

Chinese Language Education and Poverty Reduction in Africa

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Abstract: Poverty and language education are correlated, language education can alleviate poverty. Based on the analysis of Chinese language education and poverty reduction strategies in Africa, proposing effective measures to reduce poverty in Africa through Chinese education, providing effective reference for relevant government and organization to formulate language policies in order to help people in underdeveloped regions of Africa improve their language skills, obtain more information, obtain job opportunities, increase personal income, improve living standards and reach the global poverty reduction goal finally.

Keywords: Africa; Chinese language education; Poverty reduction

1. Introduction

In recent years, the regions in East Asia, the Pacific, and South Asia have achieved remarkable results in poverty reduction, meantime the Sub-Saharan Africa has made limited progress in poverty reduction, with the highest incidence of poverty and the largest number of poor people in the world, accounting for about 86.8% of the total^[1]. The poverty problem in African countries is still prominent, and the quality of economic growth has not undergone fundamental changes, manifested as “poverty growth”. With the in-depth development of China-Africa relations, cooperation in poverty reduction with Africa has entered a new stage. As a potential demand and an effective means of poverty reduction in Africa under the new situation, China can help the poor obtain more information, obtain job opportunities, increase personal income, improve living standards, and achieve the goal of poverty reduction. According to the characteristics of the economic development in Africa, African countries can selectively absorb and learn from other countries’ poverty reduction programs and poverty reduction experience, form a poverty reduction path with African characteristics, and comprehensively accelerate the poverty reduction process.

2. Theoretical Basis of Language Education and Poverty Reduction in Africa

Poverty reduction is one of the focuses of worldwide. According to the statistics from World Bank, the center of poverty in the world has changed from the Asian continent to the African continent from 1990 to 2015 which means that poverty reduction in Africa plays a vital role in the global poverty reduction process. Language education and poverty are related, and language can alleviate poverty, which stems from the close correlation between language education and obtaining information from the Internet, human capabilities and job opportunities^[2]. A combination of language policy and language education to give people in poor areas the opportunity to receive language education, acquire knowledge and skills, increase employment rate, improve people’s living standards, and promote economic growth, achieving the goal of poverty reduction finally.

Africa has the most numerous and richest languages, about 1,000, accounting for about 1/3 of all languages in the world^[3]. The current situation of language diversity and poverty in Africa verifies the Fishman-Pool hypothesis, a wealthy country has a high degree of language unity and an undeveloped country has the extreme variety of language called heterogeneity. What needs to be emphasized here is that language unification does not negate language diversity. People with multilingual skills can get more opportunities and resources and increase economic income^[4]. Therefore it is necessary to strengthening education in other languages and cultivating multilingual compound talents in order to alleviate poverty.

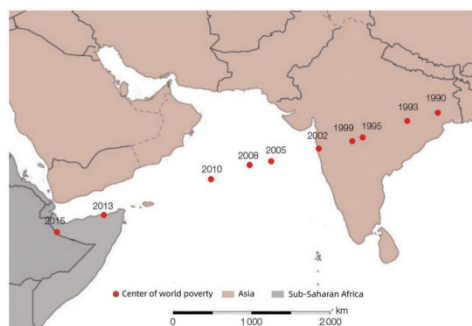


Figure 1: The Changing of the Center of World Poverty

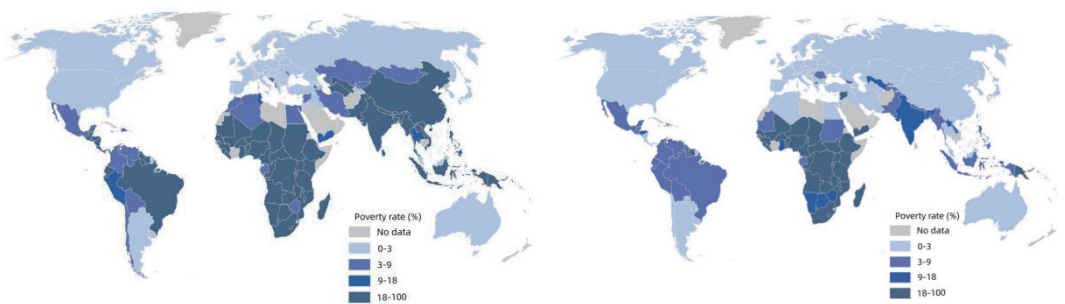


Figure 2: Poverty rates in countries around the world, 1990-2015

3. Strategic Analysis of African Chinese Education and Poverty Reduction under the New Situation

Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000, the economic relationship between China and Africa has become increasingly close, the Chinese government published China’s African Policy and Document in 2015 mentioned human resource development and educational cooperation, make good use of African Human Resource Development Fund, increasing financial support for education, continue to send teachers to Africa and help African countries develop Chinese language education. At the same time establish the scholarship mechanism for African students to study in China, increasing the number of government scholarships, increasing employment rates and promoting economic development^[5]. According to statistics, China has provided Africa with 30,000 government scholarships, trained 200,000 professional and technical personnel and made great contributions to African training and human resource development.

Learning Chinese is a potential demand and an effective means for poverty reduction in Africa under the new situation. As an important platform for many students in Africa to learn Chinese. After the first Confucius Institute was established at the University of Nairobi in Kenya in 2005, the number of Confucius Institutes in the Africa has surged in just a dozen years. China has established 61 Confucius Institutes and 48 Confucius Classrooms in 46 African countries in 2022. The establishment of Confucius Institutes has promoted Chinese education, brought more opportunities for Africans to learn Chinese, and obtained Chinese-related job opportunities. and business opportunities, potentially boosting the development of the local economy. The development plan of the Confucius Institute (2012-2020) proposes that characterised Confucius Institute should be established in order to cater the diverse needs of the students, focusing on Chinese teaching such as Chinese medicine, business, and tourism. Confucius Institute has carried out different forms of cooperation based on the actual local conditions, created a series of “Chinese Plus” models, and formulated different vocational Chinese training courses for hotels, banks, airports, etc^[6]. This model is easier to arouse the consensus of young people, makes Chinese more practical and operable, greatly increases the probability of employment and improves economic conditions.

4. Effective measures to promote Chinese language education and poverty reduction in Africa

Firstly, establishing Chinese language education and poverty reduction policies. promoting the inclusion of Chinese language to the national education systems of African countries. The key to achieving sustainable poverty reduction in Africa is to eliminate intergenerational poverty and make the poor to have an internal self-growth mechanism instead of relying solely on foreign aid. Promoting Chinese into the national education system will help Africa cultivate a group of energetic and creative bilingual young who

will achieve development by relying on their own strength and fundamentally get rid of poverty.

Secondly, Opening “Chinese Plus” characteristic Chinese education services to realize precise student training. According to the actual situation of the local area and the individual differences of the trainees. There are still many African students who miss Chinese education due to economic reasons. At the same time, there are still many students who are unable to learn Chinese because of long commuting distances and inconvenient transportation in their residences. Building the Chinese online education platform can effectively solve such problems and realize full coverage Chinese education. The Confucius Institute can promote the transformation of Chinese training from language training to skill training through cooperation and communication with agriculture, tourism, high-tech industry and other fields,

Thirdly, setting up a model of Chinese language poverty alleviation, though this measure people can simply and intuitively feel the real value of Chinese language. Poverty will affect the individual’s psychological cognitive ability, make it difficult to pay attention to language skills, and eventually make wrong judgments and decisions, leading to permanent poverty^{[7][8]}. Under the framework of “scarcity theory”, establish a model of Chinese poverty alleviation and make use of the relationship between language-capital-information-work-income to avoid excessive loss of cognitive ability, thereby producing a demonstration effect^[9]. Setting up a model of Chinese language poverty alleviation will allow more people to understand the importance of Chinese language education, obtain more information, obtain job opportunities, increase personal income, improve living standards, and achieve the goal of poverty reduction through learning Chinese.

Fourthly, establishing a voluntary service system for Chinese learners. inviting learners with good Chinese proficiency and mastery of their own language to provide free teaching and volunteer services for introducing job opportunities to students in impoverished areas who need to learn Chinese in order to help poor people get in touch with Chinese and learn Chinese and to develop Chinese on this basis. Many people do not have the opportunities to enter schools to receive systematic basic education and obtain high-quality educational resources, rarely have opportunities to learn foreign languages due to economic income. It is difficult for teachers to communicate with monolinguals who can only speak native language. Establishing a voluntary service system for Chinese learners and organizing local volunteers to teach in poor areas is conducive to the exemplary and leading role of outstanding Chinese learners, creating a good Chinese learning atmosphere, expanding the influence of Chinese in various regions, and making the language education and let poverty reduction happen to who those most in need.

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