

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE OF CHINA AND BRITISH COUNCIL OF UNITED KINGDOM: A COMPARISON

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1. INTRODUCTION

China's open-door policy was implemented in 1978 by the reformer of China, Deng Xiaoping and since then, China has enjoyed remarkable growth in terms of its economy. China's existence has also become progressively crucial within international affairs. This tremendous growth of China's economy has led the interaction between China and the United Kingdom to another level. According to Gov.UK (2015), China's president, Xi Jinping visited the United Kingdom in October 2015 and initiated a joint statement known as "UK-China Joint Statement on building a global comprehensive strategic partnership for the 21st century". Gov.UK (2015) stated that this joint statement between China and the United Kingdom comprises economic, educational, cultural, and technological bilateral as well as multilateral cooperation. It is hoped that the joint statement has paved way for a closer relationship between China and the United Kingdom. The role of the cultural institute is significant to create close cultural communication and mutual understanding between China and the United Kingdom.

China's cultural institute, Confucius Institute (CI) was set up in 2004 by the Confucius Institute Headquarters (*Hanban*) to endorse Chinese languages and cultures (Jung, Wang, & Cho, 2020). Since June 2020, the operation of CI has been transferred from *Hanban* to the Chinese International Education Foundation (CIEF) (Xi, 2020). The establishment and dissemination of CI have been authorized by China, which is in bilateral form (university to university). The CI also can be established in other institutions in receiving country partnerships that make it available for Chinese language facilities. According to Jung, Wang, and Cho (2020), this Chinese cultural institute can endorse the acknowledgment of Chinese culture and be able to decrease the transaction costs due to differences in terms of culture. In this context, it can be done through the distribution of as well as training in Chinese languages and cultures in the receiving countries (Jung, Wang, & Cho, 2020). Succeeding the examples of the United Kingdom's British Council, the establishment of the Chinese Confucius Institute plays a significant role as an instrument for the promotion of China's soft power to the world. In this context, CI plays its role by attracting foreigners to learn about Chinese language and introduce the culture of Chinese society which lead to the creation of stronger relations between individual and institutions.

Therefore, the major aim of this paper is to examine the soft power's role in China through the establishment of CI. To achieve this aim, this paper encompasses the rise and role of CI Other than that, this paper also identifies the similarity as well as the difference between CI which originated from an Eastern country, China, and the British Council from the United Kingdom in a specific context. With regards to this matter, the specific context here is in terms of the cooperation that CI and British Council have with other organisations.

2. METHODOLOGY

According to Johnston (2017), secondary data analysis is an analysis of data that was obtained by other people for a different primary purpose. The existing data which has been utilized will provide a workable selection for those researchers who may have limitations in terms of time and resources. Johnston (2017) further added that secondary data analysis is an empirical exercise that implemented the same basic research principles as studies utilizing primary data and needs to follow steps just as any research method. Therefore, this paper analyses the secondary data, and the data has been obtained from several texts for example articles and journals. Those sets of texts are related to the focus of this paper which are regarding China's soft power, CI, British Council of the United Kingdom, and the comparison between these two cultural institutes. The secondary data is also being gained through both cultural institutes' official websites; <https://www.cief.org.cn/kzxy> and <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>. The data in this paper is also derived from a published information source such as Global Times, an English-language Chinese newspaper which can be accessed at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1193584.shtml>. This paper implements the inclusion and exclusion criteria to assess and choose the related data. For the inclusion criteria, the data must be related to China's soft power in a cultural context and the comparison (similarity and difference) between CI and the British Council only within the context of the cooperation that these two cultural institutes have with other organisations. On the other hand, for exclusion criteria, the data should not be derived from the other instruments of China's soft power such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China Central Television (CCTV), and so on. Other than that, the data for comparison between CI and the British Council can't be derived from a comparison in terms of organisation structures, culture diffusion models, language teaching, and learning sources.

3. RESULTS

Table 1: Basic Comparison of Confucius Institute and the British Council

	Confucius Institute	British Council
Duration of Establishment	2004 (17 years)	1934 (87 years)
Country of Origin	People Republic of China	United Kingdom
Branches	541	229
Host Countries	162	118
Examination	HSK	IELTS

Sources: Compiled by the authors from numerous sources

Table 1 above generally provides the basic comparison between CI and the British Council. From this comparison, it is shown that CI manages to grow rapidly and has a lot of branches all over the world. This is such a remarkable achievement since CI only began to open in 2004 while the British Council has been established since 1934. The huge gap in terms of age between these two institutes and the young age of CI is not the main obstacle for this China's cultural institute to successfully engage with the world. Despite this matter, it should be well-thought-out that China is a huge country with almost 1.5 billion populations compared to the populations of the United Kingdom (68.3 million). Hence, China notably has more capability to provide an allocation of huge resources into its efforts to go for internationalization.

China's cultural institute, Confucius Institute (CI) has become one of the instruments for the Communist Party of China (CPC) as the Chinese government to endorse the Chinese

language and the culture. The CI's major objective is to deeply endorse the Chinese language and its culture to the world. This fact is supported by Lien, Oh, and Selmier (2012) whereby they stated that CI acts as a non-profit educational organization fulfilling the increasing global requests to learn Chinese as well as deepening the understanding of the Chinese language and culture abroad. Apart from that, the CI also aims to make closer in terms of the relationship between China and the world community. Starr (2009) stated that the worldwide promotion of Chinese culture is one of the more benevolent manifestations of nationalism. Therefore, the concept of soft power coined by Joseph Nye has been heavily endorsed in China. According to Nye (2004), the definition of soft power is *'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments'*. The concept of soft power can become a significant tool to have a clear understanding of the role of CI. The basis of this matter is if the rest of the world can comprehend more about China and its society, then they will become more open to China. According to Ngamsang (2013), lots of Chinese have a sense of nationalism on being Chinese and would welcome huge appreciation of contribution by China to world development and culture. Consequently, their hopes can be achieved through soft power and the establishment of the CI in 2004 can be regarded as solid evidence that China's soft power under the rule of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is completely engaged with the outside world.

3.1 Confucius Institute as Instrument of China's Soft Power

As mentioned earlier in this paper's introduction, the main objective is to examine CI's roles as an instrument for China's soft power. One clear thing to be noticed regarding CI as China's soft power is that this institute has been established quite late compared to the oldest one, the British Council. People might say CI may have some difficulties competing with the British Council especially in terms of promoting its soft power. This kind of assumption might be due to several factors such as CI's young age, still new, inexperience, and being considered as late arrivals in the world arena of soft power. Nevertheless, this paper believes CI's late arrival into the arena of endorsing soft power is not a major problem. This is because CI can learn from the positive sides and avoid the mistakes made by the other older cultural institution such as the British Council. Other than that, CI can also provide the initiative to create a faster way to reach the strong point that the British Council has reached. CI realised its newness situation, lack of organizational experience, and competencies. As a result, the partnerships with foreign universities as recognised overseas partners have become the CI's strategy to evade these problems. Through this strategy, the remarkable status and good image of the university partner can deliver instant trustworthiness for CI too. At the same time, the CI still has partnerships even with partners that are not from the top of such institutions in a targeted country. This is because CI realises is quite difficult to obtain more benefits if this institute is standing alone and without strong support from any receiving institutions in the host country. In this paper, one notable thing is this CI's strategy has created an easier path for the future in terms of its further growth since the current planning between CI and its overseas partners can be renegotiated. As an Eastern country that is rich with long history and cultures, these advantages also help CI to introduce China to the world and build a good image of China. As far as we know, China never invades another country just for the sake of getting new territory. This fact has been supported by Wang (1999) which clearly stated that China is not an expansionist in nature. However, the world cannot be blamed if they are being skeptical or cautious about China and this is the best opportunity for CI to tarnish those negative perceptions.

3.2 Cooperation That CI and British Council Have with Other Organisations

The last objective of this paper is to identify the similarity as well as the difference between these two cultural institutes in a specific context concerning the cooperation that CI and the British Council have with other organisations. There are two types of organisations that these two cultural institutes must cooperate with. Those two types of organizations are the government and other organisations. In terms of cooperation with the government, CI and the British Council have established strong relations with their government. In this context, these two cultural institutes always align their aims as well as policies with the requirements from their corresponding government. This matter can be seen when CI received several condemnations due to this institute has been accused stands of the interest of China's government and the British Council, in particular, indicated that 'the Council is firmly committed to strategically aligning its work to the long-term policy priorities of the UK Governments' (Britishcouncil.org, 2016a). This British Council's stand is significant to sustain the best value for its country. Despite this similarity, this paper also discovered the difference in terms of the cooperation's importance. As mentioned earlier, there are two types of organisations that both CI and the British Council have cooperation with and one of them is with other organisations. In this context, the CI seems to have a tendency towards two aspects only when this institute aims to have cooperated with other organisations. Those two aspects are long-term relationships and cross-cultural communication especially with academic and business organisations (Cai, 2019). On the other hand, British Council is one step ahead of CI. This is because British Council already made a move by seeking a win-win situation in economic with lots of numerous partners. Therefore, this paper believes that the British Council is not only has comprehensive but also already established extensive cooperation with other organisations and CI needs to take this matter seriously for future development and improvement.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that CI has become an important instrument for China's soft power in endorsing its language and culture to the world. Through the strategy of having partnerships with overseas partners specifically universities, this Chinese institute can obtain more benefits rather than standing alone. In addition, the world can know and understand better China especially its history and culture. At the same time, overseas CI can build a good image and relationships with the host countries and tarnishes the negative perceptions regarding China. Despite CI's rapid growth in recent years, CI has to improve the way this institute cooperates with other organisations. This is important since extensive cooperation will lead to a better relationship in the future. There are several limitations to this paper. In this paper, the comparison is only between two cultural institutes (CI and British Council) and not involves other prominent institutes such as Alliance Française, Goethe Institute, Instituto Cervantes, and so on. Another limitation is this paper only identifies the similarity as well as the difference between these two cultural institutes in a specific context concerning the cooperation that CI and the British Council have with other organisations. For future recommendations, it is hoped that there will be more comparison in other aspects between CI and British Council. Other than that, the future paper can include other prominent institutes from other countries such as France, Germany, and Spain. As a result, it can lead to a more comprehensive and wide range of explanations in terms of their role as their country's soft power.

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