



ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

China and the Philippines have a long withstanding educational and cultural partnership through HANBAN. Three pioneering Confucius Institutes have been established in the country namely: Angeles University Foundation, Ateneo De Manila University, and Bulacan State University, also now in operation a Confucius Institute at University of The Philippines, Diliman, which the main focus is on research. Despite having one goal to accomplish, problems still arise due to cultural differences in management style of Chinese and Filipino directors. Moreover, students encounter distinct classroom management techniques from Chinese and Filipino teachers. Through using a set of self-made questionnaire and interview, the researcher determined the effect of Chinese teacher's classroom management technique as perceived by Filipino students and the existing management situation of the three Confucius Institutes. After tabulating and statistically treating the gathered data, the researcher found out that Filipino students effectively learn Mandarin through both Filipino and Chinese teachers. The management of each Confucius Institute recognizes its weaknesses and aims for further improvement.

Keywords: Confucius Institutes, Philippines, Cultural Differences.

1. Introduction

The proliferation of China's influence in the academic field has been evident globally. In fact, 60,000 American college students were enrolled in Mandarin classes in 2009, which is three times as many in 1990. One American parent, Leianne Clements, doesn't have any cultural connection to China but sends her children to a Chinese learning center. She thinks that Mandarin will provide her children with competitive advantage (Brock, 2014).

China is now considered to be the top destination of students from Southeast Asian countries. Six years ago, 292,611 students from 194 countries came to China to study. Seventy-five percent of the students were from Asia ("Charm offensive: The Way China," 2014). And China's influence has carried over in the field of education in the Philippines. In 2003, a memorandum of agreement was signed between the Commission on Higher Education of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language of the People's Republic of China ("List of Phl-China Bilateral Agreements," 2014). This paved the way for Mandarin to be offered as a special course in the country.

To further strengthen the ties in education between the two nations, the Office of Chinese Language Council International (OCLCI), officially known as "HANBAN," established the first Confucius Institute in Ateneo De Manila University in 2006. Then, in 2009, Confucius Institutes were also founded in Bulacan State University and Angeles University Foundation.

These were established to promote the Chinese cultures and arts, and enhance the understanding of the Chinese language and culture globally.

Moreover, the local university should have a partner university in China. Ateneo de Manila University partnered with Sun Yan-Sen University, Bulacan State University and Northwest University, Angeles University Foundation and Fujian Normal University. The two partner universities work hand in hand with the projects, activities, programs that will benefit students, teachers and even communities.

The successful completion of HANBAN's objectives through establishing Confucius Institutes in various countries majorly depend on the competency of their local teachers that they deploy. A recent study revealed that Chinese teachers employed by the host university are equipped with satisfactory educational background (Wang, 2017). Most of them are studying master's degree and are knowledgeable in three languages including Mandarin. Aside from that, they also have a three-year experience in teaching in China. Trainings and "simulated teaching sessions" from HANBAN were also very useful in improving their teaching techniques.

The same study also reported the common problems faced by the teachers in teaching American students. Most of the schoolchildren were "very hard to control" and they seem to be not interested in class. But the teachers also admitted that they have little knowledge on how to engage with American students. They noted that it will be a great help if CI would provide them with training or seminar on what to expect in a classroom setting of foreign students. Through this, Chinese teachers will know how to handle and engage the students, enabling them to better enjoy learning Mandarin.

On the other hand, students have a positive perception on their Mandarin teachers. Aside from their initial interest in Mandarin lesson, they also like the idea of having two teachers in the classroom where one can continue discussing the lesson while the other one can help troubled students with the discussion. Evidently, this greatly helps students in focusing more on the lesson.

Financial Management and Its Issues

Each CI sources out funds from the head office of HANBAN and the local university in the Philippines. Both ADMU and AUF are operating with almost the same financial system. Their budget can be freely controlled by the directors with proper supervision of university officials. The budget for the startup of an institute is both equally shouldered by the local university and HANBAN as stated in the Memorandum of Agreement. At present, the CI of ADMU and AUF have their own bank account. They have separate committees that are accountable for the uses and liquidation of budget.

In Bulacan State University, all projects and administrative expenses were financed both by CI Trust Fund and BulSU Fund. Disbursement of CI Trust Fund was utilized in conformity with accounting and auditing rules set by the Philippine government.

However, a previous study reported a case of improper handling of funds by the head of the Confucius Institute office of a Chinese university who conspired with another Chinese director of a Confucius Institute. The latter got involved corruption, bribery in order for her personal gains (Shen, 2017).

Moreover, there are also reports about the mismanagement of some Confucius Institutes' directors. One case was about a certain Confucius Institute director who used the school's resources to bribe school officials to get to his current position. During his term as the director, he used the opportunities in going back and forth to China and the host country to offer European tours to the top leaders of the university. This will somehow secure his career development.

The study which discussed the aforementioned cases explained that the main problem was the heads of Confucius Institutes offices have too much power and there is no point person or organization that should supervise them. In addition, the Confucius Institutes Headquarters have no power to hold those accountable for wrongdoing. In fact, they are, sometimes, hesitant to give statements about cases such as misbehaviors and violations (Shen, 2017).

Since the Philippines have Confucius Institutes, it is vital to know the student-teacher engagement between Chinese teachers and Filipino students. Teachers should have a good and strong rapport for them to gain the trust of foreign learners. In addition, the study also looked on the financial management of selected Confucius Institutes in order to determine if the funds are properly regulated.

2. Research Model

The study adopted quantitative method that analyzes statistical data which are gathered through polls, questionnaires, and surveys. It focuses on a set of numerical data to “explain a particular phenomenon” (“Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Quantitative Methods” n.d.)

Respondents

The ADMU, BulSu and AUF all have one Chinese Director and Filipino counterpart director, but the three universities differ from the numbers of teachers, students and staff.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

Institutions	Director	Teachers Chinese	Staff
1. ADMU	2	20	2
2. BulSu	2	2	1
3. AUF	2	20	2

Research Instrument

Two sets of self-constructed questionnaires were utilized to gather the perspective of the Chinese teachers and Filipino students. A set of interview questions was also prepared to give light about the current status of the Confucius Institute management.

Conceptual Framework

The Input-Process-Output model was used as the conceptual framework. After gathering the needed data from the self-constructed questionnaires and interview questions, the frequency were tabulated and the mean were determined to classify the verbal interpretation for each statement.

The data gathered will be tabulated and treated using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, multiple regression analysis and analysis of variance through the SPSS.

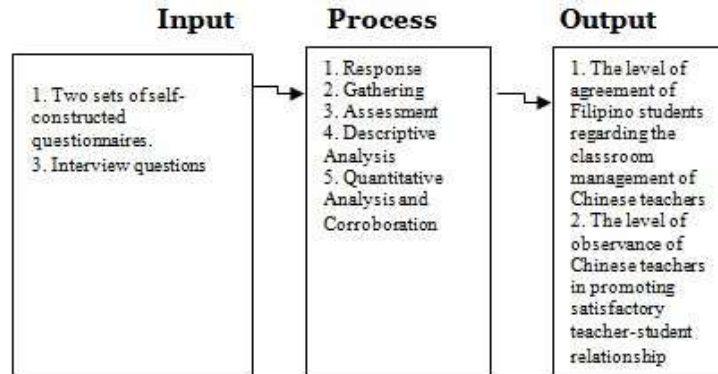


Fig.1. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Research Results

The following tables indicate the results from the research that focused on the issues, problems, and prospects of Confucius Institutes in the Philippines. The table 2 shows the level of agreement of Filipino students about the classroom management of the Chinese teachers.

Table 2. The Filipino students' level of agreement regarding the classroom management of Chinese teachers.

Statements	Frequency					Mean	VI
	5	4	3	2	1		
Chinese teachers provide motivation to students	68	35	17	0	0	4.43	A
Chinese teachers establish strong classroom interaction	67	40	12	1	0	4.44	A
Chinese teachers make students comfortable while attending Mandarin classes	70	33	4	2	1	4.41	A
Chinese teachers utilize effective teaching strategy	63	4	15	2	0	4.37	A
Chinese teachers promote collaborative learning	59	49	10	2	0	4.38	A
Chinese teachers foster a positive relationship among the students	68	46	6	0	0	4.52	SA
Chinese teachers ensure that every student learns during discussion	75	30	15	0	0	4.50	SA
Chinese teachers know the importance of giving verbal compliments to students	67	39	9	4	1	4.39	A
Chinese teachers determine the different learning capability of his/her students	56	40	18	6	0	4.22	A
Chinese teachers care for the welfare of the students	62	46	11	1	0	4.41	A

5 – Strongly Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Moderately Agree, 2 – Disagree, 1 – Strongly Disagree

Filipino students feel that Chinese teachers ensure that every student in the class learns during discussion. They also affirm that Chinese teachers promote positive relationship among the students. Overall, the students feel that their teacher practice classroom technique that match their needs.

Table 3. The level of observance in promoting satisfactory teacher-student relationship as described by Chinese teachers.

Statements	Frequency					Mean	VI
	5	4	3	2	1		
Provide supportive relationship among Filipino students	7	5	0	0	0	4.58	A
Act as a cooperating teacher	8	4	0	0	0	4.67	
Use different methods and strategies for better understanding of the lesson	8	4	0	0	0	4.67	
Emotionally aware and sensitive to the needs of students	8	4	0	0	0	4.67	
Interacts with students in a calming manner	9	3	0	0	0	4.75	
Lets the students feel engaged in the learning process.	7	5	0	0	0	4.58	
Emotionally coaches students in showing appropriate emotional and social behaviors	8	3	1	0	0	4.58	

Emotionally coaches students in showing appropriate emotional and social behaviors							
Believes in students' ability to succeed if they are a supporting teacher	10	2	0	0	0	4.83	
The students' participation, or lack thereof, has an effect on their learning	11	1	0	0	0	4.92	
It is important to teach Mandarin to your students.	11	1	0	0	0	4.92	

5 – Strongly Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Moderately Agree, 2 – Disagree, 1 – Strongly Disagree

As shown in table 2, the Chinese teachers affirm that they foster satisfactory teacher-student relationship among their students. Almost all of them believed that students' participation during class has an effect on their learning curve. They also agree that it is important to teach Mandarin to students.

2.2 Results

Based on the interpreted results, Chinese teachers that are deployed by HANBAN are competent enough to provide quality Mandarin lessons to Filipino students. They ensure that each student are engaged during discussion and provide apt methodologies to suit students' learning needs. Chinese teachers are also aware that they need to foster strong relationship among the students to gauge their learning capacity and earn their trust.

Likewise, Filipino students perceive that their Chinese teachers provide a quality learning experience through fostering a positive relationship among them and establishing strong classroom interaction. The students feel that their teachers care for their welfare and provide motivation and support. Clearly, Filipino students and Chinese teachers met their desired goals during classes.

However, several factors can also be considered for future research like the cultural difficulties faced by Chinese teachers in teaching foreign students, and the suppressed academic freedom in some Confucius Institutes.

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