



## **Indian and Chinese Human Resource Engagements with Africa**

**Speaker:** Prof. Kenneth King

**Chair:** Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty

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The presentation discussed the scope of China's and India's engagements with Africa in the area of human resource development. While China has quite a long engagement with Africa and its commitment in Africa is reviewed since 2000 when a series of triennial meetings of Africa were launched under the title of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), India has shown a recent interest by launching a series of formal India Africa Forum Summits (IAFS) since 2008. Since the speaker has been working on China-Africa relationships since a long time, in his presentation he discussed China's large-scale educational cooperation with Africa and made some comparisons with India.

One of the biggest differences between the countries providing aid to Africa is in the way they conceive of development aid and how they assign the given task under various ministries and departments. Financial aid guaranteed by China to Africa is dealt by the Ministry of Commerce, Britain created a separate department in 1977 called the Department for International Development (DFID), Australia's development work is under the purview of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia and in India, this particular mandate is under the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). By drawing on this comparison, the speaker sought to show how countries prioritized their mandate of development aid abroad. In the case of India, he explained how development aid was being carried out as a function of diplomacy, which may not be advisable.

The speaker went on to critically examine the dynamics of India-Africa cooperation. Even while India is known to focus on aspects of Africa's institutional development, he wondered if there were enough number of Indian institutions on the field as opposed to the number that had been promised in the past six or seven years. Therefore, the basic question that arises is why India is lagging behind China. Another aspect concerns the measure of seriousness towards development - while there are about 3000 Chinese on the field, there are only about 600 to 700 Indians.

According to the speaker, the aforementioned discussion highlights some comparative questions about the discourse of the China-Africa Cooperation Summits and the India-Africa

Cooperation Summits held in the past. The power point presentation prepared by the speaker highlighted some major points such as:

1. China has conducted six summits with Africa since 2000, the most recent one being in Johannesburg in December 2015 and India has conducted three since 2008. While the summits conducted by both India and China are characteristically similar with a lot of pledges, and both talk about solidarity and use language different from the one used by OECD donors. However, while China has been able to produce two white papers on its Africa Policy in 2006 and 2015, India has not produced a single document yet.
2. Since India in its summits had promised the establishment of training institutes in Africa, many people in India tended to believe that training of personnel or skill building of African workers is not an area of interest to China. The general understanding is that China is only interested in developing infrastructure such as railways, highways, ring road flyovers etc.. According to the speaker, this is a 'myth'. He mentioned that China's Africa policy explicitly talks about human resource development and hence, despite the general assumption that China does not do trainings, all documents show that there is a significant number of trainees coming to China. He suggested that it is essential for India to monitor its pledges.
3. Although the speaker believed that targets are not a guarantee for execution of projects, even so, China has been able to successfully reach its target of short term training, increasing scholarships, etc.
4. The speaker was also interested to know why Confucius Institutes (CIs) (a non-profit public educational organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China with an aim to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally, and facilitate cultural exchanges) were absent in India.
5. There is also a lack of overseas volunteers from India and there is a lack of big Indian NGOs working in Africa. However, India plans to bring out other kinds of expertise from its education system, like midday meal, science and technology, staff exchanges and so on.
6. Highlighting some of the important points from the India-Africa cooperation Summit documents, the speaker stated that it had a lot of promises regarding what India was going to offer to Africa. In its first summit, India had announced that it would let the African Union decide as to who should attend the summit and how the aid should be managed.
7. He also had problems with India's focus on capacity building in Africa as it is difficult to assess the impact of such a broad based approach on the African natives.

One of the ideas that the speaker seemed excited about was the Pan African E-network – a brainchild of the late Indian President, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam – a flagship project to connect the whole of Africa to India in respect of education and health through Information technology.

The speaker delved into some of the future prospects in the study of India-Africa and China-Africa cooperation. Firstly, there is a need to interrogate the language used in the

discussions of cooperation between India-Africa and China-Africa. While China uses the term South-South cooperation, India sees it as a collaboration and uses the term 'mutual benefit', so what is India gaining from Africa and why are both China and India hesitant to talk about their relationship with Africa in aid terms?

Another possible area of study suggested by the speaker is the larger politics of who is the final aid beneficiary because apparently only 40 percent of the I-tech short term training aid goes to Africa. The speaker mentioned that China is able to successfully maintain relations at the pan-African level as well as at a bilateral level too with the various countries in Africa. Further, India provides skill development to Africa but it is not handled by the Ministry of Skill Development or the Ministry of Human Resource development or the Ministry of Labour but the National Small Industries Corporation. Perhaps, this aspect needs to be reconsidered, in order to make the effort efficient and productive.

The speaker concluded with a few questions to probe the general state of affairs in the engagement of India and China in Africa, such as: are there Chinese or Indian academics teaching in African Universities? Are any Indian and Chinese students electing to study in Africa and if so then on whose money? Is Africa reciprocating in any way for these figures we have heard about? Or is it a one way street? Is there any staff sharing like Africans going to China or Africans coming to India?

## **Discussion**

The Chair highlighted three major points that the presentation asserted: Firstly, when India interacts with a continent, even if the interest is in trade, security, investment, natural resources and so on, other things should also be kept in mind such as human resource development. There should be a linkage between state policy and how they relate to human resource agenda of single countries as well as regions and whole continents. Secondly, living in a competitive world, it is very important for India to understand how China has evolved since the 1960s. There is a glaring contrast not only in the magnitude but also in qualitative terms. And lastly, the Chair mentioned that the presentation had raised important questions for scholars in international relations, comparative politics, political economy, development studies and culture studies.

The other major issues that came out during the discussion were: Although very few Chinese students have been going to Africa, China has provided a huge number of scholarships to African students. Replying to a question on the lessons that India should learn from China, the speaker stated that China's aid to Africa goes along with a massive movement of Chinese to work in Africa and India has to understand that there is a lot of unutilized energy in Africa. China has also provided massive aid in various other fields, such as media, teaching and promoting Chinese language, and so on. Moreover, China is also aware of the importance of Africa to its global reach. Replying to the concern of the progressive civil society and scholars from Africa who criticise the policies of India and

China the speaker replied that these are the aspects that need attention and must be looked into sincerely.

*Report prepared by Kush Kumar Gayasen and Jaya Kumari, Research Assistants, Institute of Chinese Studies.*

### **About the Speaker**

Kenneth King was the Director of the Centre of African Studies and Professor of International and Comparative Education at the University of Edinburgh till September 2005. He is now Emeritus Professor in the School of Education and also School of Social and Political Studies. His research interests over the years have focused on the politics and history of international education and skills, including higher education, and skills development in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, and on aid policy, including of China and Japan.

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