

Academic Expansion of Peoples' Republic of China on the Example of Confucius Institutes Functioning in Russian Federation

Alfiya R. Alikberova¹

¹ Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Correspondence: Alfiya R. Alikberova, Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kremlyovskaya Street 18, Kazan 420008, Russia. E-mail: alfiakasimova@gmail.com

Received: April 14, 2015 Accepted: April 20, 2015 Online Published: April 27, 2015

doi:10.5539/jsd.v8n4p32

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v8n4p32>

Abstract

The relevance of this study is due to the fact that Russia and China because of their geographical proximity, have a long historical ties, many aspects of which are discussed in detail in the works of Russian and Chinese historians. Especially great attention to the problems of relations between the two countries is given in the last decade, which is associated with dramatic changes in the political situation and the character of building international (including Russian-Chinese) relations, the main objective of which is the pursuit of good neighborliness. The aim of this paper is to examine modern cultural and educational strategies of the People's Republic of China and consider activity of the network of Confucius Institutes as an example. The study analyzes the system of promoting Chinese language and its culture in the world as a form of soft power, active formation of a positive image of China on the global arena. Special attention is paid to the mechanism of functioning of the Confucius Institutes in Russia, consideration of their regulatory framework and identification of a number of the problems that arise from the energetic humanitarian expansion of China on the territory of the Russian Federation. Practical significance of the research results is in the system coverage of the activities of the Institutes and Confucius Classes. Scientific materials and conclusions can be used in special and summarizing research on universal history, the history of international relations and inter-state relations between Russia and China; in lectures and special courses for students, bachelors and masters in the direction of "Orientalism. African Studies", "History", "International Relations"; when writing textbooks on the recent history of Russia and China, the history of Russian-Chinese political, economic and cultural ties. The results of the study can also be used by employees of international and educational departments of universities in Russia and China to develop joint educational programs, as well as to improve the quality of academic mobility of teachers and students.

Keywords: humanitarian expansion, soft power, the Confucius Institute, cultural diplomacy, people's Republic of China, international relations, modern cultural strategy

1. Introduction

At the turn of 20th - 21st centuries the government of the People's Republic of China and the leadership of the Communist Party of China clearly understands that in face of increasing economic globalization and cultural standardization cooperation in the humanitarian sphere occupies a key position.

In the formation of cultural policy, in the development of long-term humanitarian strategy a huge role belongs to the state. China is not only purposefully reforming its cultural system and persistently develops international humanitarian ties, investing significant sums to actively implementing internationally accepted instruments of foreign policy, one of them is cultural diplomacy (Liang Hui, 2009; Xu Lin, 2011).

For successful functioning of mechanisms for dissemination of Chinese language, culture, formation of positive image of the country by making full use of modern technology, in this connection, the Minister of education Zhou JI (周济) reported the newspaper "People's daily" (《人民日常》), that "China intends to take full advantage of the power of the Internet, radio, television and other modern MEDIA, strengthen cooperation with Web sites, television and radio stations create online Institutes of Confucius, radio- and tele-institutes of Confucius (Hanban, 2014). The purpose of this is to promote the Chinese language in the world and the provision of services for their study, satisfying increasing demand" (今后我国将充分利用网络、广播、电视等现代传媒工具，与网站、电台、电视台加强合作，尽快开设网上孔子学院、广播孔子学院、电视孔子学院等，以加大汉语教学的覆盖面，为汉语学习者提供更为方便快捷的学习服务) (Renmin Ribao, 2006). Such activities resulted in inclusion of the Chinese

language in the primary curriculum of educational agencies in different countries, for example, "National policy on languages" was adopted in 2002 in the UK, which gave the Chinese language the status of a "language of strategic importance" (Renmin Ribao, 2010). The same year's report "On the spread of Chinese language teaching in the USA" made by the Asian Association of the USA noted that knowledge of Chinese language is directly related to the national security.

The aim of the study is a comprehensive analysis of the stages and directions of the academic and cultural expansion of the Chinese People's Republic, as well as the preliminary results of the functioning of the Confucius Institutes on the territory of the Russian Federation. To achieve the goal the following tasks were set: to study the historical, source study and historiography basis of interstate relations of Russia and China in the sphere of culture and education at present stage; to give an overview of modern contractual and legal framework of the Russian-Chinese cultural and educational cooperation, of opening of educational and cultural centres as a network; to learn the basic inter-state political and socio-economic factors of academic and cultural expansion of China in the world; to study the main stages, directions and outcomes of the Institutes and Confucius Classes in Russia.

2. Methodological Framework

Methodological basis of the presented work are the principles of historicism and scientific objectivity, consistency, as well as description and analysis of specific situations, international projects, their explanation, comparison and generalization. Analysis of the relationship of domestic and foreign political, economic and social factors that influence Russian-Chinese relations in the studied period, allows us to provide objective scientific picture of the development of bilateral cooperation.

Being based on the specific study of cultural and educational relations, special role of quantitative analysis becomes clear. Quantitative characteristics of these relations suppose huge statistical data processing made on the basis of structuring of major economic indicators. The usage of the historical-statistical method allowed for a comparative analysis of the qualitative characteristics and quantitative indicators, which generally provide the opportunity to come to reliable conclusions concerning the most important trends in the development of Russian-Chinese relations in the sphere of culture and education on certain historical stage.

The objective patterns, which define the goals and content of educational and cultural ties between Russia and China, can be revealed when guided by the principle of objectivity. The claimed method of the system analysis in the framework of the situational approach has defined the structure of the thesis and placement of material on topics, moreover chronological sequence of its presentation was sometimes broken when needed.

3. Results

One of the most large-scale Russian-Chinese projects in the humanitarian sphere is the opening of Russian centres in China and Confucius Institutes in Russia, promoting their culture and language abroad.

The presidential decree No. 796, dated 21 June 2007, established the "Russian world" Fund, organization implementing the project on creation of a network of Russian centres, the activity of which is aimed at the preservation and promotion of the Russian language and Russian literature.

In 2009, the first three Russian centres were opened in China by the Fund: on the basis of Dalian University of foreign languages (branch in Port Arthur), in Jiling University (Changchun) and in Beijing University (Beida, Beijing), in 2010 two more centres were opened in Shanghai and Macao universities. In addition, it is planned to open Offices of the Russian World (similar to Confucius Classes).

But this kind of project is not a new one, after the signing of the Treaty on Good-neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation, June 16, 2001 three centres were opened in China to study the Russian language: based on Beijing University of foreign languages (first in China and twentieth in the world), Shanghai University of foreign languages and Heilongjiang University (Harbin).

The Fund "Russian world" provides grants to support the study of the Russian language in the world. In 2008 - 2009, a number of Chinese projects received them: "Program of distance learning Russian as a foreign language in China", project "Shanghai art salons", publication of the Russian-Chinese bilingual magazine. Moreover, to opening of the Year of the Russian language, the Fund has prepared a present for Chinese Russianists, the portal "Russian world" began to operate in the Chinese language. As early as 2002, the Chinese Government approved the program "The Chinese language Bridge" (汉语桥), which is a student competition on knowledge of the Chinese language and culture. The contest's aim is to promote the Chinese language in the world (Chinese Bridge, 2012). By the beginning of 2005, a set of measures of language expansion has been formed: opening of the Confucius Institutes, training of local teachers, introduction of multimedia technologies, attraction of Chinese experts to the program of volunteer teachers, assistance to foreign universities in providing Chinese literature, holding of regular international forums and

seminars, priority areas are developed annually, new textbooks are written, state competitive examinations for proficiency in the Chinese language for foreigners are held.

The program of IC creation started in late 2004, but its major development began in 2005 and was aimed at the countries of Central Asia, the former USSR and Eastern Europe. The first pilot project was carried out in Tashkent in June 2004, and then at the end of 2004 the first IC was opened in Seoul (South Korea). At the end of 2005, the Chinese part made a decision to implement the IC system in Russia not having officially informed the Russian state authorities but based only on the "Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the PRC on the study of the Russian language in China and the Chinese language in the Russian Federation" dated November 3, 2005, signed in Beijing. As of May 2013, similar Institutions were already functioning in 17 universities in different regions of Russia (Hanban, 2013). The Charter of the Confucius Institutes stipulates the fact that "...Confucius Institute mission is to acquaint the world with the Chinese language, to develop friendly relations between China and other countries, to promote the world's cultural diversity, while making its own contribution to the creation of a harmonious world"孔子学院致力于适应世界各国（地区）人民对汉语学习的需要，增进世界各国（地区）人民对中国语言文化的了解，加强中国与世界各国教育文化交流合作，发展中国与外国的友好关系，促进世界多元文化发展，构建和谐世界) (Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes, 2011).

The Confucius Institute is a part of the global IC network, the Chinese cultural and educational centers set up by the Chinese state Committee for the promotion of Chinese language abroad along with some foreign sinological centers. Confucius Institutes System of Management is run by the state organization Hanban - "Chinese agency on teaching Chinese as a foreign language" (国家汉语国际推广领导小组办公室), reduced - 汉办. Since the Hanban is a part of China's Ministry of education, it is common practice for mass media to use another name for the Committee "The Centre of the Ministry of education of CHINA for the development of Chinese language study abroad" (教育部对外汉语教学发展中心). Hanban was founded as early as 1987. This organization comprises the official representatives from 12 departments of the state Council of the PRC.

The main objectives of the IC, in accordance with the Charter are teaching the Chinese language taking into account local needs, training of Chinese language teachers, compilation and distribution of educational materials, conducting examinations for proficiency in the Chinese language, organization of scientific-educational and cultural events aimed at promoting the Chinese language. (开展汉语教学，培训汉语教师，提供汉语教学资源，开展汉语考试和汉语教师资格认证，提供中国教育、文化等信息咨询，开展中外语言文化交流活动) (Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes, 2011).

It should be noted that IC is funded by the Chinese side. The fact that foreign states are interested in IC opening in their countries is to a great extent due to the corresponding financial support. Xu Lin (许琳), the head of Hanban, reporting on financial investments, said, that from 2005 to 2009, the headquarter of the Confucius Institutes had paid a total of half a billion yuan for the activities of cultural centres" (Xu Lin, 2011). According to the IC Charter and financial management Regulations, the ratio of investment between the Chinese party and foreign organizations is 1:1 (Confucius Institute project funding application guide, 2011). In IC management the final authority belongs to the foreign party, which activity is coordinated bilaterally. Note that both of these provisions are not fully implemented in the Russian IC. The heads of Russian educational institutions on the basis of which IC were opened meet their financial obligations reluctantly providing only the site for Confucius Institute opening and functioning at no charge. Management is provided by the Russian party, the IC Director is the representative of an educational institution. As well as not all provisions of the Charter are implemented by the Russian party, Hanban strictly controls her own expenditures, and very often the Chinese requirements and terms of implementation of cultural and educational projects are imposed. If the demands are not met, financial sanctions, reduction of the next year budget may be applied. Initially Russia planned to open only three IC, but now there are two more applications on behalf of Russian higher educational institutions are under consideration. They intend to open them in addition to 15 existing Institutions and 2 Classes of Confucius.

However, at the eighth meeting of the Russian-Chinese sub-Commission on cooperation in the field of education (March 2008, the PRC, Beijing) a joint decision was recorded to adhere to the principle of equality when Confucius Institutes in Russia and centres of the Russian language in China are opened, but currently it is not working. (there are 5 centers in China and 17 IC in Russia) (Official website of the President of Russia, 2013). Besides, some new aspects appeared in the centres' activities that require more detailed analysis.

The development of integrated educational institutions with the countries of East Asia and, above all, Confucius Institutes takes place when the new forms are searched and new approaches are introduced in the sphere of specialists training on China in Russia and the world. Currently, with the rapid development of Russian-Chinese relations in all areas there is an acute shortage of practical, professionally trained specialists able to competently and adequately

assess the prospects of Russian-Chinese projects, to provide expert analytical support. China offers its own assessment of Chinese policy and economy, trying to introduce it also to Russian specialists. It should also be noted that through the system of Confucius Institutes, the Chinese party strives to train personnel which shares the Chinese assessment of the situation not always coinciding with Russian political and economic interests.

At present, the IC system has proved to be effective only in those regions and countries where the Chinese language has not traditionally been taught or was in its infancy (Slovakia, a number of African countries). In developed countries (UK, France, Germany) IC system did not bring about any improvement of traditionally high quality training of personnel. Moreover, some leading Sinological centres of Europe refused to participate in IC, considering this system to be ineffective and contributing to promotion of China interests only. In accordance with some expert assessments, the IC system should be seen as a form of governmental lobbying of Chinese educational standards and overall Chinese interests in general (Maslov, 2009).

There are currently 322 Confucius Institutes in 91 countries. Their regional distribution is as following (see Table 1).

Table 1. The distribution of Confucius Institutes around the world

Region	Asia (30 countries)	Africa (16 countries)	Europe (31 countries)	America (12 countries)	Oceania (2 countries)
Number of IC	81	21	105	103	12

As can be seen from table 1, the greatest emphasis in the development of IC is being done on Europe and then on the USA and Asia. Given the small scale of Europe as compared with other regions, both in terms of territory and population, this growth appears to be symptomatic. And if we pay attention to the fact that Russian IC is 16, 2% of all Institutions in Europe, we can see where the main interest of Chinese educational expansion is directed to.

It should be noted that Russia remains the only country with the lack of standard provisions and regulations for the development of IC and other similar integrated schools. As for the PRC, the promotion of institutions is developed by a special Department which is a part of Hanban, but in Russia there is neither similar structure nor proper analysis of the situation exist. Such energetic and active promotion of IC in Russia is primarily due to Chinese priorities, as well as the lack of professional teachers of the Chinese language and culture in local Russian universities, those who would not just know Chinese, but could be specialists in a narrower field of teaching and research, for example: the Chinese classical language, etc

For further support and successful development of joint educational projects it is necessary carefully develop a strategy of long-term, equitable and mutually beneficial Russian-Chinese cooperation in this field.

1. It is necessary to increase the level of macro-management in educational cooperation and intensify coordination of Subcommission on educational cooperation and the Commission involved in holding regular meetings of the Heads of the Governments;
2. To train our own highly skilled personnel for bilateral scientific and educational cooperation, including those personnel intended for every level of management (governmental organizations, regional governments, educational institutions, research organizations, enterprises) who has good knowledge of the Chinese language and is well-versed in domestic policy;
3. To increase the financial component of educational cooperation, drawing various sources;
4. To maintain essential growth rates of scientific and innovative cooperation between Russia and China;
5. To develop cooperation on the basis of regional development programs of the Russian Federation and programs of educational, scientific and technological development of Russia;
6. To approach this issue in a comprehensive manner, using all administrative capacity of governmental and regional authorities, scientific achievements of organizations and research centres, the international contacts of universities;
7. To support and stimulate regional cooperation in the field of education and innovation, creating geographically new Russian-Chinese scientific and educational centers. In general, despite a number of problems that require serious analysis, flexible reforms and identification of priority interests of Russia in the system of educational projects, Russian-Chinese relations still have huge development potential in humanitarian sphere.

4. Discussions

Stepping up of international relations between Russia and China at present stage has inspired interest not only in the

history of Russian-Chinese ties, but also in the problems of cultural and educational cooperation. In these studies, issues of humanitarian cooperation of Russia and China and its impact on the political atmosphere between two countries have been investigated with varying degrees of objectivity. In theoretical foundation the term "cultural diplomacy" plays an important role, which was introduced into scientific usage by American scientist F. Balhorn (F. Barghoorn), during the "cold war" (Zhuravleva, 2007). In his works, Chinese scientists consider the function of "cultural diplomacy" and its role in the development of Russian-Chinese relations. One should also mention the works of the famous Russian orientalist A. Maslov, the head of the Center for strategic studies, who also investigates the problems of Confucius Institutes functioning in the world and humanitarian expansion of the PRC (Maslov, 2009).

Chinese scientists and researchers, studying the problem of linguistic and academic expansion, comparing the reform of education in Russia and China, integration of cooperation, offer a range of advice and recommendations on the development of Russian-Chinese inter-University cooperation: to elaborate a program of inter-University development and make the work of the departments of Foreign Affairs and international departments at higher educational institutions more effective; work of University departments of foreign Affairs and international departments. to create a joint science and technology parks; to hold annual certification of teaching staff, including Educational Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs personnel; to hold regular international conferences and meetings with the participation of leading scientists and experts (Cheng Enqing, Zhang Quanfen, 2006).

Scientific novelty of the research presented is that a comprehensive study of the Russian-Chinese relations in the field of culture and education was made for the first time on the example of the functioning of Institutes and Confucius Classes on the territory of the Russian Federation, namely: implemented a systematic and comprehensive study of the stages, trends and characteristics of modern cultural and educational policies of the PRC; a comprehensive analysis of the development of a network of institutions, on the basis of international regulatory basis; the role of IC was evaluated, the scale and the rate of the Chinese language promotion and culture in Russia was estimated; in addition, a wide range of the new Chinese sources that are directly related to the activities of the Confucius Institutes was introduced into scientific usage.

5. Conclusion

In general, the establishment of such centers contributes to the development of cultural and educational ties between China and Russia, not only on governmental level, but also on the level of individual contacts. Such projects can raise citizens' interest in culture and history of China and to expand the scale of Chinese learning. Thus, deliberate policy of China in humanitarian sphere achieves high results, and the Confucius Institutes activities can be considered as an effective instrument of impact on the world community. Speaking about the future prospects of Chinese culture the head of "Hanban" Xu Lin said that "sooner or later the world will understand that Chinese culture is the best in the world" (Xu Lin, 2011), and a member of the State Council of China, in charge of education, science, culture, physical culture and sport, the Chairman of IC Council Liu Jiangcheng (刘延东) speaking to the members of the Council in 2012 noted that "the IC Plan of development for 2020" claimed 4 main objectives China should achieve by 2020 in the field of education and culture. One of these goals is to start mechanism of spreading the Chinese language and culture, so that Chinese should be learnt all through the world and used by all and sundry" (Liu Yandong, 2012). At present, it is the language that is a powerful means, which China uses to spread its cultural influence, and, in fact, humanitarian expansion. Moreover, against the background of global economic integration and boost of China in modern world foreign interest in Chinese culture and the Chinese language is growing: an annual National symposium on Chinese learning points out that for a long time an annual increase of Chinese learners as a foreign language by 30% has been observed.

Acknowledgments

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University

References

- A comparative study of education reform in the early 21st century, China and Russia. (2006). Beijing Symposium. Education Research: 94-96. (Svornitel'nyj analiz reform obrazovanija v Kitae i v Rossii, integracija sotrudnichestva v nachale 21 v. Dopolnitel'naja informacija Pekinskogo simpoziuma po voprosam obrazovanija).
- Cheng, E., & Zhang, Q. (2008). Preliminary comparison of Chinese and Russian higher education reform and co-integration issues. *Hebei University*, 296-305.

- Confucius Institute funds are spent only with both Chinese and foreign joint decision. (2014, September 12). Retrieved September 12, 2014, from <http://www.lianghui2009.com.cn/GB/145749/8951206.html>
- Confucius Institute project funding application gui. (2011). Beijing, China.
- Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes. (2014, September 12). Retrieved September 12, 2014, from http://www.hanban.edu.cn/confuciousinstitutes/node_7537.htm
- Hanban official website. (2014, September 12). Retrieved September 12, 2014, from <http://www.hanban.edu.cn>
- Liu, Y. (2012). *Speech at the 2012 Council of the Confucius Institute Headquarters*. State Councilor People's Republic of China, Chairman of the Council of Confucius Institute Headquarters. Beijing, China.
- Maslov, A. A. (n. d.). *Rossija – Kitaj: jetapy i problemy obrazovatel'nogo obmena v XX - XXI vv. Sotrudnichestvo Rossii i KNR v sfere obrazovanija: analiz proshlogo i perspektivy budushhego*. Moskva, 133-160.
- Official UK organization helps to spread the Chinese language. (2014, September 12). Retrieved September 12, 2014, from <http://www.russian.people.com.cn/31517/4606857.html>
- Official website of the President of Russia. (2014, September 12). Retrieved September 12, 2014, from <http://www.kremlin.ru>
- Oficial'nyj sajt Mezhdunarodnogo konkursa po kitajskomu jazyku "Chinese Bridge". (2014, September 12). Retrieved September 12, 2014, from www.bridge.chinese.cn
- Overseas Confucius Institute has reached 80. (2006). *Renmin Ribao*, July, 7.
- Throsby, D. (2010). *The Economics of Cultural Policy*. Cambridge University Press, 295. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511845253>
- Xu, L. (2011). Chinese Language Quickly Going Global is a Great Phenomenon. (2014, September 12). Retrieved September 12, 2014, from http://www.chinese.cn/hanban_en/article/2010-08/16/content_167061_7.htm
- Zhuravleva, N. N. (2007). *Kommunikativnye strategii v sfere «kul'turnoj diplomatii»: sovremennye diskussii. Sankt-Peterburg*, 160-166.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).