

Industrial Talent Development

WITH A TOTAL OF 51,970

students from New Southbound Policy partner countries studying in Taiwan in 2018, the Ministry of Education has exceeded its original target of 48,300 students.

Since the policy was launched in 2016, this number has grown by about 60 percent, showing impressive and rapid growth. Students from the partner countries made up over 40 percent of the foreign student population in Taiwan, jumping from 28 percent in 2016. On the outbound side, Taiwanese students heading to the 18 partner countries reached 21,100 in 2018, a 31 percent increase from 2016. The number of young Taiwanese either interning or volunteering abroad in these countries through government initiatives in 2018 had reached 3,500 within a year.



▲ Taiwan Higher Education Fairs have been held in Thailand, top left, Vietnam, top right, the Philippines, bottom left, and Malaysia, bottom right.

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Bi Cheu-an (畢祖安), head of the Department of International and Cross-strait Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education (MOE), says that the ministry's goals within the policy remain the same through the four-year New Southbound Talent Development Program (新南向人才培育計畫), which takes a people-oriented approach and aims to encourage bilateral exchanges and resource sharing.

The program is designed to promote and expand the higher education market overseas, to widen the two-way flow of talent between Taiwan and New Southbound Policy partner countries, and to serve as a platform for bilateral educational cooperation by integrating social and cultural links. In addition to supporting a wide range of customized internship and study opportunities for students and professionals from the partner countries, the program aims to provide partner-country language and industry experience to Taiwanese students and teachers as well as second-generation immigrants from these countries.

Bi says now that the quantitative goals have been met, the ministry can start allocating more resources

to improving the quality of exchanges.

"We're entering version 2.0," he says. "We are shifting from output-based goals to outcome-based ones for every scholarship, program and initiative. We used to look at how many scholarships we offered per year, but can these people develop into talent that can benefit both sides when they enter the workforce? Will they help support and deepen our network in the partner countries?"

GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT EXCHANGES

In the past, many exchanges as well as recruitment were conducted between academic institutions or organizations under government auspices, with overseas operations carried out by universities under three programs: Taiwan Connection, the Taiwan Education Center and the Resource Center for Economic and Industry-Academy Cooperation. In November 2018, the Ministry of Education announced that it would be closing these three programs and put the operations under internal control.

Bi says the decision is part of the Ministry of Education's goal to increase government-to-government

initiatives to better assure the quality of both the students and their educational experience in Taiwan. This will also reduce the need for third-party brokers, further streamlining the process.

In June 2019, the education ministry announced that its trial "2+i" program — in which Indonesian junior college graduates are encouraged to enrol in two-year technology programs in Taiwan — would continue and expand. Launched in September 2018, this is an example of government-to-government collaboration in which the Indonesian government selects the students and provides incentives such as one-way airway tickets and a NT\$23,000 stipend. The students need to pass interviews with Taiwanese schools, and third-party brokers are not allowed in the process. In addition to subsidies, the students are allowed to work part-time for up to 20 hours per week during the first three semesters, then take on an internship in their fourth year.

HIGH-TECH, HIGH-LEVEL TALENT

Bi says that in the past, the Ministry of Education focused more on vocational skills, but as Thailand and Indonesia steer their economic development plans toward Industry 4.0, the need for high-tech talent, management and research is pressing.

Thailand took it a step further in January 2019 — as its first move as ASEAN chair, the nation announced its strategy to implement a cohesive re-

gional plan to promote the development of Industry 4.0 across ASEAN's 10 member countries, all of which are New Southbound Policy partners.

Launched in September 2017, the Elite Scholarship Program is part of the push for high-level talent, providing for 100 lecturers per year from partner countries to pursue a graduate degree in Taiwan, with priority given to doctoral students. The program will run until 2022.

Over the past two years, several schools have established joint/dual graduate degrees with counterparts in partner countries. In May 2019, National Chiao Tung University (交通大學) established a joint doctoral program with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, adding to its existing dual degree programs with four other IIT campuses. In addition to cultivating talent, the program also boosts academic interaction between the schools, since the research is carried out in both institutes under mentorship from a professor from each school.

Students focusing on semiconductors and optoelectronics receive preference. The goal is to have 200 students enrol in the next two years, and so far 25 Indian students have signed up. To help with recruitment and better prepare the students for Taiwan, Ministry of Education-sponsored Mandarin-language teachers have been sent to two IIT campuses to offer lessons and gain a deeper understanding of local needs.



▲ National Chiao Tung University (交通大學) established a joint doctoral program with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi in May 2019.



▲ National Chung Cheng University dean of research and development Jack Huang (黃士銘), second row center, other university faculty and Indian collaborators pose for photographers at a news conference in Taipei in August 2019.

“Through this program we will be able to enhance the mobility of scholars, nurture talent and research with the best from both institutes to ensure quality education for future world leaders,” said Dr. Mau-Chung Frank Chang, president of National Chiao Tung University.

The dual degree programs can go both ways

— the agreement between Vietnam’s Can Tho University and National Taiwan Ocean University aims to recruit the children of Vietnamese immigrants to Taiwan. The students will spend two years in Taiwan and two in Vietnam, fulfilling the New Southbound Policy’s goal of helping second-generation immigrants to get in touch with their parents’ culture.

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MANDARIN EDUCATION

Another area that the Ministry of Education aims to advance is Mandarin-language education for foreign students — not only to prepare the students for life in Taiwan, but also in response to growing demand in partner countries.

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“The program will reduce the culture shock when the students arrive in Taiwan,” National Chiao Tung University vice president Dr. Edward Yi Chang (張翼) says. “They will have more confidence to live independently in Taiwan, and this will also make it more likely that they will stay in Taiwan for work after graduation.”

In July 2019, the Ministry of Education launched the Chinese Teacher Training Program (華語教學師資培訓班), which trains teachers to provide classes customized to meet the needs of students from New Southbound Policy partner countries. The training also includes classroom management and basic counselling techniques.

“The program will continue to provide post-training support to ensure the teaching quality of each trainee, and assist the teachers in adjusting and improving their teaching plans,” the ministry’s program description states.

“Adequate language skills enable these students to immerse themselves in Taiwanese society. Mandarin skills are invaluable if they want to work in a Taiwanese corporation or the Asian market in general,” Bi says.

BOOSTING OUTBOUND STUDENTS

As far more students from New Southbound Policy partner countries are coming to Taiwan than the other way around, Bi says the Ministry of Education will continue to provide incentives for Taiwanese to head to these countries to study or engage in internships.

The interest is there: a King Car Cultural and Educational Foundation (金車文教基金會) survey released in October 2018 indicated that over 67 percent of teenagers and nearly 80 percent of university students are willing to consider studying or working in Southeast Asia.

The Mandarin teachers to India initiative is one component, while 2,013 students from 95 schools will head overseas through the New Southbound Pilot Overseas Internship program in 2019. Judging from the number of approved applications so far, the ministry expects to nearly double the number of participants in 2020.

The proposals are diverse and vibrant — National Pingtung Institute of Science and Technology’s Department of Aquaculture is sending its students to experience one-stop blue shrimp farming in Brunei, while Mackay Medical College is partnering with the Mercy Community Aged Care Services in Brisbane, Australia.

“Once people see the opportunities in these countries, they will no longer think of Europe, the US, Japan and South Korea as the only overseas options,” Bi says.



▲ Malaysian education officials participate in the week-long Malaysia Mandarin Training Program.



▲ ABOVE: Students from New Southbound Policy partner nations and their Taiwanese counterparts participate in a National Taiwan University of Science and Technology week-long boot camp in Taipei on July 23. RIGHT: Nearly 200 talents were matched at a New Southbound Markets Recruitment event on June 4, 2019, in Taipei.

THE Taiwan External Trade Development Council launched three New Southbound Market Recruitment Matching events in Taipei, Kaohsiung and Taichung in 2019, where 105 Taiwanese companies offered 1,300 jobs in diverse fields including finance, precision industry, aquaculture and communications.



BUILDING PLATFORMS

The final component is to provide more platforms for exchanges between Taiwan and New Southbound Policy partner countries. Expos are one of the main avenues — the Ministry of Education brought 17 universities to Hyderabad, India, in September 2018 through the Taiwan Higher Education Expo, and 32 schools to the Taiwan Higher Education Fair in Manila, Philippines, in September 2019.

In June 2018, the Ministry of Education launched the first Taiwan-India University President Forum at National Tsing Hua University, where 11 Indian university heads met with 15 of their Taiwanese counterparts to engage in direct talks on academic and student exchanges and collaborations.

The 2019 edition was held at India's National Institute of Technology, Warangal, where a five-year memorandum of understanding was signed between the Foundation for International Cooperation in Higher Education of Taiwan and the Association of Indian Universities to capitalize on young Indians' rapidly growing interest in studying in Taiwan.

Similar exchanges also took place with Malaysia and the Philippines in 2018 and 2019.

Once the students finish their programs, the Ministry of Education hopes that they will make use of their Taiwan experience and Mandarin skills to become important bridges between Taiwan and their home countries, and it encourages them to stay in Taiwan or find employment with an overseas Taiwanese enterprise.

Bi says the students who come to Taiwan are entered into a talent database that provides them with information about job openings.

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At these events, Vietnam-based, Taiwanese-run Dai Phat Foods noted an urgent need for Vietnamese talent with Taiwanese experience over a wide range of capabilities, including marketing, sales and logistics.

Vietnamese student Daisy Nguyen, who graduated in June from a two-year international trade program at Chihlee University of Technology in New Taipei City, hoped to work in the pet care business, which has become a burgeoning industry in Vietnam as its economy grows and people are able to devote more resources to pets.

According to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs report, Nguyen managed to secure employment six months before she finished her studies with a Taiwanese entrepreneur who plans to open an animal grooming salon in Ho Chi Minh City, adding yet another success story to the program. ■