and outcome.

The scope of soft power refers to "subjects" (Hayden 2015) of or the set of actors involved in soft actions. There are two categories of actors: senders and receivers. While senders are actors seeking to achieve soft power, receivers are individual targets of soft power actions. In this dissertation the soft power sender is the Chinese government while Cameroon students are receivers.

Mechanism refers to the ways in which governments set up specific resources to achieve the effects they expect (Hayden 2015:14). It is about activities, methods and instruments employed by individual states to enhance their soft power. Among other soft power mechanisms, the author mentions aid programs, language, media, messages, and forms of reputational 'capital'. To a large extent, this notion of mechanism resonates with what Nye (2004:6) terms as soft power resources referring to assets likely to produce attraction. These assets are a country's culture, political values, foreign policies and economic attraction. Nye conceives of the enrolment of foreign students as a soft power mechanism.

Outcome designates what countries seek through their soft power acts. One of the common outcomes states intend to achieve is to have others view their policies as "acceptable, legitimate and unthreatening" (Hayden 2015: 17). By investing soft power resource, states expect to shape public perceptions, sentiments, and opinions, so as to improve their international image, or "to make the world love it".[30]In this dissertation the outcome of Chinese soft power will be seen through students' narratives on their academic and social experiences in China which account for their overall satisfaction with their stay in China.

As suggested in the introduction chapter, this dissertation contributes to the analysis of China's soft power in Africa, using student satisfaction as an entry point. The section below discusses how student satisfaction has become a core element in the field of education on the one hand, and how it has been introduced to soft power analysis on the other hand.

3.3.2   Student Satisfaction in a Global Context of Internationalization of Higher Education

> "Organizations exist to serve customers. Customers are the current and future source of revenue for the organization. By attracting and retaining customers, organizations are able to continue to exist. Without customers, it is difficult to conceive of any organization as being sustainable. Central to attracting and retaining customers is the concept of customer satisfaction. (Davis and Farrell 2016: 59).

Satisfaction is a core concept to marketing research. This is because customer's satisfaction is a central element for the expansion and the sustainability of organizations. Davis

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[30] This expression is borrowed from *The Economist*, namely its 2017 report entitled "China is spending billion to make the world love it". The report is available at: https://www.economist.com/china/2017/03/23/china-is-spending-billions-to-make-the-world-love-it . Last accessed, 12 October 2018.

and Farrell (2016: 59-60) define customer satisfaction as "a post-consumption or post-usage evaluation, which contains cognitive and affective elements. Based upon the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, customers compare their expectations with the actual performance of the product or service in question, resulting in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction".

The concept of satisfaction has gained pace in educational studies following the internationalization trend in global higher education. The concept of internationalization in the field of education has been diversely defined. However, the working definition broadly used is the one suggested by Knight (2003: 2), which suggests that internationalization of higher education "is the process of integrating international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purposes, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education". According to Hayhoe and Zha (2007), three main elements grant an academic institution an international feature: international content in the curriculum, the international movement of scholars and students and international cooperation programs.

Central to researches on the internationalization of higher education is the question of why have countries and their academic institutions embarked on the internationalization trend. In this respect, Knight and de Wit (1997), suggest four rationales or motivations behind the process of internationalization of higher education by countries and universities. These rationales are political, economic, academic and cultural/social (also see Altbach and Knight 2007; Brooks and Waters 2011; Hannerz 1996). It should be noted that rationales for internationalization of higher education are not mutually exclusive. They can overlap and support each other. Another important thing to underline with regard to these rationales is that countries and even institutions of the same country have different rationales driving their efforts at internationalization. This means that some countries prioritize academic or cultural/social rationales while others are driven by economic interests.

It is beyond the goal of this section to elaborate on these different rationales. However, for a better understanding of the issue of student satisfaction, it would be relevant to provide an insight into the economic and political dimensions of the global internationalization of higher education. The economic rationales for the internationalization of higher education is associated with the issue of commodification of education, that is, a process where higher education has become a private commodity that can be traded (Altback and Knight 2007; Brooks and Waters 2011; Gürüz 2011; Forest and Altback 2007; Knight 2003; Knight et al 2014; Knight and Sehoole 2013).

3.3.2.1 Commodification of Higher Education, Competition on the Global Education Market and Student Satisfaction Delivery

According to Altbach and Knight (2007), "earning money is a key motive for all internationalization projects in the for-profit sector and some traditional non-profit universities with financial problems. Many scholars contend that the commodification of higher education is an outcome of neoliberalism on which the world has irreversibly embarked on. Neoliberalism is thought of as a political and economic philosophy "dedicated to the extension of market (and market-like) forms of governance, rule, and control across-tendentially at least-all sphere of social life" (Brooks and Waters 2011: 3). With the establishment of a market economy, there has been a remarkable shift in the perception of the role of higher education institutions worldwide. As Gürüz (2011: 199) argues, "institutions have moved from the traditional state-academia axis to the market society apex, becoming entrepreneurial to varying degrees in different countries such that the demarcation between public and private has become increasingly blurred". Universities are no longer limitedly associated with development assistance activities or cultural agenda but a service provider, as education has become an export commodity (Altbach and Knight 2007; Brooks and Waters 2011; Knight and de Wit 1997; Mok 1997). This is attributed to the rise of market forces in higher education, which has manifested itself through resource diversification and tuition fees as well as the growing number of private institutions among other, in states´ national educational system worldwide, (Gürüz 2011). With the commodification trend, students are henceforth viewed as customers to be attracted and consequently, as Davis and Farrell (2016: 66) observe, "universities have marketing divisions that are charged with ensuring the institution meets its enrolment targets. Sophisticated marketing and promotional campaigns are developed with the primary focus of persuading prospective students to enroll at the institution. Once enrolled, students' feedback is sought regularly […]".

As already mentioned, not universities of all countries enroll foreign students for financial incentives. The case of Germany where universities are run with public funds is a perfect illustration. Until recently, the UK and the US were well-known cases of countries whose universities have become market-oriented (Altbach and Knight 2007; Davis and Farrell 2016; Gürüz 2011). Yet, the literature suggests that universities in China have become for-profit institutions (Haugen 2013; Mok 2000; Hayhoe and Zha 2007; Rumbley et al 2014).

Marketization of education in China: From state centralization to the "walking on two legs" policy

The literature tracing the evolution of the funding of universities in China suggests that for ideological purposes, education in Mao China was highly centralized and the state exerted a tight control over the quality, the provision and the management of education services (Hayhoe and Zha 2007; Mok 2000; Rumbley et al 2014). In this context, the central government was also the unique sponsor of education institutions. However, in the post-Mao period, there has been a shift in the government's education policy. Due to the economic turmoil of the late 1980s and early 1990s, China initiated political and economic reforms which culminated in the adoption of the so-called socialist market economy (See Mok 2000). One of the visible consequences of the shift was the withdrawal of the state from sponsoring education and consequently the end of the free-education era. It is also important to note that the retreat of the state went hand in hand with the growing demand for post-secondary education manifested through the increase in the number of students. The increase was as a result of the shift from elite to mass higher education (see Hayhoe and Zha 2007).

Acknowledging its incapacity to satisfy the increasing demand for education, the state opted for what was referred as a "walking on two legs" policy (Hayhoe and Zha 2007; Mok 2000). The state thus invited private people and companies to establish educational institutions while encouraging administrators of public schools and universities to search for alternative revenues so as to become self-reliant. According to Mok (2000: 109), due to the market ideology implemented by the state on the one hand and the impact of globalization on the other hand, "strong market forces have affected educational development" in China in the 1990s and laid the foundation of an education market. Consequently, education institutions adopted a managerial approach mainly concerned with finance, economic returns, costings, private funding, among others. Overall, education became market-oriented, marking the beginning of what Mok (2000), coins as the process of marketization of China´s higher education in China. Mok (2000: 112) defines the marketization of education as "a process whereby education becomes a commodity provided by competitive suppliers, educational services are priced and access to them depends on consumer calculation and ability to pay".

There were two patterns of marketization. In the first, education institutions sold their academic products in the world education markets. The second pattern of marketization consisted in restructuring and managing education institutions following business principles and practices. The marketization of education resulted in several visible consequences: adoption

of the fee-paying principle in education; reduction in state provision, subsidy and regulation; popularity of revenue generation activities; market driven courses and curricula; emphasis on parental choice and managerial approach in educational administration/management (Mok 2000: 112). Universities mainly generated income through the opening of business firms and enterprises, running commissioned courses, attracting more students by offering adult education and evening classes, and offering consultancy. Additional income was also generated through renting out the university premises, opening of cafeteria, bar, salons or even discos on the university campus (Mok 1997, 2000).

Although unstated in the public discourse, recruiting foreign students recently entered the above-mentioned wide range of means by which educational institutions secure additional funding (see Haugen 2013; Mok 1997; 2000; Rumbley et al 2014). Considering the competition prevailing in the education market, each institution developed strategies to be more attractive to international consumers of higher education. In such a context of fierce competition for students, "delivering student satisfaction" is a major concern and universities develop strategies likely to guarantee a positive student experience which in turn enhances their reputation and attractiveness (Al Khattab and Fraij 2011; Alves and Raposo 2007; Coskun 2014; Davis and Farrell 2016; Elliott and Shin 2002; Garrett 2014; Sumaedi et al 2011).

According to Davis and Farrell (2016), student experience encompasses three main aspects: the physical or facilitating goods, the sensual service provided (the explicit service) and the psychological service (the implicit service). The physical or facilitating goods refer among others to the quality and the organization of the lecture rooms, teaching materials catering, and recreational facilities. The sensual service provided (the explicit service) is related to the quality of the university staff: its ability to deliver consistent teaching and at a high level, staff availability for student consultation, its readiness to make constructive feedback and provide overall support, etc. The psychological service (the implicit service) is about the staff/student relationship, which covers various areas including staff friendliness and empathy with students' problems as well as its professionalism.

In his work entitled "*Explaining international student satisfaction*", Garrett (2014: 7) specifies that "student satisfaction is too complex and multifaceted to be reduced to any formula". In effect, the author identifies about forty aspects that are influential in international students´ satisfactory experience. He argues that of these aspects, some are more important than others. Some of these aspects include "good contacts", "organized social activities", "academic content of program", "international office", "visa/immigration advice from school"; "safety",

"cost of living", "health center", "ability to earn money"; "availability of financial support from school", "cost of accommodation", etc. Therefore, the level of satisfaction of international students derives from their expectations from host institutions with regard to the above-mentioned services, as Davis and Farrell (2016: 68) found out in their studies: "Students whose expectations were exceeded were more satisfied than those students whose expectations were not met". In other words, international students' satisfaction is nothing but the outcome of the correlation between expectation and the quality received (Alves and Raposo 2007: 572). Overall, as it can be seen from the foregoing, student satisfaction is all about student´s perception of the university delivery, as a "positive perception about the quality of service offered leaves a positive image in the minds of students which finally leads them towards higher levels of satisfaction", concludes Coskun (2014: 491). Consequently, in an educational market featured by increasing competition for students, universities pay more and more attention to "the importance of managing expectations" rather than questioning their feasibility, rightness or wrongness. (Davis and Farrell 2016: 67.

On the consequences of student satisfaction, researchers unanimously suggest that consistent with the theory of customer satisfaction, satisfied students remain loyal to the universities, do not have complaint behavior and easily engage in positive word of mouth actions after they graduate (Alves and Raposo 2007; Davis and Farrell 2016; Coskun 2014).

3.3.2.2 Student Satisfaction and Soft Power: The Political Rationale for the Internationalization of Higher Education

Another motive for states and universities to internationalize their educational institutions is the perceived role of higher education as a form of diplomatic investment for future political and economic connections (Knight and de Wit 1997; Gürüz 2011). Therefore, enrolling foreign students is considered a strategy in detecting "students who are seen as promising future leaders" (Knight and de Wit 1997: 9). Hence, internationalization can be viewed as an "effective way of developing an understanding of and perhaps affinity for the sponsorship country [which] may prove to be beneficial in future years in terms of diplomatic or business relations" (ibid). Overall many countries in the world have embarked on what Yuan (2011), aptly coins as a "diploma serves diplomacy" policy which is fundamentally built around educational cooperation or student mobility more precisely. Although enrolling African students is an old practice in China's African policy, there is a growing number of publications focusing on the contribution of education to China´s soft power agenda in Africa (Chapter 1).

However, for most Chinese scholars, the number of foreign students enrolled is the measure of attractiveness of China and thus its soft power (Li and Funeka 2013*)*. In so doing, these scholars tend to conflate soft power mechanisms and the outcome of soft power. *Against s*uch a quantitative approach, scholars are increasingly arguing for a dependent relationship between student satisfaction and the effectiveness of education as a soft power strategy (Atkinson 2010; Hart 2017; Kirkland 2016; Knight 2014 a, 2014 b; Nye 2004) and especially in China (Benabdallah 2017; Dong and Chapman 2008; Fijałkowski 2011; Haugen 2013; King 2013, 2014 a, 2014 b; Shambaugh 2015; Ziguras 2017; Zhang 2016**).** From this perspective, soft power is rather a return on investment in training foreign students and professionals. Thus, the level of investment or the number of students attracted is by no means a guarantee for the enhancement of soft power. Soft power is only enhanced if and only if the enrolled students positively evaluate the host country. In other words, soft power is nurtured when "students enjoy their experience" (Haugen 2013) and develop affection and preference for the receiving country. In a nutshell, a country´s soft power or attractiveness greatly depends on student satisfaction.

Student satisfaction is influenced by several factors. These include includes among others: social interactions between local and foreign students, the quality of the training, the attitude of the nationals toward immigrants in the host country, the availability of job opportunities, immigration policies, the nature of the relationship with the university staff; the accommodation, and support from the international students' office (Altbach and Peterson 2008; Atkinson 2010; Elliott and Shin 2002; Haugen 2013; Lam 2007; Verbik and Lasanowski 2007).

In view of these factors, how are Cameroonian students satisfied with their overall experience in China? This question is dealt with in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. Having in mind the complexity of student satisfaction as shown above, Cameroonian student´s satisfaction will be analyzed in view of the following criteria: University regulations, the management of scholarship students´ allowance, the rules of university accommodations, the healthcare system, the immigration law (in relation to students visa, student jobs, academic internship), the quality of education (content of teachings, grading system, lecturers´ performance), university infrastructure and social life (social interactions, the perception of the police).

This chapter mainly aimed at providing an insight into the discourse of the Chinese government regarding its engagement in the field of education in Africa and specifically the enrolment of university students. It appears that China´s discourse is two-dimensional. The first

dimension is the 'lingua franca of diplomacy', which is built around the friendship metaphor featuring China´s official coverage of China-Africa ties since the Mao era. Through this official framing, it seems that the Chinese government intends to influence the perception of China´s commitment towards Africa on the international stage. The second dimension of China´s discourse on Sino-African educational cooperation is internal and suggests the enrolment and training of African students and professionals as a soft power strategy. The chapter also suggests that using education for soft power enhancement is not a Chinese exception but a worldwide practice in states' diplomacy.

Chapter Four: Sino-Cameroonian Educational Cooperation. The Scope and the Cameroonian Government's Rhetoric

> "China is a great nation with the world's second largest economy. We expect much from our young students who are going to study there [in China], and hope that when they complete their studies, they will return home with certificates, skills and knowledge to contribute to the development of our nation" (Jacques Fame Ndongo, Cameroon´s Minister of Higher Education).[31]

This chapter presents the facets of China-Cameroon educational cooperation. It approaches the Sino-Cameroonian educational partnership from the perspective of the Cameroonian government as a separate stakeholder. Specifically, the chapter seeks to expose the Cameroonian government´s rhetoric on and expectations from student migration between Cameroon and China. As suggested earlier, officials in Cameroon represent student migration from Cameroon to China through the lens of knowledge transfer and human resource development. My term for this is 'learning from China' and this chapter offers insight into the ways in which it is framed on the one hand, as well as some structural elements (the state of higher education in Cameroon) which form it, on the other hand.

In this chapter, I argue that while learning from other countries is a well-known approach in the process of knowledge production and human resources empowerment (Gürüz 2011; King 2013; British Council and DAAD 2014; Gribble and Tran 2016), the current situation of economic and infrastructural deprivation of universities and research institutes in Cameroon (which reflects the limited knowledge production capacities of the country) suggests that the discourse of 'learning from China' is an admission of failure of Cameroon´s higher education system as a contributor to national economic growth. The expectation to learn from China here is interpreted as a practice of extraversion, a continuty of dependency attitude (Bayart 2000; Taylor 2014; Teferra 2013) consisting in permanently relying on and appealing to the external world to resolve local challenges.

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[31] This was the answer to a question of a journalist about expectations of the Cameroonian government from students going to further their education in China. It was on the occasion of the farewell ceremony organized for a group of one hundred Cameroonian students who had been granted Chinese government and Confucius Institute scholarships for the 2017/2018 academic year. The ceremony took place at the Chinese Embassy in Cameroon. A report on the event is available at http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/0821/c90000-9258239.html . Last accessed, 13 October 2018.

The chapter is organized into three main parts. It begins by an overview of the facets of the Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation. The second part of the chapter deals with the official discourse of the Cameroonian government on its educational cooperation with China, which I termed the discourse of 'learning from China'. The chapter ends with the description of university and research facilities and their flaws in Cameroon, which I consider the structural factors that partly shape the expectation to learn from China.

4.1 The Facets of China-Cameroon Educational Cooperation

The Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation started in the 1960s. Initially limited to Cameroonian students migrating to China for studies, the cooperation has significantly expanded throughout the years to include other aspects. This expansion is the result of a conjunction of factors of which the most important are the founding of a Chinese Language Training Center in Cameroon in 1996, the indirect impacts of the establishment of FOCAC in 2000 and the creation in Cameroon of a Confucius Institute in 2007 (Nordtveit 2011). My analysis draws on various China-Africa policy documents, my ethnographic data and secondary literature (King 2013; Niu 2015; Nordtveit 2011)[32]. Educational cooperation between China and Camerooon nowadays covers five main domains: school construction, Chinese language teaching, higher education institutional cooperation, training of Cameroonian professionals and scholarship provision. The two last dimensions are relevant for this research as they are directly linked to the Cameroonian government's official discourse of 'learning from China'.

4.1.1 Training of Cameroonian Professionals

One of the major aspects of China-Cameroon educational cooperation is the training of Cameroonian professionals in China. This training is organized either in the form of seminars or short-term trainings (see King, 2013). During my stay in China, namely in the city of Jinhua in 2016, I met several delegations of Cameroonian civil servants who had come to China for seminars. They were from different ministries including the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Economy, Planning and

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[32] Nordtveit (2011) discusses the role of China as an emerging education and development donor Africa with Cameroon as case study. He analyses the types of Chinese education aid to Cameroon. King (2013) and Niu (2015) discuss China-Africa educational cooperation in general and provides insight into the modalities of the cooperation.

Regional Development, the Ministry of Secondary Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, as well as the Ministry of Basic Education.

Photograph 6. A seminar banner at Zhejiang Normal University (Photo: Severin Kaji, Jinhua, July 2016)

Some of the events they attended were, among others, the 'Africa-China University Presidents Meeting', the "Meeting of the Africa-China Think-Tanks Forum", the "Seminar for Think-Tanks from Anglophone African Countries", the "Seminar on Pre-Scholar Education Management for Developing Countries", and the "Seminaire 2016 sur la Formation des Excellents Enseignants des Pays d´Afrique Francophones". There was also a delegation of Chinese language teachers from the University of Maroua in Cameroon who came for a two-month training at Zhejiang Normal University.

In the same vein, an official from the Cameroon Embassy in China reported that a group of Cameroonian military personnel comes to Guangzhou every year for short-term training. This is in the framework of the military cooperation between Cameroon-China which was initiated in 1975 but which only gained momentum in the 2000s (Cabestan 2015). Since 2011, a group of forty Cameroonian officers go to China yearly for a training lasting between six months and one year. In 2012, Cameroon´s official newspaper *Cameroon Tribune* estimated that over five hundred Cameroonian officers have received training from Chinese military academies since the establishment of the military cooperation (Cameroon Tribune 2012)[33]. While in Beijing in 2016, I was informed of a group of Cameroonian journalists attending a short training course in Beijing. Supposedly, the training aimed at initiating the journalists to the use of the equipment China was to offer Cameroon.

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[33] The report on the training of Cameroonian military personnel in China is available at http://ct2015.cameroon-tribune.cm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69606:over-500-cameroonian-officers-trained-by-china&catid=39:politique&Itemid=5 . Last accessed 16 October 2018.

4.1.2 Scholarship Provision

Granting scholarships is the oldest and most important aspect of the educational cooperation between Cameroon and China. As mentioned earlier, the first group of Cameroonian students arriving in China in 1957 were under the sponsorship of the Chinese government (Ngwé 2015; Li 2018). Even though China did not grant scholarships to Cameroonian students between 1966 and 1983 as a result of political and economic constraints, it resumed in 1984 when Cameroon and China signed the "Cooperation Agreement" on the 27th of August 1984 (Republic of Cameroon, 2005). The agreement covered various domains including education, sport, radio broadcasting, public health, science, editing and press (Republic of Cameroon, 2005). As the education component included student exchange, seven scholarships were offered to Cameroonian university students every year to study in China. However, in 1991, China took the commitment "to increase the quota to more than seven [scholarships] yearly" (Republic of Cameroon 2005). This decision was taken during the "Sino-Cameroonian discussions on education" which took place from the 7th to 11th of November 1989 (Republic of Cameroon 2005, 2015). As the figure below suggests, the number of Chinese government scholarships has significantly increased from mid-1990s until present. An important point regarding scholarship granting as part of the educational cooperation between China and Africa in general is that until 2000, the Chinese government was the only scholarship provider for Cameroonian students. But, with the expansion of China-Africa relations culminating in the establishment of FOCAC in 2000, there has been a remarkable diversification of funding sources in China.

Beside the Chinese central government, China´s scholarship scheme currently includes many other Chinese institutions offering grants to Cameroonian university students. These are, among others, Confucius Institutes, Chinese provinces, Chinese universities, Chinese private companies in Africa, and specific ministries in China. The difference between scholarship programs lies in several elements of which the most important are the application procedures (namely the number and the nature of – Cameroonian or Chinese – institutions involved in the selection of applicants) and the financial incentives paid to scholarship holders. Due to the multiplicity of the parties involved in China´s scholarship scheme, the Chinese government has put in place a coordinating institution called China Scholarship Council (CSC). The website of the CSC reads as follows:

"In order to promote the mutual understanding, cooperation and exchanges in various fields between China and other countries, the Chinese government has set up a series of scholarship programs to sponsor international students, teachers and scholars to study and conduct research in Chinese universities. China Scholarship Council (hereinafter referred to as CSC), entrusted by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as MOE), is responsible for the enrollment and the administration of Chinese Government Scholarship programs.[34]

CSC is thus at the core of every scholarship designed by the Chinese government no matter the difference in labeling the content and the source of the grant. Relevant for this research is what research participants termed as cooperation scholarship. This is because it is at the core of the Cameroonian's official discourse of learning from China through outward student migration. Another reason is that the dominant role of the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education in the management of the program (selection of the application) enables a critical appraisal of the discourse of 'learning from China' (Chapter 10).

Field data suggest that the cooperation scholarship corresponds to what the nomenclature of the Chinese government scholarship programs refers to as 'Bilateral Program'. The website of China´s scholarship scheme presents the 'Bilateral Program' as being set "in accordance with the educational exchange agreements or consensus between the Chinese government and governments of other countries, institutions, universities or international organizations. [Therefore], applicants shall apply to the dispatching authorities for overseas study of their home countries"[35]. These scholarships are offered in the framework of Cameroon-China cooperation. The grant is composed of a tuition fee waiver, a monthly allowance, accommodation and a return flight ticket. The main feature of this scholarship variant is that both the Cameroonian and Chinese governments are involved in its management. The Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education handles the application process: publication and advertisement of the scholarship offers and the selection of the applicants. Scholarship holders are financially taken care of by the two governments: The Chinese government pays the largest part of student's monthly allowance and the open return flight ticket while the Cameroonian

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[34]Details on China Scholarship Council are available at http://www.csc.edu.cn/Laihua/scholarshipdetailen.aspx?cid=97&id=2070 . Last accessed, December 2018.
[35]See the typology of Chinese scholarships at http://www.csc.edu.cn/Laihua/scholarshipdetailen.aspx?cid=97&id=2070 . Last accessed, December 2018.

governments sponsors the grantees´ flight ticket to China and pays them a monthly complementary stipend (see Chapter 5). The grant is meant for training from undergraduate to postgraduate levels.

Figure 2 Evolution of the number of cooperation scholarships granted to Cameroonians
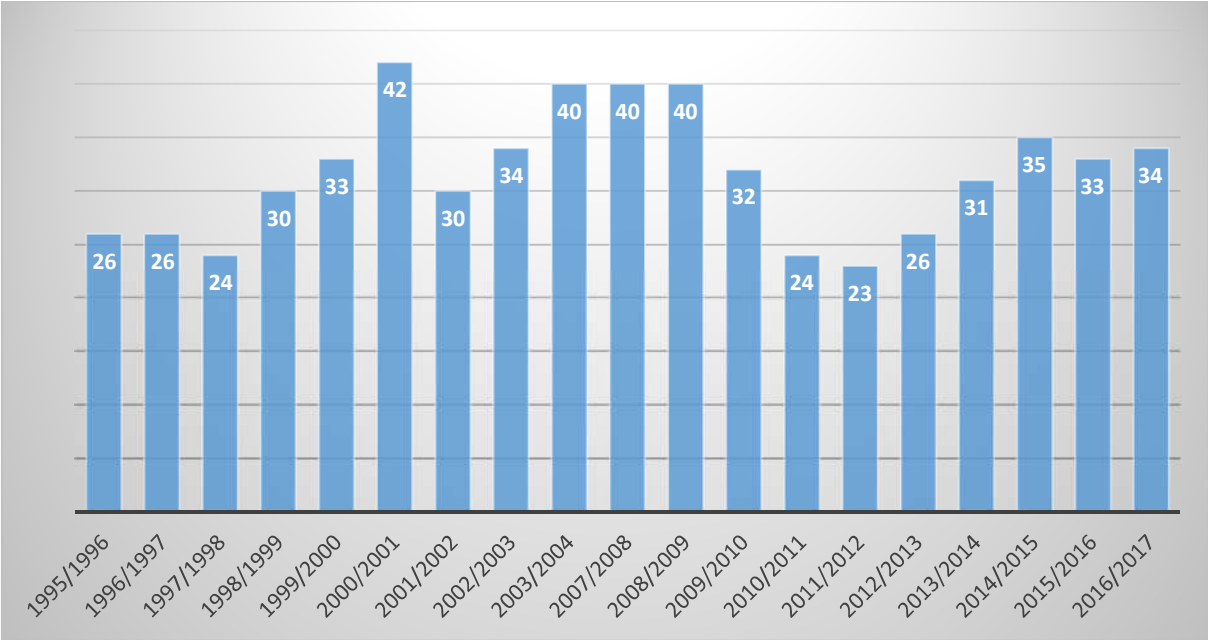
Source: Author´s compilation based on documents from the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education

4.2 'We have to 'Learn from China': The Cameroonian Government's Official Rhetoric on China-Cameroon Educational Cooperation

Analysts of educational assistance to Africa by foreign countries distinguish two categories of donors (Nordtveit 2010; King 2010, 2013; Teferra 2014). The first is composed of the so-called traditional donors that is, Western countries grouped under the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and other historical partners like Japan. The second category of countries are called Non-DAC donors (NDDs), otherwise referred to as emerging donors. This group includes China and other actors like India, Brazil, Japan, South Africa, Turkey, and Russia (King 2013). Yet, with the diversification of funding sources in China and the permanent increase in the number of scholarships, China has progressively positioned itself as a major educational aid donor for African countries, at least when it comes to scholarships. Teferra (2014: 11) argues that Chinese scholarships are of "an astonishingly high figure, dwarfing scholarship programs offered to African students by any other country".

Amongst the political and administrative elite in Cameroon, China-Cameroon educational cooperation, specifically its scholarship component, is perceived through the lens of knowledge

and skills transfer. In other words, student migration is viewed as a means towards domesticating Chinese know-how. It is important to note that far from being a Cameroonian specificity, the discourse of 'leaning from China' has a somewhat African scope, as it draws on what many scholars of China-Africa relations coin as Sino-Optimism (Adem 2016; Antwi-Boateng 2017; Corkin 2014), a paradigm which is worth alluding to before approaching the case of Cameroon.

4.2.1　A Note on Sino-Optimism

The expansion of Africa-China relations and the ever-increasing presence of China in Africa from the 2000s onward has prompted mixed reactions from scholars. Adem (2009) groups the perception of the China´s presence in Africa in two categories: Sino-Pessimism and Sino-Optimism. Sino-Pessimists depict the Chinese government´s engagement in Africa through the lens of exploitation of Africa. The Chinese presence in Africa is viewed as the "looting of Africa" (Melber 2007), "neo-liberalism with Chinese characters" (Harvey, 2005) or the "ugly face of predatory capitalism" (Bond 2006). On the contrary, Sino-Optimism regards the commitment of the Chinese government in African states as a strategic development opportunity, "a welcome departure from the zero sum game of past colonization" (Antwi-Boateng 2017: 179). As Adem (2016: 7) puts it, Sino-Optimism in Africa

> "[…] refers to the conviction or expectation that China is a force for good in Africa. There is little doubt that China would like to see Africa succeed. The sense of solidarity with Africa in China's diplomatic thought is quite deep—intrinsic interest underlies China's approach to Africa today, unlike the West's interest, which had been on the decline since the 1990s, and is therefore now partly derivative in nature, a reaction to China's interest in Africa".

This conviction is shared by political leaders in Africa. The literature on how China-Africa relations are perceived suggests that despite a slight divergence, China dominantly enjoys a positive image among political leaders at the highest levels in Africa as illustrated in their addresses and speeches on different occasions in Africa. For instance, Hanauer and Morris (2014: 10) quote the address of Jacob Zuma during the FOCAC meeting in 2012 in Beijing. The then President of South Africa stated: "We [Africans] are particularly pleased that in our relationship with China we are equals and that agreements entered into are for mutual gain. We certainly are convinced that China's intention is different to that of Europe, which to date continues to intend to influence African countries for their sole benefit". In the same vein, (Bezlova 2009 - also see Corkin 2014).) cites then Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe

(known for his "look East" policy) at the FOCAC IV meeting in Sharm El Sheikh in 2009. He claimed: "China has been able to develop its economy without plundering other countries, and the Chinese economic miracle is indeed a source of pride and inspiration". He further stated that "Beijing's engagement with the continent was the best model and therefore should be adopted by the rest of the world".[36]

Similarly, in January 2008, the *Financial Times* published a column by Abdoulaye Wade, the then President of Senegal, entitled "Time for the west to practice what it preaches". In the column, he made a comparison between China and Europe in terms of a development assistance policy for the African continent. The author stressed the following:

> "In many African nations, African leaders are striving to reinforce robust economic growth in a sustainable manner and reduce "brain-drain" incentives that have led to an exodus of well-educated Africans to Europe (…). In Senegal, a Chinese company cannot be awarded an infrastructure-related contract unless it has partnered with a Senegalese company. In practice, Chinese companies are not only investing in Senegal but transferring technology, training, and know-how to Senegal at the same time (…). Africa (…) has much to learn from China." (Wade 2008).

There are many other African leaders whose words are worth mentioning, for example Alpha Condé, the Guinea Conakry president[37], the vice chairman of the Tanzania ruling party, and many others (see Hanauer and Morris 2014: 9). An important point to highlight regarding the foregoing is that to much extent, the Sino-Optimism attitude or discourse draws on the Chinese official rhetoric presenting Sino-African relations being designed on the principle of win-win, mutual benefit, strategic partnership, brotherhood, solidarity, etc.

Adem (2016: 11-13) identifies three claims as premises to the Sino-optimism: Claim 1- China never colonized Africa; Claim 2- China supported Africa's national liberation movements (NLM); Claim 3- China's intentions are different from those of the West. Many African leaders simply believe that China is a fellow developing country with more altruistic intentions in comparison to the exploitative Western interventions. In this respect, Sino-optimism emphasizes transformative possibilities as a consequence of China's increasing engagement on the African continent. What Corkin (2014) coins as African countries' eagerness to learn from the Chinese experience of development is also to be understood

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[36] The report of Bezlova is published in *Asian Times* (November 11) and available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China_Business/KK11Cb01.html . Last accessed, 16 September 2018.

[37] See his interview to the media in the framework of the 2015 FOCAC meeting at http://info241.com/alpha-conde-la-chine-est-une-opportunite-pour-l-afrique,1452. Last accessed, 14 September 2018.

accordingly. The following section is devoted to how Sino-Optimism is expressed in the specific case of Cameroon.

4.2.2 Cameroonian Perspective of Sino-Optimism: Expectation to 'Learn from China'

In Cameroon, events like the reception of Chinese aid, the inauguration of projects financed by China, the launching of local projects on Chinese funding etc., are often occasions for both Cameroonian and Chinese authorities to praise China-Cameroon cooperation. From the Cameroonian party, it is commonplace to hear phrases such as "we should learn from China", "we have a lot to learn from China" or "China is a model". What is there to learn from China? The discourse of the officials from the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon suggests two categories of knowledge to domesticate from China: China's development model and knowledge in sophisticated domains.

The statement below is from a staff member from the 'University Cooperation Office' at the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon. It does not only summarize the perception of China´s development model in Cameroon but also the need to adapt it in Cameroon:

> "Only a few decades ago, we [Cameroonians] were at the same development level as China. But what they have done in only about thirty years is astonishing. China has achieved a lot in every single domain you can imagine: agriculture, technology, industry, and infrastructure, research, transportation, etc. China is currently the second world economic power. I think that China should serve as a model for African countries in general. (…) we have a lot to learn from China" (Interview with an official from the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education, Yaoundé, October 2015, translated from French).

From this perspective, it is all about adopting governance policies and practices which have enabled China to achieve its current economic growth.

The second dimension of the discourse of 'learning from China' is about acquiring skills and know-how in fields in which China excels. China´s know-how is visible in Cameroon through projects carried out by Chinese companies in various domains such as information and communication technology, manufacturing, public works, mining, etc. Considering universities´ vital "contributions to developing human resource and knowledge creation" (Gürüz 2011: 19), China's know-how (symbolized in Cameroon by the numerous projects carried out by Chinese companies) reflects the state of China´s higher education. Therefore, Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation, namely student migration, is viewed by Cameroonian authorities as a means towards achieving this end of learning from China. The

words of the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education provided at the start of the chapter perfectly summarize this expectation, which is why they are worth repeating: "We expect much from our young students who are going to study there [in China], and hope that when they complete their studies, they will return home with certificates, skills and knowledge to contribute to the development of our nation".

Similarly, in our conversation, an official from the 'Scholarship Unit' of the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education told me that "the selection of students for the Chinese government grant takes into consideration national needs [human resources] in key sectors such as mining, engineering, technology etc." (Interview with an official from the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education, Yaoundé, September 2015, translated from French).

4.2.2.1 'Learning from China': An Extraversion Attitude?

"In some countries (…), tertiary institutions often lack the capacity to accommodate growing numbers of secondary school graduates, do not offer programmes in certain fields, have shortages of highly trained academic staff and/or suffer from poor quality. These challenges are especially acute in developing nations, where deficiencies in tertiary capacity, variety and quality limit the ability to develop human-resource capital, a central ingredient in fuelling innovation and economic growth. In response, many countries are engaging in cross-border tertiary education activities in an effort to grow their stock of highly skilled human capital and, by extension, expand national (largely economic) capacity" (British Council and DAAD 2014: 5).

This suggests that learning from others is rather a worldwide and well-known phenomenon. Scholars of education cooperation and internationalization of higher education (King 2013; Gürüz 2011) are unanimous about the fact that learning from knowledge-producing countries has become a valuable alternative in a context of proven incapacity to rely on national universities and research institutes to meet the national need in human resources and knowledge production for local development. Outward student mobility is then part of the learning process, which is why students mostly migrate from states with low knowledge production capacities to knowledge-producing states (Gürüz 2011; Mimche et al 2016). As King (2013: 35) argues, "If under-development is in part about the absence of indigenous capacity, then seeking to source that through training abroad is an obvious strategy" for less developed countries.

According to Liu, China started resorting to outward student migration as early as in the 1930s: "In the harsh environment of the 1937–1945 War of Resistance against Japan, 1,566 students were sent abroad. These students were mainly enrolled in engineering and science, in order to enable China to develop the skills base for the period of post-war State reconstruction"

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(2007: 133) he observes. China is currently the leading country of origin of international students and there is direct evidence that it is benefiting economically from the phenomenon (Gürüz 2011). In similar respect, I spoke with students from Malaysia studying at the University of Cologne. They were funded by their government to study mechanical engineering which, from what they explained, was a priority domain for their government. This also holds true for a group of students from Brazil whom I met in 2014 during my German classes. They were on a Brazilian government scholarship and were specialized in different fields of studies. There are also African countries which sponsor their students to study abroad. In China, for instance, beside Chinese scholarships holders, there were students from Tanzania and Rwanda who were fully sponsored by their national governments to study specific subjects. Kenya also has a partnership with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for the advanced training of Kenyan university teaching personnel within German universities in "priority key sectors".[38]

Even though learning from others is a common practice, states can be grouped into two categories. There are countries whose efforts and expectations to learn from others go hand in hand with the strengthening of their local knowledge production capacities. The state of their Higher Education and research institutes and the management of outward migration of students and professionals (national financial support for studies abroad, the choice of training fields according to national needs, a return migration incentive, etc.) are indications. This might lead to ending dependency on others in the specific sector of human resource training. The cases of China, Rwanda, Tanzania, Malaysia, Brazil and Kenya alluded to earlier could be illustrations. The second group of countries are those who solely rely on the external world to overcome local difficulties in terms of knowledge production and human resource empowerment. This implies absence of local initiatives likely to sustainably satisfy the local need for knowledge and human resource in specific fields. In this case the expectation to learn from others becomes a practice of extraversion as conceptualized by Bayart (2000) and outlined in the introduction. I contend that to a great extent, Cameroon belongs to this second group.

Extraversion, designates the attitude of African elites consisting in permanently viewing the external world as a resource on which to rely to solve local challenges. It is about appealing to other parts of the world to resolve local structural challenges, or even attributing them the

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[38] For more details on the program, see http://www.researchfund.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Final-Advert-for-1st-DAAD-call.pdfN. Last accessed 25 September 2018.

responsibility for seeking the responses. Extraversion is about deliberately making oneself dependent on others. The main feature of the extraversion attitude is the limited initiatives to reduce dependency. In addition to the fact that Cameroon does not currently have a national scholarship scheme, i.e. offering full scholarship[39] to Cameroonians for long term training abroad, the structural factors informing the hope of learning from China presented in the following sections are illustrations to the extraversion attitudes of the Cameroonian government.

4.3 Structural Factors Informing the Hope of Learning from China? Mismatch Between National Development Goal and Knowledge Production Capacities

The hope of learning from China derives from a mismatch between development goals set by the Cameroonian government and the failure of the national Higher Education system to contribute toward achieving this goal through training adequate human resource, as acknowledge the different development policy documents of the Cameroonian government.

4.3.1 National Development Goal: Becoming an Emerging Country

In 2009 the Cameroonian government issued two major development policy documents: "Cameroon Vision 2035" and the "Growth and Employment Strategy Paper". In these white papers setting the country´s long-term development strategies, the government expresses the intention to make Cameroon an emerging country by 2035 and also defines the prerequisites or conditions to be fulfilled to meet this objective. The "Growth and Employment Strategy Paper" reads as follows:

> "Emerging Cameroon is a country embarked on a journey to sustainable economic and social development with a strong, diversified, and competitive economy. The economy will be characterized by a dominant industrial sector in general and manufacturing sector in particular (in GDP and exports), effective integration into the global economy". (Republic of Cameroon 2009b: 53).

On the conditions for emergence process to be successful, the White Paper stipulates that "Cameroon will have to enhance education and the training of human resources in the fields of

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[39] Cameroonians studying abroad on scholarships are usually sponsored by the receiving countries. However, there are cases where they are partially supported by the Cameroonian government. For example, Cameroonian students on Chinese government scholarship receive supplement monthly allowance and a flight ticket from the Cameroonian government. Also, national scholarship existed in Cameroon prior to the economic crisis of the late1980s.

health, science and technology, among others" (Republic of Cameroon 2009: 25). It implicitly assigns Cameroonian universities a central role in the economic growth of the country. The expectation from the universities as contributors to national development has already been asserted earlier in 2004 in a "report on the development of higher education in Cameroon" issued by the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education and presented at the forty-seventh session of the international conference of education. The report acknowledged that universities are facing a multi-dimensional crisis mostly emanating from the "extremely limited financial resource" allocated by the state. Drawing on this state of affairs, the report reads: "One of the major challenges of higher education at the beginning of the millennium, is to provide Cameroon with competent human resources for the social, economic and cultural development of the country. To do so, it is important to ensure the quality of Higher Education by increasing the operating and investment budget, strengthening the capacity of libraries and laboratories." (Republic of Cameroon 2004: 20).

In the same vein, the 2014 edition of the 'Compendium of Cooperation Agreements and Conventions' in the domain of higher education begins with an editorial by the Ministry of Higher Education entitled "The legal foundation of the knowledge economy". The editorial states that "(…) the government of Cameroon expects a lot from Higher Education to meet the challenges faced by the country, in view of attaining emergence by 2035, through the training of skilled human resources, able to satisfy the needs of overarching projects" (Republic of Cameroon 2014: ii).

As this passage clearly suggests, the aforementioned editorial is all about Higher Education as a contributor to national development. Insisting on the role of knowledge in the economic growth of the country, the minister calls for a radical transformation of the image of Cameroon's higher education, so as to develop "a creative, innovative and competitive human capital at the national and international levels" (Republic of Cameroon 2014: ii). To foster the capacities of the Cameroonian Higher Education sector to meet these expectations, the document also indicates reforms initiated by the Ministry of Higher Education. Among them is a program aiming at the "structuring, improvement and valorization of university research and innovation and the internationalization of Higher Education, [as to] strengthen the national university research and innovation system as well as technological transfer to bolster and booster industrial productivity and economic growth".

Yet, as the section below suggests, the knowledge production capacities of Cameroon's Higher Education sector are significantly lower than necessary in order to meet these expectations.

4.3.2 Limited Knowledge Production Capacities

The discourse surrounding learning from China attests to a great extent to the incapacity of Cameroonian universities to fulfill the expectations in terms of knowledge production and adequate human resources training required for the attainment of the development vision stated by the Cameroonian government. The state of higher education in Cameroon, namely university resource and research funding are perfect illustrations as suggested by the literature (Djouda Feudjio 2009; Guaillard and Zink 2009; Kemayou 2012; Konings 2002; Makosso et al 2009, CODESRIA 2009, Gaillard and Zink 2003, Gaillard 2013) and my personal university experience in Cameroon as well as my conversations with Cameroonian students in China and Germany.

4.3.2.1 Resource of Universities in Cameroon

Two types of university resources are considered: university infrastructure and teaching staff. In 2009, CODESRIA edited a volume on the crisis, reforms and transformations of Higher Education in francophone Africa. It included a research on five higher education institutions (of which four public) in Cameroon. The research participants included 412 lecturers and 2053 students, and the topics discussed covered several domains including infrastructure and other university facilities. Regarding infrastructure, they report a blatant mismatch between a growing demand in education within these institutions and their low infrastructural capacities. They qualify the situation at the University of Yaoundé II and the University of Dschang as worrying, considering the fact that the "capacities of their amphitheaters are respectively 900 and 1,500 places, for 11,291 and 10,084 students. This corresponds to a ratio of a place for nearly thirteen students in Dschang and a place for nearly seven students in Yaoundé II" (Makosso et al 2009: 43, author's translation). The authors additionally report the mediocre quality of the laboratory equipment, coupled with the problems of access to books and scientific journals (ibid: 42).

In the same vein, Djouda Feudjio (2009) in his article on the adoption and implementation of the BMD (Bachelors-Masters-Doctorate) system in the Cameroonian higher education, makes a "sociological diagnosis of the universities in Cameroon", with the University of

Yaoundé 1 and the University of Dschang as case studies. He observes that state universities in Cameroon are "on the point of imploding" (ibid:144) due to overcrowded, degraded and ill-adapted amphitheaters. The author summarizes the working condition in these two institutions as follows:

> "The drastic deterioration of the working conditions of students and teachers, inadequate and precarious facilities make the academic year an ordeal. In the "major laboratories" of the Faculty of Sciences of the universities in Yaoundé I and Dschang, teachers have (…) to make abstract assumptions during so-called practical exercises, due to lack of test tubes, reagents or any other indispensable machine. Libraries have aged and rarely have up-to-date documents. The student and the teacher must 'hustle' [each] in his [/her] own way, to acquire new publications in his [/her] scientific field" (ibid, author's translation).

Another challenge of the Cameroonian universities is related to human resources, namely lectures. In his work focusing specifically on the University of Douala, Kemayou (2012) points to the shortage of university teachers in comparison with the student population. He indicates that in the 2005/2006 academic year, there were 45.000 students for only 569 lecturers. It is important to note that this reality is not a specificity solely of the University of Douala. In 2010, the National Institute of Statistics of Cameroon (NIS) published an exhaustive report on the situation of education in Cameroon. The analysis of higher education includes all the six (by then) state universities in Cameroon and discusses several dimensions of the educational offer. The point on the quantity of the human resources suggests that for the 2007/2008 academic year, there were 2.748 teachers for 130.872 enrolled students, which corresponds to a student-teacher ratio of 45:1[40] (NIS 2010).

Another issue related to the human resources within Cameroonian universities is the low remuneration of university teachers, which leads them to develop coping strategies by investing time in extra income-generating activities such as consultancies in local and international development organizations (Guaillard and Zink 2009). As a result, lecturers have two jobs and therefore, only have limited time to attend to students' needs.

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[40] According to OECD iLibrary, the online library of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) the student-teacher at German tertiary education institution is 12: 2 (see HYPERLINK "https://www.oecd-ilibr,ary.org/sites/a1ef3bfe-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/a1ef3bfe-en" \l "countryli_container2" https://www.oecd-ilibr,ary.org/sites/a1ef3bfe-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/a1ef3bfe-en#countryli_container2

4.3.2.2   The State of Research Institutions in Cameroon

The knowledge production capacity of a country is visible through its research institutions which in Cameroon are separated from universities since 1992. Research institutes are under the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, while the Ministry of Higher Education is in charge of tertiary education institutions. There are a few reports on the history of research in Cameroon (Gaillard et al 2013[41]; Gaillard and Khelfaoui 2000; Guaillard and Zink, 2009). They discuss the evolution of research organizations in Cameroon, with a focus on issues like the national scientific, technology and innovation policies, research financing as well as constraints jeopardizing the dynamics of knowledge production in Cameroon.

From the historical standpoint, the reports suggest that the appropriation of research by the Cameroonian state started in 1974 with the establishment of the National Office for Scientific and Technical Research (*Office National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique -ONAREST*) whose mission was to coordinate the nine existing research institutes inherited from the French colonial period and to lead new research activities (Gaillard et al 2013).

From that period onwards, the state showed a high interest in developing scientific research and technology. The subsequent funding mechanisms placed Cameroon among the first African countries in terms of budget for research initiatives. These reports also inform the reader that the considerable budget (which was as consistent as that of France) dedicated to research in Cameroon, was to be interpreted as reflecting not only the national economic growth inherent in the petroleum revenue, but also and foremost "a genuine political will to train and have access to a scientific elite" (Gaillard and Zink 2003: 14). During this expansion period, researchers in Cameroon enjoyed a political and social recognition as there had been a decree on the special status of researchers, many of whom also received grants for specialization abroad. The creation of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 1984 attested to the increasing importance granted to research by the Cameroonian political leaders. It was a period of evolution of research in Cameroon (Gaillard and Zink 2003: 14).

However, this golden era lasted only for a decade. From 1986, the economic situation of Cameroon witnessed a dramatic deterioration which drained much of the political leaders' enthusiasm for research. The state ended its financial support for and the recruitment of researchers within research institutions. The state even faced difficulties in paying salaries for

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[41] The research team includes a Cameroonian.

the existing staff. Furthermore, the subjection of Cameroon to the so-called Structural Adjustment Plans from the early 1990s onwards was the peak of the economic crisis and marked what researchers in Cameroon referred to as the "descent into hell", considering the significant "break in the dynamics" (Gaillard and Khelfaoui 2000) of scientific research. From 1990 to 1996 for instance, projects designed on and run with public funding were completely stopped and the existing infrastructure steadily eroded. Only projects on external funding continued. Universities were also severely affected by the economic downward trend. In 1999, the financial assistance from the state to academic institutions was only ten percent of what used to be the case until 1991. This limited funding was only "earmarked for very specific activities, such as the operating budget rather than investment areas" (Gaillard et al 2013: 11). The significant decrease of public spending on research organizations and higher education institutions went hand in hand with a considerable drop of the salaries of researchers and lecturers.

As a matter of fact, they had to elaborate new coping strategies which mainly included consultancies for international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private businesses and teaching in private universities. Furthermore, as a university lecturer told Gaillard and Zink (2003: 23), "many [lecturers] earn extra money by spending time running from seminar to seminar to collect per diems and travel expenses, turning into hunters of expertise, travelling through the whole of Africa to teach". These practices have not disappeared, even though salaries and research allowance for university lecturers have increased in the past years. The general context of high cost of living in Cameroon could be part of the reasons for this continuity. Also, even though new amphitheaters and lecture rooms have been constructed, the situation of the university infrastructure has remained almost unchanged due to the ever increasing demand for higher education.

The Growth and Employment Strategy Papers (GESP) which was also issued in 2009 as part of the 'Cameroon vision 2035' mentioned above, stresses the issue of human capital and appraises the situation of education in Cameroon by then. It reads as follows: "Higher education is on its part facing serious teacher shortage, academic infrastructure inadequacy to accommodate large numbers of students from the secondary schools" (Republic of Cameroon 2009b: 72).

It is important to note that the Cameroonian government has undertaken initiatives to overcome the situation. These include the creation of new universities and faculties, the increase of the salaries of university lecturers and the recruitment of new teaching staff. Yet, Cameroon

seemingly still faces challenge in producing adequate human resources for its development goal. In January 2015, took place in Cameroon a forum on international academic cooperation organized by the Ministry of Higher Education. The initiative, which brought together officials from the ministry and university administrations, aimed to assess the challenges of the local Higher Education and take resolutions for its improvement. One of the resolutions, as the report of the forum indicates, was the "submission to friendly countries and donor organizations the training needs of Cameroon" (Republic of Cameroon 2015).

This resolution highlights the challenges faced by Cameroon in training its human resource on the one hand, and attributing the responsibility for filling the gap to others, on the other. This extraversion attitude is in line with the recommendation of the Cameroonian Minister of Higher Education to local universities in the 2014 edition of the 'Compendium of Cooperation Agreements and Conventions of the Higher Education'. He urged national universities to seek partnership with foreign institutions as follows: " it is imperative for the University today to take new strategies permitting it to develop and explore win-win partnership in highly specialized domains with many development partners" (Republic of Cameroon 2014: 1).

In any case, the research environment and conditions currently prevailing in Cameroon are far from enthusiastic as illustrate the words below from Christopher, a research participant in China. He made a comparison between studying in China and Cameroon as follows:

> "Everything was made available and accessible in the lab, all kind of apparels and instruments you may imagine in the domain. Any item I needed in the lab for my research, I just had to inform my supervisor and he would provide it, or could even buy it and the university would refund me […]. To encourage students in their research work, they were granted a monthly research subsidy as from the second academic year […]. I was receiving 600 RMB every month […]. In short, you will never find the equipment we have in the lab here in Ngoa Ekelle[42] [University of Yaoundé I in Cameroon]. What am I even trying to compare [laughing]. Cameroon does not have money to invest in research. I have friends in Cameroon who are currently doing a PhD. They carry out tests but to analyze their data, they have to send them to a lab abroad, which is costly and time-consuming. Doing a PhD in Cameroon takes ages because they [students] are struggling to get money to sponsor their data analysis abroad. Chinese university labs have no cause to be envious of American or European universities." (Interview with Christopher, Jinhua, July 2016, translated from French).

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[42] Ngoa-Ekelle is the name of the location of the University of Yaoundé 1 but is popularly used in Cameroon as a nickname for the university itself.

Christopher was doing a Masters in Chemistry at Zhejiang Normal University in China after earning a bachelor's degree in Chemistry at the University of Yaoundé I in Cameroon. Christopher also registered for a master's program at the University of Yaoundé I in Cameroon but ended it after two semesters, to move to China. As he explained, it is his uncle (a lecturer in the University of Yaoundé I) who informed him about the scholarship opportunities offered by Zhejiang Normal University to the students of the University of Yaoundé I in the framework of the '20+20 university partnership'. Christopher initially refused to apply on the grounds that he was already taking a Master´s program. However, he changed his mind because his uncle insisted, putting forward several arguments including facilities and the study conditions within Chinese universities. Christopher then argued that terminating his master's program in Cameroon to start anew in China was rather a realistic choice, considering what he terms "the hassle of Ngoa Ekelle" in reference to the learning conditions at the University of Yaoundé 1. By the time we had the interview in July 2016, he had just finished his master´s program and was waiting for the graduation ceremony. In the meantime, he had also applied for PhD scholarships from different Chinese universities and was waiting for the feedback.

The depiction of the University of Yaoundé 1 by Christopher, which was shared by all the research participants who attended university in Cameroon prior to moving to China, is a perfect illustration of the scientific research landscape within all Cameroonian universities. In the course of 2017, I met two separate groups of Cameroonian PhD students in the city of Cologne in Germany. The first group constituted of three students from the University of Buea where they studied medical sciences. They had come to Cologne on a scholarship for a six-month program specifically focusing on practical knowledge, as they explained to me. The second group was made up of ten students from the University of Dschang. They were all PhD students in Biology-related subjects and had come for a two-week summer school organized by the Physiology Department of the University of Cologne in the framework of a cooperation with the University of Dschang. The delegation from the University of Dschang also included university administrative staff members including the Vice-Chancellor of the university. I had several chances to discuss with the students from both groups about how they appreciated their study stay in Germany.

The common point between them was the high tendency to compare their home universities and the University of Cologne. The comparison concerned the learning environment, namely the equipment in the university labs, access to other resources such as academic literature and library facilities (internet for instance), and also (even though not

relevant in this section) the teacher-student relations. They emphasized the difficulty in running experiments at their home university, contrary to the University of Cologne, where "everything is there for you to experiment whatsoever you may want to. There are all kinds of laboratory devices and chemical compounds. The doors of the lab are open, the supervisor is there to assist and answer your questions. The latest publications are accessible and there is no such thing as power cuts or internet disruptions. In short, there is everything here to carry out a quality research", highlighted one of the students from the University of Buea. The same experience is shared by Cameroonian students interviewed in China.

In view of the foregoing, there is no Cameroonian university among the best 100 universities in Africa in 2017, according to the UniRank 2017 League Table [43] of the top 200 universities in Africa. In other words, Cameroonian universities have failed to produce "knowledge for development" (World Bank Institute 2004) so as to become a key engine of the economic growth and competitiveness, as it is the case in the developed countries and other parts of Africa (Brinkley 2009, Powell and Snellman 2004, World Bank Institute 2004). As Gaillard et al, (2013: 9) put it, "one of the major challenges that the country [Cameroon] faces with regard to research [and higher education] is [still] aligning it to make a contribution to the elimination of poverty […]".

There is no doubt that student migration can contribute to reducing dependency for knowledge and skills. But it can only be effective if it goes hand in hand with a well-designed implementation strategy, which is not currently the case with the Cameroonian government. As will be shown in chapter 9 of this work, Cameroon does not have a national outward student migration policy, nor a programme to attract graduates into higher education or the local economy.

This chapter has shown that the educational cooperation between China and Cameroon covers several domains. The Cameroonian government views the cooperation with China and specifically student migration as contributing to learning from China in sophisticated fields. Such discourse is understandable, considering that the development policy documents released by the Cameroonian government acknowledge a shortage of adequate human resource to reach its prospective development goal which is to become an emerging country by 2035. This expectation to learn from China is the outcome of the limited knowledge production capacities

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[43] The ranking is available at http://www.4icu.org/top-universities-africa/ . Last accessed 25 September 2018.

of the country which derives in part from structural challenges in the domains of higher education and research in Cameroon. These include inappropriate infrastructure, shortage of teaching staff, limited learning and teaching facilities, insufficient investment in research, etc. The initiatives by the Cameroonian government to address the situation (e.g. increase of the salaries of university lecturers, the creation of new universities and faculties as well as the recruitment of new teaching staff) are decidedly insufficient which is why it adopts extraversion as the last resort; i.e. counting on and appealing to friendly countries and institutions to fill the gap. However, student migration to China would hardly contribute to learning from China as expected by the Cameroonian government due to a lack of sustainable learning strategies. To this should be added the fact that the Cameroonian government and students have different perceptions and expectations of student mobility as a whole, as will be shown in the next chapter dedicated to the migration motivations of Cameroonian students in China.

Chapter Five: Student migration to China: students' motivations and expectations

While chapters three and four have discussed the states' rhetoric and expectations of student migration, this chapter approaches student migration from Cameroon to China from the perspective of the students. The aim of the chapter is to dig into students´ migratory projects, that is, their migration motivations and expectations.

This chapter contends that there is a difference and even a contradiction between the Cameroonian government and Cameroonian students regarding migration perception and expectation. For the former, student migration to China is part of the process of 'learning from China' in sophisticated fields of knowledge: It is thus a means of knowledge transfer between China and Cameroon. Yet for the students, acquiring knowledge is not necessarily the priority in their migratory projects. In most cases living and studying in China is rather shaped by the financial incentives associated with scholarships and other perceived money-making openings in China. Therefore, migrating to China is to a large extent a strategy for accumulating wealth and by doing so, achieving social mobility in Cameroon.

The chapter is divided into four parts. Through the lens the concept of mixed migration, the first uses case studies to expose students' migration motivations. The second part of the chapter summarizes the case studies and provides more details on the factors influencing the choice of China as migration destination. Drawing on a classification of Cameroonian students in China, part three analyses how social backgrounds shape migration motivations. Through the concept of *bush falling*, the last part of the chapter situates student migration in the general context of international migration from Cameroon. The aim is to highlight the ways students make sense of their presence in China and how this differs from the Cameroonian government's expectation of student migration and the Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation as a whole.

5.1   Migration Motivations of Cameroonian Enrolled at Chinese Universities

The expansion of student mobility across the globe has gone hand in glove with a fast-growing body of literature emanating from different fields of studies. The literature, however, is dominated by the states´ and universities´ rationales of internationalization (Altbach and Knight 2007; Mok 1997; Knight and de Wit 199; Hayhoe and Zha 2007; Knight 2003; Sehoole and Knight 2013; Altbach and Kane 2007) to the detriment of the perspective of students who, in fact, constitute the central actors in this process. Some scholars emphasize the need to shift

the focus from states and institutions to students, arguing that there is a difference between these categories in terms of migration rationales (Brook and Waters 2003; Eyebiyi and Mazzella 2014).

5.1.1   Mixed Migration

According to the Mixed Migration Centre (2018: 9) "Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking for better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have a range of legal statuses as well a variety of vulnerabilities". Initially developed to describe the overlap of migration categories, namely, forced migration and labor migration, mixed migration is used to underline the fact that the drivers of the movement of people are multiple, often intertwined, and influence each other. This implies that the categories of persons involved in the movement are not mutually exclusive. For, someone can enter a country as a tourist or a student and become an economic migrant and even acquire citizenship.

Mixed migration is relevant to underline how migration motivations of Cameroonian students in China are entangled and evolving. Through case studies, this chapter suggests that the economic and academic dimensions of the migratory projects of most Cameroonians enrolled (be it as scholarship holders or self-funded students) at Chinese universities are intertwined. Enrolling at a Chinese university is not synonymous with having a sustainable academic project for a career prospect. It is rather embedded in a broader migration project of which the ultimate aim is to improve one's chance toward financial (and thus social) security. Thus, student migration is a strategy toward international migration which is synonymous with social mobility in the collective imaginary in Cameroon. The perception of the scholarship as a salary, the quasi systematic engagement of students in business, as well as their eagerness to find a paid job (yet forbidden by law) in China, among others are illustrations as shall be discussed later in this chapter.

I draw inspiration from Şaul and Pelican's (2014: 10) argument on the "interconnections of entrepreneurship and educational migration". In their analysis on global African entrepreneurship, they approach African students as migrants and, by so doing, challenge "the classical idea of education as a period when a young person gains personal qualifications while remaining exclusively a consumer" (ibid: 11). They rather argue that "many students who go abroad approach their scholastic period as part of an already unfolding career, as a source of

income in its own right, as well as a way of obtaining a visa and therefore legal residence in a country where this is problematic for their co–nationals" (ibid). The last section of the chapter further develops the income generating activities in which Cameroonian students in China are engaged.

5.1.2   Case Studies

I will use case studies to illustrate the difference in the migration drivers of Cameroonians registered at Chinese universities.

5.1.2.1   Clement: "You Can Come to China Poor and Go Back very Rich"

On my short stay in the city of Wuhan in May 2016, I talked to Clement, a self-sponsored student in the last year of a master's degree in Software Engineering. About his choice of China, he stated: "China is orphans' country. You can come to China poor and go back very rich if you are hardworking". It is important to emphasize that being hardworking is not about having good academic performance. It rather refers to one´s capacity to seize and exploit the range of business opportunities in China. It is about being opportunistic or what is termed in the lingua franca of the Cameroonian student community in Guangzhou as a *développeur* that is, someone who develops or designs something.

Clement earned a bachelor´s degree from the University of Buea and also worked in Douala for two years before he decided to migrate to China. Although he intended to pursue higher education, doing business was prioritized in his migratory project. About his interest in business, Clement explained that alongside his paid job in Cameroon, he "was selling devices such as USB sticks and memory cards and was making one hundred percent profit. The idea of migrating to China materialized when I realized that the devices were manufactured in China." (Conversation with Clement, Wuhan, May 2016, translated from French). Due to a shortage of financial means, his migration project only took shape two years from the time he decided to move. "Nowadays, I do import-export trade between China and Cameroon. I import food[44] from Cameroon and export various Chinese manufactured products to Cameroon. With a business partner in Guangzhou, I also deal with money transfers to and from Cameroon. I would like to concentrate on business after my graduation here and Guangzhou is the right place. I am

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[44] Clement used Wechat to advertise the food imported from Cameroon, as well as Chinese goods he was selling to fellow Cameroonians in China.

currently searching for admission into a university in Guangzhou." (Conversation with Clement, Wuhan, May 2016, translated from French). In August 2016, I met Clement in Xiaobei, one of the biggest business areas in Guangzhou. He told me that he was looking for a shop for his business and had also been admitted to university in Guangzhou.

5.1.2.2   Dani: In search of an Adequate Training Program

"I have never thought of going abroad. I have always felt happy at home. I studied electronics at secondary school and earned a bachelor's degree in Cameroon in Computer Science (Programming) at the UIT (University Institute of Technology) in Douala in 2010. I left Cameroon because UIT does not offer a master's program […]. When I started [the bachelor's program] there, they promised to launch a master's program in two years. But until now it is not effective and I do not know why. Yet it was a very good school, with a good reputation in Cameroon. I would never have left Cameroon if I could do my master's there. When I graduated from the UIT, my plan was to register for a master´s program. I spent up to one year in search of a school but did not find a suitable one in my domain. The last option I had was to register for a master's course in management and programming at a private institution. Unfortunately, the school faced some difficulties only a few months after the start of the program and closed down. Luckily, they reimbursed our school fee. As I did not want to stay at home doing nothing and since I could not find a job either, I decided to do a one-year training in computing network. But they also closed down after six months and bluntly robbed us of about 500 thousand CFA Francs (760 Euros). I remember that we attended classes on a Friday and on Sunday we received a message saying that the school was going to be relocated and that they will get back to us when all is settled. As the message was not very clear to me, I decided to go to school on Monday to find out what was really happening. Offices were empty, without any notice. However, they contacted me one year later and said they could refund half the school fees I had paid. But, since I was already here in China and was no longer thinking about it and there was no one to follow-up on the refunding procedure, I just decided to ignore it. So, I came to China because UIT did not offer any master's program in the domain of computer sciences and I did not find an alternative in Cameroon" (Interview with Dani, Jinhua April, 2016 in, translated from French).

Like Dani, there were more students in the same situation, all interested in technical subjects such as computer sciences, mechanical engineering, petroleum engineering. There were students whose decision to leave Cameroon took shape because they could not find a program matching either their previous training or their career prospects. This was the case of Dani, a master's student in computer sciences at Zhejiang Normal University in Jinhua.

5.1.2.3   Marvin: What Matters is the Scholarship Money

Marvin was in his mid-twenties. He earned a bachelor's degree in Law from the University of Yaoundé II before getting a CI scholarship for a master's in "Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages" (MTCSOL) at Zhejiang Normal University. In Cameroon, Marvin did all kinds of odd jobs to take care of his three-year old boy with his girlfriend. When I asked him about his switch from Law to the Chinese language, he said:

> "I sat for several competitive examinations in Cameroon but never passed any. You know how it works in the country: you cannot pass if you don´t have support […]. I was jobless and, in the meantime, had to provide for the needs of my girlfriend and you don't really want to know what I did to earn a leaving […]. When I heard about the Confucius Institute scholarship, what interested me was the salary [in reference to the monthly allowance] and nothing else. Since last year, I receive a monthly salary with which I take care of my child. That is the most important for the moment. It might look like I am wasting my Law degree, but one has to be pragmatic sometimes. Life is not all about what we want. Who knows, a master´s in Chinese might bring new opportunities. So, I do not regret my choice […]. For now, what really matters is the scholarship money." (Interview with Marvin, Jinhua, June 2016, translated from French).

5.2   Analysis of the Case Studies: The factors Influencing the Choice of China

The three case studies above suggest that students are driven by an array of rationales that vary considerably from one individual to another. As Knight et al (2014: 1) observe, "Internationalization [of higher education] means different things to different people, institutions, and countries. It is driven by a diversity of rationales, finds expressions in a variety of activities, and brings multiple benefits, risks, and unintended outcomes". Generally, interviews with Cameroonian students in China suggested three categories of migration motivations: academic, scholarships financial incentives, envisioned business and job opportunities.

5.2.1   Envisioned Business and Job Opportunities

Fieldwork in Guangzhou suggested that for many self-sponsored students like Clement, business opportunities were a fundamental element in their choice of that specific city. However, in terms of migratory projects, it is important to avoid any homogenization of this category of students. Self-sponsored students in Guangzhou can be grouped into two main groups: those who have a study plan to which business activities are annexed, and those who register at the university to secure a Chinese visa to carry out their business activities. The

difference between the two groups is that those with a study plan usually register for a major course, attend classes and, above all, earn a degree. Those who maintain their student status only for the sake of securing a Chinese visa usually register for Chinese language classes which can last as many years as the university allows them. I met students who had been registered as Chinese language learners for four years. Situations have been reported where universities had forced some students to end their language classes and to start a major. In this case, students would prefer universities where the control on class attendance is not strict. It is also worthwhile highlighting that the borderline between these two categories is fluid.

Students´ narratives also revealed that China is not only attractive for the business opportunities it offers but also for envisioned job possibilities associated with the economic development of the country: "China is now the world best economy and, as you know economic development goes together with job opportunities, like in Germany and France, Belgium or the UK. In China specifically, there is a need for English language teachers. I know of many guys who have teaching positions and who earn a lot of money here. I hope I will find one soon" (Conversation with Ben, Jinhua, June 2016). By the time we met, Ben had already spent seven months in China and was registered as a Chinese language student at one of the universities of the city. For Ben, like the great majority of the Cameroonian students registered at this specific institution, the decision to migrate to China was not on grounds of the reputation of Chinese universities or an educational project but rather on the possibility to make money through paid jobs. Conversations among Cameroonian students there mostly concerned job offers. This was also the case with their communication platform (of which I was member) on WeChat. The frequency of job-related information was higher than any other subject. Furthermore, most of these students were enrolled as Chinese language learners even though some had already spent several years in China. What also made this institution attractive was its flexibility regarding class attendance. For instance, there were cases of Cameroonian students who were registered there but who worked (mostly as English language teachers) in different Chinese cities.

Besides the students whose priority was on getting a job, there were students who combined studies and paid jobs. The difference between the two groups lies in the priority given to studies and money making in their migratory projects. For the students who came to China to work and to earn a living, securing a job was an end in itself, while those who really intended to earn a degree considered a job as a means to sustain themselves or to complement their scholarship allowances.

5.2.1.1 Typology of income generating activities

There are several types of income generating activities in which Cameroonian students in China were engaged. They are grouped into two main categories: paid jobs and entrepreneurship.

Paid jobs

Paid jobs include English language teaching, football playing/coaching, "promoting" in night clubs, film shooting and musical performance.

English language teaching. During fieldwork in Jinhua in April 2015, I asked one of my interlocutors to list the types of jobs Cameroonian students take in China. He started with English language teaching and commented: "teaching English is the common job for Cameroonians and all foreign students". To contextualize the English teaching job in China, it should be highlighted that there is an unprecedented demand for English language teaching among Chinese citizens, which led to the emergence of what Guo and Guo (2019) term as "English industry". As Johnson reported already in 2009, China counted about 60,000 foreigners working as full-time English teachers and tens of thousands more working in part-time positions (Johnson, 2009). Over the years, the demand for English language teachers has increased. In 2015 media reports indicated that at least 4,000 native-speaking English teachers were needed nationwide for 2015-2016[45]. In terms of profiles, employers prefer the so-called native-speaking English teachers, especially from the "English five", composed of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand or United States (Guo and Guo 2016, Chan 2021). However, due to the high demand, the "native-speakerism" (Guo and Guo 2016) has progressively lost ground and the English teaching job market has been accessible for almost every foreigner, including students who are legally not entitled to paid employment in China[46]. It is also important to emphasize that the prospect of an English teaching job has been an influential factor for many Africans, students and non-students, to chose China as a migration destination as well as to stay on after graduation (Alpes 2011, Haugen 2013, Pelican 2009, Bredeloup 2014).

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[45] https://www.thebeijinger.com/blog/2015/04/28/china-faces-english-teacher-shortage

[46] For a more comprehensive study on the attraction and situation of foreign English language teachers in China see the PhD thesis of Lai Pik Chan (2021).

Football playing/coaching. Many Cameroonian students, especially males, engage in the football business which includes two dimensions: football playing and coaching. Football players are recruited by clubs for local competitions which are usually organized during holidays. There is a remuneration for every match played. Players with good skills are often recruited as football coaches in schools or football training centers. As they usually do not have a certificate and thus previous experience in the field of coaching, they mostly rely on the internet for self-training.

"Promoting" in night clubs. "Promotors" are foreign students hired by night clubs. Their job is to advertise the clubs among foreign students so as to attract them. A promotor is a usually a popular person with a large network of friends and acquaintances which is progressively built and maintained through social media. They constantly announce parties and also contact people individually to invite them to the club. As a promotor explained, having foreign customers in a bar or a night club is associated with prestige, and consequently, makes the bar attractive to Chinese citizens.

Film shooting and modelling. Many students were recruited to participate in movie shooting. One of them became famous in this domain and finally quitted university to fully engage in the film industry.

Musical performance. Musical performance includes singing or dancing. There were students who were hired by restaurants and bars mainly owned by foreigners as singers or musicians in the evenings. Students were also hired by Chinese individuals and/or institutions (such as schools) for dancing performances during events.

Entrepreneurship

Besides paid employment, Cameroonian students in China also engaged in entrepreneurship. Two main types of entrepreneurship have been identified. The first includes trade and services while the second concerns innovation.

Almost every Cameroonian student in China was involved in trade and services, which include: export of Chinese products to Africa, import of African products to China, sale of Chines goods in China, money transfer and catering.

Export Business. Export business is the dominant pattern of trade among Cameroonian students.

> "Here in China, whether you like it or not, you will do business (…) in fact, you find yourself doing it. On the internet here, you realize that the price of goods is far below the sale price in Cameroon and automatically, you think of buying and sending them home

to make profit. Almost everyone does that and don´t need to have a business experience. The only thing you need is a small capital." (Conversation with Brado, Guanzghou, April 2015, translated from French).

The goods sent to Cameroon range from electronic devices, mobile phones and accessories, garments, shoes, cosmetics, hairs etc. They are sold by relatives mainly through a door-to-door marketing approach as the quantity of products are usually small due to the limited financial capital. However, there were students who owned a shop in Cameroon in which they display and clear their stocks. The latter category was very limited and mostly composed of students who had business experience prior to moving to China.

Export business also included purchasing goods for traders and individual consumers based not only in Cameroon, but also in other African states. In this respect, students acted as middlemen and charged their services. Trade is facilitated by the effectiveness of the postal services in China. It allows to buy goods from all over China without travelling. For example, a student based in Jinhua can also order a product online and provide the address of a cargo agent in another city; which considerably reduces financial and time cost. Financial transactions between student middlemen and their clients in Africa are done via informal money transfer services to be developed later in this section.

Import of Cameroonian Goods to China and Sale of Chinese Goods in China.

Some students imported goods from Cameroon. These mainly included foodstuffs and specific cosmetic products. Compared to export trade, importing goods from Cameroon to China is complex for two main reasons. First, export services are not developed in Cameroon to the same extent as in China. Secondly, there are legal restrictions on the importation to China. Therefore, to bring products from Cameroon, students rely on Cameroonian businessmen who travel back and forth between China and Cameroon. The products are sold through social media.

Another pattern of students´ business is selling Chinese products to their fellow Africans in China. These goods are mainly cosmetic products (make-up, nail polish, perfume, etc.), jewels, clothes, shoes, watches, etc. As a female student in Jinhua involved in this business explained, these are quality products which cannot easily be found on the internet. Sources of supply are big market places, especially in Guangzhou. Products are sold door-to-door and social media are used for advertisement.

Money transfer services. Money transfer is another business Cameroonian students in China engage in. The number of students involved is very limited, probably because the business requires significant financial capital. According to students, this way of transferring

money between Cameroon and China is preferable to the formal mechanisms not only because the transfer fee is lower, but also and foremost because there is no monitoring and administrative burden as it is the case in banks. Every student engaged in this business has a business partner in Cameroon who collects the money to be sent to China and from whom money sent from China is collected.

Catering and hair dressing. Home cooking is a growing activity among female Cameroonian students in China. For each of the five cities which I visited, there was at least one student preparing and selling food to Cameroonians and other nationals. Although the idea is to serve Cameroonian food, it is often about cooking Chinese items in the Cameroonian style (roasted fish, for example), or a combination of Cameroonian and Chinese dishes. The food is prepared in the students´ dormitories or rooms and packaged for takeaway. Some of these students also cater for events organized by the Cameroonian association in their city.

Dressing one´s hair was reported as one of female students' everyday challenges. The situation is due to the lack of hair dressing saloons or the high cost when one is available. In most cases, students who had hair dressing skills would cater to their fellows at home (the hairdresser´s or clients' home).

The 'développeurs' or a different category of entrepreneurs.

Beside, these common patterns of business, there were students engaged in a more innovative and advanced types of entrepreneurship. Students in this category were known as '*développeurs*', which in the field of computer science designates a person who develops or designs software. In student jargon, the concept of "*développeur*" is used to emphasize someone´s creativity and innovation capacities. A "*développeu*r" is therefore a person who can design a new product or customize the design of an existing one.

Being a '*développeur*' has been presented by some interlocutors as a key means to efficiently take advantage of the business opportunities in China. As they explained, the classical export business in China is saturated and thus highly competitive. Therefore, the only condition to survive is to innovate, i.e. to design a product which cannot be found in shops in China. Most '*développeurs*' had created their own brand for their products which were mostly clothing items and mobile phone accessories.

Among the '*développeur*' was Brado, a master´s student in computer science. In his late twenties, he lived in a room in a luxurious building, the rent of which was three times higher then the university student accommodation that he quitted for discretion reasons. For our first encounter, he took me to a Cameroonian bar and restaurant in the neighborhoods of Xiaobei.

Brado ordered a bottle of whisky and we drank while discussing about his studies and business. At one point in the conversation, Brado took out a piece of paper from his backpack and asked me for a pen. He started drawing on the paper. Initially, I could not guess what it was all about but as the drawing evolved, I realized that it was men's shoes. When he finished drawing, he took some time to scan the drawing, and adjusted some parts before keeping it back in his backpack. When I asked Brado about the drawing, he answered that it was a shoe that he intended to design. A few days later, Brado took me to his shops in one of the shopping areas in Guangzhou. On our way, we visited several shops and he constantly took pictures of shoes with his mobile phone.

The store was medium in size and had two floors. The first one contained a desk with a computer and shelves on which women shoes branded "*Nouvelle Tendance*"[47] (NT in the shortened form) were displayed. The second floor served as storehouse which I discovered as I visited the toilet upstairs. The storehouse was full of cardboard boxes marked "*Nouvelle Tendance*". A few minutes after we entered the shop, he made a phone call in Chinese to order food and drinks for us. The girl who brought the food to us was one of his two Chinese employees, as Brado explained to me.

I initiated a conversation with Brado on his business activities in China. He had arrived in China in 2012 and quickly engaged in business. Initially, he was specialized in hair extensions and shoes which he exported to Paris where he had a relative. As the competition increased in the hair business, he totally switched to shoes and specialized in women´s shoes under his own brand: *Nouvelle Tendance*. His main target was the Cameroonian market. As he was accustomed to the competition in the Cameroonian fashion sector, Brado decided to design his own shoes. This proved efficient and his business grew very fast. He explained the key to his successful entrepreneurship as followed:

> My business grew because I was financially supported by my aunt in Paris. My personal contribution was only intellectual (…). I used my Chinese language skills to search for a shoe manufacturing company to sign a business contract with. I would acknowledge that this contract was a great asset: I could put down a small deposit and place a big order. […]. Everything here in China is about trust, which is something very hard to get as Chinese hardly trust Africans. […]. I guess I managed to get a business partner because I had support from some Chinese friends who already trusted me […]. But the money and the contract with the factory are not enough to be successful. The products you propose

[47] This can be translated as " New Fashion" or " New trend in fashion "

to customers is a highly competitive market in Cameroon. This is why I chose to design my own shoes, rather than merely buying Chinese ready-made products. I am the one who designs all the shoes I sell. I draw inspiration from shoes I see in shops and on the internet to come up with an original design of shoes using a software. I only sent the drawing to the factory with recommendations on the material and colors. The factory then produces samples for approval before mass production. This makes my product original, and you can only find it in my shop in Cameroon. Other traders in Cameroon would take my product to China to be copied. As I am aware of that, I start designing a new product as soon as I have put the product on the market; I do not produce the same shoes twice. This is the only way to remain competitive." (Interview with Brado, March 2015, translated from French).

The first element to highlight concerning Brado´s capacities as a '*developpeur*' is his designing skills which permits him to continuously innovate on his products. In Cameroon, Brado had a store in one of the biggest commercial avenues in Douala, the economic capital of the country. The shop was ran by two employees and the products are sold wholesale. For management, Brado designed an accounting software through which he controls the stock while being in China. During one of our conversations in 2016, Brado was planning to expand his business to other fashion domains, especially men's clothing.

Just like Brado there were many other students who created a brand under which they designed and sold products.

5.2.2 Academic Motivations: Escaping 'Academic Misery' in Cameroon

Like Dani, there were students whose decision to migrate to China was motivated by a desire to further education in a specific domain. The majority of these students only migrated to China because they faced structural, infrastructural and management challenges in Cameroon.

A student in Guangzhou used the expression 'academic misery' to explain the increasing number of Cameroonian university students pursuing higher education in China. By 'academic misery' the research participant referred to the learning conditions within higher education institutions in Cameroon (as discussed in chapter 4) especially at the University of Yaoundé 1 from where he graduated. He listed crowded classrooms, poorly equipped laboratories as characteristic of the university environment in Cameroon. In his opinion, these factors are highly influential in the choice of Cameroonian university students to pursue their education in China. From my personal experience, calls for the improvement of the conditions for studying have always been at the core of the "striking number of students´ strikes" (Nyamnjoh et al 2012:

1) which Cameroon´s universities have witnessed in the past. As the previous chapter has outlined, the situation of 'academic misery' is the consequence of the long-lasting structural and economic crisis (Mimche et al 2016; Djouda Feudjio 2009; Makosso et al 2009), the structural adjustment policies and the withdrawal of state support for higher education (Nyamnjoh et al 2012; Gaillard et al 2013; Gaillard and Khelfaoui 2000; Guaillard and Zink 2009) which has led Cameroon, likewise many sub-Saharan African countries, to a situation of impasse in universities (Bredeloup 2014). As a result of such a university environment, doing research in a certain field is very complex as indicated in Chapter 4.

Beyond the unavailability of learning facilities, there are many other challenges raised by the research participants which could be seen as contributing to the 'academic misery'. These include structural and management problems such as a limited academic offer within higher education institutions in Cameroon. This situation often triggers migration intentions like in the case of Dani and many other students particularly interested in technical subjects such as computer science, mechanical engineering, petroleum engineering.

Some students decided to migrate to China because they were affected by a management problem which is known within student populations in Cameroon as 'mark trafficking'. The expression is quite popular among the student population in Cameroon and is known as one of the major management problems of Cameroonian universities[48]. Mark trafficking is used to refer to grade-related issues upon the publication of exam results. The phenomenon includes, among others, one´s name missing on the list of exam results, having one´s name on the list without a mark attributed to it, having a grade different from what one´s test sheet shows, etc. In such situations, students are required to submit a request to the university administration explaining and supporting their problem with justification documents. However, submitting a request does not necessarily lead to resolving the problems. There were research participants who submitted several requests for the same problem without having a positive result. As a matter of fact, many students quitted university because they repeatedly experienced one of the variants of 'marks trafficking'.

It is important to note that for the majority of these students, going to China on a CI scholarship led to another frustration related to the choice of the major subject within Chinese

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[48] A media report on the issue of 'mark trafficking' within Cameroonian universities is available at http://www.excelafrica.com/fr/2013/01/22/cameroun-leternel-probleme-du-trafic-des-notes-dans-les-universites-camerounaises/ . Last accessed August 2018.

universities. As indicated earlier, students who are awarded CI grants are bound to study Chinese language and culture. Yet, in most cases, unlike Claudia who was studying languages in Cameroon, the others studied Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and envisaged continuing in the same subjects in China with their CI grants. It is only in China that they noticed that they were limited in terms of their field of studies. Consequently, they ended up studying the Chinese language unwillingly.

During field work in China, I met medical students whose presence in China was the consequence of a structural decision taken by the Cameroon Minister of Higher Education to regulate the medical training in Cameroon. Consecutively to persisting rumors on the existence of illegal medical schools across the country, an institutional control had been launched to assess the legal and technical conformity of the existing medical training institutions. It revealed that fifteen institutions had been declared illegal, and consequently had been banned from training medical doctors in Cameroon and closed down[49]. Some of these schools had existed for three years already before the control, which means that some students were in their third year of their training. Students affected by the decision had to seek for alternatives and China came up as one. Two factors influenced the choice of China: the flexibility (for example students who had already studied for two years in Cameroon had the possibility to register at the third level), and the affordability of the training and living costs in China. All these students went to China through a migration brokerage agent in Cameroon.

5.2.3   Scholarship as a Means to Earn a Living

In terms of migratory projects, Cameroonian students in China can be grouped into two categories. The first is constituted of those who had the ambition to leave Cameroon and, at some point in time, started the procedure for obtaining a visa to their chosen country. Students in this group are mostly self-sponsored. The second group includes those who had never imagined their life out of Cameroon for study purposes. These were mainly Chinese government and Confucius Institute scholarship holders. They only decided to migrate to China because the scholarship opportunity turned up. I use the expression 'turn up' because most of these students did not actively search for the scholarship. From my conversations with students

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[49]Further details on the closing down of medical schools in Cameroon at
http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20131115102349836. Last accessed August 2018.

on Chinese government grants, it was frequently the case that the scholarship was proposed to them by a relative working at the Ministry of Higher Education or a university administration in Cameroon. However, the case of students on a Confucius Institute grant is more complex. Some registered at the CI to learn Chinese in order to offer themselves a chance to get a job within a Chinese company and, while there, learned about the possibility to receive a grant for their studies in China. In all cases, what was interesting were the motivations of these students to accept or apply for the scholarships. While some emphasized the reputation of Chinese universities and the good quality of higher education offered, others viewed the scholarship, especially the monthly allowance as a salary, used to fulfill social duties. Thus, the scholarship represents a valuable solution to unemployment. The case of Marvin provided above is an illustration. It should be noted that even the students who did not present the scholarship as a source of income, sent part of their monthly allowance to support their family in Cameroon. However, this practice varies considerably according to students´ family backgrounds which in turn reflect the types of scholarship they had.

5.3   Classification and Social Background of Cameroonian Students in China

The stories of Marvin, Clement and Dani also suggest that students' migration motivations and pathways in China is highly influenced by their social backgrounds. In terms of social backgrounds, Cameroonian students in China can be grouped into two main categories: The politically and economically privileged and the politically marginalized. For a good understanding of the difference between the two groups, it is worthwhile alluding to the work of Pelican (2012) on regional disparities in local discourses and imaginaries of mobility among youths in Bamenda and Yaoundé in Cameroon. The author argues that the difference between youths of the two regions lies in their "differential power" which plays a crucial role in shaping their perspective of international migration. Her findings suggest that for the politically and economically well-placed youths in Yaoundé, the "perspective on international migration as an alternative to making a living in Cameroon is shaped more by the presence than by the absence of opportunities" (Pelican 2012: 11). Subsequently, for them "mobility is a matter of choice, as they enjoy the privilege of a future at home" (ibid: 15).

Yet, by contrast, many Anglophones, as they are convinced that they are politically marginalized "look to international migration as an alternative, as they perceive no valid future within their country" (ibid: 6). This distinction applies to the Cameroonian student community in China. The group of economically and politically privileged students is dominated by

Chinese government scholarship holders and a few self-sponsored-students. Linguistically, there are more Francophone students in this category, especially among scholarship holders. The politically marginalized students are mostly those on CI scholarships and the majority of self-financed students (to which belong the great majority of Anglophone students in the cities I visited). As the categorization bellow shall suggest, physical mobility is an option for the privileged students while the marginalized are forced to look for alternatives abroad. The classification below draws on my personal observations and the differentiation suggested by the research participants in China when asked to categorize Cameroonian students in China.

5.3.1 Scholarship Holders

This category is very diverse as it draws on the types of scholarship opportunities available in China for Cameroonian students (see Chapter 4). It is also important to remember that the difference between scholarships lie in the application procedures, especially the institutions involved in the selection of students. Field data suggest that, to a large extent, the kind of scholarship a student has mirrors her/his social background which in turn helps understand his/her motivation to migrate to China. It appears from the narratives of the research participants that not everybody can get any kind of scholarship and that the application for some scholarships is not necessarily an open competition but rather a matter of social capital.

5.3.1.1 Confucius Institute Scholarship Holders: The Underprivileged

During my preliminary field stay in China in 2015, my first days in the city of Jinhua were devoted to discussion with the university staff members and researchers. One of them was Shuquing Zhou from the Center for African Economic Studies. Shuquing Zhou had lived in Cameroon for two years, during which he taught the Chinese language at the Confucius Institute in Yaoundé and Maroua. Alongside teaching, Shuquing Zhou also carried out research for a Cameroon-based Chinese company in the northern part of the country. In the interview we addressed China-Africa relations from the educational perspective, namely China´s scholarship schemes. From his perspective, the difference between the types of scholarships offered by China to Cameroonian students lies in the institutions involved in the management of the grants in Cameroon on the one hand and the social backgrounds of the grantees on the other hand. Shuquing Zhou argued that students on Chinese government scholarships (selected by the Ministry of Higher Education of Cameroon) are usually from the elite class, while students on the CI grants (selected by the Confucius Institute in Cameroon) are from a lower class

background. Therefore, from his explanations, CI scholarships appear as a means to restore a sort of social justice:

> "CI just opens a window for lower-class students. These students are not very rich. Their parents are not higher officials in the government. They have no background. So, these are just very very [emphasis added by the interviewee] ordinary people. The only condition is to take Chinese language courses and pass the HSK. He or she can then apply for a scholarship to go to China. It [CI scholarship] is a tool for the poor to change their lives. (…) China leaves the responsibilities to the Cameroon government to distribute the scholarships but it seems to me that these students have rich parents [laugh]; you know what I am talking about. For the CI scholarships, if you have nobody, you are just a student and want to study Chinese, your parents are just businessmen or have no money, if you pass HSK level three and you are willing to apply for a scholarship, you might be granted one." (Interview with Shuquing Zhou, Jinhua, April 2015).

My interviews and conversations with Cameroonian students in Jinhua during fieldwork proved Shuquing Zhou right. Except for a few, the twenty-six research participants who arrived in China on CI grants where from modest family backgrounds. Their parents are farmers, traders, civil servants (high school teachers, policemen), retirees, etc. The large majority of CI scholarship holders had applied for the grant while learning the Chinese language at the CI in Cameroon. Generally speaking, the reason for taking Chinese language classes was twofold: a job prospective within a Chinese company in Cameroon and applying for a scholarship to study in China. Students on a CI scholarship are usually university drop-outs or graduates who did not have employment prospects in Cameroon.

5.3.1.2 Cooperation Scholarship Holders

An important reminder is that, as indicated earlier, the selection of students for cooperation scholarships is made by the Cameroon government through the Ministry of Higher Education. My research sample included 19 students on a cooperation scholarship. Within Cameroonian student communities in China, there is a wide range of adjectives and expressions used by self-sponsored students and CI scholarship holders to refer to the fellows on cooperation scholarships. These include among others: *les fils de* (the sons of), *les forts* (the powerful), *pas n´importe qui* (not just anybody), *ceux qui ont le réseau* (those who have connections), *ceux qui ont le pays* (those who own the country). The underlying assumption of these expressions is that only the children and relatives of the administrative and political elites can be granted the cooperation scholarships. In other words, for the research participants, it was almost unthinkable to get a scholarship on the sole basis of the assessment of one´s application.

This view is certainly not intrinsically true. There were students from poor family backgrounds on cooperation scholarships [50]. However, these cases appeared to be exceptions. The interviews and observations from the field suggest that cooperation scholarship holders are mostly either from privileged family backgrounds or possess, to borrow from Bourdieu (1986), a certain volume of social capital resulting from kinship ties, membership in a group or network of connections (often political). Overall, cooperation scholarships appear as a political resource of which the distribution is very subjective, especially in a Cameroonian context where "conservative tribalism" (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998), and "closure and exclusion" (Bayart 1979) exist.

5.3.1.3   China Scholarship Council Scholarship Holders

Among the students who participated in the research in China, twelve were on CSC scholarships of which ten had obtained the scholarships from Cameroon and two while in China. From the ten who received their scholarship from Cameroon, nine were related to the University of Yaoundé 1, either as employees or as students (former or current by the time of application). Employees were teachers (three) at the Higher Teacher Training School of Yaoundé (which is under the administrative control of the University of Yaoundé 1) or administrative staff (2) of the University of Yaoundé 1. These employees had been sent by the university in the framework of its cooperation with Zhejiang Normal University. To apply for the scholarship, the candidates needed a recommendation from their employers. Students on this specific scholarship were either graduates from, or students at the University of Yaoundé 1. They had learned about the scholarship opportunity through their migration network in China and applied directly to the China Scholarship Council.

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[50] In principle, the issue of social belonging of the research participants is very delicate and complex, as one might deliberately hide or overstate his or her family backgrounds. However, during the interview, it was possible to have a relatively clear idea of the informants´ social background. The first open-ended question I always asked research participants was about the decision-making processes regarding moving to China for their studies. Their description usually provided indications of their social background. More so, it is important to highlight that there is a tendency among Cameroonians to disclose one´s social background or social capital, viewed as *pas 'n´importe qui*' or someone '*qui a le réseau*'. Being seen or known as such is associated with prestige and supposedly confers respect from one's peers.

5.3.2   Self-sponsored Students

Self-sponsored students constituted the largest group amongst the Cameroonian student population in China. In terms of social backgrounds, they can be grouped into two sub-groups: students from business families and ordinary Cameroonians.

5.3.2.1   Students from Business Families

This group includes sons, daughters and relatives of businesspersons in Cameroon. In most cases their choice of China as a migration destination had been highly influenced by their parents and relatives, mostly from the business class in Cameroon. These parents and relatives had business contacts (or were planning to do so) with China and some were already travelling back and forth between Cameroun and China for their trade activities. Alan, a master´s student in the city of Jinhua recounted the following:

> "My initial destination was Italy. My father and I decided that after high school I will do training in woodworking and Italy is the most suitable place. But, surprisingly, my father suddenly changed the destination and suggested China. I did not take it very seriously but he managed to convince me that it was possible to do the same training in China. I finally changed my mind and came to China. I chose Jinhua because my cousin was already here. Once in China I realized that the university does not train in woodworking. I then informed my father about the situation and he told me to choose another subject. That is how I found myself studying Transport and Logistics. But with time I understood my father´s decision. Since I am here, he travels less frequently to China. He only comes here now for issues that I cannot handle. Otherwise, I do almost everything. I place orders, make payments, control the quality of the goods and supervise the loading. When he is in China, I am with him everywhere he goes because he does not speak Chinese." (Interview with Alan, Jinhua, April 2015 translated from French).

For students like Alan, assisting their parents implies being absent from the university regardless of the university regulations on class attendance. However, as some of the students indicate, their universities are often aware of their parents' activities and therefore grant them leave.

5.3.2.2   The Ordinary Cameroonians

Students from this category are dominant in the research sample. I do not use the term ordinary as synonymous with being from a poor family background. The term is rather used to distinguish between students from well-known business families in Cameroon and those who

simply view migration as a "survival strategy" (Mimche 2016), be it socially and/or academically.

Globally, my conversations with the majority of the research participants, regardless their financial status, suggest that their final decision to move to China has been influenced by their perception of China as a world economic power. Their depictions include sentences such as: "China is becoming a superpower", "China is now the world's best economy", "China is the future", "there are more and more Chinese companies in Cameroon", and "China is ruling the world"; or "China is the second, if not the first economic power", "we are talking about the second world superpower", "the Chinese language will soon dominate the world". In these depiction, the emphasis was not on the relationship between the economic growth of China and the quality of its higher education but, on China's position as a new land of economic opportunities (see chapter 7).

5.4   Studies or *Bush Falling*

For a good understanding of students´ narratives on their migration motivations and specifically their choice of China as presented above, it is important to situate student migration in the general context of international migration from Cameroon.

5.4.1   Situating Student Migration in the General Context of International Migration from Cameroon

In fact, the real sense of students' narratives and representations of China as a hub of opportunities can be found within the economic context. From the 1990s onward, Cameroon has continuously been faced with a persistent economic downturn and uncertainties (Nyamnjoh 2011, Geschiere and Konings 1993; Koning 1996; Monga 1995). This social and economic setting has fabricated disenchanted Cameroonian youths who live in permanent quest of a means and strategy of attaining success (Pelican 2013, 2014, Pelican and Tatah 2009; Ndjio 2008; Manga 2012; Ela 1994). The strategies they have developed to escape deprivation, poverty and abjection include, among others, *feymania*[51] (con artistry), football and music

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[51] *Feymania* refers to criminal activities which consist of "making a fortune through large-scale fraudulence, cons and scam such as money-doubling and pretended investment" (Pelican 2013: 244; see also Malaquais 2001; Manga 2012; Ndjio 2008).

playing, as well as international migration (Lendja Ngnemzue 2016, 2010; Mimche et al 2016; Pelican 2013; Pelican and Tatah 2009; Alpes 2011, 2016; Ndjio 2008; Nyamnjoh 2011).

In Cameroon, there is a specific vocabulary of international migration, specifically migration to Western countries. This vocabulary expresses and qualifies either the fact of moving per se, location or persons who have migrated. The vocabulary of international migration varies according to geographical and linguistic specificities of Cameroon. In the Francophone milieu, travelling abroad is referred to as *voyager* (to travel), *aller au front* (to go to the battlefield), *aller se battre* (to go fighting), "*aller en aventure* (to go on an adventure), *aller se chercher* (to go and make ends meet). These terms are mostly borrowed from military jargon to "refer to the challenges and dangers which migrants may encounter as well as the audacity and vigor required for being successful abroad" (Pelican 2013: 246). More generally, they refer to the risk, courage and determination that migration entails. *Mbeng* is the term that was initially used in Cameroon to refer to Douala, the economic city of Cameroon but has later come to stand for international migrations (Atekmangoh 2017). The establishment of industries in Douala created job opportunities which thus made the city a major destination for Cameroonians from rural areas "in search of greener pastures". With the emergence of transitional migration, *mbeng* was used to designate Paris, which was the most popular destination for Cameroonians. However, in the current day, the term is used with reference to foreign countries associated with wealth accumulation possibilities, both in the global North and global South. In the francophone terminology, people who have managed to migrate are called *voyageur* or *mbenguiste*. A *mbenguiste* can be *vrai* (real) or *faux* (fake) depending on the level of demonstrating their belonging and success namely through financial investment, support for relatives and displays of the latest consumer good and hard currency during visits at home (also see Nyamnjoh 2011 and Pelican 2013).

In the Anglophone vocabulary, traveling abroad is referred to as *to go bush* or to *fall bush* and the generic term used to denote transnational migration is *bush falling*. An international migrant is then called *bush faller*. Etymologically, the concept of *bush* has two connotations (see Alpes 2011; Nyamnjoh 2011; Pelican 2013; Pelican and Tatah 2009,). The first refers to the bush as characterized by the wilderness and backwardness -*black bush*- while the second associates bush with enrichment possibilities and opportunities -*white bush*- (Pelican 2013: 242). While the *black bush* is used to refer to forests in African villages, the *white bush* designates the foreign world, initially in the US and European countries and currently Asian states like China, Japan, India, to name just a few.

In both perspectives, *bush falling* implies going hunting and bringing back the trophies. The term *bush falling* under which international migration is envisioned simply means "seeking game and farmland [in] foreign lands as local hunting grounds and farmlands are depleted or simply mismanaged" (Nyamnjoh 2011: 705). In this sense, *bushfallers* are those who leave Cameroon in search of opportunities to make it. Unlike the first generation of Cameroonians (labeled as *America wanda* or *been to*) who up to the 1980s migrated to the US and Europe mainly to study, *bush fallers* are "in search of better circumstances [and] education is not always their priority. Their priority is making money [and they] will stop at nothing to pursue their goal […]" (Nyamnjoh 2011: 704). Making money is a means to enhance one´s social visibility in Cameroon where long-lasting economic crisis has severely narrowed the job market, hence considerably diminishing chances of social mobility. *Bush falling* as a social phenomenon is therefore a response to the youth´s social effacement in Cameroon.

An important aspect in the research on the Cameroonian perspective is, to borrow from Alpes (2011), about how "young Cameroonians dare to migrate". It is about the strategies to which potential immigration candidates resort in order to secure their visa to the *bush*. Those strategies, which are often legal but sometimes also illegal (Alpes 2011; Atekmangoh 2017), include: applications for asylum, conferences and seminars, marriages of convenience, tourism, sports competitions. The literature also suggests that enrolment at a foreign university has become the fastest means of securing a visa (Alpes 2011; Atekmangoh 2017; Mimche and Kamdem 2016; Şaul and Pelican 2014; Tardif Lonkong 2013). Even though this strategy was initially used for the so-called traditional destinations, mostly in the global North, China has recently emerged as a major destination for Cameroonians applying for study visas.

5.4.2   Travelling to China as an Alternative to Social Immobility at Home

In their narratives, the research participants in China tended to differentiate 'bogus' from 'real' students. Jude for instance, a student from the city of Wuhan distinguishes between "les *étudiants qui sont sortis pour sortir*" that is, the students who left Cameroon just for the sake of going abroad and "*les étudiants sortis pour apprendre*", the students who travelled to China to further their education. According to Jude, the difference between the two categories lies in their efforts towards finding solutions to their learning challenges. For the first category of students, it is very easy to give up on their studies when faced with the smallest difficulty whereas the second category of students are more inclined to explore alternative solutions. To overcome the Chinese language challenge, Jude mentioned, for instance, the possibility of

downloading non-Chinese books and articles from free websites, or investing part of the monthly stipend on online training courses to complement the knowledge received in class. In Jude's opinion, the priority for the majority of Cameroonian students in China, regardless of their financial status (scholarship holders or self-sponsored), is not to earn a degree. They rather migrate to China to 'escape misery' in Cameroon. Jude, a Master's student who has also been a leader of the Cameroonian student association in China argued:

> "Globally speaking, young Cameroonians are here because they want to escape misery in their country (…). Even those who apply for scholarships want to earn a bit of money in China. After all, they can make some money because, as they receive 3000RMB every month, they can save 1000 RMB. At the end of their four years they will have quite something. So, guys leave the country [Cameroon] with the idea of *aller au front* [to go into battle]. Even though the reason given for coming to China might be to study, it is primarily with the prospect of making a living that they undertake the journey. Thus, the studies are simply a strategy in attaining this goal. This means that in case the students cannot make it through their studies, they will turn to something else. In other words, rather than being a rush for a degree or a desire for knowledge, the students are more interested in how to make money because they know that even if they earn a degree in China and return to Cameroon, they have only a fifteen to twenty percent chance of getting a job. With this mindset, priority is not given to studying, especially if the universities they attend are not strict on class attendance. They do not come to China to acquire knowledge and return to contribute to the development of their country. Maybe, at the most, ten percent think differently [returning to Cameroon after graduation]. Most of them want to stay in China and earn some money. Maybe a sensitization could help but it is quite hard to sensitize people who already have their own vision of life. Many students have finished their studies but have not returned. They rather stay and engage in small business. I do not know how they renew their visa but they have become entrepreneurs, buying things like hair and other gadgets to send to Cameroon. They also buy goods for business people in Cameroon. Maybe the Cameroonian government should just improve the business environment in Cameroon so as to encourage them to become fully-fledged business people" (Phone conversation with Jude, December 2017, translated from French).

Jude's remarks corroborate with Alpes' (2011) finding that Cameroonian students travel for "studying and hustling" which means "to try and be ready to do any kind of work" (Alpes 2011:11). However, even though studying and hustling are not necessarily mutually exclusive, it transpires from Jude's observation that for the majority of Cameroonian students it would be preferable to sacrifice one´s studies to the benefit of money-making initiatives, and not the reverse. This option, which to an extent can serve as an explanation to the limited efforts

invested in overcoming the academic adaption challenges they face (see Chapter 8), is rather a pragmatic choice.

In fact, being aware that the job market in Cameroon obliges university graduates "to defer their entry into adulthood indefinitely as they are unable to achieve economic independence" (Nyamnjoh et al 2012: 2), enrolling at Chinese universities for Cameroonians is embedded in broader migration projects of which the ultimate aim is to improve their chance toward financial (and thus social) security. There are many arguments, in addition to those mentioned earlier in this chapter, (namely in the section on students´ migration motivations) to make the case Among others, one can mention the risk-taking attitude featuring the majority of them (both self-sponsored and scholarship holders) in China, that is their eagerness to engage in lucrative activities, which in most cases is against the Chinese immigration laws (see Chapter 7). Besides paid jobs (which are discussed in chapter 7) most students were engaged in business activities.

5.4.2.1 Business-Studies Combination: A Common Practice

My observation of the use of social media suggests that the majority of the research participants were involved in business in one way or the other. It was an ethnic entrepreneurship wherein the business activities included buying goods and sending them to Cameroon for resale, selling Chinese products to fellow Cameroonians and other African nationals in China, selling Cameroonian products (foods and cosmetics) in China, money transfer, catering, hair dressing, and so on. It was common for students to advertise their products and services on student communication platforms in China (namely WeChat) and other social media such as Viber and foremost Facebook.

What was remarkable was that for the majority of students, engaging in business was rather an apprenticeship in the sense that many said they had never done business before their move to China. Two main factors influenced their engagement into business: awareness of low prices of Chinese goods and university frustrations. For some students, especially in Guangzhou and Jinhua, the turning point was the first visit to a commercial hub. This is the case of Caty, a female Cameroonian student in Guangzhou:

> "When I arrived here, I went shopping at Xiaobei. It was just for personal use. When I arrived there, I was struck by the price of items and I immediately started comparing with the prices at home [in Cameroon]. During shopping, I was taking photographs of items which I shared with some friends back home. They were interested in some of the products and sent money so that I can purchase and ship. By word of mouth, many other

people contacted me from Cameroon to order some goods. Progressively I built up a small capital and when my elder brother sent my school fees, I only paid half of it and invested the rest in hair and shoes that was sold in Cameroon by my sister. I currently shop for small business people in Cameroon and sometimes act as an intermediary for Cameroonian businesspersons who source up here in Guangzhou." (Interview with Caty, Guangzhou, March 2015, translated from French).

Some students discovered the low cost of Chinese products through online shopping while searching items for personal use. Anna, a CI scholarship holder at Zhejiang Normal University said:

"I got interested in business when I discovered *Taobao*[52] (…) It is hard for us [African girls] to find our big size of clothing in shops here in Jinhua. The only alternative is online shopping and on *Taobao* I found so many varieties of products at a very cheap price. As the university paid our scholarship for two months [at once], I bought some goods like hand bags, shoes, clothes and sent them to Cameroon. That is how I started and I am now thinking of how to increase my capital and to invest more." (Conversation Jinhua, July 2016, translated from French).

During my stay in Jinhua, I noticed that students frequently visited the numerous on-campus package shops (on the university campus) to collect items ordered online. In many cases, the products were meant not just for personal consumption but also for shipping to Cameroon for marketing. The goods included among others, mobile phones, hard drives, USB sticks, cosmetics and clothes.

Some students emphasized that their idea to engage in economic activities (business or paid job) only took shape when they came to realize that their academic expectation could not be fulfilled. During my visit at the Cameroon embassy in Beijing in August 2016, I met a student from the city of Shenyang (Liaoning Province of China) who came to collect his new passport. He told me that in his city he was working in the night club as a promotor[53]. As we were talking about living expenses in China, I asked him whether students in his city were allowed to work, and he commented:

"It was forbidden but I do not have any choice because one should not leave China with empty hands (…). For us here in China, there is nothing to expect in terms of training because of language. Language problems constitute a huge obstacle here in China. Honestly, there is no way to get a solid training. So if you cannot achieve your academic

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[52] Taobao is the biggest Chinese online shopping website.

[53] "Promoting" in a popular student job in China. Promotors are foreign students hired by night clubs and assigned the task of bringing in not only African students but other foreign nationalities. A promotor is a popular person with a consistent network of friendship progressively built and maintained through social media, which constitute their essential working tool. They announce parties and advertise the clubs employing them on social media.

goal, you should at least earn some money. Otherwise there is no point staying in China, unless you have time to waste. What matters now is how to make money" (conversation Carlos, Beijing, August 2016, translated from French).

The foregoing corroborates previous research on African students in China. For instance, Haugen observes that many African students in Jinhua and Guangzhou engage in business activities at the expense of their university training. She further argues that "the decision arose from a combination of readily available opportunities and a desire to compensate for disappointments with the quality of education." (Haugen 2013: 14). The disappointment results from language difficulties as well as the teaching quality which was reported low in comparison with education in the West and even in some African countries. However, while students´ complaints and frustration with regard to the quality of education might be well-grounded, they need to be analyzed in more detail. I argue that to some extent, the learning difficulties that can lead to disappointment and discouragement (and hence engagement in business) depend on individuals´ efforts toward adaptation to the new university environment. This in turn informs the importance granted to knowledge acquisition in students' migratory projects.

5.4.2.2   The Improbable Return

Another illustration to the fact that migration to China is viewed as an alternative to social immobility in Cameroon is what I would term the improbable return. Chapter 6, for instance, documents the case of a group of students whose CI grants were cancelled but who remained in China without any guarantee of sustainable financial support from their respective families. The improbable return also means that most Cameroonian students, including scholarship holders, tend to leave China by force rather than by choice. The foregoing depiction does not only apply to Cameroonians studying in China but, to a large extent, I would argue that this holds true also for Cameroonian students in other parts of the world. The migration rationales and priorities only evolve according to structural factors (immigration laws, labor market or career prospect) in the host countries.

This chapter has shown that migration motivations vary considerably from one student to another. The difference lies in the priority every student grants to either acquiring knowledge, earning money through a paid job, or taking advantage of the business opportunities available in China. However, a migratory project is not fixed or predetermined but rather permanently under construction. Priority can shift from studying to business, or a business dimension can be

included into a project that was initially for study exclusively, and vice versa. The main objective of this chapter was to compare the perception and expectation of study stay in China by the Cameroonian government and students. The chapter has shown that the categories of actors have divergent and sometimes conflicting expectations. While the Cameroonian view student migration as a means to learn from China, the priority of the majority of the students is not necessarily on acquiring knowledge and returning to Cameroon. In most cases, they are in China to take advantage of envisaged business and job opportunities associated with the economic development of China. Therefore, the expectation of the Cameroonian government to transfer Chinese knowledge and know-how to Cameroon through student migration is practically an illusion.

Chapter Six: Management of International Students as a Migrant Category in China

"We'll be influenced by our time here, but that does not mean we'll be totally in favour of them (…). It's not like a father and child". (Saleh, a Chinese government scholarship holder from Tanzania, cited by Allison (2013)[54]

The previous three chapters have specifically discussed the motivations and expectations of the different stakeholders involved in student migration from Cameroon to China: The Cameroonian government, the Chinese government and the Cameroonian students. For the Chinese government, the goal pursued through its generous scholarship scheme and favorable student visa requirement is to win the hearts and minds of African students. In other words, student mobility is used as a soft power strategy. The aim of this thesis is to assess the effectiveness of student recruitment as China's soft power strategy. As argued in the introductory chapter, students can only develop a preference for China if they have a satisfactory stay-abroad experience. This implies that the effectiveness of student recruitment as a soft power mechanism depends on student satisfaction, which in turn leads to the development of "a sense of giving something back" (Hart 2017). The study-abroad experience is influenced by several elements including social interactions between local and foreign students, the quality of education, the nationals' attitude towards immigrants in the host country, the availability of job opportunities, the health system, the visa/immigration policy, the nature of the relationship with university staff, the accommodation and the support from the international students' office, etc. (Elliott and Shin 2002; Atkinson 2010; Haugen 2013; Lam 2007; Altbach and Peterson 2008; Verbik and Lasanowski 2007; Campus France 2017). Chapters Six, Seven and Eight aim at evaluating the level of satisfaction among Cameroonian students in China following three aspects: the management of foreign students (student jobs, accommodation systems, visa renewal issues), social interaction and the quality of education.

This chapter discusses the management of foreign students in China in connection with the issue of student satisfaction and thus, the attractiveness of China as a study country. The focus is on management practices which from the interviews and informal conversations with Cameroonian students in China appear as influential in their perception of China. I discuss the

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[54]Allison, 2013. Fixing China's image in Africa, one student at a time. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/31/china-africa-students-scholarship-programme. Last accessed, December 2017.

management of foreign students from two perspectives: university regulations and immigration laws. The chapter argues that university regulations and immigration laws in China negatively impact the overall experience of Cameroonian students and, consequently, constitute an obstacle to the attractiveness of China. The approach of the chapter consists of examining university regulations and immigration laws (from the least to the most important, following students' narratives), followed by students' emic perspectives and how they make sense of their experience.

It should be underlined that the regulations in question are explained in the international student handbook that universities usually make available to the students. My observations from the field suggest that Cameroonian students in their majority do not read the handbook and consequently ignore the terms of the regulations and other useful information. As a result of this attitude which can be interpreted in part as a lack of self-reliance, students ignore their rights and duties and consequently, formulate unrealistic expectations which necessarily lead to frustration. This implies that some problems Cameroonian students face in China are not only caused by the Chinese administrative system but also by their own negligence.

6.1   University Regulations

In their narratives about student life, my interlocutors mentioned several aspects of university regulations. The most important were those applied to university accommodation, scholarship management and the healthcare system.

6.1.1   Living in university Accommodation in China: Coping with the Rules

My conversations with Cameroonian students in China suggest that student accommodation is an important aspect of their life in China, as it is imbedded in university regulations. Accommodation rules towards foreign students in China vary between universities. Generally speaking, the Confucius Institute and Chinese government scholarship holders are offered free accommodation in university hostels which are located on the university campus. This simply means that they are bound to living on campus grounds. Some universities allow scholarship students to live in private accommodation (and pay this from their own pocket) but these are exceptions. In the university hostels, undergraduate and graduate students are usually accommodated in shared rooms while doctoral students are entitled to a single room depending however, on the hosting capacities of the university. I visited a PhD student in the city of Guangzhou who lived in a shared room.

As far as self-sponsored students are concerned, universities also apply different policies, mostly depending on their hosting capacities. From my observations, the common practice is that universities with sufficient hosting capacities tend to impose their rooms on self-paying students. In this case, living on-campus becomes mandatory and constitutes part of the admission conditions. As a matter of fact, the accommodation fee is included in the tuition fees. There are also exceptions where universities allow self-sponsored students to live outside campus. This is the case at Zhejiang Normal University in Jinhua, for instance. However, students living off-campus must receive an authorization from the university by submitting their housing contract (with the contact of their landlords or land ladies. Upon submitting the contract, they receive the "Zhejiang Normal University Students off-Campus Accommodation Registration Form". This form is used for registration at the local police where students are issued a "Foreigner Accommodation Registration Certificate". As indicated earlier, rooms in university accommodations are usually shared. However, there are exceptions where universities either offer single rooms or offer the possibility to occupy a double bed room alone, as long as the students pays the rent for two. However, for economic reasons, students generally prefer to live in shared rooms, even though they find it very inconvenient.

Cameroonian students in general highly appreciated the fact that they never experienced power cuts and water suspension in China, compared to Cameroon where the phenomena are very common (see Chapter Seven). However, many students living in university hostels unanimously complained about the restrictions to which they are subjected. The restrictions concern visits and mobility. In almost every university I visited in China, visitors cannot enter freely but are required to register at the reception of the hostel and submit an identification document, such as a student card or passport. The registration sheet contains information, such as the visitors´ identity, telephone numbers, the room they are heading to and, the starting time of the visit. The last column of the form indicates the time the visitors leave the building and therefore should be filled out when collecting their identification documents at the end of the visit. It is forbidden for students to host a visitor for the night. At closing time, the receptionist might knock on the doors of the students who still have visitors in their rooms.

The following conversation with Prince, a self-sponsored student in his mid-twenties in Hangzhou, illustrates the concern of the research participants regarding the rules:

"(…) you are an adult but do not have either privacy nor the freedom to come back anytime you want. You are not afraid that the *shushu [*叔叔] [55] would close the dormitory. It is really like being in prison when you live in the university dormitory. You have to be back at a certain time, otherwise you will not get in. You are not allowed to host someone. The *ayi* [阿姨][56] are always around and watch people's movements. Even a simple visit is a problem, there is just too much protocol or formality for visitors (…) and, funny enough, you pay a lot of money. They treat us like children". The only way to live freely is to be in a private accommodation" (Conversation with Prince, Hangzhou April 2015, translated from French).

In China, Chinese male and female students are hosted in separate buildings and visits are prohibited (see Chapter 7). Although this rule does not generally apply to foreign students (as they are accommodated in the same building regardless their gender), there are exceptions. Students from the city of Jiujiang, for instance, told me that female and male students are hosted in separate accommodations and are not authorized to visit each other.

Another issue raised by the majority of Cameroonians was the restriction of their mobility. In general, rules for accommodation in university hostels in China define closing and opening hours. At Zhejiang Normal University, for instance, the international student dormitory closes at 11pm from Sunday to Thursday, and at midnight on Friday and Saturday. According to the International Students Handbook, students who "intend to go out of the campus should notify in advance their head teacher and apartment management". Doors are opened daily at 6 am. In some cases, the gate is closed while the door to the building remains open. In this case, those who come back late muss climb over the fence as illustrates the photograph below which was taken in the city of Guangzhou in front of a hostel where a friend (a PhD student) offered to host me for my three-day stay in the city. As I expressed my surprise while taking the photograph, he said: "We are going to do exactly the same thing. The gate closes at eleven pm and if you are outside, you will have to do this". He was explaining to me while climbing. "I go first and then you pass the suitcase to me", he continued. Once in his room on the seventh and last floor of a building without an elevator, he said: "You see how a PhD student is treated in China. Like a pupil in boarding schools. It is a real pain" (Conversation with Christopher, Guangzhou, July 2018, translated from French).

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[55] In the student milieu, gatekeepers of student dormitories are referred to as *shushu,* a term that in Chinese, as research participant explained to me, means uncle. The term is then used to show respect.

[56] A*yi* is the feminine equivalent to *shushu.* It means aunt and designates women working at the reception of the student dormitories.

Photograph 7: A student climbing over the fence of the university hostel. (Photo, Severin Kaji, China, July 2018)

All research participants considered living in the university as "being in prison", "losing one´s freedom", "being spied", and "infantilizing". No doubt that students compare the housing condition with the situation in Cameroon. In Cameroon, youths generally view their graduation from high school as the beginning of adulthood. Becoming a university student is associated with the end or at least the reduction of social control to which children and youths are exposed in their families. This is because in the majority of cases, students leave their family houses and rent a room (shared-rooms for undergraduates and single rooms for postgraduates) in the university hostel. There is no mobility restriction in university hostels. It is also common in Cameroon that roommates give space when visitors come (a girlfriend for example), which is known as 'shifting' or 'bouger' (in French) in student jargon. In view of the limited capacities of the university hostels, students often rent a room in a private accommodation in the neighborhood of the university. Depending on their purchasing power, some students prefer to

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share a room to reduce the rental cost. Flat mates in this case usually know each other and therefore, are flexible[57].

6.1.2   The Management of Scholarship Students

Universities are key actors in the scholarship schemes in China. Their role goes beyond training and includes the management of scholarships. For instance, regardless of the funding institutions (Confucius Institute, Chinese government, provincial government, etc.) the monthly allowance of scholarship holders is paid by their universities. Second, the decision to extend students' scholarships depends on the assessment of their academic performance which is carried out by the universities. Lastly, students are informed about updates concerning their scholarships (new requirements, scholarship cancellation, allowance suppression etc.) by their respective universities. The management of the scholarships by universities was one of the concerns raised by the research participants. The concern is specifically related to the payment of the monthly allowance and the requirement for the extension of the grant.

6.1.2.1   Monthly allowance

The payment of the monthly allowance by the universities to students is subjected to a number of conditions, including class attendance as described above, and what students called a confirmation of presence at school, which consists of signing up at the university within a certain time frame. At China University of Geosciences in Wuhan, for instance, students on Chinese government scholarships were required to submit their fingerprints between the 17th and the 25th of every month. During this time interval, as a research participant explained, an apparel for fingerprints is placed at the reception of the international student hostel. At Zhejiang Normal University, the payment of a monthly allowance is conditioned by the 'attendance confirmation', which the international student handbook describes as follows:

> "Full scholarship students are required to confirm their attendance during the third week of each month to the liaison teacher at the college. Those who are unable to confirm their attendance on time are required to notify the liaison teacher in advance. [Their] allowance for the next month will be suspended (but can be reclaimed the month after the next month

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[57] In Cameroon, some university students (undergraduates in most cases) live in their family home either for financial reasons or for social control. However, they have several strategies to escape social control including false lecture timetables.

when they have confirmed their attendance next month). Allowance will be cancelled for those who have failed to confirm their attendance on time without notifying their liaison teacher in advance". (International Students Handbook of Zhejiang Normal University 2016:28).

Furthermore, as the international student handbook also states, in case of leave (even approved by the university) lasting over half a month, the allowance for the month will be cancelled. More so, for those who take on an internship out of China, their monthly allowance is suspended for the duration of their stay abroad. However, they can reclaim the overdue allowances upon return to the university. This last measure was particularly criticized within the student community. At the time I was doing fieldwork, there was a student who had just come back from her internship in the United States. She contacted the university administration so that her overdue allowance could be paid. Initially, she was told that she was not allowed to go for an internship (see Chapter 9) and therefore had no right to forward reclamation. However, after a long-lasting argument with the university administration, she received the allowance but not the full amount.

This case was well known within the Cameroonian student group and research participants often used it to emphasize the weaknesses of the scholarship administration by this specific university. For instance, a student on a Chinese government scholarship commented: "I do not understand the Chinese meaning of scholarship. They are always like (…) living allowance will be suppressed in case of this or that. This is really blackmailing. It is even worse with Confucius Institute scholarships." (Interview with Jane, Jinhua, July 2016). Drawing on the same case, some students underlined the impact of the attendance confirmation on the training in China as follows: "They know exactly how difficult it is for us to get an internship in China. But when you endeavor to search for one abroad, they threaten you instead with the issue of scholarship cancellation. Either they should assist us in looking for internship positions here in China or they give us the money to sustain ourselves during an internship abroad. They treat us as if we were beggars." (Conversation with Josua, Jinhua, August 2016).

In general terms, research participants on scholarship described their financial treatment by universities, using terms like 'blackmailing' and 'threat'. The criticism of the scholarship management was more directed to CI grants.

6.1.2.2 A Focus on Confucius Institute Scholarships

My conversation with Cameroonian students in China indicated that the financial situation of students on CI grants were particularly uncertain. Bedel described Confucius Institute scholarships as follows:

"Confucius Institute scholarships are too tricky […]. When you have a Confucius Institute scholarship, you are constantly under pressure […] it can be cancelled anytime because it is almost impossible to fulfill the requirements for the extension of the grant. We were four in our batch on a Confucius Institute scholarship but none of us succeeded in maintaining the scholarship up to the end of the study program […]. It starts with the suppression of the monthly allowance. Second, they kick you out of the university dormitory and finally, you are even required to pay school fees." (Interview with Bedel, Jinhua, April 2015, translated from French).

By the time of the interview, Bedel was a self-sponsored MA programme. He came to China in 2009 for a four-year Bachelor's programme but, part of his scholarship (namely the monthly allowance) was suppressed for the third and last year of the training due to the fact that he did not fulfill the extension requirements. A student leader compared the Chinese government scholarships and the CI grants as follows:

"The Confucius Institute scholarship is nothing but blackmailing. That is the worst scholarship one could get […]. It is very unlikely to maintain the full grant for the three or four years because extension conditions are very strict. Most of the guys here end up either with partial scholarship or as self-sponsored […]. CI scholarship is particularly stressful." (Interview with Steven, Jinhua, Avril 2015, translated from French).

Seemingly, this perception of the CI was informed by the organization of the grant. The 'admission notice' (which I received from a student) issued to the awardees by the Confucius Institute reads the following:

"According to the notice of the China Scholarship Council, your fees for studying in China will be covered by: First year: Full scholarship (including tuition, lodging, comprehensive medical insurance, medical care, learning material and living allowance). Second and third year: If you are qualified in [the] annual review, you will be awarded [a] full scholarship; if no[t] qualified, [you will be awarded a] partial scholarship or [will become] self-supporting".

The conditions and requirements for the CI scholarship extension are well detailed on the webpage of the China Scholarship Council (CSC). It reads as follows:

"The degree scholarship program applicants [Category 1, 2, 3] are subject to annual academic performance review. Only those who achieve outstanding records in academic

and Chinese language proficiency are entitled to a full scholarship for the following year; those who achieve average academic records are entitled to partial scholarships; the others will not be entitled to scholarship any longer. Partial scholarships consist of tuition fee, accommodation fee and comprehensive medical insurance."[58]

My interview with students on CI grant indicated that the Chinese language proficiency test (HSK) is the main requirement for the scholarship extension. Drawing on the situation of CI scholarship holders at Zhejiang Normal University, it seems that this requirement, which a student association leader qualified as "a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of CI scholarship holders", is not easy to fulfill. For instance, of the 24 research participants on full CI grants, only 10 succeeded in maintaining their scholarship until the end of their study programs. Twelve received partial scholarships (accommodation and a school fee waiver), while two students simply got their scholarships cancelled. None of the research participants on a Chinese government scholarship lost her/his grant.

Cameroonian students on scholarships, specifically those funded by the CI, are generally not informed about the exact terms and contents of their grants. For instance, my conversation with students on CI grants suggested that the great majority came to China ignoring the fact that with the CI grants they were bound to study Chinese language and culture. Most of them came to China with the intention to study a subject of their choice. They only realized after the language course that this was not possible. Therefore, the only option available was to take a major by default, which was very frustrating for those whose priority was to study. In the same respect, there were five students who were granted scholarships only for one year but they thought it was for three years[59]. Similarly, most students on long term scholarship thought that the grant was to be automatically extended every year.

This attitude can be interpreted through the lens of popular imaginaries of international migration in Cameroon as discussed in the previous chapter. In a context where international migration is viewed as alternative to social mobility, leaving the country is an end in itself and, to achieve it, people resort to all kinds of strategies, including education. In such context, those who are granted a scholarship are more interested in the migration opportunity that it represents.

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[58] The terms and conditions of Confucius Institute scholarships are available at http://www.csc.edu.cn/laihua. Last accessed, December 2018.

[59] Their scholarships had been cancelled toward the end of the first academic year The reason for the cancellation, as the students concerned told me, was that they did not hold a Bachelor's Degree, which is a condition to be admitted to Master's program. Yet they claimed that their Chinese language teachers (Chinese) at the CI who assisted them in the application process in Cameroon as well the director of the institutes had ensured them that it was feasible to do a Master's program in China without a Bachelor's Degree.

This implies that the terms and conditions of the grant are unimportant because whatever they are, the migration opportunity is to be grasped. This is certainly one of the reasons why the students who had lost part of their grants or those whose scholarships were cancelled after only one year in China did not return to Cameroon but stayed in China and registered as self-sponsored students. Yet my conversation with them suggested that they did not have any guarantee of sustainable financial support from their respective families. As indicated in the previous chapter, students on CI grants are usually from modest family backgrounds. To sustain themselves, these students had to search for alternative sources of income, which goes against the law in China, as international students are not allowed to engage in economic activities. The decision to stay in China at all cost is to be understood through the lens of Cameroonian students´ migratory projects which often are not only about earning a degree a university degree. More generally, migration is viewed as an alternative pathway to accumulating both knowledge and material wealth, and thus a reliable route to social mobility.

6.1.3 Managing Illness in China

During my first stay in China, the number of initiatives organized within the Cameroonian student community to raise funds to support a sick fellow caught my attention. This motivated me to discover more about how Cameroonian students in China manage illness.

6.1.3.1 The Role of the Universities in the Student Healthcare System

Like in every other country, international students in China are required to purchase a comprehensive medical insurance. However, what set China apart (in comparison with Germany, for example) is that the universities in China play a decisive role in the health care system. They are intermediaries between students and the insurance company. For scholarship students, the medical insurance which is part and parcel of the grant is paid to the insurance company by the university. Self-sponsored students pay the insurance fee to the university as a registration requirement at the start of the semester and the university purchases the insurance on their behalf. It is the same process when claiming for the reimbursement of medical expenses: students are required to submit their bills to the university which in turn forwards these to the insurance company. The insurance company also provides feedback through the university: for reimbursement, the money is sent to the university and the university pays it to the claimant. The university also plays a crucial role in the treatment procedure in case of illness. At Zhejiang Normal University, for example, students are expected to inform the

university before going to the hospital, especially in case of hospitalization. This is for the university to be sure that it is not a private hospital, considering that the insurance company only has partnership with government hospitals.

Student handbooks and other registration documents usually provided by universities provide some information regarding student insurance scheme. For instance, the international student handbook of Zhejiang Normal University indicates the name of some hospitals that students should not attend. These are private hospitals and the insurance company only deals with public hospitals. The document also indicates cases of diseases and aspects of treatment expenses that are not covered by the insurance. Drawing from my personal experience as an international student, while acknowledging the complexity of the student insurance systems everywhere, I argue that the perception and expectations of Cameroonian students in China were perhaps in part the consequence of their lack of information on important issues concerning university regulations in general.

Overall, Cameroonian students highly admired and praised the quality of the infrastructure of hospitals in China compared with the situation in Cameroon. However, they expressed concerns over the healthcare system, namely the treatment procedure and the academic consequences of illness.

6.1.3.2 Students´ Experiences of Illness in China: The Treatment Procedure

Students' concern over health treatment in China results, among other things, from their limited financial power. They are required to pay for their medication cost before claiming for reimbursement from the insurance through the university. I talked to several students from different cities who said to have successfully claimed for reimbursement of medical care. However, besides these positive cases, there were students who expressed a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty in case of sickness, finding the insurance system "blurred", "uncertain", "nebulous", etc. In most cases, these were students whose reimbursement claims had been rejected either because, as they explained, they had attended a wrong hospital or the disease is not covered by the insurance. It should be emphasized once again that these eventualities are provided in the international student handbook, even though broadly.

The major complaint of the research participants about the healthcare system was in regard with the deposit requirement. As indicated earlier, hospitals often demand from students to pay a deposit before they can receive a treatment. Field data suggests that such a requirement

puts students in a precarious and vulnerable situation. There were students who were sick but since they could not afford the deposit, could not be treated.

The last aspect of discussion regarding the healthcare system is the academic consequence of sickness reported by students, namely the risk of being dismissed from the university because of sickness.

6.1.3.3 Illness and Dismissal from the University: The Cases of John and Lucy

During my research, there were two students who had been dismissed by their respective universities (from two different provinces) in the aftermath of health-related issues. I will refer to these students as John and Lucy and will also refrain from giving details of the universities involved.

The Case of John

I met John during my extended fieldwork in 2016 in one of the Chinese cities I visited. John had arrived in China in August 2015 on a Confucius Institute scholarship for a Master´s program. His younger brother who had come to China earlier was studying as self-sponsored in another university in the same city. John fell sick in July 2016 and was taken to the hospital where he was diagnosed with kidney failure for which the treatment required surgery. In order to begin treatment, the hospital demanded a payment of a deposit of 5000 RMB (640 Euros), which John could not afford. As a matter of fact, John sought assistance from fellow Cameroonians in China. A student immediately created a Wechat group named "Assistance to our brother John". The group included students from different Chinese cities and aimed to inform the Cameroonian community about the situation of John and raise funds for the payment of the deposit required by the hospital. One member of the group was appointed to collect individual contributions. I was also invited to join the group, which I did and also contributed.

The fund-raising was initially a Cameroonian issue in the sense that it only involved Cameroonians. However, it took a different turn after John´s younger brother posted an alarming message on Wechat stating that the first operation had occurred but that the financial requirement for the rest of the treatment were enormous. Part of the message read: "(…) we should take more action to help him in view of the complexity of the insurance system in China. (…) I would simply ask each other [for] more compassion and concern (because] the urgency is clear". As the message was accompanied by a series of six photographs of John in the emergency room, it was welcomed within the Cameroonian community as an alarm bell and,

as a matter of fact, many students shared it on their personal WeChat inviting their friends to support. Within a few hours, the message went viral and beyond the Cameroonian community: The Cameroonian student who was in charge of collecting the contributions told me that she received money from students of different nationalities, including Chinese. She had already collected 14825 RMB (about 1900 Euro) when the university administration was informed, and ordered to stop the initiative.

The university administration passed the message through one of the leaders of the Cameroonian student association in that city. The latter explained to me that the university provided two justifications to its decision to put an end to the fund-raising initiative. The first was that the fund-raising campaign was harmful for the reputation of the university, in the sense that "the external world would interpret the initiative as the incapacity of the university to guarantee medical care to its students. They [the university administration] are surely concerned about the attractiveness of the institution and the financial incentive it encompasses" (Conversation with a student association leader, Jinhua, August 2016, translated from French). Secondly, the university viewed the fund-raising as a sign of dishonesty on the part of John. Because the insurance was going to support the costs of the treatment, John did not need more than 5000 RMB, the deposit required by the hospital. The university then accused him of taking advantage of his illness to make money.

One of the students who were assisting him at the hospital told me that the costs of the treatment, beside the deposit, was about 60.000 RMB (about 7.700 Euro) which was fully covered by the insurance. As far as John was concerned, beside the payment of the deposit, he spent only very little on his treatment and the money raised was mostly used for feeding during hospitalization. When released from the hospital after about a month, there was tension between John and the university. From what other students reported to me, the university required a report from John on the use of the money collected via the fund-raising initiative. However, John categorically refused to do so, arguing that the university had no right to know how the money was used. It has even been reported that there were arguments between John and the university officer in charge of the issue.

On the 16th of September 2016, I received a message from John, telling me that he was facing problems with the administration of his faculty at the university. As he explained, the university had told him to go back to his home country to get some rest. "They say that the university spent too much money on my treatment", he wrote. From the message, he was

worried because he still had an appointment at the hospital for a checkup. Officially, it was not a dismissal but a sort of sick leave at the end of which John could return to China.

As John and the rest of the Cameroonian community were doubtful about the official stand, they requested a document from the university asserting that John could come back to China when he was healed. The Cameroon Embassy in China was also informed and got involved. The university finally issued John with a document mentioning a "temporary absence" of six months. The university also accepted to book him a flight, which was not initially the case. John finally returned to Cameroon in early October 2016. I contacted him in November 2017 and he was still in Cameroon. He told me that he had applied for a visa to return to China but that it had not been granted[60].

The Cameroonian community in general found the university´s decision too harsh. Some students believed that John was being sanctioned for insubordination and stubbornness towards the university administration. This is in reference to his refusal to provide explanation on how the funds raised were used, which the university viewed as defiance. From this perspective, the 'temporal' suspension of John was a sign of power on the side of the university. This explanation seemed plausible, considering that students described the attitude of John towards the university staff as "disrespectful", "contemptuous" and "immature".

However, for the majority of imposed by the insurance on the basis of financial calculations. As a student explained to me:

> "The insurance company spent a considerable amount on John´s treatment. But that is probably not the reason why the university decided to send him back. I personally think that, from the nature of John´s illness, there was a risk of relapse, which implies further expenditure for the insurance company. (…). Here in China, it is all about money, even if human life is at stake. That is what capitalism is all about (…). So, on the basis of a "profitability calculation", John was viewed as a financial burden for the insurance company and consequently, his insurance contract could not be renewed. And, given that you cannot be a student in China without insurance, the university then had no choice than to dismiss him" (Phone conversation with Steven, November 2016, translated from French).

I did not have additional practical elements and information to appreciate this line of argument. Knowing the person who made this statement (from our conversations and interviews

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[60] I met John in Cameroon in early February 2019. He had not succeeded in returning to China. His health situation was very unstable and he was to undergo dialysis every week. He said "My treatment in China was not complete. I needed to stay longer for follow-up. It is very unfortunate that they did not allow it".

since my first stay in China in 2015) as having a particularly negative perception of China, I tended to consider his interpretation as part of a widespread discourse among Cameroonian students incriminating the insurance system in China. However, the information I received during the course of November 2017 about the situation of another Cameroonian student in a different Chinese city granted some credit to his interpretation. It is the story of Lucy.

The case of Lucy

Lucy, in her mid-twenties, was a self-sponsored medical student. She was the roommate and classmate of Mira, one of the Cameroonian students with whom I frequently communicated after my departure from China. It was on an evening in the course of November 2017 when I called Mira on the phone. She sounded downcast and explained: "The school has told my roommate to return to Cameroon because of her health condition". She explained Lucy had gone to the hospital in March 2017 for a checkup and had been diagnosed with primary liver cancer. Lucy consequently had surgery and received two chemotherapy treatments. Lucy was at the hospital for a total of five weeks and the medical costs were very high and paid for by the insurance, Mira explained. When Lucy was released from the hospital, the university granted her two weeks of medical leave, after which she took up her studies as "everything was back to normal, apart from light foot swelling from time to time" Mira indicated.

Lucy returned to the hospital for a medical checkup required for visa extension. She was accompanied by a university staff member. Her blood test showed an "abnormal composition" Mira said. For Mira and Lucy, both medical students, there was nothing surprising about the abnormality because "after two chemotherapy treatments, the constitution of the blood cannot be normal, [and] it takes time for it to get back to normal", Mira claimed. Yet, for the university administration "it was rather viewed as a very serious matter". They even "claimed that there was no hospital in China which could effectively handle the case", Mira underlined. As a matter of fact, the university suggested Lucy "to go to a country where she could be appropriately treated". After a few days the attitude of the university administration evolved from "a simple suggestion to seek suitable medical care in a third country to a menace of dismissal". Mira explained that not only had the university openly told Lucy that she could no longer be enrolled as a student, but even also offered to refund her school fees for the year.

For months, Lucy got into arguments with the university administration but the decision was irrevocable. She then pleaded with the university to allow her to finish the semester. The idea was to apply for a university admission in France in the meantime. Lucy´s mother lived in

France and did not want Lucy to return to Cameroon from where she had migrated to China. The reason was that the health care system in France is far better than in Cameroon. However, the university did not grant Lucy´s request, even with intervention of the Cameroonian Embassy in China. Finally, Lucy had no choice but to accept the decision. She was issued a document which read: "A rest with the family due to serious surgical intervention and could come back in a year upon medical opinion", Mira quoted. Lucy finally left China in late December 2017 for Cameroon. In mid-October 2018 Mira phoned me. When I answered, she said: "Lucy is no more. She died a few days ago. Lucy died because of the poor medical system in Cameroon (…). The Chinese are wicked […]. I cannot find a word for my hatred towards this university. They [university] refused to give Lucy a chance to treat herself here in China. Human life means nothing to these people. What interests them is money and nothing else" (phone conversation with Mira in October 2018, translated from French).

It is important to note that universities in China have the capacity to dismiss a student for sickness as stipulated in the international student handbook of Zhejiang Normal University: [Universities] are authorized to request [an international student] to return to her [/his] home country for treatment." (International Student Handbook of Zhejiang Normal University: 23). However, this is only possible, at least in principle, in cases where the student "has contracted an infectious disease"[61].

The cases of Lucy and John were highly discussed within the Cameroonian student community on social media in China, and the comments suggested a negative image of China among Cameroonian students. Some students described China as "a country where human life is valueless".

The healthcare system in Cameroon is by far worse than the situation described by students regarding treatment procedures in China. First of all, there is no systematic health insurance system; a part from the political and economic elite, Cameroonians generally do not take out insurance policy. Therefore, they have to pay for their healthcare that is, paying before they can receive treatment. Secondly, the quality of the infrastructure and equipment in Cameroon is poor. In view of these two factors, it is clear that students in their complaints

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[61] Research participants mentioned the case of a Cameroonian female student who had been repatriated upon a positive HIV/AID testing. The infection was discovered during a medical examination to which new students are subjected upon their arrival in China.

compare the health system in China with the insurance arrangement in Europe which they probably are not fully acquainted with. From my personal experience, although the requirement to pay a deposit in advance does not exist in Europe, a patient might have to pay the cost in advance and be reimbursed later, depending on the insurance policy. This misconception of the insurance system attests to the myth of lands of milk and honey which shapes the popular imageries of western countries in Cameroon (Nyamnjoh 2011).

6.2   Management of International Students as a Migrant Category: The Role of Universities

This photograph is a copy of a four-year resident permit granted to a medical student in Nanchang. The student posted it on WeChat with the following message: "No more fucking visa fee. No more fucking insurance fee. No more medical checkup fee. Just no more cheating". The terms used and the tone of this reaction of happiness summarizes research participants´ perception of the visa renewal process in China.

Photograph 8: Copy of a four-year resident permit granted to a medical student in Nanchang

This section focuses on the legal aspects of student life in China. It addresses the role played by universities in managing the foreign student population as an immigrant category and the visa policies enforced toward this specific group.

6.2.1   Chinese Universities as an Externalized Immigration Management Service

"As a student, if you have a visa problem in China, you should not blame the immigration office but your university […]. The immigration office grants you exactly the number of months indicated on the visa renewal document issued by the university" (Andrew, a Cameroonian student in Guangzhou, March 2015, translated from French).

This statement introduces the reader to the role of universities in managing students as a specific immigrant group. This will be done through the lens of the concept of externalization.

6.2.1.1 The Concept of Externalization

According to the working definition developed by Frelick et al (2016: 193),

"Externalization of migration controls describes extraterritorial state actions to prevent migrants, including asylum seekers, from entering the legal jurisdictions or territories of destination countries or regions or making them legally inadmissible without individually considering the merits of their protection claims. These actions include unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral state engagement as well as the enlistment of private actors".

Although externalization is mostly understood as the transfer of border management to third countries, it is also used in the literature from a corporatist approach (Lahav 2010) as synonymous with "delegation", "privatization", "outsourcing", "offshoring" (Menz, 2011; Zaiotti, 2016; Lahav, 2010; Chacón, 2017; Frelick et al, 2016) to account for a situation whereby states incorporate a set of third party agents in migration management and surveillance. Zollberg (1998, 2006) coins this practice as "remote control" immigration management. According to the literature, the third party agents involved in the surveillance regime are international, private and local actors. As far as local actors are concerned, they are mostly referred to as employers (private and public), airline and shipping companies and private security agencies (Chacón 2017; Frelick et al 2016).

My ethnographic data suggested that universities in China are part of the state migration management apparatus. Specifically, the state has outsourced the control of foreign student population to universities. Reading through the 2017 edition of the 'Guide for New International Students' of Tsinghua University in Beijing, I came across the following section: "According to the regulations of the Chinese government, the university shall report all admitted but unregistered students to the Public Security Bureau. If you are holding a student visa in China, but do not register at the corresponding university, the visa will be cancelled and you will be penalized for illegal stay"[62]. The "regulation of the Chinese government" alluded to is the "Rules on the Control of the Acceptance of Foreign Students by Colleges and Universities 2000 (PRC)" according to Liu´s work on immigration law in China. The author indicates that "Article

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[62]See the 'Guide for New International Students' of Tsinghua University at
http://is.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/is/9279/2017/20170630105513097453663/20170630110225780519414.pdf .
Last accessed, December 2017.

49 of the Rules on the Control of the Acceptance of Foreign Students by Colleges and Universities 2000 (PRC) regulate [s] that foreign students who have graduated, completed study, or left school are required to exit from China within the stipulated time limit stated in the visa. Their university or colleges should promptly advise the local competent exit and entry administration authority of the names of those foreign students who have been ordered to withdraw or who have been expelled. The local competent exit and entry administration authority should withdraw those students´ Alien Residence Permit or shorten their period of stay in China" (Liu 2011: 75). Therefore, it is likely that university administrations and the immigration service have opted on not paying particular attention to this legal provision. Such an option is also understandable, considering the fact that, within immigration management in China, there prevails what Liu (2011: 109) calls the principle of "pay no attention, unless something untoward occurs".

6.2.1.2   The Evolving Role of Universities in Immigration Control

Although the law mentioned above was passed in 2000, universities´ responsibility in controlling foreign population only became visible after China enforced stricter immigration control in response to an unprecedented influx of national and international migrants brought about by the economic development of China (Pieke 2012). There has then been a sort of outsourcing deal in which the state grants universities the authorization to enroll foreign students and the universities are answerable to their foreign students. The works of Bredeloup (2014) and Haugen (2013) are essential for understanding the nature of and the background that prompted the tightening of the relations between higher education institutions and the state in China in the field of immigration management.

In her study of African students turned entrepreneurs in China, Bredeloup suggests that the deal between the state immigration apparatus and universities was made to curve the growing phenomenon of misuse of student visas which emerged as one of the adaptive strategies of the African population in response to China's stringent visa policy. The author indicates that one of the effects of the new and stricter immigration law passed in 2007 was the considerable shortening of the duration of visas. For instance, one-year visas authorizing multiple entries were removed and substituted by 30-day visas. The consequence of the change for African traders was the multiplication of their trips to Guangzhou, Macao, and Hong Kong to renew their visas, sometimes with the assistance of travel agencies. Initially, substituting working visas for study visas was a valuable alternative to the costly procedure, but it rapidly

became impossible to do so. "As a matter of fact, Bredeloup (2014: 43) concludes, since the tightening of immigration laws made it almost impossible to obtain a residence permit, many Africans began to apply for a student visa with the intention of doing business."

Haugen (2013) corroborates the idea of enrolling at a Chinese university as a way of escaping from what she coins as a "second state of immobility", imposed on Africans by stringent immigration regulations in China. In her work on China´s recruitment of African university students, Haugen (2013) describes a phenomenon of African traders turning students in China. Based on her observation in the cities of Guangzhou and Jinhua, she suggests a typology of African students based on three main criteria: the country they live in prior to enrolling at Chinese universities, their source of financial support and the priority they attach to studies versus business activities. She then identifies four groups: "scholarship students", "self-sponsored students", "traders-turned-students" and "family firm trainees". For the purpose of this section, which is approaching Chinese universities as part of the immigration management system in China, I will consider the case of "traders-turned-students".

Contrary to "scholarship students" and "self-sponsored students", "traders-turned-students" do not enroll at university to earn a university degree or to acquire specific knowledge. Also, in most cases, this category of students are already in China when they enter university. Turning students is rather a coping strategy in the context where, as Haugen describes, renewing short-term tourist and business visas became often difficult, time-consuming and unpredictable on the one hand, and overstaying one´s visa exposed them to a high risk of police interception, fining, imprisonment and deportation, on the other hand. As a consequence of such situations, Haugen (2013: 11) concludes, "student visas have become more attractive". This was so because Chinese universities attached more importance to students´ university performance than to their presence in class. On the regulation of undocumented non-attendance, Haugen observes that while some universities enforced a 'don't ask, don't tell'-policy (taking days off without informing the teacher and obtaining a leave authorization from the latter), others even "went as far as to encourage African students to take up work". This was a strategy to attract more foreign students, as the market-oriented policy imposed on universities by the Chinese government required them to look for alternative sources of income, including recruiting international students. However, upon the crackdown campaign on undocumented migrants, the phenomenon of misusing student visas was unveiled and the Chinese government, which did not have "a clear legal and administrative framework and apparatus to deal with the entry, residence, and employment of foreigners" (Pieke 2012: 58) then imposed the regulation on

Chinese universities to enforce stricter rules on class attendance; otherwise their right to enroll foreign students could be withdrawn (Haugen 2013). Some universities were required to digitalize their class attendance recording system to make it accessible to the immigration service.

Overall, there is collaboration between universities and the immigration service in managing foreign students. As the next section on student visa policy will show, the duration of the visa granted to international students is decided by universities.

6.2.2 Student Visa Policy: The Discrepancy

As will be shown throughout this section, student visa policy is a reflection of discrepancy, featuring the enforcement of immigration laws between and within provinces in China (Lan 2014). The student visa policy as addressed here encompasses three aspects: conditions for visa renewal, the length of the visa and the entitlements that come with the student visa.

6.2.2.1 Student Visa Renewal: The Conditions and the Length

Cameroonian students usually enter China with a three-month visa to be prolonged in China. The conditions for visa extension include medical checkups, housing contract provisions, and a school fee payment (for self-sponsored students). When these requirements are fulfilled, universities deliver a visa renewal document which students submit to the immigration office as part of the visa application requirements. The document delivered by the university also indicates the duration of the visa the applicant should be granted. Regarding the length of the visa, it varies between universities and according to the status of the applicant.

For instance, students on scholarships usually get their visas extended for one year. The only requirement is the payment of the visa extension fee which is 800 RMB (about 100 Euro). For self-sponsored students, common practice is what a research participant coined as a "pay-as-you-go" policy, referring to the fact that the duration of the visa issued depends on the payment of the school fees. In this respect, students who pay half the school fees are granted a six-month visa and those who pay the full amount for the year are issued a visa for one year. The visa extension fee also depends on the visa duration: 400 RMB (about 50 Euro) for a six-month visa and 800 RMB for one-year visa.

However, there are exceptions where the so-called "pay-as-you-go" does not necessarily apply to the second visa extension and the duration of the visa is not in proportion to the school

fees. For example, a student from China University of Petroleum in Qingdao (Shandong) informed me that all international students at his university are usually granted a six-month visa even if they pay the complete school fees. Nevertheless, he specified, students with outstanding academic performance can as an exception be granted a one-year visa. The university took this decision to enforce the six-month visa policy because of the high rate of absenteeism, as many foreign students often devoted more time to lucrative activities than their studies. Mira, a medical student from the city of Jiujiang in the Jiangxi province of China also commented:

> "In my university the longest visa one can get is one year […]. While some students are granted one-year visas, others get eight-month or six-month visas. It is a very arbitrary decision from the university administration. You cannot tell what the rules are but I guess the university administration takes into consideration things like class attendance, academic performance, compliance with school fee payment deadline, student attitudes (like not to be involved in things like fights, etc.)." (Interview with Mira, Changsha, July 2016, translated from French).

Mira was obviously disappointed because, as she explained, the immigration law in the region provides the possibility for international students to be granted a residence permit valid for the duration of their entire study program. "This rule is publicized on the webpage of the university as an advantage for studying there but, practically, the university administration does not allow students to benefit from it", Mira complained.

Mira´s frustration also resulted from the fact that she knew a university in Nanchang, a city of the same Jiangxi province, which grants students a visa for more than a year and sometimes equal to the duration of their study as illustrates the photograph at the beginning of this section. Additionally, Mira also mentioned the case of her cousin majoring in civil engineering at a university in Beijing who received a student residence permit for five years.

6.2.2.2   Visa Renewal as a Triple Burden

Cameroonian students in China are burdened in three aspects: financial, time, and health. The burden all the research participants raised with regard to visa renewal was the visa application fee. It is important to remember that for each visa renewal application, students are required to take a medical examination, for which they are charged; and they also pay a visa fee. "Students spend a lot on visa matters here. Imagine that they are to pay for medical controls and visa fees every year or even twice a year for some students. It is just too costly for everyone, especially for self-sponsored students who, because they pay half the school fees, get a six-month visa and have to renew it every six-months", complained the leader of the Cameroonian

student community in Jinhua. Another grievance against frequent visa renewal was that the process was long and time-consuming. As already indicated, the visa extension procedure implies a back and forth between several institutions: university, hospital, police and immigration services. "It takes you an entire day to visit all these administrations to assemble all the visa application documents. It is a lot of time and also money because they [administrations] are not located in the same area. Therefore, one has to spend on transportation", observed a student in Hangzhou.

A female medical student criticized the visa renewal policy from a health perspective: "To apply for a visa, you must do a medical checkup which includes an X-ray (…). Imagine that some students have to go through the same process every six months and they are to be in China for five or six years. I think it is just too much exposure to UV rays, which might be harmful to their body in the long run" (Conversation in Changsha, July 2016, translated from French). In their narratives, students often made comparisons with the situation of their friends and relatives living in western countries. Drawing on my personal experience, I would argue that visa renewing is a complex issue everywhere and students experience different realities depending on their financial status, that is, self-sponsored or scholarship holders. However, in comparison to Germany, for example, the visa renewal process is particularly challenging in China. In Germany, students are not required to submit a health report to renew their visa. Also, the length of the visa is decided by the immigration service and not by universities. Furthermore, self-sponsored students in Germany are usually granted a visa for at least a year and are not required to register at the police after every visa prolongation. However, China´s student visa policy presents an important advantage. For visa renewal, self-sponsored students do not have to prove their financial situation (a bank statement or financial affidavit) as is the case in Germany. This makes China's visa scheme more accessible to students of a poor family background.

6.2.3 Benefit and Entitlement of the Student Visa: The Attractiveness of China at Stake

Beside the three grievances above, the most important criticism unanimously raised by Cameroonian students in China with regard to the visa policy was the prohibition to work with a student visa, or the possibility to decide to stay in China after graduation.

6.2.3.1 Student Visa and Job Issues

Zou´s 2006 working paper on "Regulating ´illegal work´ in China" indicates that the prohibition by administrative regulations for foreign students to engage in paid work in China dates back to the late 1980s. Nonetheless, this measure was revised and softened in 2000, allowing foreign students to engage in jobs and economic activities provided that they are organized by their universities. For instance, article 36 of the "Rules on the Control of the Acceptance of Foreign Students by Colleges and Universities 2000 (PRC) states the following: "Foreign students are not allowed to seek employment, conduct business or engage in any profit-making activities during their term in China. However, they are allowed to participate in work-study programs as stipulated by their university or college." (cited by Liu 2010: 77-78).

In the same vein, the 2013 Exit and Entry Administration Law of the People's Republic of China is favorable to students work but gives power to the local governments to elaborate and enforce their specific study-work policy. In fact, Article 42 of the 2013 Exit and Entry Administration Law of the People's Republic of China states that the "The competent Department of Education under the State Council shall, in conjunction with relevant departments under the State Council, establish an administrative system for foreign students working to support their study in China and set forth regulations on the scope of jobs and the limit of work time for such foreign students".

As one can see, this rule does not completely preclude foreign students from engaging in income-generating activities. It rather limits students´ room for maneuver in their job seeking endeavors by introducing new actors, namely the institutions enrolling foreign students and local governments. Through a system of "devolution of regulatory responsibilities" (Zou 2016), these entities have the capacity to give content to and probably define the eligibility criteria for what they consider the "work-study program". Yet, despite the seemingly favorable legal setting, one of the major concerns raised by most research participants and foreign students in China was the ban of student jobs (also see Richter 2020). My discussion with staff members of the university administration suggested that the regulations on student jobs were interpreted differently by different institutions[63].

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[63] For a detailed analysis of national and local regulations regarding student jobs and their implementation by different universities, see Richter (2020).

For instance, Ms. Huang from the international student office at Sun Yat-sen University in the Guangdong province in China recognized the possibility for students to engage in paid jobs, before highlighting the role of local authorities in the management of foreign students. In her opinion, each province has its own approach toward the internationalization of higher education and the governance of international students, especially regarding student jobs. On the specific aspects of student life in China, she argued that Jiangsu province has the most favorable environment for international students. This was because, as she explained, the universities in the region collaborate with the emigration authorities to support students finding internships or part-time jobs as well as in organizing suitable visa arrangements. This is not the case with the Guangdong province, where part-time jobs are not allowed for international students. She explained that the enforcement of this specific law is highly dependent on the economic situation of each province.

Contrary to Ms Huang, Mao Xilong, the head of the international student office at Zhejiang Normal University in the Zhejiang province, clearly pointed out the prohibition for international students to involve themselves in income-generating activities, especially paid work. In one of our conversations during fieldwork, namely in June 2016, he asked me about my findings, particularly the concerns of the international students. I listed, among others, the issue of access to jobs, to which he immediately reacted: "Foreign students are not allowed to work in China. It is illegal. You know, China is not an immigration country". Drawing on my conversation with Ms. Huang from Sun Yat-sen University and my awareness of a law authorizing foreign students to work (if the local government and the university allows them to), I told him that there are regions in China where foreign students can take up paid employment, provided that they enjoy the support of the immigration service and university authorities. At first, he said that he was not aware of such an arrangement and was very skeptical, before he finally concluded: "It is not possible". Two months after our conversation, I attended a meeting in August 2016 which was organized by the international student office for foreign students in the framework of the preparation for the G20 summit held in China in early September 2016. As the head of the international student office, Mao Xilong was one of the speakers. He took the floor after the immigration and police officers finished their talks on security measures and, in a rather threatening tone, he warned international students about their activities during holidays. He insisted on the fact that students were not allowed to work, at the risk of getting their visa cancelled in case they are caught by the police.

Even though most students worked illegally, this legal provision was still a cause of frustration as they risk imprisonment and deportation, as provided by the immigration law in China. The disappointment with the interdiction to work and the decision to work illegally resulted from the fact that for the majority of students, the borderline between the economic and the study dimension of their migratory projects is rather blurred. For, as discussed in Chapter 5, in view of the social and economic conditions in Cameroon, migration, even for educational reasons, is considered an opportunity for wealth accumulation. Gerald, a master's student in Hangzhou complained:

> "In countries like Germany or Belgium, you have the possibility to work while studying. Fellows in those countries build houses in Cameroon before they graduate. A friend of mine is studying engineering in Germany. He is graduating this year. He rebuilt the house of his mother in Cameroon with student jobs. You come from there and you know better what I am talking about (…). During the holiday, he works in companies like Mercedes and the salary is really good. Here in China, you cannot even sustain yourself before thinking of saving money. This country is very dangerous. China makes you feel like a kid. How can you force a grown up to stay indoors, […] encourage him not to initiate anything? It literally kills your sense of creativity. China can make you amorphous." (Conversation with Gerald, Hangzhou, April 2015, translated from French).

In any case, working illegally seemed not to be a matter of choice, especially as most self-sponsored students came from a poor family background. A leader of the Cameroonian student association in Guangzhou explained the situation as followed:

> "Students have to make a choice between illegal work and precariousness. As we know, parents in Cameroon do not send money to their children abroad. They instead expect money from them. Therefore, to survive here, students have no choice but to work illegally, which is a high risk (…). They risk visa cancellation, imprisonment and deportation. I know of a few Africans who were caught while working. Some had to bribe the police to get away. It is known here that the least you can give the police is 5000 RMB, which is a lot in comparison to what they earn from the job." (Conversation with a leader of the Cameroonian student association, Guangzhou, August 2016, translated from French).

The fact that the Chinese police was amenable to being bribed seemed to be an asset, especially as Cameroonian students have ample experience in dealing with corruption which is common in Cameroon and West Africa as a whole[64].

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[64] On the systemic character of corruption in Western Africa, see for example Olivier de Sardan (1999).

Another issue raised by the research participants with regard to working without a valid visa was that it led to a situation of exploitation of the students by potential employers. Tijo, a student in Bejing commented:

> "Hiring someone without a work permit is a good deal for companies. Let's take the case of an English teaching job. The wage of a professional English language teacher is about three times higher than for a non-professional, for example. In addition to that, students recruited by schools to teach English do not sign a contract, which leads to all sorts of abuse (…); the job can be ended anytime without any notification and so on." (Conversation with Tijo, Beijing, April 2015, translated from French).

Despite the legal provisions on student jobs, it was still possible for some self-sponsored students to earn money, although mostly moderate amount. However, during my last visit to China in July 2018, I learned that control on students' activities had increased. A student in Guangzhou told me that she had been controlled by the police in a business mall. Upon realizing that she was a student, the police told her that she should not be in the market on a school day and warned her that her visa would be cancelled next time.

In Jinhua, one of the oldest among the Cameroonian students in the city, Foma, told me that it was becoming more and more difficult for students to find part-time jobs, as a result of the increase in control of illegal work by the police in the city. Foma commented: "Self-sponsored students are facing more and more hardships here. They have serious problems in paying their bills. They do not have money (…) No way to get a part-time job because of police control". To emphasize the extent of the difficulty, Foma, who was aware of the focus of my research, suggested that I should sensitize people in Cameroon about life in China:

> "I do not know how you would do it but you definitely have to include in your work a section about student life here in China. Things are not what people in Cameroon think. Parents have to know the truth before sending their children here. China is not Europe, where you can earn money while studying. People in Cameroon have to know that student jobs are banned in China and that those who are caught could be imprisoned. Parents have to know that they must support their children here. There is a lot of precariousness here in Jinhua." (Conversation with Foma, Jinhua, July 2018, translated from French).

This depiction suggests that for Cameroonian students, access to jobs and other money-making opportunities constitutes a central element in student satisfaction and thus the attractiveness or the soft power of a receiving country.

6.2.3.2   Congratulations, it is Time to Exit: "A country Without Profit"

Some Cameroonian students in China often qualified China as a "country without profit" with reference to immigration regulation, for two reasons. The first is the interdiction to seek part time employment or to engage in income-generating activities with a student visa, as mentioned above. The second justification is the impossibility for them as foreigners to obtain Chinese citizenship, no matter how long they stay in China. Some universities even encourage (if not oblige) their foreign students to leave China immediately after graduating. This was the case at Zhejiang Normal University in Jinhua.

On July 20 2016, I had an interview with Namih, a Cameroonian bachelor's student in "Teaching Chinese as Foreign Language" on a provincial scholarship. She had just finished her last exams and was waiting for the graduation ceremony. Namih looked sad when we met. She then explained:

> "I went to the university today to get a stamp on a document, which I succeeded in. But the person who received me told me that all graduate students have to leave China as soon as they can because, as from the 7th of July, they will no longer be under the responsibility of the University. Personally, I do not even intend to remain in China but the problem is that I cannot afford a flight ticket for the moment. I am waiting for my mother to book me a flight but she also has financial difficulties. So, I cannot predict how long it will take." (Interview with Namih, Jinhua, July 2018, translated from French)".

A few days after my meeting with Namih, a student shared on the Wechat group of the Cameroonian students in Jinhua a message from the Department of Foreign Affairs of the University (see the screenshot below), inviting graduate students to "complete all procedures and depart as soon as possible" because their names will be sent to the immigration office "who will start the nullification of visas". In the same vein, I learned that scholarship students whose grant included a return flight ticket were contacted by the university administration to suggest a return date so that the university could proceed with the booking of their flights. Once the booking was done, the university informed the immigration office so that the visa of the concerned students were cancelled. Nonetheless, there is a possibility for students to be granted "some more time to settle one or two things" before departing from China, as indicates in the message on the photograph.

1. This semester is ending on July 1 , the next one is starting on September 11. Please come back on time. Pay much attention to your visa and remember to apply for extension ahead of time in order to avoid trouble if it happens to expire.
2. Graduates (students who graduated this year) have to complete all procedures and depart as soon as possible. The school will sent the name list of students who completed their courses this year to the immigration who will start the nullification of visa. If there are students who still have a study visa and they need some more time to settle one or two things. They can go and notify the international students office who will mark it down on the list to be sent to the immigration office. — —Foreign Affairs Department

Photograph 9: A screenshot of a message from the Department of Foreign Affairs of ZJNU to foreign students (Photo: Severin Kaji, 2016)

However, it is important to note that although students are bound to leave China at the end of their studies, the rule is usually not strictly enforced by universities. As many research participants explained, "students are often not pushed to leave as is the case this year. What universities usually do is that they do not accept you into another program. For example, you cannot finish a Bachelor's program and get accepted for a Master's program at the same university. The principle is that you have to go back to your country and apply anew from there. In this case, you have no choice but to leave the university before your student visa expires", observed Oliver, a Cameroonian student who had been studying in Jinhua for four years (Conversation with Oliver, Jinhua, June 2016, translated from French).

Yet, there are students who managed to maintain themselves in China upon graduation by registering at a different university. But, as Rosa outlined, for these students, "the process is very stressful. Let's assume your visa ends in early August and the academic year in the new university starts in September. What will you do, considering that you need documents from the university to renew your visa? That is exactly what happened to me. It was just too stressful and I finally returned to Cameroon for two weeks just to avoid overstaying my visa" (interview with Rosa, Guangzhou, April 2015, translated from French). Rosa, successfully sought university admission for a major in Guangzhou after taking Chinese language courses in Jinhua. There are also a few students who graduated and stayed in China for business or paid employment. In this case, they had to change their visa category for which the procedure necessarily requires them to return to Cameroon for formalities at the Chinese embassy. "The chances to change one´s visa category here are significantly lower. It is not like in Europe where

all you need is a valid work contract", emphasized a student who received a refusal on his application to change his visa category.

In their narratives on visa policy in China, students tended to make a comparison with European countries. Even if they sometimes had an idealistic view of Europe, they were generally well-informed, probably drawing on their network of friends and relatives in the western countries. For instance, the students who claimed that graduates only needed a valid work contract to extend their visa were right. To consider the cases of Germany and Norway, foreign students who graduate are entitled to a visa extension (if they can prove that they have enough finances to sustain themselves), enabling them to look for a job. After the extension period of maximum eighteen months (in the German case), they are bound to submit a valid work contract to receive a new visa. The only condition is that the work contract has to be consistent with one´s academic background.

Regarding the visa issue in China, eventhough students find the renewal system annoying, it should be emphasized that the situation is still much better for them than for traders who have no institutional support and have to do it all themselves.

This chapter suggests that, to a large extent, university regulations or governance practices regarding issues like visa policy, accommodation, the health system, and scholarship management are negatively perceived and interpreted by Cameroonian students in China and they are therefore not likely to nurture a pro-China attitude and discourse, nor the willingness to give something back to the latter.

Chapter Seven: Social Life of Cameroonian Students in China. Approaching Soft Power through the Social Experiences of Foreign Students

A football Match Between Chinese and African Students at Zhejiang Normal University

On my third day in the city of Jinhua in April 2015, I took part in a friendly football match between Chinese students and their African colleagues from Zhejiang Normal University (ZJNU). I was told that the match was initiated by the university administration in the framework of the cultural and sporting activities of the university. The event offered some glimpses of the nature of the relationship between Chinese and African students. The two teams were preparing when we got to the field. What caught my attention was the way the two groups of students occupied the stadium benches: Chinese and Africans gathered separately on two opposite ends. During the break, the players of the two teams still took different directions, as in an official match. Even though this option was understandable in the sense that the break in football is the time for each team to make some readjustments, the fact that the same scenario reproduced itself at the end of the match was rather questionable. At the end of the game, the players of the teams left the playground in separate directions and, to my surprise, without anything symbolizing friendship like handshakes, hugs, etc. which happen even in professional football competitions. The above setting was striking because it was in sharp contrast to another match that had taken place the previous day between Cameroonians and a group of student broadly called 'East-Africans' from ZJNU. Players from both teams talked to each other before the game, during break and particularly, spent some time together afterwards to talk about the game.

The attitude of Chinese and African players attested to the institutional or arranged characteristic of the football match. As my research went on, I realized that there was a sort of avoidance relationship, or a distant cohabitation between African students as a whole and their Chinese colleagues. Interviews and informal conversations with Cameroonian students in China suggest that this pattern of relationship is influenced by their experiences (direct and indirect) as foreigners in China.

This chapter focuses on lived experiences of Cameroonian students in China as a vital element to China's attractiveness or soft power. The aim of the chapter is to analyze the level of satisfaction of Cameroonian students with their social life in China on the one hand, and how it shapes their overall image of and attitude towards China as a receiving country, on the other hand. As previously argued, education can only become an effective soft power mechanism if

and only if students develop the feeling of giving something back to the receiving country during and after their study stay. This feeling is in turn nurtured by students´ overall experiences during their study stay. As Altbach and Peterson (2008) suggest, students' experiences encompass non-academic aspects like an affinity with certain elements of the local popular culture, food, marriage with nationals and adoption of the host country´s lifestyle. In short, students' satisfaction with their experience abroad is also shaped by their social life as a foreign population.

In this chapter, I further draw on the works of Atkinson (2010), Haugen (2013) and Rawnsley (2016) on the relationship between the social life of foreign students and the effectiveness of education as a country´s image-branding strategy. Analyzing the conditions that are likely to positively influence the social experiences of an exchange student, Atkinson (2010) identifies, among other factors, "the depth and extent of social interactions between the exchange student and local populations, the extent to which the exchange student shares a sense of community […] with the local people with whom the social interactions occur [etc.…]" (Atkinson 2010: 5).These conditions, she concludes, can only be met if host countries create what she terms an "effective socialization environment". In her article "China's recruitment of African university students: policy efficacy and unintended outcomes", Haugen (2013) echoes Atkinson´s emphasis on the impact of social interactions on the effectiveness of soft power or countries´ attractiveness among international students. She contends that there are two necessary conditions to meet for China's scholarship schemes for African students to be effective tools in China's soft power enhancement: "that the students enjoy their experience and that they find the host country's political system attractive" (Haugen 2013: 4). For Rawnsley (2016), the reaction of "the audience" or the group (Cameroonian students in this case) targeted by any soft power resource (education) is partly determined by what he coins as their "experience of socialization" in the host country. Do the experiences of Cameroonian students in China lead them to developing a preference for China? Put otherwise, do they really view China as a second home country (see King, 2013), as some Chinese political elites would claim or expect them to do?

This chapter is composed of two main parts. The first offers a historical perspective into the life of African students during the Mao and post-Mao era. By so doing, I aim to show how the social experiences of African students in the past influenced their perception of China and impacted the expansion of communism in Africa which at the time was the main goal pursued by the Chinese government through the enrolment of African students. From a comparative

perspective, the second part of the chapter discusses the everyday life experiences of Cameroonian students in contemporary China through the lens of soft power theory. It is about how social life informs Cameroonian students' attitude toward China as a country.

7.1 African Students in Mao and Post-Mao China: On the Effectiveness of the "Socialism Business"

China started enrolling African students in the late 1950s (Li 2018) and, according to Sautman (1994: 413), this was "an attempt to win the hearts and minds and bolster China´s Third World credentials in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split". Similarly, Li points out that "(…) in the 1950s-1970s, [China's] policy for international education cooperation was mainly ideologically oriented, i.e., to unite African countries in the struggle against the capitalist camp headed by U.S. in the first stage, then […] against the two hegemonies, the US [*sic*] and the USSR in the second stage" (2018: 14). In the same respect, Emmanuel Hevi, a former African student in China views the enrolment of African students by the Chinese government at the time as a "socialism business" which he describes as follows: "The Chinese had brought us here to their country for a defined purpose: to absorb their indoctrination (…) and afterwards spill it back to the people in our native countries" (1963: 115). What did China benefit from such "business"?

Considering that the attractiveness of a country is in part dependent on the social experiences of the students, this section discusses what China earned from the business. In other words, drawing on the social context that prevailed in China on the one hand and, the opinions of the first cohort of African students on the other hand, the focus here is on how successful China was in making African students pro-Chinese.

This section draws on the literature, mainly the autobiographical book of Emmanuel Hevi entitled "An African student in China" published in 1963. Hevi, from Ghana, studied in China from November 1960 to April 1962 and was one of the leaders of the African student union in China. The section is supplemented by the literature on African students in China from the 1960s onward (Dikötter 1994; Sautman 1994; Sullivan 1994; Gillespie 1999; Liu 2013; Li 2018).

7.1.1 Social Life of African Students in Mao and Post-Mao China

Hevi's 1963 autobiographical book (despite the scholarly criticisms to which I shall turn at the end of this section) is the most referenced volume on the experience of African students

in China during the Mao era. The book is a description of the Chinese society and the life of African students in China. In this respect, Hevi indicates that African students in the early 1960s "encountered a spartan, puritanical and politicized environment in the host country" (ibid: 102). Overall, they were "fed up" with China for a set of reasons: isolated "social life", "hostility", "racial discrimination", "language difficulties", a "poor education standard" and "spying" (Hevi 1963: 117-136). Hevi emphasizes that social discrimination was "the first item on their list of grievances" (ibid.: 183). There was a "preaching of hatred on such large scale" (Hevi 1962) that the majority of African students departed before the end of their studies. Hevi uses the terms "exodus" to refer to the high rate of departures among African students: Of the 118 African students who were in China for the academic year 1961-62, 96 had left and 10 were threatening to leave for their home country.

Some scholars like Li Anshan (2018) and Liu Haifang (2013) consider Hevi´s figure to be somewhat exaggerated but they still acknowledge that "the data proves that the majority of African students were very eager to leave" China (Liu 2013: 142). The critics also confirm some grievances raised by Hevi. Li, for instance, highlights that the social context in China, dominated by dogmatism, social taboos and regulation, inevitably led to "a kind of ´segregation´ between African students and ordinary Chinese, especially African males and Chinese females" (Li Anshan 2018: 9). Li Anshan also points to the "pervasive politics" (ibid) prevailing in China by the time of Hevi, which prevented social interactions between foreign students and the local population. Overall, on the basis of China´s "classified official files", Liu argues that "the experiences of African students in China were far from ´petty annoyances´" (2013: 145) as claimed by the critics of Hevi´s book.

Sautman's 1994 work on "Anti-Black racism in post-Mao China" suggests that the situation remained unchanged in the 1970s and 1980s. The author indicates that African students in China in the 1970s reported pervasive politics, social isolation, low living standards and a "dearth of social opportunities" (Sautman 1994: 414). Consequently, the same as their predecessors, they were eager to return as early as possible. As foreign students were not authorized to exit from China before the end of their training, African students developed different strategies to obtain repatriation. For instance, Sautman reports that in 1972 a dozen African students of the Beijing Railroad Engineering School in Beijing burned portraits of Mao Zedong, expecting/ hoping for deportation as a sanction. The 1980s were marked by increasing violence against Africans in China. The Nanjing clash (see the next section) was the "'last major outbreak of anti-Africanism in China during the 1980s" (ibid: 423). However, as Sautman

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points out, the end of the violence did not mark the beginning of a fully pleasant life for African students until a number of years later: "This [the absence of open confrontation] does not mean, however, that hostility has since disappeared. Interviews with Africans in China in 1992 revealed that racial slurs were still a daily experience. Africans spoke of continuing isolation from Chinese students and a fear of the violence to which some of them had been exposed when venturing off campus on their own (ibid: 423).

In 1997, Gillespie undertook a survey on the experiences of African students in China. The study fell under the heading 'South-South transfer: a study of Sino-African exchanges' and involved 133 students from 29 African countries spread over four Chinese cities. The author found out that the majority of students "were concerned about racial discrimination" (ibid: 132). They reported that they were "insulted, shunned and feared as a matter of course" (Gillespie 1999: 137). Similarly, an embassy counselor who participated in the study indicated that it was hard to "find a single one talking anything good about China" among the students from his country (ibid: 146).

7.1.2   Three Decades of Campus Violence

Until the late 1980s, African students in China experienced physical violence from the Chinese population as a whole, as a result of nationwide "anti-Black" resentments in China (Sautman 1994). Most of the attacks against Africans took place on university campuses (Sautman 1994, Gillespie 1999, King 2013, Dikotter 1994, Sullivan 1994; Hevi 1963, Li 2018, Okouma Mountou 2008, Liu 2013, Crane 1994). Even though what Sullivan terms as "racially inspired attacks" (1994: 445) within university campuses, this only caught the media attention in the 1980s, although the literature suggests that violence against Africans in China started as early as 1962. From the literature on Africans in China during the Mao and post Mao era, I listed over eighteen clashes between African and Chinese students in China 1962 and 1989, which occurred in several cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Tianjin, Xi´an, Shenyang, Wuhan and Hangzhou.

The first act of violence against Africans presented by Hevi occurred in the Peace Hotel in Beijing in March 1962. He referred to the incident as "the Ali Affair" (1963: 162) in reference to Ali, a Zanzibari student, who was beaten up by the workers of the hotel. Two African journalists who were coincidentally staying at the same hotel were also assaulted when they came to witness the incident when they heard the noise. This incident was one of the main causes of what Hevi termed an "exodus".

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The works of Sautman (1994) and Sullivan (1994) on anti-Black racism in China address in detail the racial tensions between Africans and Chinese from the 1970s to the 1980s. Shanghai, Tianjin and Nanjing were the main (but not only) epicenters of violent clashes. The major clash between African and Chinese students in the 1970s occurred from the 3rd to the 4th of July 1979 at the Shanghai Textile Engineering Institute. "African students were stoned and the foreign student's hall of residence was besieged by Chinese hurling bricks" (Sautman 1994: 415). Also, African students' "possessions were destroyed as the police stood by" (ibid).

Violence against African students in China gained momentum in the 1980s. Even though Shanghai was still the center of the violence until mid-1985, other Chinese cities also came into play, with Tianjin and Nanjing in the pole positions (see Sautman 1994; Gillespie 1999; Dikotter 1994; Sullivan 1994; Li 2018; Okouma Mountou 2008, Liu 2013; Crane 1994). The most publicized clash ever between African and Chinese students in China occurred at Hehai University campus in Nanjing in December 1988. Its scope and scale made it "the most open, mass and sustained" hostility against African nationals (Sautman 1994: 418). Chinese and African students "fought each other with stones and bottles" (ibid: 449), rooms of several Africans were destroyed, many African and Chinese students were injured. Within the same period, anti-African protests were also recorded in Hangzhou (Sullivan 1994). This series of incidences marked the end of what Gillespie (1999) describes as "the decade of conflict across campuses".

The literature suggests a variety of explanations to the violence against African students. These include the favorable treatment of African students by Chinese authorities as compared to their Chinese co-students, romantic relationships between African males and Chinese females, as well as existing "racialized trends of thought" (Dikötter 1994). Other explanations include political dissatisfaction of Chinese students channeled into anti-Black racism. How did social experiences of African students impact the 'socialism business' in Africa?

7.1.3 Experiences of African Students in China and the 'Socialism Business' in Africa

With regard to the attitudes of African students in China in the 1960s, Hevi (1963) points out that they left China in a state of "disillusionment". This feeling of disillusionment which resulted from their social experiences, not only constituted a significant obstacle to making the students "good communists" (ibid) but could also contribute to turning them against China, as Hevi indicates: "But the Chinese realized, as we also did, that every student returning home in disillusionment constituted an argument against China. Those students were not dumb; they

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could speak, and China´s international reputation wasn´t going to be improved if a whole lot of returned students started talking in the outside world in a big way" (ibid: 138). What is more, in terms of social background, African students in China until the late 1980s were selected on political grounds. They were mostly from the political elite class and were thought to take on political positions upon returning to their respective countries. Their social background exacerbated the risk of the negative political effects of the students' discontentment, as Sautman (1994: 413) highlights: "(…) because the persecuted were themselves part of the proto-elites of foreign states, there may be long-term consequences for Sino-African relations."

This simply means that the underlying objective of China to 'win the hearts and minds' of the enrolled students was not achieved. More directly, the feedback of the African students about the 1988-89 Nanjing anti-Black protest had produced negative and unintended political outcomes. Sautman, for instance, reports critical reactions from governments and opinion-leaders in Kenya, Nigeria, Liberia, Benin, Senegal, Gambia, Ghana and even the Organization of African Union (OAU). In their opinion, the confrontation was "not accidental". They interpreted the "appalling situation" as "yellow discrimination", "apartheid in disguise", "pressure campaign of a racist nature" (Sautman 1994: 422). As indicated earlier, the confrontation led to the departure of many African students from China, with the support of their national governments. Some countries, Benin for instance, threatened to turn down Chinese scholarships in the future.

Overall, leaving China on such ground, returning students undoubtedly had a negative impression of China and thus were likely to spread a pale image of China in their various countries. Moreover, the "adverse commentary in the African media" about China brought about diplomatic tensions between China and a series of African countries and constituted a political obstacle to the expansion of Communism across Africa (Sautman 1994: 419).

7.2 Social life of Cameroonian Students in China in the Post-FOCAC Era and China's Soft Power Attempts

This section aims to analyze the social experiences of Cameroonian students in China in a context where the enrolment of foreign students is part and parcel of the country's strategies of image branding and soft power strategies (Allison 2013; Antwi-Boateng 2017; Hartig 2016; Haugen 2013; King 2013; Kurlantzick 2007; Nye 2004; Rotberg 2008; Taylor 2011; Nordtveit 2011; Rein 2014; Sautman and Hairong 2009; Shao 2012; Rønning 2016; Zhang 2016). Considering student satisfaction as a prerequisite for the effectiveness of education as a soft

power mechanism, the focus here is on the social life of Cameroonian students in contemporary China on the one hand, and how their everyday life experiences shape their attitude towards China as a country on the other hand. The analysis of the social life of Cameroonian students in China considers several elements, including the nature of social interactions with Chinese citizens as a whole and students in particular, students´ perception of the police, the social impact of the ban on student jobs, and so on. The section also engages with the 'ignorance versus racism' debate which has emerged from the field data.

7.2.1 Patterns of Social Interaction between Cameroonian and Chinese Students: A Distant Cohabitation

A positive stay-abroad experience (which nurtures the feeling of giving something back to the host country) of foreign students is shaped by several factors including the extent of their social interactions with the local community and the sense of community they share (Atkinson 2010; Rawnsley 2016). Social interaction means not only the ways in which people interact with others but also how they react to how other people act (Barkan 2005). The focus here is on the forms of collective and individual relationships Cameroonian students maintain with Chinese citizens within and outside the university campus on the one hand, and the factors informing these patterns of interaction, on the other hand. Generally, my field observations in China suggest two patterns of social interaction between Cameroonian and Chinese students: formal and informal.

7.2.1.1 Formal interactions

Photograph 10 Chinese students having their hair braided by Cameroonian co-students at ZJNU during the celebration of the anniversary of the university (photo, Severin Kaji, Jinhua, April 2016).

Formal interactions refer to encounters initiated by university administrations through different events. At Zhejiang Normal University, for instance, I participated in three activities organized by the university. The first was the celebration of the anniversary of the university which is organized on a yearly basis. During the event, each group of foreign students was given a stand to represent their countries by exhibiting cultural objects (works of art, clothes, decoration) and/or cooking food, with the financial support of the university. Cameroonian female students usually offer hair services (see picture above) to Chinese females who were willing to have their hair braided. Another event organized by the university in which I participated was the *huódòng* (physical activities). This is a series of sport activities (volleyball and football) organized for all students of the university; taking place in the afternoon after classes and lasting for three days. The participation was mandatory and participants were issued participation attestations which, according to some research participants, were very important when applying for university or provincial scholarships.

The university also organized tutorial classes for Chinese language learners. During the time I was registered as a student, the teacher responsible for our class provided us with the telephone numbers of Chinese students to contact in case we needed help with our lessons or

homework. I personally had one meeting with two students. The tutorials were sometimes organized in a large group and scheduled in a classroom. Chinese students waited in the room and foreign students who needed support could just show up, without any prior booking or other arrangements.

7.2.1.2   Informal Interaction

Informal interaction designates patterns of contact initiated by the students, in other words, this relates to friendship or comradeship. During my research stay in China, I observed the conspicuous absence of social interaction between foreign students and their Chinese counterparts in places like university restaurants or cafés (as is the case in Germany, for example). Even though most of the Cameroonian students (40 out of 70) said they had Chinese friends, their social interaction is limited. Concerning the frequency of their meetings, the three answers provided in interviews included (in descending order): "when they need my help" (18), "seldom" (13), "when I need their help" (9). However, a few research participants said that they often went out for food or drinks with their Chinese friends. There were also four (out of seventy) Cameroonian students who had Chinese girlfriends[65].

My observation of the very limited contact between Cameroonian and Chinese students is consistent with the conclusions of earlier studies on the internationalization of higher education in China (Ding 2016; Lagrée 2013). For instance, Lagrée's (2013) investigation of several universities in Beijing, Shanghai, Taiwan and Guangdong depicts the organization of life on university campuses in China as made up of three juxtaposed groups: Chinese mainland students, Asian foreign students including Chinese overseas students and the "Black and White" students, that is, students who do not fall under the two first categories. According to the author, contact opportunities between Chinese students and other groups of students are unlikely. Similarly, Ding (2016: 332) observed specifically for Shanghai that "international and local students are basically two separate groups that do not interact well". Yet, as Atkinson (2008) emphasizes, the attitudes of foreign students toward their host country is highly influenced by the extent of person-to-person interactions and the sense of belonging to the same community with local students.

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[65] There were no Cameroonian girls with a Chinese boyfriend.

The literature also addresses the factors that contribute to this pattern of social interaction. These include the housing system (Chinese students and foreign students live in separate accommodation), cultural differences, language barriers and the absence of entertainment culture among local students (due in part to their limited financial resources), (Ding 2016; Lagrée 2013).

According to most Cameroonians in China, another explanation for the limited interaction between local students and foreigners is the former's supposed scheming or calculating attitude. Within the Cameroonian student community there was a common belief that Chinese students only make friends with foreign students in general if there is specific interest (learning English, for example). African students in China in the late 1980s and 1990s had the same representation of the Chinese. For instance, in his autobiographical book on the life of African students in China, Okouma Mountou (2008), a Gabonese who studied in China from 1987 until 1995, highlighted the importance of friendship with Chinese students for learning the Chinese language, and complained about the difficulty to make friends with the latter. He claims:

> "(…) very few Chinese students are interested in [friendship with] foreign students, unless for a hidden interest. When a Chinese visits you, [it is because] either he/she would like you to get him foreign currency, buy him a good quality electronic device from Hong Kong, help him get a foreign girlfriend, or search for a scholarship abroad. In case the expectations cannot be met, he/she will never visit you again" (2008: 159, original in French, author's translation).

Whether this perception of Chinese people is right or wrong, it is important to indicate that it similarly applies to some Cameroonian students in China, as well as those of other nationalities, who engaged in friendship or romantic relationships with Chinese students out of specific interests, such as networking for job search, financial support and improving Chinese language skills. The works of Zhou (2017) and Lan (2017), for instance, suggest that marriage/partnership with Chinese women in Guangzhou is in part a strategy for African men to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility.

7.2.2 Perception of China as a Host Country: What it Tells About China's Soft Power

The attitude of international students towards a host country is in part dependent on their satisfaction with their social life during their study stay. Cameroonian students expressed mixed feelings regarding their social life in China. On the one hand, they were all highly satisfied with the living conditions in China, specifically the means of transportation, the quality of

infrastructure such as water and electricity supply, and delivery service. Tino, a Bachelor's student in Beijing, made a comparison between Cameroon and China in the following terms:

> "Coming from Cameroon, China is like a paradise. Since I got here, there has never been a power cut or water suspension like we regularly experience in Cameroon. The roads are all well tarred and illuminated. The transport system is perfect. There are so many options to go from here to the city center. There are hospitals here and there, even though the service is a bit problematic. No need to go to the market. Whatever you need, you can buy online and it will be delivered to you very fast. Even food you can buy online" (interview with Tino, Beijing, April 2015, translated from French).

Despite the excitement with the facilities, research participants were less satisfied with their social life in China. This was due to a sense of insecurity and vulnerability which, according to students' narratives, results from a range of factors, including the partiality of the Chinese police, a ban on student jobs in China as well as alleged racism.

7.2.2.1 "No Justice for Foreigners in China, Especially Africans": The alleged Partiality of the Police in China

Many Cameroonians students shared the perception that there was no justice for foreigners in China because the Chinese police was partial. During my stay in China, I was often advised by Cameroonian students to avoid any situation with a Chinese person that may require police intervention "because a Chinese will never be proven wrong no matter the case" (Prince, Hangzhou, April 2015, translated from French). The partiality of the police in China was underlined by stories about incidents which occurred between African (including non-students) and Chinese citizens, and the ways in which the Chinese security service handled them.

Adrian, for instance, one of the research participants in Guangzhou, recounted the story of an African found dead on a basketball court of a university campus in Guangzhou. His corpse was discovered by a maintenance agent. However, the police never established the circumstances of the incident, which gave rise to rumors within the African student community in Guangzhou that he was murdered out of jealousy by the Chinese with whom he was playing basketball and that the police were protecting the identity of the murderers. As Adrian explained, students' suspicion was backed by the fact that gathering information on the incident was an easy task for the Chinese police, considering its investigation capacity. He mentioned, for instance, the number of surveillance cameras within and outside the university campus:

"There are cameras everywhere at the university gates and within the campus. Nothing happening on this campus can be hidden from the police, unless they [the police] decide not to know. It is possible for them [the police] to know who gets in, who comes out, and at what time. [However,] the case just ended like that. Nobody finally knew a thing about the death of this student. But, I am sure the case would have taken a different turn if it was a reverse situation, that is, a Chinese person found dead in a playground after a game with Africans. The case would go viral on the internet and the media and the Chinese police would do everything possible to find out what happened." (Interview with Adrian, Guangzhou, March 2015, translated from French).

Despite the fact that Adrian's account on the incident was perhaps distorted, his opinion on the police in China was in line with the complaints of students in other cities. Bedel, a Master's student in the city of Jinhua commented: "If a Chinese slaps your face and you return it, the fact that you were just reacting to something he did to you would never count. The Chinese would always be considered a victim of your brutality, no matter what" (interview in April 2015, translation from fieldnotes). Bedel's comment was based on a motorbike accident between a Chinese lady and a Cameroonian student. From the explanation of Bedel, the Chinese lady was "to blame because she was chatting on the phone while driving as they do here". The Chinese lady was injured and the Cameroonian student was taken to the police, where he had to sign an engagement to pay for the lady's treatment. Bedel further commented:

"My concern was not about the Cameroonian having to pay for the treatment of the lady but the fact that only Chinese people have such advantage. There have been cases of accidents in which Chinese were unarguably in fault. But it is always a problem for the police to acknowledge it. And in case they acknowledge it, they will tell you to be understanding because things happen. Yet, there is no such thing like being understanding when Chinese are the ones complaining" (interview with Bedel, April 2015, translated from French).

Overall, Cameroonians generally shared the sentiment that justice in China was only for the Chinese, that is, "a country where there is no right for foreigners" as a research participant put it. In their narratives, some research participants often pointed to the fact that "police in China is ruder when it comes to Black people, especially from Africa (…). A Black American will never be treated the same as a Cameroonian for example" as commented Edmond, a Master' student in Guangzhou (conversation with Edmond, Guangzhou, March 2015). To illustrate this point, Cameroonians in Guangzhou often told the story of a Black person who

was severely beaten by the local police[66]. Upon realizing that it was a Black American, the police apologized: "It was funny how the police guys humbled themselves when they realized that it was not an African. Police in China will never make an apology to any Black African. Never" (ibid).

Even though the research participants' assessment of the police in China might be exaggerated, it is seemingly evidenced that their perception negatively affects their view of China as a destination country. It is also important to note that administering justice in China was part of the grievances raised by African students in China during the Mao and post Mao eras, as outlined by Hevi (1962 187-188):

> "Yet another grievance of ours was that we had no justice and security. We recognized it clearly through the Ali assault case. When the incident occurred, the police did not take any statement from Ali, neither did they bother to question any of the foreigners who were on the spot and who, by any way, were unanimous in their condemnation of Chinese brutality on the occasion. What the police did was to take statements from the Chinese side only and then give their "judgment" on that. It is true that on Wednesday evening they came with the intent to take Ali´s statement, but they brought along with them at the same time a written and stamped "judgment" pronouncing Ali guilty. We found it difficult to understand this novel method of administering justice: judgment first, statement afterwards."

Similarly, Okouma Mountou, the Gabonese who studied in China from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, made the same observation. Drawing on how the Chinese police handled a bicycle accident involving a Guinean student and a Chinese citizen, he concluded: "(…) whether you are at fault or not, the Chinese is always right" (2008: 116, author's translation).

7.2.2.2 The Perceived Risk of a Love Relationship with a Chinese Girl

The growing presence of Africans in China has led to an increase in African-Chinese marriages and partnerships in China involving especially Chinese women and African men (Lan 2018; Zhou 2017). According to Lan, these ties constitute for most African business people a coping strategy "to circumvent, negotiate, and overcome some of the structural constraints imposed on their physical and social mobility in urban China" (2018: 145). This implies that having a Chinese wife or partner is an asset for the business and is thus sought after.

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[66] Lan (2018) also mentions the same story as reported by the Nigerians participating in her 2018 study on the new African diaspora in China.

Contrary to this perception, informal conversations with some male[67] research participants rather depicted romance relationship with Chinese females as a risk, and thus to be avoided. Research participants often illustrated their perceptions through stories of other students which they had witnessed or heard about. They mostly reported situations where, to take revenge on their African boyfriends for cheating or threatening to end the relationship, Chinese girls reported their boyfriends to the police for alleged rape or physical violence. As a result, African boyfriends would "be imprisoned or deported without any proof of rape or physical violence through medical expertise", a research participant commented. One of the students to whom I talked during my first stay in China in 2015 had a Chinese girlfriend. When I returned to China one year after, he told me that the relationship had ended. He explained the cause of the break-up as follows:

> "One day we went to a party where there were other Africans. She did not appreciate the fact that from time to time I talked to some fellow students, especially females. She became very grumpy and when we got home, she said that I had ignored her at the party because I was having an affair with one of the African girls I had talked to. I tried to explain to her that she was wrong but she was not convinced. She started crying and threw my phone against the wall and the screen got broken. I got very angry at her and she told me that if I did anything to her she would call the police and say that I had hit her. She said so because she knew that the police would never doubt her. She knew that in front of the Chinese police, Chinese citizens are always right. From then onward, I felt so powerless and also realized that I was at risk. She could one day actually call the police to make up a story against me. Who would ruin his/her life because of women's issues? I simply started avoiding her, claiming that I was busy. That is how the story ended and never again I will have a relationship with a Chinese" (Interview with Adrian, Guangzhou, August 2016, translated from French).

Many research participants also claimed that they had decided to avoid a romance relationship after having heard of situations where African students with Chinese girlfriends were assaulted by Chinese men out of jealousy. "When you are talking to a Chinese girl on campus, the way Chinese boys look at you clearly shows that they do not appreciate it. There

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[67] I only focus on male participants because none of the female research participants had ever dated a Chinese man. Within the Cameroonian student community in China it was argued that Chinese men are generally shy when it comes to interacting with non-Chinese, especially girls. It should also be noted that cases of love relationships described in the literature involved Chinese women and African men and the explanation is almost the same. For Okouma Mountou "Chinese men are intimidated by the roundness of African women as they are used to slim women" (2008: 161, translated from French). Beyond this explanation, the attitude of Chinese men might also be shaped by the racial nationalism, an argument developed at the end this section.

is no doubt that they will attack you if they would have the opportunity", argued Tijo, a Cameroonian student in Beijing. This opinion corroborates that of Marvin, another Cameroonian student in the city of Jinhua who had a Chinese girlfriend. I asked him whether he sometimes felt in danger because of his relationship with a Chinese girl. He said: "Undoubtedly. Chinese men do not appreciate the relationship. Their gaze says it all. I can walk hand in hand with my girlfriend within the university campus without any problem but never in a remote area. They [Chinese men] will probably lynch me. There are so many stories of Africans murdered because of their relationship with a Chinese girl. Generally, if there is no violence against Africans who have Chinese girlfriends within universities, it is thanks to the infrastructural development of China […]. There are surveillance cameras everywhere on campus." (Conversation with Marvin, Jinhua, July 2016, translated from French).

Moreover, Cameroonian students from the city of Jiujiang told me the stories of two African students who had Chinese girlfriends and who were dismissed from the university. For the research participants, there was a connection between the university administration's decision and the fact that the students in question were in a relationship with a Chinese girl. The first research participant to narrate the stories was Mira. She alluded to the cases when we discussed the regulations at her university. The first case concerned a Ghanaian who had a Chinese girlfriend, a student from the same university. The university was aware of the relationship between the two students and had summoned the Ghanaian to draw his attention to the fact that he was "not allowed to have a romantic relationship with a Chinese female student", as Mira put it. Despite the warning, the relation continued and "one day the Chinese girl was caught in the room of the Ghanaian. She even came out naked as she wanted to escape. It caused a scandal on the university campus and the Ghanaian was finally dismissed for insubordination." (Interview with Mira, Changsha, July 2016, translated from French). The main motive for his dismissal was that he had violated the rules of the accommodation by inviting a female in his room, which was forbidden.

The second story also involved a Ghanaian. He used to drive his Chinese girlfriend's car even though he did not have a driving license. As Mira said, the university administration also told him to end the relationship, which he did not. One day, he got checked by the police and was fined for driving without a license. The police also informed the university about the sanction, and as a result he was dismissed. The reason for the dismissal was that he was a bad student and also had difficulties paying his school fees on time. For Mira, "the university's claim was absolutely wrong because the document of the student indicated that not only was he

paying school fees on time but he also had good grades". Foreign students petitioned to have the student reinstated but these attempts were in vain.

Two other students from the same university as Mira told me the same stories when I jokingly asked them if they had a Chinese girlfriend. Regarding the case of the student caught without a driving license, I argued that it is reprehensible to drive without a license and he reacted:

> "You are definitely right but what does driving without a driving license have to do with someone's student status? Why should the police inform your university about things you do off-campus in the first place? […] the student in question told us that he was not surprised about the university decision because someone from the university administration once openly told him that sooner or later he will pay for his relationship with the Chinese girl." (Interview with Moses, Changsha, July 2016, translated from French).

To argue against the causal link between the dismissal of the concerned students and their relationships with Chinese girls, I told the three research participants who narrated the stories that I personally knew two Cameroonian students in other cities who had Chinese girlfriends who had no problem with the university administration, especially as one of them even lived in the same accommodation as a university administration staff member. Therefore, I emphasized the breaking of the university dormitory regulations as the main motive for the university decision. To challenge my perspective, one of the research participants claimed that even though students were not authorized to invite other students in their rooms,

> "the rule is tougher when Chinese girls are concerned (…). There are many cases where girls are caught in boys´ rooms, but since it usually involves foreigners, it is overlooked. The truth is that African students who have problems with the university administration in most cases have Chinese girlfriends. It might be a coincidence but African students at my university believe that it is implicitly prohibited to have a love relationship with a Chinese girl." (Interview with Moses, Changsha, July 2016, translated from French).

Again, it should be emphasized that the foregoing should not be taken for granted. It is possible that the research participants in their narratives exaggerated or altered some aspects of the incidents. Moreover, as indicated earlier, I personally came across a few Cameroonian students who maintained love relationship with Chinese girls without any threat from their university administration. However, historical accounts of the attitude of university and political authorities regarding interracial relations between foreign males (especially non-Europeans) and Chinese females allow reconsidering these stories. In his report on "the girl friend headache" to which I have alluded earlier, Hevi indicated that the "relations between the

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authorities and [African students] became more strained than ever" because some of the students "were too bold with the [Chinese] girls" (1962:173). However, Hevi does not provide further indication of any sanctions taken against students who had relationships with Chinese girls.

Similar tensions between the university administration and African students were also reported throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. In a chapter under the heading "*Le probleme des femmes en Chine*" (women-related issue in China) in his autobiographical book, Okouma Mountou (2008: 116) indicated that any suspected proximity between a Chinese female student and an African male was "a whole lot of problem" (author's translation, original in French). To illustrate, he recounts the following anecdote:

> "[…] after a mathematics lesson, an African student and a Chinese girl sat in the garden of the Telecommunication University in Peking and were going through a mathematics book searching for non-understood sections. The guards on watch pounced on them, as they found the two [students] suspicious. The students almost laughed because the African student had just intended to make friends so as to learn the Chinese language (…). At that time when you were apprehended, you were submitted to questioning and in case you were at fault, you would be dismissed" (Okouma Mountou 2008: 162, author's translation, original in French).

Love relations between African men and Chinese women constituted a crucial element in the campus violence against African students, which culminated in the 1989 Nanjing incident known as anti-African protest. As Lan (2017:147) put it, "The event started with Chinese students' resentment toward relationship between African males and Chinese females on the college campus". The same as university administrators, Chinese students raised no concern about relationships between Chinese females and non-Black males (Lan 2017, Crane 1994, Sautman 1994). This is the result of nationalist conceptions of racial hierarchy in China that early on were influenced by reformist intellectuals, including Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei (Dikotter, 1994). Adopting a scientific racism inspired by Western Darwinism, they suggested a racial hierarchy which Dikotter describes as followed: "In their racial hierarchy, the white and yellow races were opposed to darker races doomed to extinction by hereditary inadequacies. Blacks were seen as lazy, stupid and incapable of progress. In contrast, some whites (particularly Anglo-Saxons) were considered natural-born rulers. The reformers expressed alarm at the supposedly higher sexual drives of blacks, which Liang cited as underlying and justifying the lynching of African-Americans. Kang advocated the eradication of darker races through dietary change, migration, sterilization and intermarriage" (Dikotter 1994: 427). This

classification constituted the foundation of the Chinese traditional aesthetic and was included into school curricula and thus transmitted across generations.

With the emergence of racial nationalism from the late 19th century onward, race became the main definer of the Chinese nation and fostered the perception of China as a biologically specific entity or a biological unit. Thus, as Dikotter describes it, 'Chineseness' is seen to be primarily a matter of biological descent, physical appearance and congenital inheritance (Dikotter 1994: 404). As a result of this perception of Chineseness and otherness, there have been "general Chinese anxieties over issues such as "who can be Chinese, who can produce Chinese children, what kinds of interracial relationships are acceptable for Chinese women, and the impact of foreign immigration by people of African descent into China" (Frazier and Zhang 2014: 238).

Thus, the concern regarding romance relationships between Chinese and Africans reflects the perceived necessity to preserve the Chinese gene-pool; i.e., the idea to protect it from being corrupted by Blacks (see Sautman 1994) and to prevent inferior births (Dikotter 1994). The violent attitude of Chinese students regarding love relationships between Africans and Chinese from the 1960s through to the late 1980s should be interpreted in the light of nationalism as Dikotter argues:

"University students have been the most prominent social group involved in one of the more recent attempts to promote skin colour as a marker of social status in China. Physical attacks and demonstrations against African students on the university campuses of the People's Republic of China throughout the 1980s have been the most widely publicized feature of these racialized practices […]. Far from being a manifestation of a vestigial form of xenophobia, these events are an intrinsic part of racialized trends of thought which have been diversely deployed in China since the end of the19th century. (Dikotter 1994: 411).

This nationalist trend of thought is still present in contemporary China. In 2017, Shanshan Lan examined the Chinese internet representation of African migrants in Guangzhou. Her analysis of the perception of Chinese-Black marriages in the cyberspace revealed that there is still a demonization of Black sexuality and "Chinese/black marriages are constructed as a threat to China's birth control policy and the purity of the Chinese race/nation" (Lan 2017: 147)

While these nationalistic trends may give some credibility to the students' perception of romantic relationships with Chinese women as risky, it is important to insist on the need to

critically review students´ discourses and avoid systematic generalizations; i.e. the risk may be real in some places and not others.

7.2.2.3. Seeing a Doctor: Female Students' Challenges

The registration process at a Chinese university begins with a medical checkup at a hospital suggested by the university. As a student, I went to the hospital with a group of Cameroonian students including females. While walking into the hospital and searching for the reception, I noticed that all doors were open and I could see doctors talking with patients. I was the first in the consultation room and the door remained open; i.e. a patient could enter the room and talk to the doctor during my checkup which required me to take off my shirt. At some point, female students who were being consulted in the next room started an argument with a Chinese female. When I came out from the room, I was told that the argument started because Cameroonian female students gathered at the door and kept it closed so as to prevent Chinese patients to enter the room while their fellow Cameroonians were being consulted. This was the only guarantee for their privacy. Due to the the lack of privacy at the hospital, female students were reluctant to see a doctor in case of sickness. As a female student in Changsha said: " I pray to God not to fall sick here in China. Seeing a doctor here is a big challenge. There is no privacy when you are talking to a doctor… other patient are just behind you waiting for their turn. You cannot go into details if you suffer from certain diseases, unless it has become very critical" (interview with Mercy, Changsha, July 2016).

Some female students confided that in case of gynecological infections, they would either wait until they travelled out of China or ordered medicine from Cameroon when someone was coming to China. A medical students said:

> "Even in a face-to-face setting, it is already embarrassing to open up to a doctor for women suffering from some sort of diseases. It is thus impossible to do so when you have people around you. People would prefer to call a doctor in Cameroon to ask for advice and try to obtain medicine from Cameroon if possible, because here in China, contrarily to Cameroon, you can only buy medicine on medical prescription. This practice is dangerous for women´s reproduction health. They take drugs without having done a checkup to know exactly what they are suffering from. Such practice exposes them to complications" (phone conversation with Mira in October 2018, translated from French)

Even though these complaints are understandable, they have to be qualified. In fact, it is important to emphasize that seeing a doctor is not necessarily the first choice in Cameroon as auto-medication is a common and even dominant practice. This is favored by the easy accessibility of different types of medication. Besides de proliferation of street medicine, one can also purchase medicine from the pharmacy over the counter. Therefore the problem may be the consultation practice in China as well as the (in)accessibility of medicine.

The last aspect of the social life concerns Cameroonian students' experiences of racialization and how this impacts their attitude towards China. For a better structuring, they are discussed in a separate section.

7.2.3   Experiences of Racialization in China and the Soft Power Ideal

It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to extensively engage in the racial discourse in China or what the literature often considers anti-Black racism in China (Bodomo 2012; Haugen 2012, 2013; Lan 2014, 2016, 2018; Li 2008; Li et al 2009, 2012; Lyons et al 2008; Zhou et al 2016; Zhu and Price 2013). However, students' narratives suggested that experiences of racialization constitute a main element of their assessment of their overall experience as foreigners in China. Students' experiences of racialization fundamentally influence the attractiveness and the public image of China. This connection makes it relevant to unpack the students' race discourse which both aspects covers how students perceive and interpret the attitudes of the Chinese population and of the Chinese state towards them.

7.2.3.1   The Racism Versus Ignorance Debate

From my field data, the attitudes of the Chinese population towards Blacks emerged as a key aspect of student (dis)satisfaction with their social life in China. Research participants viewed the attitudes of the Chinese in different ways. Martha, a master's student in Jinhua reported a very positive experience of sharing a room at the hospital with a Chinese student. She commented:

> "My roommate was a Chinese. I was particularly struck by the attention and care she gave me. She always asked me how I was doing, encouraged me to take my medicine. She also constantly offered me food. Africans associate the behavior of Chinese people with racism because of a lack of contact. When you have the opportunity to really interact with them [Chinese people], you realize how friendly and sociable they are." (Interview with Martha, Jinhua, July 2016).

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This depiction by Martha echoes that of Ivo who graduated in medical studies from the University of Jiamusi in 2014 and then returned to Cameroon. He was very enthusiastic in his perception of Chinese people and explained:

"When you are in China, you are at home. When a professor tells the Chinese students to help us foreign students, they would take their time. It is not like here, where people would wonder what their interest in helping you may be. Being back to Cameroon, I still receive messages from my friends asking when I will return to China. Chinese people do not like problems. If Africans have problems here, it is either due to girlfriend-related issue, alcohol or drug affairs. (…) they cease people's girlfriends. There are exceptions but the few incidents between Africans and Chinese usually occur in bars or night clubs. This means that you will never get into trouble if you stay away from those places." (Interview with Ivo, Yaoundé, October 2015, translated from French).

Field material suggested that positive experiences like Ivo's and Martha's were rather limited. The majority of Cameroonians (both students and non-students) outlined racial issues, which they expressed through what Lan (2018: 10) qualifies as a "heightened awareness of being Black in China". The majority of the research participants negatively appreciated the attitudes of Chinese towards Black people. Attitudes of Chinese were qualified as curiosity, fear, avoidance, contempt, and fascination. The research participants had different interpretation of the attitudes of the Chinese. While some viewed them as resulting from ignorance, others attributed them to anti-Black racism in China.

For those supporting the 'ignorance' perspective or what even appeared as an understanding approach, the attitudes of Chinese towards Africans were a result of the lack of exposure to other people and cultures. Cati, for instance, a female student in Hangzhou commented:

"I just try to adapt to the context. It was very difficult to see Chinese people on the street photographing me without asking my permission, as if I was an object in a museum. People close their nose when you pass by, some even spit. Initially, I was convinced that it was really about racism. But from the kind of ridiculous questions I was often asked here and there, I understood that it was not out of racism. (…). You know, Chinese were not used to Africans of dark-skinned people until recently. They either do not even know about Africa or just know very little about it. So, I kind of understand them even if it is very hard to remain insensitive." (Interview with Cati, Guangzhou, April 2015, translated from French).

For the majority of Cameroonian students in China, the attitudes of the Chinese population towards Black people go beyond ignorance. "[…] there is no other word to term the ways Chinese treat Black people here. It is racism. There is racism in China, especially against

Black", stressed Tony, a student from the city of Hangzhou. To illustrate his point, Tony mentioned a situation of discrimination Black Africans allegedly faced in the English teaching job market in China. "It is well known here that a school can only hire a Black person when there is no White person interested in the job. Skin color is a determining recruitment criterion. Schools would rather hire a White from Eastern Europe with low command of English than a Black who has English as his/her mother tongue. There are even job announcements which precise the color of the skin of the person needed" (conversation with Tony, Hangzhou, April 2015, translated from French).

Tony's argument about the preference for Whites as English language teachers corroborates with that of a student from Russia. She taught English language in a school and also offered private tutoring classes to two Chinese pupils in the city where she lived. She told me that it was harder for Black Africans to get a teaching job in the city because school administration and children's parents preferred Whites. In her opinion, this was the reason why most Africans were only hired in remote areas, "places where someone who has a choice would not go because of the distance".

Cameroonian students in some cities reported discrimination against Black people or a preference for Whites in places like night clubs or bars. Tijo, a student in Beijing argued that "there are some clubs here in Beijing where you cannot get in as a Black person, unless you are in a group with White guys. Being with whites is not necessarily a guarantee that you will be allowed to enter but it makes a huge difference". Mica Lemiski's 2017 report "White Privilege as a Western Student in China"[68] suggests similar remarks. She compiles the voices of six foreign students (three Canadians, one Mozambican, one German and one Finnish) in China to show "what it's really like to live and study in China and why being treated like a VIP can either be wildly fun or weirdly dehumanizing". The point in the six stories is that skin color has a significant impact on the everyday life experiences of foreigners in Beijing. The story of the German student reads:

> "For my farewell party, we went to a club, and there were ten people, six of them blond girls. We got two bottles of Grey Goose—worth about $300 in that club—all for free. I felt like a king at first, but it was also really weird. They were catering to our every need, and we didn't pay a thing. It's hard to enter certain clubs if you're with Black people. I

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[68] The report is available at: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/nezaqb/white-privilege-as-a-western-student-in-china?ref=hvper.com. Last accessed, 15 September 2018.

have a friend from Mozambique, and once we went to a really nice club and booked a table in advance. We all met at the entrance—five Westerners and one Black person— and the promoter was like, "Yeah, you cannot enter." When we asked why, he told us it was because my friend looked dangerous, which was just crazy. We argued with the guy for about 15 minutes and told him that if he didn't let us in, we'd post on WeChat that the club was racist, and so he finally let us in. From there, it was open bar all night" (as quoted by Lemiski 2017).

Such remarks were quite frequent among the research participants. However, from my personal experience in China, it is important to note that the issue seemingly only prevailed in megacities. For example, in the small city of Jinhua, my main research site, I went to several night clubs but was never refused entry.

I often asked the students who viewed the attitudes of the Chinese towards Africans through the lens of racism to provide concrete examples of racist acts they had experienced in China. Students from Beijing and Wuhan mostly mentioned the fact that it was very hard for a Black person to get a cab, which I personally witnessed during one of my stays in Beijing. I had a discussion on the attitude of cab drivers with three students. When I argued that the behavior of cab drivers was probably influenced by widespread Chinese media representation of Africans as a threat (Lan 2018), my interlocutors reacted that there are no mitigating circumstances. One of them said: "There is no explanation to that. Nothing can change anything to the pain it causes me as a human being. It is very dehumanizing." (Conversation with Tijo, Beijing, April 2016, translated from French). It is important to emphasize that media reports in Beijing indicate that not only Black people face such forms of discrimination but all non-Chinese people in Beijing. However, the scale differs according to the skin color, as Jaffe (2012)[69] observed: "While non-Chinese nationals can have trouble getting a cab, it can be even worse for those with a darker skin".

Another behavior of Chinese some students interpreted as racist was the fact that some Chinese people often covered their noses when a Black person passed by, or even avoided sitting near them in the bus because of their supposed strong body odor which, according to the literature, Chinese often associate with dirtiness (Lan 2018; Li et al 2009; Zhou et al 2016). The research participants interpreted such attitudes as "disrespectful", "insulting" and an expression

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[69] Gabrielle Jaffe's report "Tinted prejudice in China" is available at https://edition.cnn.com/2012/07/24/world/asia/china-tinted-prejudice/index.html. Last accessed, 18 October 2018.

of Chinese "superiority complex", especially as they considered the Chinese people less clean than them. A research participant commented:

> "One day I went swimming with my girlfriend [an Asian]. There were several pools and each could contain five to six people. Users were free to move from one pool to another. When the pool was dirty, the manager would replace the water. He used a specific tool to measure the dirtiness. I noticed that whenever I met Chinese people in the pool they would leave and when I moved to a new pool, the manager would immediately go and check the water. It was never the case when Chinese changed to a new pool. I felt so bad and shocked so that I almost cried. Yet, my ex-Chinese girlfriend told me that Chinese people usually do not bath every day. Some can even go for two days in a row without taking a shower but they still think that they are cleaner than Africans. That is just a superiority complex, which results from the negative representation of the Black skin in China. In fact, it is one of Chinese racist attitudes towards Blacks […]." (Conversation with Marvin, Jinhua, July 2018, translated from French).

Another racist act mentioned by students was alleged racial profiling practiced by some police officers toward Africans in China. The majority of students believed that visa and passport checks by the police were more directed to Black people than other ethnicities. For instance, Maeva, a student in Guangzhou claimed: "Sometimes you have the feeling that they are out there looking only for Black people. I can't tell how many times I often get checked by the police in a single day. I hardly find the police checking passports and visas of White people. In their mind, only Africans can overstay their visas, only Africans do bad things in China (interview with Maeva, Guangzhou, March 2015, translated from French). This description of the police attitude in Guangzhou corroborates the observations of many scholars. Lan (2018: 98), for instance, indicates that despite the official claim that immigration control targets all foreigners "Africans are more likely to be stopped by the police for passport checks than other foreigners and they become the most vulnerable group in the local government's anti- illegal immigrants campaign". As a result, she observes that "most of the immigration raids in Guangzhou also occur in areas where African migrants are concentrated" (ibid: 102).

Medical students reported that during internship at hospitals, Chinese people were reluctant or often refused to be treated by a Black person. For the research participants, such attitudes were due to a social representation of Black people in China as "uneducated", "backward" and so on (see Chapter 6).

An important point to underline with regard to the race discourse of the research participants is that they often distinguished between racism in China and in Europe. Maeva, for instance, argued that what Africans experience in China is a "primary racism, which is different

from racism in European countries where people have been in contact with Black people for so long" (interview with Maeva, Guangzhou, March 2015, translated from French). Even if this nuance sometimes appeared as a mitigating circumstance, it seemingly did not make the alleged anti-Black racism acceptable either, as a research participant outlined: "The fact that the Chinese only recently got exposed to the external world or to Black people specifically, does not make any change in how you feel in the face of dehumanizing acts like spitting or closing noses when you pass by, being refused by cab drivers, and so on. The feeling is the same whether you are in Europe, in the U.S. or in China. Racism is unacceptable, wherever you experience it." (Conversation with Marvin, Jinhua, July 2018, translated from French).

7.2.3.2   Media and Representation of Blackness in China: On the Alleged Complicity of the Chinese Government

Many scholars have outlined what Lan (2016: 203) terms the "media production of the African threat narrative". That is, the influential role of the media in shaping and perpetuating a negative representation of Africans in China, namely in Guangzhou. Li et al (2009: 713), for instance, suggest that local media reports on Africans in Guangzhou emphasize negative aspects of their presence such as illegal immigration, questionable business practices, as well as drugs and AIDS problems. Yet, as Lan (2018: 57) argues, there "is clearly a correlation between popular negative stereotypes [and] excessive media coverage".

In their narratives, students who claimed that there was an anti-Black racism in China often outlined the complicity of the Chinese government in shaping a negative representation of Africa and Africans to the Chinese population. From the interviews and informal conversations, this alleged complicity is indirect, as summarized in the comment below by Max, a Cameroonian student in Guangzhou:

> "In their discourse, Chinese authorities present China-Africa relations as guided by friendship, brotherhood, solidarity, equality, mutual respect, and so on. Yet in reality, they don't really treat Africa and Africans as friends or brothers. Think about it: Chinese, like other people, are influenced by the media and education. What they see on TV or are taught at school is the truth. Racism or the perception of Africans in China is nothing but the outcome of the media. The Chinese media only show the hideous side of Africa. They show war and people starving or suffering from all kinds of diseases. There is hardly something positive about Africa on Chinese TV. They would not show cities like Kigali, Lagos and so on, I mean places with good infrastructure, where people are happy and joyful. Similarly, Africans in China are shown in the media as drug dealers, and as violent. The inevitable consequence of this is that it nurtures among the Chinese a condescending

attitude towards Africans. It is the same thing at schools. Teachers show images of misery in Africa (…). What is shocking is that we are talking about China, a country where the state controls or can control everything. I mean, the censorship regime in China is so strong and effective. The state knows about all TV programs here, whether on public and private media. Even on social media there is censorship. If you post something harmful to the image of China on Wechat, for example, it will be deleted. The Chinese government is definitely a party to the negative representation of Africa and Africans by Chinese (…) by not applying censorship to negative reports on Africa and Africans. The Chinese government cannot successfully claim to be unaware of how Chinese media show Africa and Africans to Chinese. You cannot do that to a genuine friend or brother. The Chinese government is not sincere at all." (Interview with Max, Guangzhou, August 2016, translated from French).

An event that the research participants mentioned as illustration to the alleged responsibility of the Chinese government was the 2018 Chinese New Year Gala aired on CCTV, a national TV channel. The skit started with a group of Africans performing dancing, and singing in Mandarin. Some were in traditional attires and others dressed up as zebras, lions, giraffes and antelopes. The second part of the show was a sketch in which a Chinese woman with a black face due to make-up played the role of an "African mother". She is overweight, with a large artificial posterior and wears an African traditional outfit. On the stage, she carries a fruit tray on her head and she is accompanied by an actor (supposedly Black) in a monkey suit, carrying a basket on his back.

The show was highly criticized within and beyond the Cameroonian community in China, as some aspects were considered racist. Some research participants were particularly critical toward the Chinese government which they considered to be an accomplice thereof. Their claim was that the Chinese government had the capacity to prevent the broadcasting of the show, or at least to remove the parts that they considered blatantly insulting and dehumanizing towards Africans. For instance, Marvin is Jinhua commented:

"The show and all its racist elements were definitely approved by the Chinese governments. Political authorities in China know everything. They knew the content of the show right from the beginning. I am sure that they even read and commented on the scripts. This is China… there is no freedom of press. You cannot just unilaterally decide on what to show on TV or write in a newspaper. The censorship is too heavy (…) and what is more, the show we are talking about was broadcast on a public channel." (Phone conversation with Marvin in March 2018, translated from French).

To much extent, the arguments of the research participants with regard to the censorship capacity of the Chinese government corroborate with findings of previous research on media control in China. Tan-Mullins (2016: 108) for instance, argues:

"(…) in China, unlike the West, the media is mostly controlled by the central government and censorship is a common affair. Indeed, media practices self-censorship due to domestic censorship guidelines. For example, the Chinese government sends out weekly directives to editors on what to publish or not (Council on Foreign Relations, 2015). Furthermore, China has the world's largest "Internet police" force, reportedly totaling approximately two million people […]. Tasked with erasing Wechat and Weibo (Twitter-like social media platforms) texts with sensitive messages and keywords, the Internet police are famed for erecting the "Great Wall of China" in the electronic sphere"

This chapter has suggested that despite the excitement with the high standard of life guaranteed by the quality social facilities in China, the research participants expressed concerns about their social life as foreigners and specifically as Africans in China. They pointed to racial discrimination in the job market, a partiality of the Chinese police and the attitudes of the Chinese population. The ban of student jobs which significantly limited students´ purchasing power led to their incapacity to satisfy their basic needs, especially feeding. These experiences of Cameroonian students in China is unlikely to produce positive effects in terms of image branding or attractiveness. This implies that the outcome of education as a soft power resource is currently limited for the Chinese.

Chapter Eight: Academic Experiences of Cameroonian Students in China: Critical Appraisal of Student (Dis) satisfaction with the Quality of Education

"In terms of university infrastructure, the difference between China and Cameroon is like night and day. At the University of Yaoundé 1 there were often more than one thousand students in a hall with 300 seats. It was normal to attend a three-hour lecture standing or sitting on the ground. I have never seen such a thing here in China, a country of about one and a half billion inhabitants. There is an uncountable number of lecture and reading rooms on this campus" (Aron, medical student in Changsha, interview in Changsha, July 2016).

"After my first semester, I understood that I was in a system where a student would hardly fail, as long as he [/she] attends classes. In China, you do not need to put so much effort in your assignments. Despite our poor command of the Chinese language, everyone has excellent grades (…) just do copy-paste. Cheating during exams here is normal (…) guys use their mobile phones and it looks very normal. The system is mind-numbing. Guys earn degrees here in China but they aren't worth much". (Prince, a student in Hangzhou, interview in Hangzhou, April 2015, translated from French).

This chapter focuses on the quality of education as a central element to student satisfaction. It is concerned with how Cameroonian students who have participated in this research assess their learning experiences in China, that is, how they perceive and account for the quality of the training at Chinese universities. These experiences help assess the effectiveness of China's intention of knowledge sharing and Cameroon's desire of learning from China.

Field data suggests that Cameroonian students have mixed opinions regarding the quality of education in China. While all of the students highly admired and appreciated the standard of the learning environment within Chinese universities, they were rather dissatisfied with the quality of the training received, in comparison with their initial expectations. The low quality of education was viewed as resulting from a combination of factors including language barriers, simplified training curriculum, a limited quality and quantity of courses, inadequate teaching methods, lax examination conditions, limited opportunities to acquire practical knowledge, etc. These factors have led to a university system which some students described as "mind-numbing", "mind killing" or a system "where you can be content with being average". Students also depicted the academic system in China as "a system in which it is impossible to fail" because "universities are more interested in student´s money than in their academic

achievement". Furthermore, "presence in class is a guarantee for passing" and "using one´s mobile phone during exams is normal".

The argument of this chapter is twofold. First, I argue that dissatisfaction with the quality of education negatively shapes students´ overall image of China and therefore constitutes an obstacle to the enhancement of China's soft power through education. I further contend that while students´ sense of self-reliance and effort towards academic adaptation are questionable, some universities in China adopt a somewhat lenient attitude towards foreign students in general and which could be seen as being driven by economic incentives rather than a real interest in the effective education of the students.

The first part of the chapter exposes the students' narratives on their learning experiences while the second analyses how they make sense of them. The last part of the chapter is a perspective of an African lecturer in China on the quality of English-taught study programmes in China.

8.1 Cameroonian Students' Overall Appreciation of their Training

The Cameroonian students in China usually assessed their training from two main perspectives: the learning environment and the quality of the training.

8.1.1 Learning Environment

The learning environment refers to the university infrastructure (buildings, libraries, laboratories, classroom, accommodation, etc.) and other learning facilities such as an access to internet, teacher-student ratio. All research participants emphasized the quality of the university infrastructure in China, which they characterized as "excellent", "perfect" and "irreproachable". In their descriptions and appreciation of the university infrastructure in China, the students explicitly made a comparison with the reality at Cameroonian universities. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Cameroonian universities are faced with several infrastructural challenges, ranging from crowded classrooms to poorly equipped laboratories. Coming from such an environment, the students were impressed and praised the university environment in China. Students majoring in technical subjects such as chemistry and mechanical engineering were particularly fascinated by the quality of the equipment in their faculty laboratories. Comparing the laboratories at Zhejiang Normal University and at Cameroonian universities, Christopher, a Master's student in Chemistry said: "In our library here, we have the latest apparatus for all sort of experiments. Anything you need, you just tell your supervisor and he will purchase it".

Research participants also stressed an access to other facilities such as university libraries, and the internet. In this respect, Christopher further commented:

Whenever you go to the library, there is always a seat available not only because it [the library] is really big but also because the students have many options for reading since there are several reading rooms. In Yaoundé I, the library is just too tiny that you can hardly find a seat, unless you are at the door when it opens." (Interview with Christopher, Jinhua, July 2016, translated from French).

Students also mentioned the availability and the quality of multi-sport centers existing on university campuses in China. Additionally, the Cameroonian students admired the physical environment of Chinese universities. This includes the large size of the university campuses and the green areas and the lakes across them, which the researched participants viewed as important for psychological well-being. Tony for instance, a Bachelor's student who moved to Hangzhou after studying Chinese language in Jinhua commented:

"University campuses in China are amazing not only for their size but also how they are planned. You can take a walk through the campus, you can do a picnic on campus and so on. The quietness of some areas on campus, especially the lakes, make them appropriate for contemplation, meditation and praying. Life would definitely be more stressful without such planning. In short, the construction and planning of universities in China constitutes a solution to the stressful life we have here in China." (Conversation with Tony Hangzhou, April 2015, translated from French).

However, despite the overall satisfaction with the high standard of university infrastructure and learning conditions in China, the majority of the research participants were less enthusiastic about the quality of the training received.

8.1.2 The quality of Education

The discussion of the quality of education includes two dimensions. While the first is concerned with how research participants perceive the quality of training offered by Chinese universities, the second presents possible reasons for their perception. For clarity's sake as well as for a better overall understanding, these two aspects are discussed in separate sections.

8.1.2.1 "Fictive Engineers", "*De Gros Titres Pour Rien*"

I would like to start the discussion with some anecdotes and jokes about education in China that caught my attention in several informal settings during my fieldwork in China. They portray the ironic or rather sarcastic tone in which students often talked about higher education in China. The relevance of presenting these jokes lies in their implicit or explicit connection

with the individual´s opinions about training in China, to be presented in the second part of the section.

The first joke is a conversation involving three Cameroonian students in Hangzhou, Tony, Prince and Gerald. It occurred at the birthday party of a Cameroonian student in the city of Hangzhou in April 2016. While I was standing outside the party room with Tony, my friend who had brought me to the party, Prince and Gerald stopped to greet us. Tony introduced them to me and mentioned their field of study. Prince and Gerald were studying architecture and civil engineering, respectively. After the introduction, Tony and the two joked (in French):

> Tony: "They are fictive engineers (…). They consider themselves engineers-to-be, they lie to people, especially to girls, that they are engineers, yet they know nothing. I am not sure this one [pointing at Gerald] can even make concrete" (The three individuals burst into laughter).

> Gerald: "You can put me to the test. Get me a construction contract and you will see what I am capable of".

> Tony: "We know each other so well; I cannot take such a risk".

> Prince: "Be nice! How can you `expose´[70] us like that in front of the elder brother [referring to me]". Big brother, [talking to me] don´t mind what he says. That is just a sabotage".

> Tony: "Never mind, he will not tell anybody".

During the party I had the chance to talk to Prince about education in China. He was in his last year but was not satisfied with his training. His plan was to return to Cameroon upon graduation. But he judged his skills too low to be competitive in the job market in Cameroon, which was why he was considering migrating to Canada to further his training[71].

The joke above reminded me of another setting I had witnessed a few weeks earlier in April 2015 during a meeting of the Cameroonian student association in Guangzhou. It was the first meeting session of the semester and there were about thirty participants. The internal regulation of the association provides self-presentation of the participants during the first meeting of the years. The presentation consisted in giving one´s name, field of study and the number of years spent in China. At the end of the round, one of the participants ironically said:

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[70] To 'expose' somebody in the Cameroonian jargon means disclosing something one would otherwise like to keep secret.

[71] Like Prince, there were many Cameroonian students in China who considered (and even succeeded) moving to another country, especially in the West. Beside their dissatisfaction with the quality of education, another main reason was the perceived accessibility of the job market in the West, in contrary to China.

"Big titles for nothing. People who attend lectures but who cannot follow forty per cent of what the lecturers say […]. Stop impressing girls for nothing"[72] (translated from my French). This statement prompted an outbursts of laughter, followed by comments, such as "They are fooling themselves", "we know each other", or "people who cannot tell you exactly what their subject is all about".

@black👩🏾‍🎓👨🏾‍🎓dream
When you are graduating & you don't even remember what you studied.
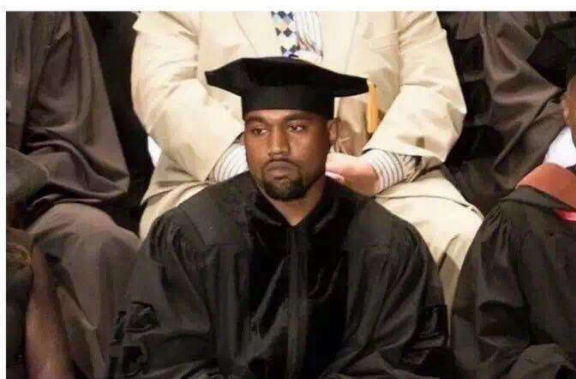
Four years of University studies in China to become a full time native teacher

Photograph 11 Screenshot of a message by a student on WeChat

The foregoing jokes are in a way related to this photo if not through the messages it exhibits, at least the context in which I came across it. I saw this picture for the first time in the WeChat groups of a Cameroonian student association in China in July 2016, the month when students graduate in China. While students were talking about graduation and employment opportunities, a member of the group posted this picture. It elicited reactions and comments, which mostly stressed the challenges in finding a job with a Chinese degree. One comment, for instance, read: "I hope you guys have learnt Chinese at least. Because that is the only thing you will bring from China. If you think you can compete with the guys back home, you are very badly mistaken because they are [well-prepared]". There were similar reactions qualifying graduates as "future engineer-translators within Chinese companies". I came across the same picture several times on social media posted either in group chats or on individual pages. As one can see, the foregoing jokes and anecdotes suggest a scepticism about the quality of the training in China. Individual interviews with the research participants (including university lecturers) provided explanations for this sceptical attitude. I introduce four case studies to illustrate how different students deals with the quality of training offered by Chinese universities.

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[72] In French : «de gros titres pour rien. Les gens qui vont en classe et ne comprennent même pas quarante pour cent de ce que l´enseignant dit (…). Cessez d´impressionner les filles pour rien »

8.1.2.2   Mercy: "I Am Not Up to the Task"

I met Mercy in July 2016 in the city of Changsha after her graduation in medical studies. By the time we met, she had returned to China only a few days earlier after her academic internship in Cameroon. The name Mercy appeared in my interview with another Cameroonian student. The latter suggested Mercy as a suitable person to meet, not only because he was quite new in China but also because he was aware of the challenges Mercy had experienced in her own training, especially with regard with the internship issue. By the time we met Mercy was facing difficulties collecting her degree because the person who was to sign certificates was unfortunately on vacation as it was during the holidays. Mercy was desperate, especially as her visa was about to expire and it was almost impossible for her to extend it for financial and bureaucratic reasons. Since the most likely option for Mercy was to return to Cameroon, I asked her if she had applied for jobs there. She replied:

> "No. I have not sent any [job] application. To be honest, I am not ready to practice as a medical doctor. I am not up to the task. I am searching for a clinical traineeship and mentorship. I need a professor or a mentor who will really be willing to take me under his/her wing." (Interview with Mercy, Changsha, July 2016).

Mercy had arrived China in 2009 as a self-sponsored student. For the five years of her training, she received the prize of best international student of the university. This prize, which is granted yearly on the basis of academic performance, consists of an amount of money equivalent to the annual school fees. "It was really helpful. I did not have to bother my parents for school fees", she admitted. Although the prize was granted on the basis of her outstanding performance, Mercy was very doubtful about her capacities as a physician. She lacked self-confidence and openly acknowledged her deficiency in terms of professional know-how, which is why she was planning to take either a specialization course or a traineeship in a hospital wherever she could find an opportunity. I asked Mercy how she felt about having been consecutively rewarded the best foreign student of the university and at the same time acknowledging the gaps in her training. She responded: "Look, the reward was all about my record or grades; and here in China, when professors realize that you are an assiduous student and you try hard to learn, they will always give you high grade. That was my case. (…) Having good grades here in China does not necessarily mean mastering the course. It is more about your attitude and how you are perceived by professors." (Interview in Changsha, July, 2016).

Mercy was in a dilemma regarding her career path. On the one hand, she considered staying in China for a master's programme at a different university but was wondering whether

the training system would be different. On the other hand, she was thinking of returning to Cameroon for a traineeship in a hospital, but had in mind the frustrating experience with her recent internship in Cameroon. Beside the difficulty in finding an internship in Cameroon, Mercy reported that she was constantly being mocked by colleagues for her skills, which were judged as very low: "People often asked me questions like what is your level in medicine or what kind of training do you receive there in China. You can imagine how it feels". At the end of our conversation, as Mercy knew that I was registered at Zhejiang Normal University, she asked me to enquire if there was an English-taught master programme for which she could apply. Mercy was not the only student who graduated but who at the same time acknowledged not being skilled enough in their respective field.

8.1.2.3   Richie and Conrad: The Secret of the 'Made in China' Remains a Mystery

I met Richie in Jinhua in July 2016. He had arrived in China in 2008. As he wanted to register for a Chinese-taught programme, Richy learned the Chinese language for two years. The reason for Richie to study in Chinese was that he found English-taught programmes very trimmed. After the language course, Richie registered for a bachelor's programme in Electronics. At the end of the four-year training, he took a master's in Computer Engineering at the same university. By the time we met, Richie had just graduated and was preparing to depart from China. I asked Richie to tell me about his training in China in the light of his initial expectations in terms of skills-transfer and knowledge. He said:

> "I have got to the end of my training path here. But the path was not as I expected (…). My expectation was to discover the secret of the 'made in China' motto, so as to be able to design TVs, mobile phones and other electronic devices 'made in Cameroon'. But all I had was classroom lectures and a few practical exercises. What I needed was just to spend four months where devices are manufactured. I needed to see how things were being designed. That was all I needed. (…) I came here to steal, so to say, the secret of 'made in China', but I was so far away from it. It is still a mystery to me." (Interview with Richie, Jinhua, July 2016, translated from French).

Richie´s initial plan was to set up an assembly center in Cameroon. The idea was to import electronic parts from China to make devices such as mobile phones, TVs, and tablets in Cameroon: "When you have the parts, all you need to fabricate an item are a formula, technological drawings and the assembly process, among others. That is what I came to China to learn but I am returning almost empty-handed". As Richie found his technical skills insufficient for his career prospects after six years of training, he was searching for an admission

for a complementary qualification training in France. Richie told me that he had not informed his family about his intention to further his training in France. He was reluctant to do so because he thought his family would not welcome the idea very positively, considering that his eight-year stay in China had been very expensive. Richie also said he found "it embarrassing to inform his family that he needed a complementary training after six years of study in China". In early 2017, Richie contacted me from France and informed that he had started a training programme there.

The perception of Richie is similar to that of Conrad, a student from the city of Wuhan. Conrad was doing a Master´s in Maritime Transports and Logistics Management on a Chinese government Scholarship Council at the Wuhan University of Technology. He was particularly critical of the gap between the programme syllabus and the course they were being taught in class. He ended his comments on his academic experience as follows:

> "Let say things as they are: If I was paying the tuition fees from my own pocket, I would have gone nuts. I don't know if it is the case in other universities but as far as I am concerned, they did not teach me anything. Except for the Chinese language, the rest [of the subjects] is very problematic. But, in the end, they grant you a degree as if they were saying: Take it and leave." (Interview with Conrad, Changsha, July, 2016, translated from French).

Many research participants considered moving to another country (especially to the West) upon graduation in China, for different reasons. In some cases, students intended to migrate to Europe only because Europe is perceived as "the real *bush*", "the real *mbeng*" (as described in chapter 6), that is, the place where chances to accumulate wealth are higher than in China. In this case, the aim was not necessarily to further their education. For students who seemed to have a well-planned academic project, the intention to move was mostly nurtured by their dissatisfaction with the quality of training in China, as in the case of Richie. I often heard statements such as "When I am done here, I need to find out where to really study". I personally know of four students who graduated from China and opted for additional training in Europe. All are enrolled at private institutions which are more costly, yet "worth it if one wants to be competent and competitive in the job market" as explained by one of the students.

In a nutshell, this perception of Chinese higher education corroborates with the findings of previous research on international students in China, including Chinese scholars. One of the recent articles is "Exploring the experiences of international students in China" by Ding (2016), a Chinese lecturer from Shanghai Normal University. The article focuses on the issue of student satisfaction and the author argues that although China has become a major destination for

international students attracted by "the distinctiveness of the Chinese language" as well as China´s "continuous economic growth", there is a "considerably and consistently low level of international students' satisfaction with their study" (2016: 319). According to the author, this situation is evidence that "China has not paid sufficient attention to improving its supply of higher education and other services." (2016: 319). My field data suggests several elements that account for the perceived low quality of higher education in China.

8.2   On the Perceived Low Quality of Education in China

This part of the chapter is concerned with what in the research participants' opinion constitutes the cause of the supposedly low quality of the training in Chinese universities. Before discussing these opinions in more depth, I would like to emphasize as highlighted in the methodology chapter, Chinese universities do not constitute a homogenous set. They are rather different in terms of status, human and financial resources, infrastructures, factors that impact the quality of education.

According to Cameroonian students in China, the allegedly low quality of training within Chinese universities is the result of a combination of factors related to the language of instruction, the structure of the study programmes, the organization and pass conditions of exams and the lack of practical knowledge through internships.

8.2.1   The Language of Instruction: The Language Dilemma

"Whether you study in Chinese or in English, you will always have problems: On the one hand, Africans studying in Chinese cannot follow and understand hundred percent of a lecture. On the other hand, those studying in English can follow professors who have difficulties with the English language. They cannot fully express themselves in English. That is our dilemma here in China" (Tilda, a medical student in Guangzhou. Interview in Guangzhou, March 2015 translated from French).

This observation by Tilda, summarizes the complexity of language problems raised by Cameroonian students in China.

8.2.1.1   Studying in Chinese: The '*ting bu dong*' Phenomenon

When I asked Chinese passers-by for information on directions or locations in English during my first days in China days, the answer I usually received was "*Wo ting bu dong*" or simply "*ting bu dong*". As some Chinese respondents often accompanied the sentence with a

gesture of a finger pointed towards their ears, I guessed that this meant that they didn't understand, a guess proven right later by the Cameroonians I met living in China.

During my stay in Hangzhou in April 2015, I realized that Cameroonians as well as other Africans used "*ting bu dong*" as a qualifier to designate somebody who does not understand, namely the Chinese language. I attended a meeting of the Cameroonian student association in Hangzhou and had the opportunity to discuss some aspects of my research in a group setting. There was a group of four students who were at the end of their training in architecture at Zhejiang Sci-Tech University. As they said they were disappointed with the quality of the training they had received in China, I asked them about the challenges they faced. One of them replied: "First of all, foreign students in class are all "*ting bu dong*". They generally have no clue about the story the dude [the lecturer] is telling in front. They [students] look at him [the lecturer] like dogs in front of a TV". In this respect a "*ting bu dong*" is someone who does not understand anything. The expression "*ting bu dong*" was not only used by Cameroonians. I heard students from Congo in Hangzhou using the expression in the same way.

It is important to note that foreign students in China are bound to learn the Chinese language for one year before the start of their major, often regardless of whether they will major in English or in Chinese. However, research participants enrolled for Chinese-taught programmes unanimously found their Chinese language capacities very limited, only adequate for social interaction. Due to the lack of what they considered technical vocabulary, it was hard to really follow lectures and exchanges with the lecturers.

During my fieldwork in Cameroon, I talked to Iris who had returned from China after nine years of medical studies in the city of Nanjing. The biggest challenge she faced during her study stay in China was the Chinese language, which she described as follows:

"When I finished my Chinese language courses, I could easily communicate in the supermarket, ask information about prices and directions, hold a conversation with Chinese people and so on. But when I started my major, it looked as if I had never learned Chinese before. I was literally lost for the first year. During the second year, I could grasp something but very slowly (…) I got tired of saying "*ting bu dong*" because it made no difference, no matter how long the professor took to explain things. I think it took me up to three years[73] to be able to totally follow lectures in Chinese. Imagine a student starting to understand what the lecturer is explaining only during the second half of the training [silence]…and we are talking about medical studies, that is, the training of people whose

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[73] There were even students in their fifth year of study who still complained about their inability to follow lectures Chinese.

job is to protect and to save human lives." (Interview with Iris, Yaounde, September 2015, translated from French).

Due to language obstacles, Iris argued, many foreign students in her class were discouraged and frustrated to a point that they stopped attending lectures.

While I was doing my fieldwork in China, many Cameroonian students were writing their theses and I personally witnessed the complexity of the language challenge they faced. In the city of Jinhua, for instance, almost all students majoring in Chinese had to write their thesis in Chinese. But they could not write directly in Chinese, considering their limited command. As a matter of fact, they had to write in English and get it translated into Chinese. For the translation into Chinese, they mostly relied on Chinese students booked by their supervisors. The translation was commonly free of charge (only one student told me (s)he had paid for the translation). The issue with the translation was that some students could not identify themselves in the content of the translated version of their dissertation. As they explained, it was due either to the sophisticated Chinese language used or the misinterpretation of their ideas by the translator. Therefore, as a student commented, preparing the defense was sometimes not very different from "preparing a presentation on a book from the library". Aware of the language challenges, universities often granted students with facilitating measures. At Zhejiang Normal University for instance, I talked to two Master's students who were authorized to write their thesis in English, provided that they defend it in Chinese. The language barrier has been raised by many scholars as one of the biggest learning challenges faced by international students in general (Liu, 2013) and by African students in particular (Haugen 2013; Ferdjani 2012; Liu 2017) in China. To avoid language anxiety, some students opted for English-taught majors.

8.2.1.2 Schooling in English: A Problematic Alternative

"Faced with the complexity of the Chinese language, some students consider enrolling for training programmes in English […]. There are undoubtedly professors who can teach in English but how many of them are as fluent in English as they are in Chinese? They are very few and that is the central issue with schooling in English here in China." (Adrian, PhD student in Guangzhou. Interview in Guangzhou, April 2015, translated from French).

This observation by Adrian (who was also a leader of the Cameroonian student association in Guangzhou) suggests that studying in English in China is seemingly not an effective solution to the anxiety associated with the Chinese language. All research participants majoring in English also mentioned language as an important learning challenge they

experienced. However, as field data suggests, contrary to Chinese-taught programmes, where students were the ones facing language difficulties, language challenges in English-taught programmes concerned lecturers. Every research participant enrolled for programmes taught in English considered the English language command of their lecturers insufficient for teaching. Concerning the English language skills of their lecturer, Alan, a Master's student in Jinhua, commented:

> "Our teachers do not speak English very well. Sometimes you can really see that they are struggling to find the right words to explain their ideas. There was a professor who has so many problems in English so that we finally suggested to her to send the rest of her notes to us via email so we could manage on our own. She did so and it was better for us and I also think it was a relief for her because it was like a torture for her." (Interview with Alan, Jinhua, August 2016).

In the same respect, students reported situations where professors prepared power points for their lecture in English but presented them in Chinese. Alternatively, as research participants also indicated, during lectures, some professors faced with language difficulties often asked students with good English language skills to explain the power point presentation to the rest of the class. Conrad, a Master's student from the city of Wuhan recounted ironically:

> "One of my lecturers had difficulties explaining a chapter in a course book. He asked if there were a student willing to make a presentation on the chapter. Two students offered to take the task and required two weeks for preparation, which the professor accepted. […] He did not have a choice anyways. The two students gave a presentation on the chapter […]. We are used to situations like that and I personally think that we have to adapt to it and find ways to fill the gaps. Complaining will not change the situation anyway". (Interview with Conrad, Changsha, July 2016, translated from French).

To cope with the English language difficulties of one of their teachers, a student taking an English-taught Master's in International Relations told me that their class offered the teacher to teach them in English only for one hour during every class session (of three hours). However, the student regretted, the lecturer did not follow the rules and continued to lecture in Chinese and, as a result, many foreign students skipped the lectures of this specific teacher, or simply participated for the purpose of class attendance.

According to the research participants, the alleged low command of English of the professors had two main consequences. First, as some students claimed, due to limited vocabulary, some lecturers only skimmed through their presentations and by so doing, only taught the basics. "Sometimes you can tell from the PPT that a professor is making a very insightful point, but due to language problems, he cannot really elaborate when students ask

questions. He [the professor] tries to be very short in his answer. Most of the time, students and professors communicate in a somehow incongruous language", observed Samy, a former Cameroonian student in Guangzhou. (Interview with Samy, Guangzhou, March 2015, translated from French).

Secondly, the language barriers not only limited communication between students and professors but also and foremost fostered misunderstandings that rendered the grading system hazardous, as Eric a former Cameroonian student in Guangzhou observed: "Some students estimated that their Chinese language capacities were not sufficient, and therefore preferred to speak to the professor in English during oral exams, yet the English language level of the professors was also not good. Consequently, it was more than likely that professors will misunderstand the answers and grant a good grade" (Interview with Eric, Guangzhou, March 2015, translated from French). This observation corroborates with that of Florian, a Master's student who commented on the grading of the assignments as follows: "For the assignment, a student would hardly fail. Whatever you write, you will have a good grade because they [professors] don´t understand, as their English is not good". In his opinion, this option "made life easier for the professors" as it prevented them from "getting into a situation where they had to explain to a student why he had got a bad grade, considering their communication challenges" (Conversation with Florian, Jinhua, June 2016, translated from French.

Overall, considering the perceived English language difficulties of Chinese lecturers, many research participants, including Africans lecturing in China, claimed that studying in English in China was a bad option for those who wish to receive solid training in China. On the quality of English-taught programmes in China, an African lecturer in China commented: "Let us assume you are studying chemistry. If you want to have a solid training, you should do it in Chinese (…). Of course, you can also do it in English but academic programmes in English here in China are very simplified. In most cases, they are specifically aimed at foreign students, and programmes designed for foreigners are for business purposes." (Interview in April 2015, translated from French).

My field data also suggests that the university administrators were often informed of the language problems in English-taught programmes. At Zhejiang Normal University for instance, I told the head of the international student office about students´ complaints on the limited English language skills of some lecturers. He confirmed that he was aware of the situation and that he had "reported it to the commission in charge of teacher recruitment." (Conversation with the head of the international student office, Jinhua, July 2016).

During my fieldwork in China, I also talked to Shu Zhan, who had worked as a diplomat in Africa[74] for about thirteen years. Upon retirement, he joined the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University and was "mainly doing research and helping the institute to set up contact with Africans and also foreigners in other countries doing African Studies" he said. (Interview with Shu Zhan, Jinhua, April 2015). Reflecting on the question of knowledge transfer between China and Africa, Shu Zhan was less enthusiastic or optimistic as compared to the official discourse in China. In his opinion, one of the main obstacles to the effectiveness of China´s human resource development project for Africa is language-related. Having acknowledged the language challenges of Africans studying Chinese-taught courses, he analyzed the efficiency of English-taught programmes as an alternative: "Only ten per cent of university teachers in China can teach in English. Another important question is whether African students are able to find reading materials in English in China. They [reading materials in English] exist, but not enough." (Interview with Shu Zhan, Jinhua, April 2015).

Scholars of the internationalization of Chinese higher education (including from China) also highlight the language capacities of the lecturers as a major obstacle. For instance, analyzing the experience of both domestic and foreign students in China, Liu (2013: 2003) identifies the lack of "qualified teachers is [as] one of the main reasons for the questionable quality of bilingual courses in China". In the same vein, Chang (2006) lists "teacher´s inadequate language skills and professional competence" among the "problems concerning the education of English majors" in China. According to Brandenburg and Zhu (2007: 45), addressing this language gap is an objective of the 2005 action plan of the Chinese Ministry of Education which "stresses the importance of the increase of teaching staff with practical experience". Yet, the situation is apparently still not fully addressed, according to Li´s observation in 2018 that "the English language proficiency of Chinese teachers is not always good enough, which makes the learning process for African students more difficult" (2018: 26). Brandy (2018: 19) indicated that almost every student participating in her study on African students in China expressed a language concern due to the English language command of Chinese professors. "Most of the students are studying in English but are taught by Chinese

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[74] As a diplomat, he was a secretary, counsellor and ambassador in several Eastern and Southern African countries, especially Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Rwanda, South Africa and Namibia. He has also been a visiting scholar in Zimbabwe and in South Africa. He had already been retired for three years when we met in April 2015.

English speakers that usually have trouble explaining themselves in English", argues Brandy (ibid).

However, focusing the analysis of the language challenges solely on teachers is partial and even misleading. My field observations suggested that the English language skills of some Cameroonian students were also highly questionable. Although Cameroon has English and French as its official languages, not every Cameroonian is bilingual. The command of the English language of some of the Francophone Cameroonian students (who were dominant in the research population[75]) to whom I talked was rather low. It is worth bearing in mind that an English language proficiency document was not an admission requirement for most Chinese universities, which is why many Francophone research participants decided to enroll for an English-taught programme to escape the envisioned Chinese language anxiety.

I often asked students about their own knowledge of English and usually got answers such as "Cameroon is bilingual. Even if I hardly spoke English, I could read and understand a book in English"; "it is true that I did not practice English in Cameroon but I used to watch English news on TV". As one can see, these answers stress a familiarity with and not a mastery of the English language.

This linguistic gap constituted a significant challenge for many Francophone students. Many of my research participants were also PhD students and we sometimes discussed our respective research projects. Two who were at the start of their programmes asked me if I could read and comment on their research proposal once it was written. I accepted but they never contacted me in this regard. More than a year later, in one of our rare conversations on social media, I asked them how their research projects had evolved. Hans was one of them and was doing his PhD in Jinhua. He told me that his proposal had been rejected by his supervisor. He explained that he wrote the research proposal in French before translating it into English. For his translation, he used Google which, he acknowledged, was problematic: "You know, Google translation is not accurate. To make good use of it, you should be able to detect possible errors. This means that you need to have some knowledge in English. And to be honest with you, that is my main concern now" (Phone conversation with Hans, September 2017, translated from French). He told me that he was going to Cameroon on holidays and intended to find someone to help him translate his proposal. I was personally not very surprised, because our

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[75] This might reflect the sociolinguistic composition of Cameroon, featured by the numerical domination of the Francophones. It is also possible that the Anglophone students were in different Chinese cities from those I visited.

conversations in China showed that he was preoccupied by his English language capacities. He had often asked me for some helpful tips to quickly learn English.

Samy had a similar problem. I asked if he had already defended his research proposal as is generally the case in China. He answered: "The thing is not easy. Writing in English takes ages. For every single sentence I have to open Google translation and online dictionaries. After all this, all you get is a word for word translation and you still need to organize the structure of the sentences [grumbling]." (Phone conversation with Samy, October 2017, translated from French).

During fieldwork in China, there were several settings that brought together Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians as well as students from other English-speaking African countries. From the conversations between the two linguistic groups, it was quite apparent that the English level of some of the Francophones was low, including some I knew who were taking English-taught programmes and were in the third year of their studies. By mentioning this, I do not ignore the fact that learning a language is a process. The point here is that analyses of language problems in English-taught programmes in China should not be limited to lecturers but also to students. Another criticism of the quality of education in China by the research participants was in connection with the content and the structure of the training.

8.2.2 The Structure and Content of Teaching Curricula

The content and structure of training programmes in China was mostly criticized by students in the technical fields of studies such as Computer and Software Engineering. Mechanical engineering, Architecture, Petroleum Engineering, or Medical Sciences. A common grievance highlighted was the discrepancy between the programme syllabus as advertised by universities and the courses taught. Davy for instance, who was in the second year of his English-taught Master's in Software Engineering, spoke of the contents of his training programme as follows:

> "The courses we have been taking are different from the ones we selected at the start of the programme. When we started, we had been given a list of courses to pick from. Surprisingly, when the lectures began, there was no option any longer. We had to take what they [the department] offered us. Since there was a shortage of teaching staff, when there was a lecturer who could teach a course, that course became mandatory. At some point, due to the lack of lecturers, we were forced to register for courses at the Bachelor's level, not because of their relevance for our training but because they were taught in English and our programme was in English." (Interview with Davy, August 2016, translated from French).

In total, I talked to three students attending the same programme as Davy and they had the same experience. Florian was one of them. He had started the programme earlier in 2014. He recounted that right at the beginning of the programme, all international students were disappointed because they were asked to join Chinese students, which meant schooling in Chinese. Yet they registered for an English-Master programme, which was 4000 RMB more costly than were the programme taught in Chinese. They requested courses in English as provided in the programme syllabus but the university could not meet their demand, due to the lack of teaching staff. As a matter of fact, they then claimed for the reimbursement of the price difference between the English and Chinese-taught programme but the school also rejected this, and instead promised to hire English-speaking lecturers for the following semesters. However, at the beginning of the next semester, Florian commented:

> "We were told that there was a course that was mandatory for us. I attended the first session and the classroom was surprisingly full for a Master's level. I asked the two Chinese students sitting next to me about their level. They were actually first and second year Bachelor students. Besides that, the lecturer was teaching something I already did many years back. I approached the lecturer during break and told him that the teaching was too simple for Master's students. He told me that his lecture is not aimed at Master students but at Bachelor students. We stopped attending the course. Since then I lost hope here in China." (Interview with Florian, July 2016, translated from French).

Conrad, a Master's student in Maritime Transports and Logistics Management also pointed to the fact that the courses they received in class did not match the training syllabus initially presented and on the basis of which he had chosen the programme. He said:

> "According to the structure of the programme, we are supposed to have a logistic lab equipped with all sort of programmes and software for simulation but it is not the case. Also, as an engineer, I am supposed to be in the field most of the time to see how things really function in the reality. But everything is just theoretical." (Interview with Conrad, Changsha, July 2016, translated from French).

Another issue raised by the research participants was that the content of their training differed from that of Chinese students in the same class. They specially claimed that Chinese students had more courses than did foreign students. Florian recounted that while wandering on campus during supposedly free time, he often saw his "Chinese classmates with their bags". At first, he thought that they were from one of the numerous reading rooms of the university. He became intrigued when he saw them one day coming out from a lecture room at a period provided free by the timetable. Florian enquired from one of his Chinese classmates and realised that there were several courses their Chinese classmates attended separately. Florian also

claimed that those courses were generally not in the programme syllabus presented at the beginning of the academic year. As his attempt to register online for one of those courses failed, he complained to the university administration and was then promised that those courses would be opened to foreign students; yet the situation remained unchanged.

When I argued that foreign students might be excluded from courses that are irrelevant for their training, such as lectures on political ideology, Chinese history, or Chinese Law, Florian claimed that the courses their Chinese classmates took separately were rather fundamental in their field of training. He further argued that even if a course is viewed as irrelevant, it should still be opened to foreigners and attendance should be optional. "In my opinion, they exclude us because there is something to hide from us", Florian concluded.

This suspicious attitude also emerged from my conversations with students based in other cities. Among them was Hugo, a bachelor´s student in mechanical engineering who also emphasized the discrepancy between the quality of training received by Chinese students and their foreign classmates. He interpreted the imbalance as an intention, to hide knowledge from foreign students. Hugo claimed:

> "There is no doubt that Chinese are hiding many things from foreigners. First of all, Chinese students start hands-on exercises from their first year, while foreigners can only start in the third year. In my department, Chinese have three times as many courses as do foreigners. They [Chinese] are overloaded with work, indeed. We have completely different programmes. I am not entitled to some courses they have. I am talking about very technical courses (…) only reserved for Chinese. The other day, I visited my Chinese classmate in his room. There was an electric skateboard and he told me that it had been designed by our classmates in the framework of a project that had lasted for three months, of which I was not aware." (Interview with Hugo, July 2018, translated from French).

Tony, another student who graduated from the same university and the same programme as Hugo, mentioned a competition organized by his department and which only involved Chinese students. As he explained, the competition which consisted of designing a mechanical component was an important learning process because every student preparing the competition spent a lot of time in the lab with the assistance of lecturers. "You have an idea and try to materialize it. Professors are there to watch and guide you. At the end of the project a participant necessarily learns a lot, not only from the professors but also classmates. Every competition is good for creativity", Tony regretted. Tony complained to the university administration about the exclusion of foreigners from the competition. "I told the person responsible for foreign students that I have come to China to acquire skills and thus would like to be included in any academic project within the department", Tony pushed (Conversation with Tony, April 2015,

translated from French). The university official in question promised to organize an internship for Tony and then effectively did so.

Some officials from the Cameroon embassy in China were also suspicious about the willingness of Chinese universities to make their knowledge accessible to foreign students. One of them said:

> "[…] You know; these people are not really true. I have the impression that they are all the same secretive. If you ask them how to build a road, a plane, would they fully show you? Would they let you do an internship where they construct planes? I think there is a problem of sincerity. Students [Cameroonian] here are very critical. I am sure they have told you that they receive a substandard education here in China." (Conversation in Beijing, April 2015, translated from French).

While students' belief that Chinese universities intentionally hide knowledge from foreign students is necessarily debatable, the literature seemingly confirms the existence of different schedules for Chinese students and their foreign mates in the same study programme in China. The most recent work is by Brandy (2018), entitled "African scholars: made in China. An analysis of the economic impact of African international students in China". Drawing on a survey including Cameroonian participants, the author found that "most African students have rated their experience as negative and believe there is no hope for a change in attitudes" (2018: 3). The author describes the negative experience of African students in China as resulting from several factors, one of which is the small amount of classes they are required to take in China. Brandy (2018: 18) argues precisely that: "The inability to work, coupled with taking fewer classes than a Chinese student would take seems to be an underlying factor in the way that African students experience their schooling here in China."

Another issue raised by the research participants concerned the content of their training curricula which was viewed as too simplified. Many students, mostly those who earned a Bachelor's or Master's degree and who had also gained working experience in Cameroon prior to migrating to China, often claimed that they were being taught things they already knew from their prior training. Davy, for instance, graduated in Computer Sciences in Cameroon and worked as a web application designer for a company before he decided to migrate to China for a specialization course in the same field. I asked him about his level of satisfaction with his training in the light of his initial expectations. He replied:

> "Truly speaking, there is nothing to be satisfied about. So far I haven't learned anything much (…). Teaching leaves much to be desired. What I had [in terms of knowledge] at the start of the programme is still the same. Nothing has been added. I would say the programme has just helped me revise what I already knew. It is true that by revising, one

always learns new little things, but that is not what brought me here. I came here to have what I did not have in Cameroon. My expectations are still far from being met." (Interview with Davy, August 2016, translated from French).

As such complaints were recurrent among Cameroonians, I decided to ask for the opinions of students from other African countries. The first person I talked to was Mourad, a student from a west African country, who was described within the African community at his university as "the student who lives in the library" in reference to his recurring presence there. Mourad had earned a Bachelor Degree in Accounting and worked for a financial company and at a private school as a teacher in Togo. He received a scholarship for a Master course in China, which he was very happy about. However, Mourad´s expectations were not fulfilled. He said:

"I expected something special, something completely new in the field of accounting, financial mathematics and so on. But I was so frustrated because I was being lectured what I had been teaching high school students for several years in my country. Can you imagine the disappointment? It is embarrassing because when I will return, people who know me will expect me to impress them or to share new knowledge which I acquired in China. I don´t know what to tell them […] At least I master SPSS, luckily [laughter]." (Interview with Mourad, July 2016, translated from French).

By the time we met, Mourad had just submitted his Master's thesis and was helping his classmate to analyse data for theirs, using a SPSS, a data analysis software programme he had discovered in China. He learned about SPSS in a course taught by one of his professors from the Netherlands. Mourad explained that the lecturer simply mentioned the software in passing but that he had decided to know more about it. He then approached the lecturer after class and the latter told him more about what the software could be used for. Mourad became fascinated and his personal challenge was to master the software, especially as he had already lost hope of his training in China. "I said to myself that I should at least learn something during my stay here. So, mastering the software literally became my only objective here and I can tell that I succeeded. I used it for my thesis and lot of classmates are currently contacting me to help them analyze their data with the programme. So, SPSS is what I will take home." Mourad concluded.

Medical students were generally satisfied with their course syllabus which they viewed as including "all of the subjects a student requires for a fully-fledged training". However, they pointed to the teaching approach as a source of concern. The common gap raised by the research participants in this field of study was that the professors were only "concerned with covering the curriculum. They are so quick that they do not touch on things in-depth. Whether or not students understand a chapter does not interest them. This is what makes them good teachers in the eyes of the administration." (interview with Mercy, July 2016. Translated from French).

This observation corroborates the narratives of an African lecturing in the field of medical sciences in China to which I will get back later in this chapter.

Overall, the foregoing criticism about the content and the structure of training in China corroborates the finding of previous research on African students in China. In her study of Sino-African exchanges, Gillespie (1999: 172) reports that African students in China in the late 1990s contended that universities in China "did not have any well-defined programme for foreign students, especially in the post graduate area", and consequently, that students had to "scramble to find courses […] to get the minimum credit". Due to these gaps, some students told Gillespie that "the academic programme for foreigners [was] a total failure" (ibid: 171). Gillespie concludes that the larger percentage of African students rated their overall satisfaction with the Chinese educational programme as fair and poor. In her 2018 research, Brandy received similar comments from African students. For instance, a student from Morocco told the researcher "that obtaining a Bachelor [degree] in Morocco is equivalent to obtaining a Master's in China" (2018: 14). On education in China in general, "a large amount of students believe that the quality is only fair", Brandy observes. Similarly, King (2013: 96) refers to two specific Master's programmes initiated by two Chinese universities as follows: "These were delivered entirely in English, and the students from Africa who were taught separately from Chinese students. Surprisingly for Chinese Masters degrees, the new Masters […] was delivered in just one year, as compared with Masters of three years, where there is one year of Mandarin as a precondition."

8.2.3   An Easy Academic Path After All

"In class, foreigners cheat during the exams and the invigilators say nothing. Yet if a Chinese student dared, he/she would be severely punished. Last semester, we did a very complex course which was fundamental for programming. To be honest, I did not understand a thing but I received 90 out of 100 for the exam. I copy-pasted the greater part of the questions. If I told my father, he would think that his son is a genius. Yet, I know absolutely nothing about the subject. In fact, mobile phones are not forbidden in the classroom during tests and people use them for cheating." (Jacob, Conversation in July 2018, translated from French).

Jacob was a Master´s student in Computer Sciences in one of the cities I visited. He made the comment above in a conversation with three other Cameroonian students from different cities. I became interested in their conversation when they started discussing about their training. Like these students, the majority of the research participants in China found getting good grades very easy. They described the academic system in China as one where "it is almost

impossible for a student to fail". From the students´ narratives, the situation is due to a lenient examination system.

8.2.3.1 Lenient Pass Conditions and Examination System

Regarding pass conditions, conversations with Cameroonian students suggested that the requirement differed between foreigners and their Chinese counterparts. Christian, for instance, a former student who had returned to Cameroon after his studies in China, told me that "in China, there is a sort of lenient grading system for African students. That is, if Chinese students are required to have an average of 14 over 20 to pass a course, foreigners are allowed to pass with 10" (interview with Christian, Yaoundé, October 2015, translated from French). In the same vein, Lorena, a Master's student in China claimed: "Sometimes, it looks like they just want to give you the degree to push you out of China. They are less concerned with the quality of the student's performance" (Lorena, interview in August 2016). Students generally argued that the most important thing is to be a good student, which meant being present in class. Many students acknowledged that a student who attends all classes already has a fifty per cent chance to pass, regardless of the exam grade. Being a good student also means maintaining good relations with the university administration and lecturers. Mira claimed that at her university, "when a student is at the service of the administration in the sense of bringing new students from his/her home country, he or she can receive outstanding grades for the least effort" (Conversation with Mira, July 2018, translated from French).

The connection between academic results and students´ attitudes has also been raised by former generations of African students in China. In his autobiographical book, Okouma Mountou (2008: 37), points to the fact that those labelled as bad students "risked an unfruitful academic stay in China [because] discipline and students´ behavior mattered a lot for achieving good academic results." (author's translation). Gillespie (1999: 1) corroborates this finding in her studies as she underlines "the influence of [university] administrative authorities on a student's grade". The benevolent grading of international students was identified by Lagrée (2013: 198) as a cause of tension between Chinese students and the latter. The author mentions "a few stories [that] expressed what is understood as a resentment on the part of the local students who think that the foreigners benefitted from teachers´ or universities´ with regard to the marks they received. It is often said that graduation is made easier for foreigners than for local students." So, the differential treatment and the lenient grading are seen as a problem by both Cameroonian and Chinese students.

Concerning the examination system, the research participants criticized the rate of cheating. "There is nothing wrong about cheating during exams in China", a research participant contended. What research participants complained most about with regard to cheating was the attitude of the lecturers during exams. They said that lecturers implicitly authorized cheating during exams by "ignoring students overtly using their mobiles phone during tests". However, some research participants highlighted that, while foreign students were tolerated for cheating, lecturers had different reactions towards Chinese students. A Chinese student found to be cheating was punished. Research participants interpreted the differential treatment by lecturers concerning cheating as a lack of interest in the quality of training and skills acquired by foreign students. "They do not really care whether you are well trained or not. After all, you will not be employed in China […]. Foreigners are not trained for the Chinese market. They give you a degree and you leave China". It is not their problem if you cannot use the degree for a career", Lorena contended. (Interview in August 2016). Such a claim was somewhat common within the Cameroonian student community.

Even though cheating during examinations is identified by some scholars as a feature of the academic environment in China (see for instance Altback 2014: 86), the argument that Africans are not trained for the Chinese market does not hold. There are Africans who are recruited by Chinese organizations after their training in China. Three participated in this study, namely two university lecturers and one medical doctor. What they had in common is that they were all recruited by the universities they attended. The hospital in which the medical doctor worked was attached to the university where he studied. However, the two lecturers did not have a positive opinion about the quality of the training which foreigners received at Chinese universities.

8.2.3.2.1 Doing an Internship is Optional: The Management of the Internship as Part of the Training

Aron, a PhD student in Petroleum Engineering, highlighted the perceived role of practical knowledge in a training programme as follows: "Practicing means watching and repeating what you see. That is the only efficient way to learn. When the eyes see, there is no need to explain. There will never be enough words to explain what the eyes see anyways. Trial and failure lead you to mastering. Theoretical lectures will never make a student an engineer" (Phone Conversation with Aron, July 2016, translated from French). The negative appreciation of the education in China by the research participants as shown earlier resulted from the lack of practical training, through internships. Almost all African students with whom I talked in China

pointed to the fact that they graduated without having the chance to practice the theoretical knowledge received in class, so as to acquire hand on experience.

A leader of the Cameroonian student association in China observed that "[i]n China you can graduate from civil engineering without having been to a construction site. Nobody cares. There are so many guys who will get their diploma without mastering the basics in their respective fields. This is China" (Conversation in Changsha, July 2016, translated from French). From the narratives of the students, this was due to two reasons: First, the difficulty to secure an internship position within a specialized organization in China and second, the lax attitude of the university regarding internships as part of the training curriculum. Since the issue of internships is one of the foci of chapter 9, this section only focuses on how universities in China approach internships as part of the training.

An internship in higher education is a field-based work experience that is focused on or is related to students' academic subjects (Cabell et al 2017). In a globalizing and competitive labor market where internships have become a job requirement (Amy 2013), there is increasing demand from international students to gain hands-on experience during their training. This implies that acquiring practical knowledge through an internship during the stay abroad is part of the expectations of international students. This is one of the reasons why internships are increasingly becoming part of higher education worldwide (Hergert 2009; Vairis et al 2013).

However, universities have responded differently to the increasing demand for internships among international students. Although internships have become part of the curriculum in certain fields of training worldwide, universities' practical implementations vary between and within countries. University institutions can be grouped into two main categories. The first category is universities where internships are a graduation requirement and are thus mandatory. In this case, students are required to do an internship and to submit a report which is then graded. Within this category, some universities assist their students to meet the internship requirements (e.g. through partnership with specialized institution and one-on-one support to students). This is only the case with small institutions with a limited number of students. The second group of institutions is made of those where doing an internship is optional. This implies that doing an internship is not a graduation condition even though it is part of the curriculum.

Field data suggests that most of Chinese universities fall within the two categories. On the one hand, there are universities were students are required to do an internship as a graduation condition. On the other, there are institutions where doing an internship is optional. In both

cases it is not the duty of the university administration to help students obtain an internship position. Students are therefore supposed to search for the internship place on their own and then to inform the university administration for the purpose of the legal formalities surrounding academic internships in China (I return to this specific point in Chapter 9). This does not, however, exclude the fact that students can receive support from their professor on a purely personal basis as it was the case with two research participants.

The internship policy at Chinese universities constituted one of the most recurrent criticisms of the research participants regarding the quality of their training in China. The complaints were slightly different, however. In cases where internships constituted a graduation requirement, students claimed that the university administration was too permissive in the sense that, as they explained, the university would "understand" a student who did not manage to do an internship. For instance, Brado, a Bachelor's student in Computer Sciences in Guangzhou stated:

> "Our programme syllabus included internships. When the time we were supposed to do our internships came, I asked the university administration to assist me in finding an organization for an internship. I was told that it was my responsibility to find one. I sent a couple of applications but never received any feedback. I informed the university administration about the challenge and they told me that I did not really need an internship. I then understood that was a mere formality." (Interview with Brado, Guangzhou, April 2015, translated from French).

As with Brado, the majority of the research participants graduated without doing an internship, yet it was part of their training. Tony, a Bachelor student in Mechanical Engineering from Hangzhou argued: "I know of a lot of students who graduated without ever doing an internship. In China they don't care if foreign students do an internship or not". This also corroborates the observation of Tamo, a Master´s student in Business Administration from Beijing who said: "In my university, doing an internship is optional. In our class, we were 75 but only four of us succeeded in doing an internship, be we all graduated of course [laughter]".

As indicated earlier, one of the reasons why Cameroonian students in China graduated without having done an internship was due to the fact that they usually received negative feedback on their applications to local companies. Many students interpreted their refusal through the lens of anti-Black racism (see Chapter 9) which is why they tended to expect their universities to at least put them in contact with relevant companies. Such an expectation was somehow too high, considering the number of students searching for internships. Concerning the attitude of the university regarding the issue of internships, research participants appeared

rather critical, as they considered universities too "understanding", "lax" and "casual" about the internship as a graduation requirement. Research participants claimed that there was a connection between the attitude of the university and the level of effort students invested in searching for internship positions. Tony, who was also a leader of the student association argued:

> "Because they [students] know that the university does not give importance to internships, there is no reason for them [students] to stress themselves too much, especially as Chinese companies are not easily accessible. They [students] just get lazy and stay home provided that they will get their degrees in any case." (Conversation with Tony, Hangzhou, April 2015, translated from French).

Obtaining an internship position is a common challenge among international students worldwide, including in countries with a longer experience in internationalization of higher education. I talked to one of the research participants who had moved to France for a Master's upon her BA graduation in China. The training programme in France required a six-month internship. She had sent several internship applications but none of them worked out. As she was desperate, I suggested she consider doing the internship in Cameroon. She said that the internship was required to be done in France. She finally received positive feedback on one of her applications. I also know of a Cameroonian student in Germany who faced difficulties securing an internship position within a German company to the point that he applied and was accepted in France. In the same respect, a 2017 report by Ross on the experience of Chinese students in Austria highlights the same difficulties. Chinese students faced challenges in their search for internship positions in Austria, to the point that returning to China remained the only valuable alternative. "Lack of internships drives Chinese students home", Ross (2017) observes.

The similarity between universities in Austria, France, Germany and China is that internships are part of the training syllabus. However, the difference between China and other countries is the attitude of the university to the fulfillment of the internship requirement by students. Universities in Austria, for instance, seem strict towards students regarding internships (which could be one of the reasons why Chinese students in Austria returned to China for their internship), while in China, as the research participants argued, universities seemingly have a lax approach.

In the interviews, I often alluded to the issue of academic adaptation of international students. My argument was that as foreigners they had to face a new educational system which implies adapting to a new academic environment. This means adapting to different

pedagogical practices and also and foremost to developing new learning kills or coping strategies in general. The answer I often got was that the working attitude or the effort toward academic adaptation depends on how strict the university is with regard to academic performance. Eric, the former Cameroonian student in Guangzhou commented:

"Cameroon loses more students to China than to Europe or America. It is more constraining there [in Europe or America]. In China, students take the form of the vase. If I would put a paste in a plastic bag and give it to you, you could form a circle with it. This is to say that, when you arrive here, the Chinese [universities] ask you what you want to do, whereas in the West, you are told what you want to do. In China, you are indirectly told that you can really study or just get the degree. If you want the degree, just pay the tuition fee and see you in five years […]. The consequence of the less constraining training system is that a lot of lazy students graduate. When you are in a system that is not really restrictive, you can be content to be an average student." (Interview with Eric, Guangzhou, March 2015, translated from French).

This statement corroborates Liu´s (2013) argument in a comparative research on the experiences of international students and local students in China. The author indicates that international students were not motivated to adapt to the academic environment in China as a result of their dissatisfaction with the teaching methods which they found ineffective and unenjoyable. The author further suggests that the dissatisfaction with the teaching methods led international students to be absent from class and could also be the reason why most foreign students in China enroll for Chinese language courses instead of practical subjects.

8.3 On the Quality of English-Taught Medical Training in China: A Perspective from Marc, an African University Lecturer in China

A medical student in one of the cities I visited in China informed me that one of their lecturers was from a West Africa and was lecturing at a university hosting a majority of Cameroonians majoring in medical studies. He provided me with the contact of the lecturer in question. I will refer to him as Marc. For the interview, Marc took me to a restaurant and we had a conversation that lasted for about three hours, during which he recounted all his educational path and experience in China both as student and lecturer.

8.3.1 The Experience of Marc as a Student in China

Marc was in his late forties. He graduated from a medical school in his country and worked as a physician for six years prior to his move to China. As a general practitioner, Marc

first worked at the maternity unit in a hospital. He was then transferred to another hospital where he was appointed at the Gynecology Department. This new position was the starting point to his need for specialization courses. Marc applied for a Chinese government scholarship in his country and it was accepted. He migrated to China in 2004 for a four-year Master's in Medical Sciences. About his student experience, Marc first remembered what he referred to as a "shock":

> "At the start of the programme, students were required to select the number of courses from the website of the university. The website was in Chinese, which I could not read. I sought support from my Chinese classmates and they selected some courses for me. Later on, when I translated the titles of the courses they selected for me, I realized that they had picked courses like Politics, Philosophy, or Maoism, which were irrelevant to the training in Gynecology. They explained to me that such courses were easy to pass and thus make it easier to reach the number of credit points required to graduate. I told them that such courses cannot appear in a transcript of a student specialized in Gynecology. I told the administration that I wanted to change the courses that I initially selected. I also suggested to them [the university administration] courses that the training in Gynecology should include. Such courses did not exist online. They promised to include them for the following semester but only a few were added […]. My field experience really helped me […]. Coming from the field, I knew exactly what [courses] I needed as a gynecologist. At the hospital [during the practical phase of the training], I elaborated and submitted to my supervisors my own schedule, indicating the units where I would like to spend time […]. The training I finally got was not what I expected. (Interview in August 2016, translated from French).

Towards the end of the Master's programme, the university offered Marc a scholarship for a PhD, of which he was very surprised, since he had never applied. Marc believed that the university offered him the scholarship for his attitude: In addition to the fact that Marc suggested the university administration to include specific courses into the training curriculum, he also submitted his own schedule to his supervisor during his internship at the hospital. Furthermore, thanks to his field experience, Marc was able to take on technical tasks during his internship at the hospital. This attitude set Marc apart, and the university administration viewed him as "a focused, motivated student, with a high determination to learn".

8.3.2   Marc' Assessment of English-Taught Medical Training in China

Soon before the end of the four-year PhD programme, as Marc explained, the university administration told him that "we gave you a PhD scholarship and it is now your turn to help us". The university had a project to establish an English-taught medical programme and wanted

Marc to be part of the teaching staff. "That was when I understood that the scholarship offer was not out of altruism", Marc said. Initially, Marc was not very convinced about the project because all the teaching staff were Chinese and hardly spoke any English. As the university assured Marc that English-speaking lecturers were to be recruited, he finally accepted the offer. In terms of lectures, his agreement with the university was that he would only teach Gynecology to students in the fourth year. However, as time progressed, the university administration requested Marc to teach other subjects:

> "They put in place a flawed system. The beginning was a matter of trial and error […]. I started by teaching Gynecology. After three months, I was asked to teach Anatomy because the lecturer responsible for it was travelling abroad. After some time, they asked me if I could also teach Microbiology because the students complained that the professor [in charge of the course] did not speak good English and only read PowerPoints in class without explaining anything. Shortly afterwards, I was asked to teach Pathology. Every two months I was added a new course […]. I also taught Physiology. Students started to wonder about my real field of specialization. Students were very unhappy with the teaching and the demand was continuously dropping and they had no choice but to end the programme".

The end of the programme implied the end of Marc´s contract with the institution. While Marc considered leaving China for an African country where he had contacts through whom to secure a job, his Chinese friend recommended him to another Chinese university (in the same city). Marc was finally recruited and the situation was similar in the new institution, as he explained:

> "[…] it was a different world. I discovered another face of the Chinese that is not good […]. It was worse there than what I had seen before. As soon as I started, I immediately understood that it was a deception. They were fooling students. All that interested the university were the school fees. It was anything but a medical training. It was a business."

Marc illustrated his point through several examples related to pass conditions, teaching staff, the structure and content of the training, and so on.

8.3.2.1   Pass Conditions

Marc recounted an incident he had had with the university administration regarding a group of his students. The university administration promoted the students in question to the next grade, although they did not pass all the required courses. These students were from Pakistan and were in the third year of their medical training. They seldom attended lectures and also failed some of their exams, especially the subjects Marc was teaching and which he considered fundamental for a medical training. As a matter of fact, they were to repeat the class.

However, Marc explained that "to my great surprise, these students were part of my fourth year class the following year". Marc reported the situation to the administration and was told that the university administration purposely admitted them to the next grade. As a justification for the decision, the university authorities told Marc that repeating a class constitutes a huge financial burden for the students and their families, considering the high amount of school fees. Furthermore, the university administration said that failing a student is also financially risky, especially in a context of high competition for global international students because a student who fails could discourage potential candidates via negative publicity of the university.

Marc insisted that the students should be downgraded because, for him, the courses they failed were fundamental for their training. "One could tolerate a student failing in Chinese language or a course like Immunology. But as far as Gynecology, Surgery, Internal Medicine and Pediatrics are concerned, it is out of the question. These courses are indispensable for medical studies. Admitting a student to the upper grade without them passing these courses is disturbing for my conscience", Marc claimed. Even though the University refused to grant Marc´s request, the two parties finally agreed that for the students to graduate, they would have to pass the courses in which they failed and for which Marc wanted them to repeat the class.

Marc also complained about the tendency of the university administration to please students by all means and at the expense of the quality of the training. For example, Marc illustrated, prior to the exams, the president of the university sometimes reminded the teachers not to ask difficult questions and also to be lenient when marking students´ papers.

8.3.2.2 The Content of the Training: Overloaded Lecturers

Marc also pointed to the content and course design, especially the imbalance between the time provided for, and the scope of a course. For instance, according to the official time schedule of the university, the Gynecology course was to be covered in one semester, which Marc found insufficient, considering the fact that a semester in China lasts between three and the half and four months. Marc commented:

> "I immediately understood that the concern was not the understanding of the subject by students […]. The lecturers were expected to cover the course curriculum by all means, even if they would discuss three different topics or diseases in one session of three hours. Under these conditions, the lecturer can just simply read his note and move forward. There is no time to explain things in details […]. What is more, the Gynecology class took place only once a week, that is for three hours. This was also the case with Internal Medicine, which is the largest course ever in Medical Sciences. It was to be taught in one

semester and once a week; which meant four sections per months and a total of ten or twelve sessions. Yet Internal Medicine had about two hundred lessons. For my personal training, those courses were spread over two years each. There is no way they can be taught in three months […]. It is true that the students are not very motivated but the system does also not encourage learning."

Marc said that he refused the schedule and requested two semesters at least to teach Gynecology, supposedly the only subject he was responsible for. The university initially rejected the demand. However, as Marc threatened to quit the job, the university finally granted it. Another gap Marc highlighted concerning the course design was the limited number of lecturers, which led to a situation of overloaded teaching staff. Marc, for example, was initially recruited as a Gynecology lecturer but over time he found himself overwhelmed with several other courses including Forensic Medicine, which he had never taught before. He remembered that it was in 2013 when the university administration explained to him that Forensic Medicine was topical in Pakistan and thus requested by a group of 170 newly enrolled Pakistani students. As there was no specialist of the subject within the existing teaching staff, the university president asked Marc to teach the course. Marc believes that the university asked him to teach the course because his university transcript records showed that he had taken a Forensic Medicine course during his training as a medical student in his own country. "I started with Gynecology, later on they added Internal Medicine, then Forensic Medicine", Marc commented. To cope with the workload, "I had to work from nine a.m. to nine p.m. every day from Monday to Saturday", he complained. Marc also told me that before the semester break, the university administration requested him to teach a course on preventive medicine and another one on infectious diseases for the next semester.

I asked Marc why the university gave him so many subjects and he explained that overloading a lecturer is profitable to the university authorities in the sense that hiring an English-speaking specialist was more costly than attributing the course to one of the teaching staff and paying him a supplement salary. This also suggests that overloading lecturers was not only profitable to the university administration, as Marc seemingly claimed. Teachers also profited from it because the more courses one taught, the more one earned. Even though Marc claimed that he accepted the workload to please the students because they appreciated his teaching practices and thus constantly solicited him, it could also be for financial reasons. In addition, some research participants reported that Marc was active in scholarship brokerage business, helping foreign students get a scholarship against agent fees.

8.3.2.3 The Internship Setting at the Hospital

The last point Marc raised concerned the internship arrangement at the hospital. Marc pointed to two challenges, related to language barrier and skin color. As he explained, students are trained in English and, as a matter of fact, have very limited Chinese language skills. They do internships in a hospital where the patients are Chinese and hardly speak or understand English. "Patients speak only Chinese and sometimes it is not even the real Mandarin but their local language. That means that the Chinese would not understand even if the students tried to speak Mandarin", Marc observed. The consequence of the language barrier is that foreign students tend to be passive at the internship place. "Some of them prefer not to take on responsibilities because they cannot communicate with the patient. Without communication, there is no treatment. […] that is the real problem" Marc concluded.

Another challenge African students were faced with during internships was race-related, which Marc described as follows: "Chinese´s mentality is another problem. It is even worse […]. Chinese people associate Black people with dirtiness, sickness, backwardness, as portrayed in the Chinese media. This perception makes it difficult to accept to be treated by a Black person." However, Marc emphasized, "when a Chinese supervisor introduces the intern to the patients as his student from the United States, the skin colour immediately disappears. But this state of affairs psychosocially affects students and some simply stop the internship". This was a common criticism among medical students participating in this research. I shall get back to this in the section devoted to internships.

Marc concluded his comment on the quality of English taught programme in China as follows:

> China is not well prepared to deliver a training in English that meets international standards. They first have to strengthen the English language skills of their teachers. For the time being, English-medium programmes are just for lucrative purposes. Universities are just making lot of money out of it. There are a few universities that started [English-taught programmes] early, like in Wuhan, Shanghai or Pekin. They have a different system. They are renowned universities in China and apply zero-tolerance. [In contrast] in most provincial universities, nobody cares whether the training syllabus is in accordance with international norms and standards in the field. Generally, I would say it is very risky for students to start their training as medical doctors here in China. They will get lost. The Chinese language is too complex for them and professors in English-taught programmes do not speak good English."

Another African lecturer I encountered in a different city and who was teaching an engineering subject had the same criticism about English taught programmes.

The depiction of the quality of education as depicted through this chapter as a whole corroborates with previous research, including that by Chinese researchers. In research on African students in Bejing in 2012, Ferdjani (2012) reports on the benevolence of universities toward African students, especially regarding internships as a graduation criterion. She argues that while doing an internship is compulsory in Western countries no matter the subject, "apparently there is no internship requirement in Chinese universities" (Ferdjani 2012: 28). A student who participated in Ferdjani's said that only two out of thirty classmates who had graduated from Beijing over the past three years had done an internship. In the same respect, Gillespie in her study of Sino-African exchange found out that the percentage of African students who rated their overall level of satisfaction with the Chinese educational programme as "fair" and "poor" was higher than those who rated it as "excellent" and "good". In general, Gillespie (ibid: 177) concluded, that "students expressed that an essential element of their experience in China was a sense of unfulfilled expectation [with regard to] programme design, level of mutuality, and access to technology and industrial sites."

In the study exploring the experiences of international students in China" in 2016, Xiaojiong from Shanghai Normal University found that students "gave the course content a low rating" and described them as "meaningless or kind of boring" and "out-of-date". Overall, Xiaojiong (2016: 331) concluded that "international students in Shanghai have a relatively low level of satisfaction with their study programme." As a consequence of this dissatisfaction, Xiaojiong further observes: "Relatively few international students were willing to recommend studying in China" (ibid). This points to the connection between student satisfaction and the attractiveness of China.

Chapter 9: China's 'Knowledge Sharing' Intention and Cameroon's Expectation of 'Learning from China'. Beyond Rhetoric, Questioning States' Practices

This chapter discusses the effectiveness of China´s 'Human Resource Development for Africa' project and Cameroon´s expectations to 'learn from China'. My aim therefore is to look at how political discourses surrounding Cameroon-Chinese educational cooperation in general and student migration in particular are translated into action. In other words, this chapter examines the practicality of knowledge transfer between China and Cameroon. Chapter 8 suggested that one cannot be fully optimistic about student migration as a means towards knowledge transfer between Cameroon and China. This is due to the low quality of education which students viewed as resulting from several factors such as the language barrier, the limited quality and quantity of courses, inappropriate teaching methods, lax examination conditions, and a lack of practical knowledge. While these criticism can be ascribed to universities, this chapter furthers the discussion on the issue of knowledge transfer by shifting the focus from universities to states as specific stakeholders in student migration.

In this chapter, I argue that beyond the responsibility of universities, the ineffectiveness of knowledge transfer between Cameroon and China is also to be seen as the result of states' practices in managing student migration. As far as China is concerned, these practices are to be limited to the legal aspect of academic internship in China, while the Cameroonian government's practices should manage student migration as a whole. This chapter encompasses three main parts: The first explores student's academic internship in China in the light of immigration regulation. The second focuses on student migration policy in Cameroon, with an emphasis on the management of Chinese government scholarships. The last part further analyses student migration governance of the Cameroonian government using extraversion as analytical framework.

9.1 China: Academic Internship as a Political Issue. On the Legal Obstacle to Accessing Practical Knowledge

As Chapter 8 suggested, one of the main reasons for the dissatisfaction with the quality of training among Cameroonian students in China is the inaccessibility of practical knowledge due to a lack of academic internship opportunities. Moreover, staff members of the Cameroonian Embassy in China and the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education mentioned

that the major academic difficulty faced by Cameroonian students in China which was often brought to their attention was access to internship opportunities in China. Ethnographic data and the literature suggest that the internship challenge results in part from the Chinese law on academic internship for international students on the one hand, and the interpretation of this law by university administrations on the other hand. The objective of this section is to provide more insight into the regulation of international students´ internships in China as well as how this regulation is differently interpreted and enforced by Chinese universities. I use the case of Tony to introduce the legal and administrative procedure surrounding academic internships in China.

9.1.1- The Successful Internship Experience of Tony
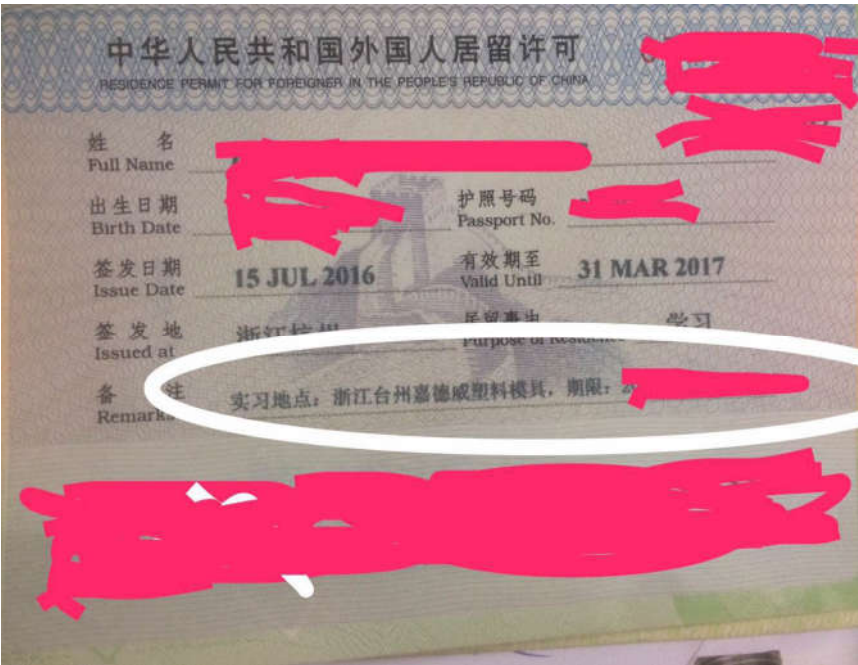
Photograph 12 Example of Intership Authorization by the Immigration Office in China (Photo by the research participant, China, 2018)

Tony was undergoing a Bachelor programme in Mechanical Engineering in the Zhejiang province. He was the only research participant who did two internships in the course of his training. The first internship was in the second year of his programme. Tony explained that he decided to do an internship because some of his Chinese classmates had told him that they planned to do an internship themselves during holidays. Tony then contacted the university administration to enquire about the organization of the internship. Initially, he was told that internships were not allowed for foreign students. He responded by arguing that he should also be given the chance to acquire practical knowledge. Upon several requests, the university not only allowed Tony to do the internship but also assisted him in the search for an internship place by putting him in contact with a local company. Tony was finally offered and completed a one-month long internship position. He

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did his second internship during the fourth (and last) year of his training. This was at a company with which his uncle in Cameroon had a business partnership. Whenever Tony's uncle was in China for business, Tony accompanied him as a translator. It was during one of the visits to this specific company that Tony mentioned his interest in an internship to the director who immediately promised him an internship opportunity.

For each internship, Tony followed the same procedure which included several steps. The first consisted in getting an acceptance letter from the organization offering the internship opportunity. In the second step, this letter was submitted to the university administration which in turn issued an internship authorization letter. Tony then applied to the local immigration service in order to receive notation to his passport indicating the location as well as the duration of the internship. For this, Tony was required to submit the acceptance letter from the internship company and the internship authorization from his university.

There were two other research participants from Beijing and Guangzhou who mentioned having done internships during their studies. The similarities in the internship experiences of the latter and Tony's was that they both relied on personal connections (built in the framework of business) for the internship application process. However, field data suggest that these three cases were exceptions. Apart from medical students and Chinese language students whose internship was often a course and thus organized by their universities, the great majority of research participants complained about the lack of internship opportunities in China which is in turn the reason why it was rather common to graduate without having acquired practical knowledge in their respective fields. This corroborates the findings of Gillespie (1999) and Ferdjani (2012) in their previous research on African students in China.

Field materials indicate that the internship challenge in China is the result of a combination of factors, of which one of the main ones reported by the research participants (including Cameroonian students and Chinese university staff members) is the Chinese law regarding academic internships for international students on the one hand, and the interpretation of the law by university administrations on the other hand.

9.1.2 Acquiring Practical Knowledge in China: The Legal Aspect of Academic Internship

According to Liu (2011), there are two legislations that separately regulate international students enrolled at Chinese primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities. The first is 'The Rules on the Controls on the Acceptance of Foreign Students by Colleges and

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Universities 2000' and the second is the 'Provisional Rules on the Controls on the Acceptance of Foreign Students by Primary and Secondary Schools 1999 (PRC)', promulgated in 1999. The latter have been complemented by 'The Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Administration of the Entry and Exit of Foreigners' that came into force in September 2013.

Regarding 'Teaching and Learning Administration' Liu quotes articles 23, 24, 25(2) and 26 of the 'Rules on the Control on the Acceptance of Foreign Students by Colleges and Universities 2000' as follows:

> "[As] a rule, depending on teaching plans, universities and colleges should place foreign students together with Chinese students when making arrangements for teaching and practical training. However, the selection of sites for internships and practical training should be carried out in accordance with the relevant stipulations concerning foreign affairs" (ibid: 211).

In the same respect, Article 22 of 'The Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Administration of the Entry and Exit of Foreigners' of September 2013 provides that:

> "[w]here a foreigner holding a residence permit for study intends to engage in off-campus work-study or internship, he or she shall, upon the approval of the school, apply to the exit and entry administration authority of the public security organ to have such information as the location and duration of the work-study program or internship placement specified in his or her residence permit. A foreigner holding a residence permit for study shall not engage in any off-campus work-study or internship unless the information prescribed in the preceding paragraph is specified in his or her residence permit".

What transpires from these two rules as well as the internship experience of Tony presented above is that doing an academic internship in China is authorized; however, only under certain conditions, namely the requirement for students to get their residence permits updated by the Entry and Exit Office with information on the name of the internship institution, its location and the duration of the internship. For this purpose, students are required to submit documents from their universities as well as the institution offering the internship. This contradicts the opinions of students and some university administration staff members in China who claim that international student internships in China are illegal. Most likely, such claims reflect the difference in the interpretation and the enforcement of laws between provinces and even within universities in China.

9.1.3 Discrepancy in the Enforcement and Variation in the Interpretation of the Regulation on Internship

To begin with, it is important to mention the existence in China of what Zou (2016) refers to as a "devolution of regulatory responsibilities", which is a setting whereby the Chinese central government defines a national legal framework but leaves the responsibility and the ability to provinces not only to adopt and implement but also to "regularly adjust" and adapt them to local realities and policies. This implies that provinces or universities are not bound to enforce a law elaborated by the central state. According to a staff member of the international student office of Sun Yat-Sen University (in the Guangdong Province), the adoption and implementation of a legal framework for student internships depends on their provinces and universities' specific approach towards internationalization of higher education and the management of foreign students, especially regarding student jobs and internships (interview in Guangzhou, March 2015). To illustrate this, she compared the policies in the Jiangsu and Guangdong provinces. In the former, students were allowed to do internships and/or take part time jobs, and there was collaboration between universities and immigration authorities in the region to support students in their endeavors. In contrary to Jiangsu, international students in the Guangdong Province are neither allowed to engage in part-time jobs nor to do internships. In 2016, however, the Guangdong Government published the 'Relevant Issues Concerning Internships of Foreign Students in Guangdong' which gave foreign students the right to intern in China. In 2014, Shanghai Province also published 'The Shanghai Interim Rules on Off-Campus Practical Training by Foreign Students', defining conditions for international students in the regions to take part in practical training.

On the other hand, the argument that academic internship was forbidden also resulted from the confusion between part-time jobs and internships. From the legal perspective, part-time jobs are activities in which students engage and receive a salary from an employer in China. According to Chinese regulations, engaging in part-time jobs with a study visa is illegal. However, it is important to note that part-time jobs are different from what is known in Chinese law as a 'work-study programs', which are also part time employments but organized by universities for "foreign students working to support their studies in China" (EEAL, 2012). As some university administrations often confused part time jobs with internships, foreign students were often told that they were not allowed to do internships in China. This implied that students could not be issued the authorization letter to follow up the administrative procedure for internships.

It should be noted that the interpretation of the law also varies within the provinces. In the Zhejiang province for instance, while Tony, the student from Sci-Tech University in Hangzhou did an internship twice, a staff member of Zhejiang Normal University (in the same province) told me that internships for foreign students were not allowed because it is considered employment, and thus forbidden by law. He said: "You know!, foreign students are not allowed to work in China. To do an internship, a student [would] need to change his/her [study]visa into a working visa, which is quite impossible." (interview in Jinhua, July 2016). Underlying this interpretation is the fact that doing an internship is equal to working. In the same respect, while an official from Sun-Yat Sen University argued that foreign students were not allowed to engage in internships, a research participant from South China University of Technology (in the same province) was authorized to do an internship in a local company.

The understanding and interpretation of the law guiding academic internships also varied among staffs from the same university. At Zhejiang Normal University, for instance, the head of the international student office emphasized that doing internships was authorized. Conversely, a research participant told me that her supervisor asked her to go and do her internship in Cameroon arguing, "in China, an internship is viewed as synonymous with working whereas students are banned from working in China." (Interview with Martha, Jinhua, July 2016).

In places where academic internship was authorized, there was a confusion about the administrative procedure, specifically the order of the production of the required documents between the universities and the solicited internship organization, which made it impossible to fulfil. For instance, students reported situations where their universities required them to submit an internship acceptance letter from a company before obtaining the internship authorization letter. At the same time the internship company first required an internship authorization letter from the universities in order to deliver an internship acceptance letter. Many students gave up on their search for internship opportunities upon finding themselves in this situation. Some students often interpreted the requirement from Chinese organizations as an excuse to reject their internship application. Yet, it could also be seen as the organizations´ interpretation of the internship as a student job. In a context where organizations that illegally employ students (that is without the authorization of the immigration service) are exposed to legal sanctions, requesting students to provide an authorization letter from their universities could also be seen as a safety measure for the organization.

In their narratives, the majority of the research participants pointed out that the question of access to practical knowledge in China can only be solved by political authorities. For instance, Oliver, a Master's student in public administration commented:

> "Regarding the issues of practical knowledge in China (…) beside the discrimination against Africans by Chinese companies, the main problem is the law. Many Chinese companies use the law as an excuse to reject internship applications of Africans. In my opinion, the internship problem in China is political. Laws are made by the government and the same government can change laws." (Conversation with Oliver, Changsha, July 2016, translated from French).

This view was shared by one of the university officers. Reflecting on the internship issue, he said: "The problem of internship is caused by the Chinese immigration regulation. Maybe the state should change the law. It will certainly make things easier." (Interview with an official from ZJNU, Jinhua, July 2016).

The lack of internship opportunities led the students to graduate without acquiring practical knowledge. Consequently, the ideal of skills transfer between Cameroon and China is practically questionable and, as the foregoing suggests, immigration law in China is seemingly one of the main obstacles. However, beyond this structural barrier in China, the situation of knowledge transfer between China and Cameroon is also the result of the governance of student migration by the Cameroonian government. It is about the learning mechanisms put in place by the Cameroonian government. Regarding the issue of governance of student migration, I will limit myself here specifically to the management of Chinese government scholarships by the Ministry of Higher Education of Cameroon.

9.2 Cameroon and the Hope to 'Learn from China': Beyond the Discourse, Questioning the Learning Mechanism

During my fieldwork in China, the president of the Cameroonian student association in China (who was at that time doing his internship at the Cameroon Embassy in Beijing) shared a document issued by the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education entitled 'Priority field of training for Cameroon'. The document was a list of subjects which the president had sent around with the following accompanying message: "Fellow countrymen, let us make good use of the opportunities China offers us". The document was in line with the repeated claims by the officials of the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education that applicants for the Chinese government scholarships are selected considering the national needs of human resource in

sophisticated domains. This implies that student migration from Cameroon to China is officially viewed as a means of transferring knowledge and skills from China to Cameroon.

Chapter 4 indicated that learning from other countries is a well-known approach in the process of knowledge production and human resource empowerment. It is commonplace that countries that cannot rely on local higher education to satisfy their needs in human resources and knowledge for local development turn to knowledge-producing countries (Gürüz 2011; King 2013; British Council and DAAD 2014; Gribble and Tran 2016). Student migration constitutes one of the means, which is why outward student migration often occurs from states considered knowledge users to knowledge producers (Gürüz 2011) or from so-called under-developed to developed countries (Mimche et al 2016; King 2013). Therefore, considering that universities and research institutes in Cameroon are currently facing a situation of economic and infrastructural deprivation, the official discourse presenting student migration from Cameroon to China as a means of transferring knowledge and skills from China to Cameroon (see Chapter 4) is well justified. However, even if international academic mobility can significantly contribute to the development of science and tackle the skills challenge in countries with low knowledge production capacities (Gürüz 2011), and this can only be effective if it takes place within a well-designed national student migration policy.

The following sections aim at assessing the mechanisms put in place by the Cameroonian government to successfully learn from China. To do so, I will specifically focus on the management of the Chinese government scholarships by the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education. The management of scholarships here includes several aspects, such as the selection of the grantees and knowledge capitalization (return migration and employment), among others. I shall briefly make a comparison with the case of Rwanda, drawing on my conversations and interviews with Rwandan students in the city of Jinhua.

9.2.1 The Selection of the Students for Chinese Government Scholarships

One of the features distinguishing scholarship schemes is the selection of applicants. There are cases where the selection of the students for scholarships is done by the granting countries. This is the case with DAAD scholarships in Germany, UCD (University Commission for Development) scholarships in Belgium, Campus France scholarships in France, the 'Quota scheme' in Norway, etc. In these cases, applicants send their documents directly to, and receive feedback from, the granting countries. There is a second category of scholarship schemes whereby granting countries entrust the selection procedure to the applicants' home countries.

This is usually the case with scholarships granted within the framework of bilateral cooperation. Chinese government scholarships to Cameroon fall under this second group. According to some scholars (King 2013; Niu and Jing 2016; Niu 2013), the decision of the Chinese government to entrust the selection of the applicants to the beneficiary countries should be understood in the light of the principles of 'mutual non-interference in each other´s internal affairs' which is part of the 'Eight Principles' of China´s aid to foreign countries.

According to the officials from the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education, once the Ministry of Education of China decides on the number of scholarships for Cameroon, the offer is forwarded to the Chinese Embassy in Cameroon. The Chinese Embassy sends the offer on to the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cameroon. It is the Ministry of Higher Education, through the 'Department of Student Assistance and Welfare' that publicizes the call for a scholarship. Potential candidates are required to hand in their application files at the 'Scholarship Division' of the Ministry of Higher Education. According to officials from this ministry, application documents include, among others, a handwritten application addressed to the Ministry of Higher Education, an application form, university transcripts or school reports (for postgraduate and undergraduate applicants, respectively), and a study plan. The most important criteria, I was told by the officials, are the applicants´ previous academic performance (grades and the length of study), the age, and the intended study programmes.

My conversations with officials from the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon further indicate that the selection procedure consists of three steps. The first step is internal to the Ministry of Higher Education and consists of scanning the application files to ensure that they contain all the required documents. This leads to the establishment of a summary sheet for each student. These summary sheets are used in the second step which is the selection of grantees itself. According to the officials from Cameroon's Ministry of Higher Education, the selection is done by a commission composed of representatives of several administrations including the Presidency of the Republic, the Prime Minister's Office, the Chinese Embassy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and every department of the Ministry of Higher Education of Cameroon. "The presence of a representative of the Chinese Embassy is just symbolic. He [she] does not have a word", commented a staff member of the Ministry of Higher Education. The list of the selected candidates is published, and the grantees are informed and required to undergo a medical check-up. In the last step, the results of the medical check-up "are attached to the candidates´ summary sheets and submitted to the Chinese side for validation", said an

official from the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon. I also asked him whether the Chinese government could reject the list of candidates suggested by the Ministry of Higher Education and he said: "The Chinese trust us. The list is sent simply for confirmation and paper work. They need the names of the students to issue scholarship award letters which are useful for visa application and so on." (Conversation with an official from the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education, Yaoundé, September 2017, translated from French).

When the final results are published, the grantees are informed and invited to collect their letter of award from the Ministry of Higher Education. For the preparation of the travel of the students, the ministry organizes several meetings, during which former Chinese government scholarship holders or those still studying in China but who had come to Cameroon for the holidays, are invited to share their experiences, so as to provide the new grantees with useful tips. During the last preparation meeting, the grantees are given their flight tickets[76] paid for by the Cameroonian government.

The outcome of a learning process being in part dependent on the profile of the candidates, I discussed the criteria and the fairness of the selection process with officials from Cameroon's Ministry of Higher Education as well as Cameroonian students in China (both scholarship holders and self-sponsored). During my research stays in Cameroon, one of the staff members of the Ministry of Higher Education was particularly cooperative and granted me several meetings (formal and informal). He was from the 'Department of Student Assistance and Welfare', the unit at the core of scholarship management. My first question to him during our first meeting (which took place in his office) concerned the selection criteria of the applicants for Chinese scholarships. His answer was: "the selection criteria are clearly defined. These are excellence, regional balance and gender. A student with outstanding academic performance can be sure that he/she will be granted a Chinese government scholarship." (Conversation with an official from the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education, Yaoundé, August 2015, translated from French). During our third meeting which took place in a very informal setting, we discussed the fairness and meritocracy in the selection procedure. He commented: "As I told you last time, the selection criteria are excellence, regional balance and gender, except for candidates recommended by the Ministry [of Higher Education] or the Chinese ambassador [to Cameroon]." (Interview with an official from the Cameroonian

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[76] According to the research participants, the flight ticket is one-way because the tickets back are to be borne by China

Ministry of Higher Education, Yaoundé, September 2015, translated from French). By this statement, he implicitly acknowledged that the selection is not as fair as he had indicated earlier. When I argued that recommending a candidate was against the excellence criterion he had mentioned earlier, he reacted:

> "Admittedly a superior [from the Ministry of Higher Education] or the Chinese ambassador can recommend a candidate, but it is not a common practice. Even in case of recommendation, the person recommending will first send the application file of the recommended to the competent department to assess the feasibility. If the candidate is not qualified, the person recommending will be informed. However, it is normal to support a candidate recommended by a hierarchical superior because one might need his/her service one day. In the end, they are excellence scholarships. The problem is that in Cameroon, popular representation attaches too much credit to connections, which is not true. It is not only "the sons of" who are awarded scholarships. There are as well sons [/daughters] of poor" (Interview with an official from the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education, Yaoundé, September 2015, translated from French).

My research stays in China and Cameroon confirmed the argument of the possibility for the "sons [/daughters] of the poor" to be granted a Chinese government scholarship on the sole basis of their academic performance. I identified two cases during field work in Cameroon, Ivo and Lama, from the Adamaoua and the west regions of Cameroon, respectively. Both had studied medical science in China and returned to Cameroon upon graduation. They had three things in common: their rural family background, the fact that they were living and studying out of Yaoundé (where the Cameroon´s Ministry of Higher Education is based) when they applied for the scholarship, and their parents being farmers in the village. At the time of the interviews, they were in Yaoundé where they had settled upon their return from China a few months earlier. Each of them lived in a relative´s house which I visited for the interview purpose. As they explained to me, the choice to live with a family member was imposed by the fact that they could not afford private accommodation. Lama was sharing a studio apartment (in a remote and populated neighborhood) with his elder sister, her husband and their little child. Lama was in search of either a job or another scholarship opportunity to further his education abroad. During the interview, Lama showed me his high school diploma with which he had applied and been granted the Chinese government scholarship. The diploma indicated that he had passed with an average of 15,50/20, which in the Cameroon context is quite exceptional performance. Ivo was also living with his younger brother in a modest apartment in Yaoundé. He was planning to return to China for a Master´s course, or else to apply for a teaching position

from the University of Ngaoundéré where he had earned his Bachelor's degree in medico-sanitary science.

It is important to emphasize that the social background of the research participants is very delicate and complex. One might deliberately hide or lie about his or her family background. However, during the interview, it was possible to have a relatively clear idea of the informants′ social background. In this respect, the first open-ended question I always asked research participants was about their decision-making processes regarding their migration project, as their narratives usually provided important indications on their social background and social capital. It should also be highlighted that there is a tendency among Cameroonians to disclose one′s social background, especially one's social networks and social capital. Those with alleged or real social capital are viewed as "*pas n′importe qui*" (not just anybody) or someone "*qui a le réseau*" (someone who has connections). Being seen or known as such is associated with prestige and supposedly confers respect from the peers.

Nonetheless, from my conversations with students and some officials of the Cameroonian Embassy in China, the chances for the "sons of the poor" like Ivo and Lama to be granted a scholarship are very low. From the interviews and informal conversations with students and some officials of the Cameroonian Embassy in China on the one hand, and my analysis of the content of the Cameroonian student's communication on Wechat on the other hand, it seemed that the number of "sons [/daughters] of the poor" on Chinese government scholarships is rather low. Chinese government scholarships in Cameroon apparently constitute a political resource. Yet the political and social structuring in Cameroon is featured by a domination of ethnicity and belonging (Pelican 2006, Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998; Bayart, 2009), "kinship" (Geschiere 2000), "conservative tribalism" (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998), and "closure and exclusion" (Bayart 1979), which might affect the distribution of all kinds of resources.

As suggested in Chapter 5, among students, there is a shared idea that what counts in the application for Chinese government scholarships is one's social capital and not one's academic performance. This is why there is a specific terminology to designate students on Chinese government scholarships. For instance, they are referred to as "*les forts*", "*les puissants*", " *ceux qui ont le pays*", "*ceux qui ont reseau au pays*", "*muna for tété* "[77] . Students' perception of the

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[77] In the Cameroonian lingua franca, "*muna*" means son/daughter and "*tété*" refers to an elite with economic and political power, that is someone who has connections within the governing class. "Muna for tété" then literally means "a son/daughter of" an elite.

governance of the scholarship scheme in Cameroon corroborates with the assessment of some Cameroonian government officials both in China and Cameroon. For instance, a staff member of the Cameroonian Embassy in Beijing commented on the management of the Chinese government scholarships by Cameroon as follows: "… for the Chinese government scholarships nowadays, priority is given to the "sons[/daughters] of ». They are numerous here [in Beijing] and I am not sure that they are necessarily the best students in Cameroon." (Interview with a staff member of the Cameroonian Embassy in Beijing, April 2015, translated from French).

This grievance was shared by another official in Cameroon. She studied in China on a Chinese government scholarship in the early 2000s. Discussing the selection criteria for Chinese government scholarships, I told her that some staff members of the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education had presented the selection criteria as objective and fair. She reacted:

> "[…] that is storytelling; there are no selection criteria. It is all about mentoring, sponsorship and things like that. In the past, before the responsibility for the selection of students was entrusted to the Ministry of Higher Education, it used to be handled by the Chinese embassy here. Applicants in the fields of science were to sit for a competitive examination organized at the higher teacher training school here in Yaoundé. It is the Chinese who were in charge of the design and the correction of the test. The selection was essentially based on applicants´ academic performance. That is the reason why those who went to China in those days were the best in their different fields." (Interview with a Ministry official in Yaoundé, October 2015, translated from French).

My conversation with students who had received their scholarships through the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon confirmed the foregoing. In Beijing in April 2015, I met Tino. He was then in his early twenties and had arrived in China about eight months earlier and was thus still learning the Chinese language. In our informal conversation, we alluded to his decision to come to China. I learnt that Tino´s mother worked at the Supreme Court in Yaoundé and his late father had been a gendarmerie officer. Tino´s uncle (the brother of his father) was a Director at the Ministry of Mining, Water and Energy of Cameroon. The wife of his uncle was a Sub-Director at the Ministry of Higher Education. "It is precisely thanks to her [the wife of his uncle] that I am here today. She called me over to her office one day and gave me the scholarship requirement document. It was on a Tuesday and the deadline was on a Friday [laughing]. I don't know why she did so, but it was probably to gauge how committed and determined I am…But I managed", Tino said. I asked him whether he could have been granted the scholarship without the support of his uncle´s wife. Tinos´s answer was unequivocal,

drawing on the situation of an old high school friend who had also applied for the scholarship but had not been granted one:

"In high school, the guy was just unbeatable in terms of grades. Everybody knew that he was the best in every single subject. He passed his GCE A level with distinction but his scholarship application was not accepted. Yet, during the application process, I suggested he should tell his parents to try 'to do something' […] like to see someone at the ministry and maybe give some money [bribery]. You know how it works in the country […]. Anyways he did not listen to me since he was so self-confident, counting on his intelligence. Unfortunately, he was proven wrong. He did not get the scholarship, which made me sad." (Conversation with Tino, Beijing, April 2015, translated from French).

Like Tino, the majority of students on Chinese government scholarships with whom I talked acknowledged in one way or the other that they had got their grant thanks to a relative. Such practices were also underlined by Jude, the former president of the Cameroonian student association of one of the cities I visited in China. He was viewed within the student community of the city and beyond as "an exemplary student" and a "true leader". On the selection of the grantees, he commented:

"I cannot clearly tell on what criteria the selection of students is based. If you have luck, you will be selected. If you have good connections, you will definitely be selected. Nobody really knows the criteria, apart from them [those who select] there [in Cameroon]. But, in most cases, the choice of the candidates is contentious. When you discuss with guys [Chinese government scholarship holders] you realize that it is all about connections and favoritism, they do not even hide it". (Conversation with Jude, Wuhan, April 2016, translated from French).

The foregoing depiction aligns with previous research on the management of Chinese government scholarships by African states. In her study on China´s recruitment of African university students (which included Cameroonian research participants), Haugen (2013) observed that most Chinese government scholarship holders are from a "privileged background". Similar practices have been reported for Chinese government scholarship selection in Namibia. In a 2013 article entitled 'Fixing China's image in Africa, one student at a time' which analyzes the effectiveness of Chinese soft power by means of scholarships, Allison (2013) quotes Namibian newspapers criticizing what is referred to as an "abuse of scholarship". One of the newspapers reads:

"High-ranking government officials are grabbing educational scholarships offered by China for their children and close relatives (…) Investigations show that high-profile figures ranging from former president and founding father, Sam Nujoma; current President Hifikepunye Pohamba; government ministers overseeing procurement of multi-

million dollar deals with the Chinese government; senior military and several government officials are snatching the scholarships which are supposed to benefit mainly students from less privileged families for their children and relatives." (Allison, 2013).[78]

Furthermore, Allison interviewed Chinese scholars interested in China-African relations. The author indicates how one of them "speaking off the record" acknowledges that Chinese diplomats in Africa have a share of responsibility in the abuse of scholarships, as they "use the scholarship programmes as a carrot with which to reward cooperation from African governments"[79]. Quoting one of the Chinese scholars interviewed, the report reads: "The traditional mindset among some Chinese officials is that they still think the most important thing is to leave enough quota, enough scholarships, to give to special persons, the elites. They go to officials' children or special connections" (ibid). From a soft power perspective, this way of using scholarships does not favor a long-term relationship between China and the grantees

With the influence of social capital in the scholarship selection procedure, it is very likely that there is no attention attached neither to the academic performance nor the field of study they chose, contrary to the officials' claims that students are selected in accordance with national needs in specific domains (see Chapter 4). This was the opinion of Jude, the student leader to whom I referred earlier. He pointed to the negative relationship between what he called "clientelism" in the granting of scholarships and the effectiveness of knowledge transfer or the possibility to 'learn from China':

> "The thing is that when someone wants to offer a relative a scholarship, the issue of academic performance and the subjects does not matter. In a Cameroonian context where everyone wants to leave the country, a scholarship is a great opportunity (…). It becomes something like: take the scholarship first and you will think of what to study later. During my term as president [of the student association], I sometimes wondered about the profile of the students sent here [by the Ministry of Higher Education]. There were students with a background in Law who were granted scholarships to study engineering. I don't know since when this has been happening, but for the time I have been here, I have been witnessing it (…). I understand after all: These are probably people who have been granted the scholarship as a gift, without any clear academic project. […] Technology

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[78]The report is available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/31/china-africa-students-scholarship-programme. Last accessed December 2018.

[79] The case of Botswana in 2009 is an example. On the website of the Chinese Embassy in Botswana, the advertisement of the Chinese government scholarships for Botswana for the 2009/2010 academic year reads: "For the academic year of 2009/2010, the Chinese government will provide 22 full scholarships for Botswana students who wish to study in China as postgraduates for master or doctoral degrees, Chinese language students, general scholars and senior scholars. Among all the scholarships, 12 of them have been distributed to Botswana Government officials while the rest 10 are for the public." (http://bw.china-embassy.org/eng/sbgx/t539917.htm). Last accessed, December 2018.

transfer does not mean moving big machines from China to Cameroon. It is about well-trained human resources. And if they only send students here by clientelism that is, to their sons and relatives without any criteria, they will return to Cameroon without any skills. I am sorry to say this about my fellows but most of us return to Cameroon without any knowledge, be they scholarship holders or self-sponsored. About fifty per cent of those who graduate from China are not skilled (…) In short, I personally think that we [the Cameroon government] are wasting the scholarships." (Phone conversation with Jude, December 2017, translated from French).

I also discussed Cameroon-China educational cooperation, namely scholarship provision with Eleih-Ellé Etian, the former Cameroonian ambassador to China from 1988 to 2008 and author of the book *Vingt ans d'expérience en Chine. Un Africain raconte*, (which translates as Twenty years of experience in China. An African relates) published in 2011. He was critical about the management of scholarships offered by the Chinese government. Among other issues, he pointed to the selection of the grantees. He was particularly concerned with the age of students. In his opinion, students who were sent to China within the framework of cooperation were usually not mature enough to cope with adaptation problems they faced. He said he had drawn attention of the Cameroonian government to the issue but that the situation remained unchanged. He recalled:

"I remember that at some point, there had been remarkable incidents. Young Cameroonians were literally ´going nuts´ in China. We at the Embassy finally drew the conclusion that it had to do with their age. Therefore, we suggested to the Cameroonian government not to send young high school leavers any more but only those who already have the mental and psychological capacities to cope with and adapt to a new environment and culture. This means students in the phase of specialization or doctorate studies. Unfortunately, I recently met young high school leavers in China and here [in Cameroon] as well who have been awarded scholarships. People slip through the net." (Interview with Eleih-Ellé in Yaounde, October 2015, translated from French).

Another staff member of the Cameroon Embassy in China to whom I spoke in 2016 also raised the issue of the students' age when we discussed the nature of the problems Cameroonian students face in China. He specifically correlated academic and social adaptation challenges with the age of the students:

"China is a completely different context. There is racism or ignorance here in China which makes the adaptation process very difficult. It requires a lot of effort to live in China. Besides that, language is another issue. Mandarin is a very complex language for studies, which is why there is a considerable rate of discouragement among students. For these two reasons, lot of students spend most of their time on social media […], they like partying. However, when you take a closer look at the situation, you realize that the age of students is an important factor: younger ones are more vulnerable, which is

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understandable. They have never faced any real social and academic challenge prior they stay here. There have never been in a situation where they had to develop adaptation skills. The best would be to send graduate students." (Conversation with a staff of Cameroon Embassy in China, Beijing, August 2016, translated from French).

For comparison purposes, I had interviews with students from other nationalities. One of the biggest group of non-Cameroonian students I interviewed were from Rwanda. My interest in Rwandan students took shape when I met the first student from Rwanda at Jinhua Polytechnic. It was in the framework of a football match between African students of this institution and those from Zhejiang Normal University. We were all spectators and I initiated the conversation by asking him what he studied. As he told me that he was on scholarship, I asked him about the application process. He said: "I did not apply for a scholarship. I was actually at the farm with my parents when I received a call from the principal of my school asking me if I was interested in a scholarship for ICT in China" (conversation with Sylvester, Jinhua, July 2016). He further explained to me that there is a committee in Rwanda in charge of scholarships. The committee defines the subjects open for scholarships as well as the requirements. The committee develops an algorithm which is applied to the national registrar for the category of students targeted. It automatically generates the names of students who meet the requirements and their names are conveyed to their respective schools and the principals of the schools would contact the students not only to inform them about but also ask if they accept the grant. This selection procedure as described by the research participant was not only completely new to me but also intriguing, considering what I knew about the case of Cameroon. Consequently, I decided to talk to other Rwandan students on the topic of scholarships. I talked to three others altogether and their descriptions matched the first interviewee's. One of the Rwandans was very proud of the mechanism for the selection of the students, in comparison with experiences of other African students at his university. He said: "When I discuss with other students, it seems like they are here because they have connections within the political system in their country. I understand then that Rwanda is an example when it comes to objectivity. Our leader has a vision for our country and needs the best to achieve it. We are proud of Rwanda and of our leader" (Interview with Karl, Jinhua, July 2016).

To get back to the case of Cameroon, field data suggested that the selection of students for scholarships is not the only limit to the effectiveness of knowledge transfer between Cameroon and China. The integration of the returning students in the labor market back in Cameroon is another great obstacle.

9.2.2   Knowledge Capitalization: Return Migration and Employment

Outward student migration can only be beneficial for a sending country if there is a well-planned student migration policy that is, a clear scenario for capitalizing the knowledge acquired abroad. Knowledge capitalization here refers to the mechanisms put in place to domesticate knowledge acquired. Knowledge capitalization here encompasses at least two dimensions, namely return migration and employment.

During field work in Cameroon, I discussed the issue of return migration with officials from the Ministry of Higher Education. I asked one them about the number of students who have been trained in China and those who returned upon graduation in China. We also discussed the arrangement between the Cameroonian government and the students who are granted scholarships. An extract of his answers follows:

> "There are statistics on the number of scholarships offered by China since 1998. [But] unfortunately, it is difficult to tell how many students return to Cameroon. This is because some students do not return. They stay on in China for business or job purposes. Others move to different countries in Europe. They refuse to come back because it is difficult for them to have a job here. Another reason is that those who return to Cameroon do not inform the ministry of their return. That is why it is difficult to keep track of the number of returning students. […] As I said, scholarships are granted in accordance with the national needs for human resources in specific fields of knowledge. This means that students are expected to come back upon graduation and to fill this gap. Unfortunately, this is not the case, due to the factors I highlighted earlier. In the past, scholarship students had to sign a 'ten-year commitment'[80] so as to guarantee their return to Cameroon after their study abroad. But this is no longer the case. Maybe the government should reintroduce it. But you should not forget that this can only work if there are job opportunities for the returnees. There is an employment crisis in Cameroon." (Interview with an official of the Ministry of Higher of Education of Cameroon, Yaoundé, September 2015, translated from French).

This statement indicates that the paths of students trained in China cannot be traced in Cameroon. Even though there was a not official statistics, my fieldwork in Cameroon suggested that there is a handful of students returning to Cameroon after their study stay in China. My

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[80] In the aftermath of independency, Cameroonian students who were given a scholarship to study abroad were bound to sign a "ten-year commitment". It was an engagement to return to Cameroon upon their study stay abroad and work the government for a minimum of ten years before they could take a job from a non-state owed institution. This means the government had to create jobs to absorb the returnees. For further details on the issue, see Mimche *et al* (2016: 194).

observation suggested that in terms of professional trajectories, most of the returnees were employed within Chinese companies, mostly as translators, and regardless of their field of specialization (including medical students as in the case of Sako in the introductory chapter). This professional path of student returnees was known to some officials of the Ministry of Higher education, namely the head of the 'University Cooperation Unit' who acknowledged that there were many students who return and are mostly employed within Chinese companies in Cameroon.

During fieldwork in Cameroon, I interviewed eighteen former student returnees. The table below summarizes their professional situation.

Table 7: Professional situation of returning students in Cameroon

Gender	Financial status in China	Training domain in China	Professional status in Cameroon
Male	CI grant	Chinese language	Translator in a Chinese company
Male	CI grant	Chinese language	Bank officer
Female	CG grant	Chinese language	Civil servant (Chinese Language teacher)
Female	CG grant	Chinese language	Government officer
Female	CG grant	Medical studies	Jobless
Female	CI grant	Chinese language	Jobless
Male	CG grant	Computer Sciences	Translator in a Chinese company
Male	CG grant	Medical studies	Jobless
Male	CG grant	Chinese language	Translator in a Chinese company
Female	CI grant	Chinese language	Civil servant (Chinese Language teacher)
Male	CG grant	Medical studies	Translator in a Chinese Company
Female	CI grant	Chinese language	Translator in a Chinese company
Female	CI grant	Chinese language	Translator in a Chinese company
Male	CI grant	Chinese language	Translator in a Chinese company
Female	CG grant	Public administration	Translator in a Chinese company
Male	CG	Education administration	Civil servant
Female	CG grant	Education administration	Civil servant
Male	CSC grant	Chemistry	Translator in a Chinese company

Source: Author's compilation based on fieldwork.

Regarding training fields, most of the student returnees that were interviewed had studied Chinese language (eight) and were on Confucius Institute scholarship. Others had studied Medical Sciences (four), Computer Sciences (two), Education Administration(one) and Chemistry (one). Regarding their professional career, nine of the returnees worked as

translators in Chinese companies. Although the majority of these translators (fives) had studied Chinese Language in China, three graduated from other subjects, namely Education Administration, Medical Sciences and Computer Science[81]. For those who graduated from other subjects than Chinese Language, working as a translator was rather a default option, considering the difficulties they faced securing an employment in their training domains.

Besides translation, returnees also worked as Chinese language teachers, bank workers, medical doctors, civil servants and government officers. Three of the participants were jobless. Another important point emerging from the table is that all returnees were scholarship holders, namely Chinese government scholarships (10), Confucius Institute scholarships, (seven) and China's Scholarship Council scholarship (1). The absence of self-sponsored students among returnees accounts for the difference between self-sponsored students and scholarship holders in terms of migration motivations as suggested earlier.

In my interview with the former ambassador of Cameroon to China to whom I referred earlier, he was particularly upset by the fact that students returning from China after their studies were not employed. He found it "bizarre not to say deplorable" that the returnees were not even included in the infrastructure projects being carried out in Cameroon. Lastly, he blamed the unemployment of the returnees on the absence of what he termed as "harmonized policy" on the part of the Cameroonian government. Even though he argued for a win-win cooperation between Cameroon and China, he also qualified:

> "I have the impression that we [Cameroonian authorities] are not making enough effort to get the most of the cooperation with China. One may even see it as a situation where you are offered something, but you do not take the chance…it is sometimes the case […]. When China offers us [Cameroon] scholarships, we should not blindly use them. They should be targeted-grants. […]. It is not logical and sensible that students trained in China in the fields we [Cameroon] consider fundamental or priority are not employed. It is a shameful contradiction. There should be a state-led policy […]. If we know that we have oil and need engineers to exploit it, we should therefore ask China to train students in Petroleum Engineering, because we will need them in the long run, etc. The government

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[81] In our conversation, the head of the University Cooperation Unit at the Ministry of Higher Education of Cameroon claimed that there were employment opportunities for all returning students. When asked about the existing job opportunities, he primarily mentioned Chinese firms and emphasized their growing number in Cameroon.

may claim that there is liberalization but if students returning from China with a degree (for which the state has invested important amount of money) are abandoned in nature, or have to struggle on their own to find something to do, liberalization is therefore debatable." (Interview with Eleih-Ellé, Yaoundé, October 2015, translated from French).

To make a slight comparison with Rwanda, I learned from my interviews that the Rwandan government put strategies in place to guarantee the return of students after graduation. First, students who were granted a scholarship signed a contract with the Rwandan government, by which they were bound to return to Rwanda after their studies. Secondly, graduates' degrees were not issued in China after graduation; degrees were conveyed to Rwanda according to an arrangement between the Rwandan government and Chinese universities. This implied that Rwandan students graduate in China but collected their degree in Rwanda. However, the students clarified that returning to Rwanda was not a guarantee to be employed by the government. They also explained that graduate students were allowed to depart from Rwanda after they collected their degree but that "the government would collect information about where they go and for which purpose" (Interview with Karl, Jinhua, July 2016).

9.3   The Management of Chinese Government Scholarship as a '*Mise en Dependence*' Mechanism

I use extraversion as analytical framework to discuss the management of the scholarship. Conceptualized by Bayart to analyze the situation of Africa in the world, Extraversion rests on several postulates of two are relevant to this discussion. First, African countries are "active agents in the *mise en dependence* of their societies" (2000: 219). By arguing in this way, even though Bayart acknowledges the "existence of a relationship of dependence between Africa and the rest of the world" (ibid), he criticizes the idea that the African continent has "been made dependent" by the dominant actors in the world order as claimed dependency theorists. The second postulate formulated by Bayart is that in their way of relating, African states view the external world as a "major resource" in solving local challenges. In this sense, "extraversion" means relying on the external world to overcome internal or local challenges.

The Cameroonian government's attitude toward Sino-Cameroon educational cooperation, and more precisely what I have termed the discourse of 'learning from China' is an extraversion attitude.

For illustration purposes, I recall two facts. First, from the 27th to the 30th of January 2015, the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education organized a Forum on International Academic

Cooperation. The event brought together ministry and university administration representatives and aimed to assess the challenges of the local higher education and to take resolutions for its improvement. One of the resolutions, as the report of the forum indicates, was the "submission to friendly countries and donor organizations the training needs of Cameroon" (Republic of Cameroon 2015). Second, in the 2014 edition of the 'Compendium of Cooperation Agreements and Conventions of the Higher Education', the Cameroonian Minister of Higher Education recommends local universities to seek partnership with foreign institutions: "It is imperative for the University today to take new strategies permitting it to develop and explore win-win partnership in highly specialized domains with many development partners" (Republic of Cameroon, 2014). It is very important to recall that the Minister made the recommendations upon highlighting the expectation of the Cameroonian government for universities in terms of training of skilled human resource in view of becoming an emerging country by 2035 (see Chapter 4).

Learning from others is a worldwide practice with the ultimate goal of becoming independent in terms of knowledge and skills. However, as I have argued, learning from the others can only lead to empowerment or to "reduced dependence" if it goes hand in hand with a well-designed student migration policy. Considering the management of Chinese government scholarships by the Cameroonian government, as described earlier, there is no good reason to hope for the domestication of China's know-how which is still greatly needed in Cameroon.

On the whole, it seems that after several decades of university cooperation between Cameroon and China, Cameroon still depends on China to maintain, at least, some infrastructure built by Chinese companies in Cameroon. In 2018, I came across media reports on the state of what is known in Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon as the newest 'ministerial building'. It is an 18-storey building of which the construction started in 1984 but was suspended due to the economic downturn that Cameroon experienced in the 1980s. In 2010, the Cameroonian government decided to continue with the construction and the contract was given to China Shanxi Construction, a Chinese company which also built the well-known sports palace in Yaoundé. The construction was completed in 2013 and inaugurated in 2014, and is now occupied by different government administrations. However, in January 2018, local newspapers reported the complaints of the users of the building. The complaints were specifically concerned with the elevators and the air-conditioning system of the building. These dysfunctions were presented as having been caused by a lack of maintenance which resulted from the unavailability of qualified maintainers. According to the media report, the users of the

building blame the fact that "the Chinese did not proceed with the transfer of technology". A Cameroonian architect interviewed by a newspaper commented:

> "We do not have the adequate technology. I have always said that to handle the maintenance of an infrastructure of this caliber, it is necessary to train people. Cameroonians should be trained in the technology used by the Chinese. But unfortunately, people continue to acquire scraps of knowledge on-the-job. More importantly, we need not only maintainers but also spare parts and equipment. We should not invest in a technology that we are unable to maintain." (author's translation, original in French).[82]

According to the political rhetoric, projects carried out by foreign companies in Cameroon include an aspect on technology transfer, which is why these companies are often bound to recruit local experts. However, it seems that Cameroonian engineers included in some of the project teams are only superficially involved. I spoke with some Cameroonian engineers who worked in a hydroelectric project carried out by a Chinese company. They said that Cameroonian engineers in the project occupied minor roles as they were often used as simple manual workers. One of them said:

> "When it comes to real tuffs like designing, solution finding and so on, Cameroonians are not involved. When you ask questions about technical aspects, you have no answer. You spend years in a project without gaining any new practical skill. The worst is that you have nowhere to complain. There is nothing the Cameroonian project coordinator can do to the Chinese […]. With their money, Chinese are very powerful. All Cameroonians with decision–making power in the project are their friends [...]. The technology transfers they [political authorities] talk about is absolute nonsense. Only Chinese can maintain the infrastructures they build in Cameroon, unfortunately." (Conversation with an engineer, Yaoundé, April 2019, translated from French).

The situation of dependency might be profitable to foreign companies in the sense that maintenance operations after the construction of an infrastructure imply new contracts. Consequently, no company will easily transfer its technology unless it is bound to. This means that not only technology transfer should be a contractual obligation, but there must also first

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[82] A full report on the situation of the building with the analysis of the architect is available at HYPERLINK "http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroun-yaounde-limmeuble-de-lemergence-renovee-a-hauteur-de-147-milliards-de-fcfa-naffiche-314106.html" http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroun-yaounde-limmeuble-de-lemergence-renovee-a-hauteur-de-147-milliards-de-fcfa-naffiche-3

and foremost be a follow up strategy to ensure companies abide them. The later condition is probably very hard to fulfil in view of the level of corruption in Cameroon, as the above statement of the engineer implicitly suggested.

This chapter has suggested that Cameroon's hope to learn from China and China's intention to share its knowledge with Cameroon through student migration are unworkable for the moment due to structural elements, such as the legal requirement regarding academic internship in China on the one hand, and the lack of well-planned student migration policy in Cameroon on the other hand. On the whole, to borrow from Taylor (2014), educational cooperation with China might not necessarily contribute to the "rising" of Cameroon but rather to a "diversified dependency".

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This thesis has discussed Sino-Cameroonian educational cooperation and specifically student migration from Cameroon to China. I have approached student mobility from the perspectives of two separate stakeholders: States (Cameroon and China) and Cameroonian students (those still studying in China as well as returnees in Cameroon). This dissertation pursued a triple focus: a) to understand the states' discourses and expectations of student migration, b) assess students' motives for migration, their academic and social experiences in China, as well the professional paths of the returnees in Cameroon and c) to evaluate if and how states' and students' perspectives match. This last aspect contributed to critically assess the beneficial outcomes of student migration for both states and students.

The overview of the interdisciplinary literature suggests that the number of Cameroonian students in China has grown astonishingly over the last two decades. This unprecedented increase is the result of a combination of factors, such as generous scholarship schemes, easy university admission requirements and simplified visa conditions and procedures. The thesis addressed the following question: Why does the Chinese government not only open the doors of its higher education institutions to African students but also facilitates their entry through substantial scholarship schemes?

Government rhetoric about student mobility: 'knowledge sharing', 'learning from China' and soft power expectations

This study has shown that the China-Africa educational cooperation is built on earlier historical and political alliances between China and the African continent. Today's Chinese government scholarships to African students fall under the umbrella of a 'Cooperation in Human Resources Development and Education' in the framework of which China stated its 'commitment to assist Africa in Human Resources Development (HRD)' (People's Republic of China 2006). This commitment, as China's African policy documents suggest, is justified by the fact that the lack of adequate human resource in Africa constitutes the central cause of the current state of under-development of the continent (ibid). In this respect, student migration from Africa to China has to be seen as the Chinese government's desire to enhance economic growth in Africa. China's 'Human Resource Development for Africa' project, just as for China-

Africa cooperation in general, is embedded in a diplomatic vocabulary of solidarity, friendship, mutuality, and a win-win partnership.

However, as I have argued throughout the thesis, beyond the official framing of the China-Africa educational cooperation as a measure of developmental support, the Chinese government unofficially resorts to education as a soft power resource. This implies that the Chinese government expects to 'win the minds and hearts' of the enrolled African students so as to have them love China, develop a preference for China, and consider it their 'second home'. Enrolling and training African students is part and parcel of China's image branding strategy tool box. For several soft power theoreticians, China's soft power agenda in Africa is primarily a ploy for China´s neo-colonialism in Africa (Brautigam 2009; Michel and Beuret 2009). In this sense, China´s engagement for education in Africa simply prepares the ground for its economic activities. In other words, enrolling African students is part and parcel of the Chinese government´s strategies to penetrate African states with the aim of targeting their natural resources.

Against this backdrop, I have emphasized through the cases of Germany and the UK, among others, that using education as a soft power resource is not a Chinese exception but in fact a common practice of 'state diplomacy' worldwide (Chapter 1). More importantly, I have argued that soft power and 'knowledge sharing' are not mutually exclusive. This implies that a state can effectively train foreign students, and at the same time enhance its positive image among the latter. Consequently, with regard to the soft power debate, my goal has not been to investigate whether or not China is using education as a soft power mechanism. I was rather, primarily interested in the conditions under which education can become an effective soft power strategy and, secondarily, to assess how much soft power China has among Cameroonians who have studied and/or are studying in China. That is why I have focused on student's attitudes towards China and their assessment of China as a receiving country.

Concerning the discourse of 'knowledge sharing' deployed by the Chinese government, I was interested in what Cameroonian students are effectively learning from China in terms of theoretical and practical skills. In other words, my focus was how the 'knowledge sharing' is organized. The Chinese government's discourse of 'knowledge sharing' or human resource development aligns with the Cameroonian government's discourse of 'learning from China'. I have shown that this expectation to 'learn from China' is legitimate, considering the limited knowledge production capacities of Cameroon, which is the consequence of a multidimensional crisis that the local higher education and research institutions have been facing over the past

decades. This state of affairs, as officially acknowledged by the Cameroonian government in its different development policy documents (Chapters 4 and 9) leads to a shortage of human resources required for the national development agenda. I have also shown that learning from other countries is rather a global practice used by states to fill the gap in their human resource formation. However, the assessment of the Cameroonian government's policy towards outward student migration and the professional trajectories of students returning to Cameroon after graduation in China has shown gaps between the discourse and the practices of 'learning from China'. Student migration is not an effective strategy towards ending dependency vis-à-vis Chinese expertise. The way the scholarships offered by the Chinese government are managed by the Cameroonian government rather contributes to the "*mise en dependence*" of the Cameroonian state.

On the effectiveness of education as a soft power resource: How much soft power does China have among Cameroonian students?

From the theoretical perspective, this thesis aimed to draw on students´ social and academic experiences in China, so as to contribute to the soft power debate which the literature suggests to be the mainstream analytical perspective for understanding China´s commitment to enroll and train African students in general (Allison 2012; Haugen 2013; King 2013). I have engaged with this debate, using student satisfaction as a starting point. More precisely, I have contended that students´ satisfaction with their social and academic experiences in China is the precondition for education to become an effective soft power resource in China's image branding endeavor. In other words, students can only develop a preference for China if, and only if, they have a positive judgement of their overall experience in China, an attitude which nurtures in them "a sense of giving something back" (Hart 2017). As outlined in academic studies on student migration (Atkinson 2010; Altbach and Peterson 2008; Haugen 2013), international students' experiences are influenced by several elements, such as the quality of the university training, the attitude of the local population towards immigrants in the host country, the availability of job opportunities, the health system, the visa/immigration policy, the nature of the relationship with the university staff, the accommodation and banking service, and the support from the international student office.

Considering these factors, this dissertation has shown that the level of satisfaction among Cameroonian students in China is mitigated. Despite their excitement with and praise for the quality of social facilities and the university infrastructure, students were dissatisfied with their

overall experience in China. For instance, research participants pointed to a stringent immigration regulation in China. Although student visas for China (in comparison to Western countries), are relatively easy and affordable, the immigration laws in China appeared to be a cause for discontentment for several reasons. First, the conditions for visa renewals which students viewed as challenging, added to the quasi-impossibility for a foreigner to obtain Chinese citizenship regardless of the number of years spent in China. Secondly, the most recurrent critique of Chinese immigration law was related to student jobs. By law, foreign students in most provinces in China were not allowed to seek part-time employment or to engage in income-generating activities. This legal provision was a particular cause for concern within the student community because the choice of China (like any other country) as a study destination was generally motivated by perceived job and business opportunities. This is also because for many students, both studies and money-making are integral parts of their migratory project. Said otherwise, what makes a study stay abroad successful from the perspective of Cameroonian students is not solely the degree earned but also (and often more so) the wealth accumulated during the study stay in China.

Furthermore, the dissatisfaction with social life resulted from social and racial contacts with some Chinese citizens. The students I spoke with showed an important awareness of being Black in China, emphasizing some unsettling attitudes of Chinese towards Black people, such as avoidance, curiosity, discrimination and racial profiling. Specifically, they pointed to the fact that Black people in China are faced with a sort of glass ceiling in the labor market because Chinese employers are believed to have a preference for White skin. The difficulties witnessed by students in their search for internships within Chinese companies were interpreted through the lens of this anti-Black discrimination in China. Added to this was the perceived partiality of the Chinese police in doing justice in situations involving Chinese citizens and foreigners in general. There was a claim among the research participants that Chinese citizens would always be favored by the police. Such a perception often structured a permanent sentiment of unprotected safety.

Overall, the research participants framed their negative social experiences as the result of either racism or ignorance which they considered as having structural causes. In their opinion, ignorance resulted in part from a lack of racial exposure or contact between African and Chinese students. Yet, Chinese universities (which in students' narratives were often confused with the Chinese government) not only accommodate foreign students and their Chinese colleagues in separate hostels, but also restrict visits between them. These rules in university accommodation,

some students claimed, was nothing but a mechanism to keep distance between the two groups, and by so doing, to prevent mutual cultural learning which is important for deconstructing the Chinese perception of Africa and Africans. Another structural cause of the perceived-negative attitude of the Chinese towards Africans in China was the depiction of Africa and Africans by the media in China. In their opinion, reports of Chinese media on Africa only show the ugly facet of Africa, by emphasizing poverty, sickness, warfare and hunger which in turn reinforces disdain, condescendence and a superiority complex among the Chinese vis-à-vis Africans. For this alleged role of the media, students pointed a finger at the Chinese government for not applying censorship policy prevailing in China so as to control or ban news reports that are harmful to the image of Africa. Consequently, the Chinese government is considered an accomplice to the perpetuation, if not to the emergence of Chinese's prejudices and stereotypes towards Black people. Such suspicion is unarguably harmful to the image of China and its soft power impact on Cameroonian students. However, even if there is an "anti-Black racism at the personal level" in China as outlined by Lan (2015: 3), research participants might also misinterpret the attitudes and actions of the Chinese population.

From the academic standpoint, as illustrated in the story of Sako in the introduction, the academic expectations of Cameroonian students in China were not met. There was a concern about the quality and quantity of teaching as a result of simplified curricula, coupled with language barriers experienced not only by students but also by Chinese lecturers. Chinese lecturers in English-taught programmes were believed to have a low command of the English language which impacted the quality of their lectures. Another element presented as contributing to the low quality of training is what the research participants considered an easy academic path for foreign students in China, in reference to complaisant grading and pass conditions, as well as toleration of cheating during exams. This lax attitude of the university leads to a laid-back attitude. The dissatisfaction with the quality of education is also due to the academic internship challenge, which prevented the accumulation of hands-on experience during the course of studies. The inefficiency or lack of internship possibilities does not only apply to medical students but more generally to students in all subjects, with the exception of Chinese language and culture courses. More specifically, there is a legal and administrative confusion over internships for international students in China. This negative appreciation constitutes an obstacle to the attractiveness of China.

However, it is important to emphasize that the negative assessment of the quality of the training cannot be generalized to all research participants, as there were a few who were quite

proud of their academic path in China. Furthermore, regarding the criticism on the quality of the training, it is worth mentioning that even though students in their narratives tended to put the blame on the Chinese government (in regard to academic internships) and Chinese universities (in view of course design, teaching methods, the quality of the teaching staff for English-taught course, and so on), they also bear a share of the responsibility. For instance, the English language capacities of some francophone students enrolled for English-taught courses was rather limited. In addition, their effort towards adapting to the new academic environment in China were also questionable.

All in all, despite China´s investment in a generous scholarship scheme and a favorable student visa policy which has attracted an impressive number of African students and professionals in general, the "return on investment" (Hart 2017) in terms of image-building or soft power is seemingly still limited. This is due to the students' dissatisfaction with their academic and social experience, as described above. However, it should be emphasized that delivering student satisfaction is a challenging initiative, for at least two main reasons. Firstly, international student life encompasses many aspects (legal, social and academic), as indicated earlier. It is therefore unlikely for students to be satisfied with all these dimensions of their stay abroad. Secondly, the expectations of international students vis-à-vis the host country are often too high and unrealistic. An example is their aspiration to earn money in a country where is it forbidden to work or carry out business while studying, as it is the case in China.

Notwithstanding this, some countries are more successful in delivering student satisfaction than others. Drawing on my personal experience as an international student and on my conversations with other Cameroonians in Germany and China, it seems that Germany is more successful in achieving student satisfaction than China. The satisfaction of Cameroonian students in Germany rests on the quality of the training, the visa renewal system, the authorization and availability of student jobs as well as career opportunities, coupled with the general possibility to acquire German citizenship. In general, the findings of this research on the soft power earned by China through education confirms He's (2012) observation that: "No wonder, despite the continued scholarships granted by the Chinese government to African students to study in China, top African students still choose Western countries as their prime destination for overseas study" (quoted in *China Daily*, Februry 27, 2012). In He's opinion, this situation results from the fact that "China's investment in soft projects is still rather limited compared with its investment in hard projects" (ibid).

From the theoretical perspective, specifically about education as a soft power resource, the foregoing elaborations point to the fact that money alone does not necessarily create attractiveness or soft power. The level of investment in scholarships for the training of Africans in general, or the mere number of students and professionals sponsored, is not an illustration of a guarantee for the success of education as a soft power strategy for China. Thus, there should not be any confusion between soft power resource (sponsoring and enrolling students and professionals, favorable visa conditions) and the outcome of soft power (love and preference for China by foreign students and professionals trained in China). The Chinese government's investment in education as a soft power mechanism is seemingly not proportionally producing attractiveness. This is probably one of the reasons why Cameroonian students in China still consider China as a second-choice destination. Another illustration to China's limited soft power effects within the Cameroonian student community is the perception of the Chinese grants. Some students do not necessarily feel indebted to China for their scholarships. They consider the financial support not as assistance but as a compensation for what China is getting from Cameroon in terms of natural resources.

Another point to add to the theoretical debate of soft power is that the increasing and prolonged presence of foreign students in a given country is not necessarily synonymous with their love and thus preference for this country. As shown throughout the thesis, although Cameroonian students in China were dissatisfied with their social life, the majority still preferred to stay on in China (which for many was not a feasible option) rather than to return to Cameroon. Indeed, departing from China after graduation, specifically for students from poor social backgrounds was the last option in most cases. Furthermore, despite their criticism of the social context in China, Cameroonian students continued to assist their relatives and friends in Cameroon who intended to migrate to China. Such contradictory attitudes are to be seen through the lens of the popular representation of international migration in Cameroon.

The last contribution to the soft power debate is related to the economic incentive of the attractiveness achieved through education. I have shown in this research that one can have a negative image of a country but still serve the economic interests of the latter. For instance, the majority of the returning students in Cameroon are mostly employed by Chinese companies despite their negative image of China. Consequently, to some extent, this can be considered part of China's economic expansion strategy in Cameroon. Overall, the Chinese government's generous scholarship scheme contributes to its economic expansion in Cameroon, by making available labor force for Chinese enterprises in Cameroon.

What is Cameroon really learning from China through student migration?

This thesis has challenged the claim that China-Africa educational cooperation has been "successful [in human] resource development over the last years" (Li and Funeka 2016: 4). Such a claim is based on the number of African students and professionals trained in China, rather than the assessment of the quality of the training by the trainees themselves. My data has shown that beyond the Chinese government's laudable intention to 'share' and Cameroonian authorities' well-founded expectations and hope to 'learn from China in sophisticated domains', student migration from African to China is not yet an effective tool in human resource development. The inefficacy of the knowledge transfer process lies in structural and policy-related challenges, for which both governments can be held accountable.

I have also shown throughout this study that the cause of the mitigated outcome of outward student migration as a means for Cameroon to learn from China lies in part in how the Cameroonian authorities manage student mobility. It is important to emphasize that although learning from knowledge-producing countries is rather a worldwide practice, its effectiveness is dependent on how states organize the learning process. Yet, as far as Cameroon is concerned, there is no stringent student migration policy in general and the management of the Chinese government scholarships by the Ministry of Higher Education is somewhat skewed. For instance, contrary to the official claim that scholarships are distributed based on the academic performance, informal conversations, including those with scholarship holders, suggest that the majority of grantees were not necessarily the most deserving applicants, that is, selected on the basis of their academic performances. Scholarships are mostly obtained thanks to applicants' social capital, especially in a Cameroonian social context that has been characterized by corruption, "conservative tribalism" (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998), and "closure and exclusion" (Bayart 1979). It is important to note that this prevalence of connections in the selection of applicants is not only acknowledged by the grantees in China but also by some officials in Cameroon.

Another expression of the lack of a national policy for student migration in Cameroon is the absence of a follow-up and knowledge capitalization mechanism in Cameroon. There are no statistics at the Ministry of Higher Education on the number of students who have graduated and returned to Cameroon, the subjects they graduated in and the domains in which they are employed in Cameroon. This indicates that making use of what students have learned in China is of no interest. In the end, probable career prospects for the returnees were to work for Chinese companies, mostly as translators. That is, former students were recruited mostly for their

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command of the Chinese language and business knowhow rather than for their skills in a specific field of knowledge.

In total, there is a discrepancy or even a contradiction between the Cameroonian government's official discourse and its practices regarding outward student migration. On the one hand, there is a claim that student migration to China constitutes a way to learn from China, especially as the different development policy documents released by the Cameroonian government clearly acknowledge a shortage of human resources, which in turn is the reflection of the structural incapacity of national higher education and research in Cameroon. On the other hand, there is no designed learning policy.

This contradictory attitude has led to engaging with the scholarly debate in the literature on China's presence in Africa, or the nature of the relationship between the two ends (Chapter 4). I contended that the alarmist perspective or Sino-Pessimism depicting China's multidimensional engagement in Africa through the lens of colonization, imperialism, and neo-colonization is exaggerated and misleading to a large extent, as it fails to question the agency of African countries, that is, the ways in which the latter engage with China. I share the view of Taylor (2009: 177) in that "the recent upsurge in Chinese activities [namely in the field of education] holds a great deal of opportunity for the [African] continent". This implies that the educational cooperation with China as well as with other countries could effectively contribute to ending the situation of dependency on foreign expertise to which Cameroon is tied in the domains of roads and infrastructure, information technology, aviation, hydraulics, energy, mining, medicine and other field.

Yet, the approach of the Cameroonian government to student migration to China seems to be an indication of its lack of concern regarding its state of dependency. This brings into play the broader debate on the place of the African continent in the world system, specifically the nature of the relationship linking the continent to the rest of the world. Adopting Bayart's conceptualization of extraversion, I have shown, by drawing on the contradictory attitudes the Cameroonian government describes above, that the dependency theorists' main argument of Africa as having been placed and kept dependent on the other parts of the world is "more than ever […] a nonsense" (Bayart 2000: 267). The management of the educational cooperation between Cameroon and China, specifically regarding student migration, is an illustration that African states have "few opportunities to shape rather than react" to the processes structuring their relationships with others (Taylor and Williams 2004: 4). Cameroon can be considered an active actor in its *mise en dependence* for China's sought-after expertise.

In a nutshell, in view specifically of the Cameroonian government's official expectations to learn from China and its practices at ground level, Cameroon is seemingly the loser in student mobility between Cameroon and China. However, this situation is in no way the effect of China's supposed new imperialism or interest in Cameroon. In cooperation, the interests of one party do not preclude those of the partners involved. The outcome of cooperation is dependent on the agency of the stakeholders that is, their strategy to gain the most from their dealings. Yet, while China has a defined African policy, most African countries do not have a designed Chinese policy. This does not by any way imply that the extraversion attitude illustrated throughout out this dissertation can be generalized to all African countries. The case of Rwanda, for example, has shown that countries have different approaches to their educational cooperation with China. This thesis instead argues that a win-win student migration between Cameroon and China is a definite possibility, on the condition that the Cameroonian government adopts a winning attitude.

Students' migration motivations and expectations: the stay in China was worth it

Students' dissatisfaction with their training in China does not mean that they viewed their study stay as a waste of time. I have shown throughout this thesis that the final decision to move to China for the majority of students regardless of their financial status was influenced by their perception of China as a world economic power. This was not necessarily due to eventual positive impacts of economic growth of China on the quality of its higher education but the economic opportunities associated with the economic growth. This is an indication that the migration motivations of Cameroonian students in China are mixed or intertwined. In other words, the economic and academic dimensions of their migratory projects are not separable. Consequently, registering at a Chinese university is not exclusively synonymous with having a sustainable academic project for a career prospect. It is rather embedded in a broader migration project of which the ultimate aim is to improve their chance toward financial security and social mobility. Because they have traveled to China for "studying and hustling" (Alpes 2011: 11), they constantly reconsider their initial aspirations and reposition themselves considering the possibilities and opportunities open to them in China.

I have shown that almost all Cameroonian students in China were engaged in business in one way or the other. Most of them entered business for the first time in China, taking advantage of the resources and opportunities offered by the local economic environment. The twist took shape under the influence of combined factors including the dissatisfaction with the quality of

education and visit to business hubs. The majority were involved in ordinary entrepreneurship as their heir business activities included cargo, money transfer, import/export, catering and hair dressing. There were also a few engaged in more innovative/advanced types of entrepreneurship namely designing and branding (clothes, shoes, bags and mobile phone accessories). This specific category of entrepreneurs was known as '*développeurs*' and 'hardworking'. One of the essential capitals which students needed for their entrepreneurship in China was their command of the Chinese language which they have acquired during their stay in China. For many students who returned to Cameroon after graduation in China, the Chinese language skills also constituted a fundamental asset (and often even more than the degree they had earned in China) in the job market especially in a Cameroonian context characterized by a high rate of unemployment. In addition to the Chinese language, their stay in China also enabled some Cameroonian students to improve their English languages skills. To these practical advantages of staying in China should be added the exposure to different people and cultures.

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