



Impact of Global Education Dynamics on International Student Mobility Trends in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The global education market influences the movement of international students in higher education. This change is influenced by economic, social, and technological elements, crossing borders between educational institutions, allowing students to explore academic options beyond their home country. Taiwan, as one of the increasingly preferred destinations for higher education, attracts attention with the rapid growth in the number of international students. It is important to analyze the complexity of the global education market and how these factors affect the mobility of international students in Taiwanese higher education. This research utilizes a literature review methodology. The analysis results found that factors influencing the mobility of international students in Taiwan include scholarships and financial support, which are crucial factors in decision-making for students. The quality of education and government policies also drive the surge in the number of international students. Despite challenges such as imbalanced talent mobility and the impact of the global market on higher education, technological advancements, policy changes, modifications in financial support, and considerations for environmental sustainability remain poised to reshape international student mobility.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The global education market has had a significant and ever-changing impact on the movement of international students in higher education throughout the current period of globalization. As a result, the global higher education sector is experiencing significant changes influenced by a complex network of economic, social, and technical elements. The interdependence of educational institutions across national boundaries is a crucial factor in influencing the decisions and preferences of potential international students. This creates a dynamic environment where students have the ability to explore academic possibilities outside of their native nations. The complex relationship between the global education market and the movement of international students is one that warrants a thorough analysis.

The global market for education services had expanded fourfold since the mid-1970s when a mere 0.8 million international students were enrolled worldwide. By 2008, there were more than three million tertiary students studying overseas, with more than half enrolled in Australia, France, Germany, the UK, and the USA (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2010). Research has shown that most international students prefer to select countries where English is the language of instruction. Thus, the principal destination country was the United States, followed by Britain, but Australia, Canada, and New Zealand actively competing (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012). The global education market is characterized by various intricate variables, such as international rankings, technology advancements, cross-cultural cooperation, and the commercialization of

education services. These factors all contribute to the globalization of higher education, as students increasingly seek academic opportunities beyond their own countries. Comprehending the impact of the factors at play in the global education market is crucial for understanding the current state of higher education, particularly in relation to foreign students' decision-making, preferences, and patterns of mobility.

Currently Taiwan is among the countries that are capitalizing on the increased growth in international student mobility. Taiwan has been a prominent participant in the global landscape, attracting a substantial number of international students in recent years (see Figure 1). More international students are choosing to study in Taiwan (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2021).

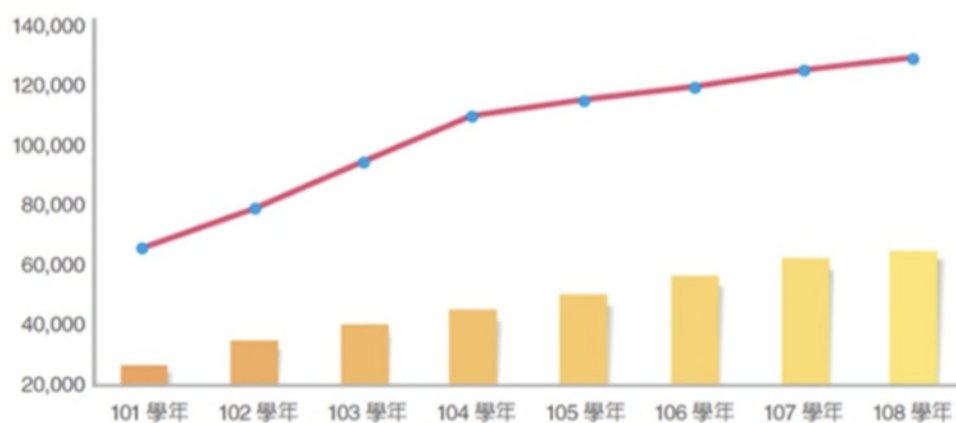


Figure 1. The growth trend of the population of overseas students at colleges or universities in Taiwan (Ministry of Education Republic of China, Taiwan, 2021)

There are 70 universities in Taiwan, 34 are public and 36 are private. For Technological Universities & Colleges there are 89 in total: 15 public and 74 private. Currently, the number of students pursuing higher education is 1,185,830, and the number of international students (as of 2021) is 92,963. Taiwanese universities have experienced rapid and significant global advancement in recent years, with Taipei as one of the leading centers for higher education in Asia. The curriculum in most universities focuses on academic studies and research, while technology universities emphasize practical training and specialized skills (TAIPEI ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL OFFICE IN THE PHILIPPINES, n.d.). With such a large number of international students, it is intriguing to delve into the intricate dynamics surrounding the impact of the global education market on the trend of international student mobility in Taiwan by providing insight into the complicated mechanisms that contribute to the enrollment of students from various cultural backgrounds in Taiwan's academic institutions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses library research methods, explaining phenomena that occur based on scientific studies that have been done before. Study the references in the form of books, journal articles, and other factual information related to the discussion. The researcher collects, selects, and analyzes related information to then formulate the ideas. George (2008) defined the library research method as a research method that is conducted by computer engine searching or practical book reading to find the knowledge and information to be answered by the research question.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Factors Influencing International Student Mobility in Taiwan

A number of push and pull factors influencing the flow of international students (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002) including in Taiwan. Chou et al. (2012) illustrated that since the second stage of Taiwan's internationalization policy in 2007, international students have increased inbound mobility patterns. The most prominent one is intra-regional student mobility where most of the students are from Asia such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan (Chou et al., 2012). Based on a quantitative study by Tsai et al. (2017), the top reason international students choose to study in Taiwan is due to scholarship attributes. According to USGOA's report (2009), there are a number of approaches being applied to reach and attract overseas students, including marketing their higher education to the international community much as a business that would promote a product.

Scholarships and financial support a strong pull factor for International student mobility

The expenses play a crucial role in shaping the decisions of international students when choosing Taiwan as their study destination abroad (Lee, 2013; Chou et al., 2012; Lin, 2020). Statistical results show that the most influential factor studying in Taiwan is scholarship (Tsai et al., 2017). Scholarship opportunities offered by Taiwan's educational authorities make it an attractive destination for students from Southeast Asia (Lee, 2017). Several government departments have given scholarships to foreign students ever since the Taiwanese government began to

focus on recruiting foreign students in the second stage of internationalization of higher education in 2003. Chou et al. (2012) listed the ministries included Taiwan Scholarship Program (funded by MOE), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Science Council, Ministry of Economic Affairs and MOE Mandarin Enrichment Scholarship Program. The Taiwanese government's foresight views these as an investment in their nation's economic growth and talent acquisition.

In the New Southbound Policy, to attract international students from NSPC, the Taiwanese government launched a series of scholarships. Offering full scholarships from the host country was identified as the most compelling factor in attracting students (see table 4) . With reduced tuition fees and living expenses in Taiwan, these scholarships cover costs, allowing students to afford their education and stay without financial support from their families (Thai, 2013). This attractive factor produces a strong inbound mobility status.

Table 4. The Taiwan scholarship quotas in the most recent years for freshman awardees from the New Southbound Nations (Ministry of Education Republic of China (Taiwan), 2021)

Country	2016 AY	2017 AY	2018 AY	2019 AY	2020 AY
Malaysia	20	35	35	35	37
Vietnam	28	43	50	56	60
Indonesia	16	30	35	37	37
Thailand	11	15	15	17	18
The Philippines	2	5	10	14	18
India	12	30	36	41	41
Others	11	22	20	18	19
Total	100	180	201	218	230

Quality of education attracts students to pursue their degree in Taiwan

The standard of education in Taiwan and how well academic qualifications earned there are accepted globally are important considerations for international students when deciding to study in Taiwan. This factor significantly impacts their motivation and choice to pursue higher education in that country (Lee, 2013). Taiwan's focus on enhancing educational standards has significantly increased its appeal to foreign students, resulting in a notable surge in international student enrollments in Taiwanese universities (Thai, 2013). A past survey indicated that quality of education is actually the top 3 reason foreign students selected Taiwan as their destination country to pursue their degree (Chou et al., 2012). Another latest quantitative survey described that the second highest factor for foreign students to choose Taiwan is the desired course (Tsai et al., 2017). In short, the desired course can be defined as a program offered by the university that caters to the needs of the students. This can be another definition of quality program from students' perspective.

There are different strategies adopted by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education in Taiwan and make themselves visible academically. In 2015, academic research in Taiwan showed improvement and achieved outstanding overall performance in research papers on the Web of Science and Scopus (Department of Higher Education, 2019). Compared to Malaysia, Taiwan attracts more graduate students because of this achievement, which makes the country stand out among Asian nations. In response to international pressure to find talent, Taiwan's MOE launched the Higher Education Sprout Project in 2018 with the goal of raising university standards. (Department of Higher Education, 2019) . Higher Education Sprout Project 2018-2022 is the first phase and currently moves to the second phase from 2023-2027. The heart of this project is to encourage

multi-faceted development and enhance international competitiveness. Higher education system provides opportunities for international students to study a variety of courses and programs (Foundation for International Cooperation in Higher Education of Taiwan (FICHET)).

Government policies and regulation boost up the influx of international students

The government and higher education institutions in Taiwan have made considerable efforts to attract international students. Studying in Taiwan has become a growing trend among individuals from New Southbound countries. The surge in the number of international students is propelled by the increasing hundreds of thousands of foreign students pursuing degrees in colleges or universities in Taiwan. Taiwan's outstanding record in nurturing international talents is attributed to the Ministry of Education's efforts in formulating the New Southbound Talent

Development Program in 2017. This program aimed to recruit highly potential Southeast Asian students, organize higher education exhibitions, and hold admission information sessions in Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines. Additionally, it aimed to double the scholarship quotas for these countries (Ministry of Education, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2021).

Challenges of Internalization of Taiwan Higher Education

a. Higher education's internationalization face competition from Japan and Korea

In the process of internalization of Taiwan's higher education, they face competition from Japan and Korea. Lin (2020) compared Taiwan with Japan and Korea regarding their internationalization process and policy of recruiting international students. The three countries face the same issues, which is decline in university domestic students' enrollment. The Japanese government launched "The top Global University" as their initiative to accelerate their internalization and improve their global ranking. By 2023, this policy sought to enroll over 70,000 students; Japan's successful approach sped up the goal's accomplishment in 2016 (Luo, 2017; Chou et al., 2012). Besides Japan, the South Korean government launched three policies related to inbound international students to South Korea, the latest "Study Korea 2020 Project" is the latest policy with intention to increase the inbound rate to 200,000 in 2020 (Korean Association of International Educators, 2013 as cited in Lin, 2020). The ambitious recruitment from both developed Asian countries indirectly impacts the recruitment of international students to Taiwan. To deal with this issue, Taiwanese government internationalization policy switched their focus to talent circulation with the 18 countries and this indeed brought some changes. In contrast to Japan and Korea, which focus on recruiting international students globally, the Taiwanese government's new Southbound Policy aims to lure students from the region (Lin, 2020).

The aim of New Southbound Policy is to ensure talent circulation and response to regional education needs (Lin, 2020). Originally this policy was intended to promote economic collaboration with Southeast Asia and South Asian countries to reduce Taiwan's government economic dependence on China. However the intention of brain circulation did not really go well but caused other issues which is the unbalanced mobility within the intra-region countries.

b. The New Southbound Policy caused unbalanced talent mobility among NSPC

The government and higher education institutions in Taiwan have made considerable efforts to attract international students. Studying in Taiwan has become a growing trend among individuals from New Southbound Countries. The surge in the number of international students is propelled by the increasing hundreds of thousands of foreign students pursuing degrees in colleges or universities in Taiwan. Taiwan's outstanding record in nurturing international talents is attributed to the Ministry of Education's efforts in formulating the New Southbound Talent Development Program in 2017. This program aimed to recruit highly potential Southeast Asian students, organize higher education exhibitions, and hold admission information sessions in Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines. Additionally, it aimed to double the scholarship quotas for these countries (Ministry of Education, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2021).

According to Taipei Time (2024), 86% of international students who responded to a survey stated that they would like to stay on after graduation, citing safe study environments of Taiwan and high-quality instruction as their main reasons. The high brain gain rate from the inbound students undeniably caused other countries to experience brain drain. This is consistent with the findings of Shkoler et al. (2020), who suggested that some countries may eventually suffer net brain loss and that the positive framing of brain circulation could be a disguise. In this case Taiwan might cause some developing countries from NSPC to have a narrower talent pool.

Another study by Lin (2020) also shows that the imbalanced flow between Taiwan and NSPC worsened as a result of this nation-driven policy. After 2016, even though students from NSPC study in Taiwan increased, the Taiwanese students seem uninterested to study in NSPC. The number is still less than 10,000, and it was even less after the New Southbound Policy was put into place (Lin, 2020). This unbalanced scheme is challenging for Taiwan, as to maintain their relationship with other NSPC the promise of "talent circulation" has to be kept.

c. COVID-19 international student mobility pattern reorientation benefits Taiwan

Nonetheless, Taiwan benefits from the post-pandemic regional international student mobility reorientation (Mok et al., 2021). Aforementioned, pandemics reduce the mobility of international students as well as alter the flow of students who study abroad. In Mok et al. (2021) study, after the pandemic, 84% of international students from China and Hong Kong expressed no interest in studying abroad; however, the mobility pattern shifted to Asian nations, with Taiwan ranking among the top 5. Another qualitative study from Vietnam mentioned that students still show strong personal motivation to study in Taiwan due to friendly New Southbound Policy and quality education (Shen, 2021). Wang (2022) has a different idea than other scholars regarding the decreasing physical student mobility after the pandemic. He actually suggested that after the pandemic, people have realized the importance of physical and true experiences in learning, thus the craving for true experience. From this perspective it can be deduced that studying abroad but nearer to the country will be the choice for foreign students. Thus Taiwan higher education can expect to receive more students from Asian countries.

When focusing on numerical growth, this significant intake of international students might be considered a "temporary" respite of their demographic crisis and university recruitment strategy. Lin (2020) critiques that this is only a short term remedy and in regard to long term national construction, the goal of talent recruitment should be aligned with the types of talent recruitment instead of focusing on number. Labour shortage is not a new issue for Taiwan (ICEF, 2023), although local people employment is high. It is essential that the Taiwanese government attends to the issue of the "race for talent" among locals and migrants, nevertheless, given the persistence of the intake of foreign students and their protracted job searches. Instead of making the jobless problem among domestic professionals worse by hiring highly skilled migrant labor, the government should identify the industries in need.

d. Digitalization of Higher Education and the readiness of Taiwan in virtual mobility

A new trend in international student mobility is virtual mobility, which involves an institution directly providing students with learning opportunities while utilizing ICTs to deliver programs, courses, and tuition assistance (Shkoler et al., 2020). Though efficient policies and attracting factors of scholarship are interesting and might continue to lead to brain gain patterns to Taiwan international student mobility. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 has caused two major shifts in overall international student mobility which is virtual mobility and the regional shift of student mobility (Strielkowski, 2022; Mok et al., 2021). This pandemic has become a massive world event that affects the push and pull factors for students to study abroad. The pandemic accelerated digitalization of Higher Education which allows students to experience virtual mobility with many institutions' effort to conduct education business online. The fees for the courses are perceived to be lower compared to traditional institutions with lower cost of living as compared to physical mobility (Strielkowski, 2022). These experiences are expected to accelerate the decrease in international student physical mobility for those that are experiencing financial capital issues. Virtual mobility could be a threat for Taiwan higher education by affecting their physical student mobility.

e. The Future

The movement of international students has been a dynamic and evolving occurrence, shaped by various economic, political, and educational variables. As we assess the future of this environment, it is crucial to examine previous patterns and possible changes in the global education picture. Some of the key factors shaping the future of international student mobility are technological advancement and online education, policy changes, financial support, and environmental sustainability

f. Technological advancement and online education

Technological advancement is a driving force in the changes in the international student mobility landscape. Strielkowski (2022) highlights that after 2020, higher education has entered the era of online and digital universities. The emergence of online education, propelled by the COVID-19 epidemic, has added a new aspect to the movement of international students. The prevalence of virtual learning environments and remote education possibilities is expected to grow, which will have an impact on the traditional concept of physical mobility. The unexpected COVID-19 pandemic disrupted higher education and international student mobility and accelerated the anticipated digitalization of the education process. College administrators have been forced to reconsider their internationalization plans in light of the pandemic. College lectures and university professors were prompted to switch and rethink their approach to teaching. They had to remove traditional teaching and learning methods to incorporate using new technologies. The decline in international student mobility increased the costs for universities and colleges after COVID-19. As a result, online learning has emerged as a competitive option for retaining foreign students. To stay competitive, even the most prestigious universities are utilizing digital education. Thus, this approach and access to higher education will change the future of international student mobility.

g. Policy Changes

Policy reforms are essential in determining the future of the international student mobility landscape. These modifications can impact multiple areas of the mobility experience, encompassing visa requirements, overseas students' employment prospects, and overall education availability in a specific country. Alterations in visa restrictions might directly influence the accessibility or complexity of registering for educational institutions overseas for international students. Tighter visa regulations could dissuade prospective students, resulting in a decrease in international enrollment. Therefore, Countries that implement policy reforms that simplify visa application processes and minimise bureaucratic obstacles can entice more students (Perez-Encinas et al., 2021) and augment the overall appeal of a nation as a desirable location for academic pursuits. Similarly, post-study work options are significantly influenced by employment policies, which in turn substantially impact the decisions made by overseas students. Nations that provide advantageous work permit opportunities after graduation are more likely to attract a greater influx of students. This preservation can result in a favourable economic effect and heightened global competitiveness for countries that can develop effective policies that favor both the country and international students.

h. Financial Support

Alterations in government funding and scholarship rules can directly influence the accessibility of overseas education. Enhanced financial assistance in the form of scholarships or grants can broaden the accessibility of studying abroad to a more diverse group of students. Emphasizing diversity and inclusion in scholarship allocation

policies enhances the foreign student population's diversity, hence enhancing the educational experience for all students. The financial viability of foreign education is still influenced by economic conditions, both at a global level and within specific countries. When students perceive that they are more likely to receive sufficient financial support, they are more likely to be persuaded to leave their home country for that country (Perez-Encinas et al., 2021). This suggests that developed countries are likely to remain the top destination for international students (Rivza & Teichler, 2007). However, this realization also shows that despite being a world power, students will first consider the degree of financial support they will receive and not only the degree of power held by a country.

i. Environmental sustainability

The general political stability of a nation impacts its appeal as a destination for studying. The occurrence of abrupt political shifts or instability can discourage potential students due to apprehensions over safety and the overall excellence of the educational encounter. In the last decade, the world has seen various nations engage in increasing conflicts. Some of these countries over the years have offered students enticing study packages; however, with the increase in conflict, more students are likely to reject their offerings. Additionally, the movement of international students is frequently interconnected with diplomatic ties. Enacting policies that encourage favourable diplomatic ties can ease seamless movement and cooperation among countries, thereby boosting the overall global educational atmosphere.

4. CONCLUSION

The global education market has significantly impacted the international movement of students, providing opportunities for students to explore academic prospects abroad, influenced by factors such as the language of instruction, international rankings, technological advancements, and the commercialization of educational services. Taiwan, as an increasingly preferred educational destination, has drawn attention with the growth in the number of international students. With various universities, both public and private, focusing on academic and technological education, Taiwan demonstrates potential as a competitive hub for higher education in Asia.

The global education market has had a significant impact on Taiwan's education system, altering the methods, processes, and overall educational objectives. The international student mobility in Taiwan faces pressure from declining populations and competition with neighboring countries like Japan and Korea. In response to these challenges, Taiwan implemented the New Southbound Policy, which successfully increased the number of international students. Factors such as educational quality, financial aid, affordable living costs, and an effective response to COVID-19 contributed to this success. This policy demonstrates Taiwan's commitment to strengthening regional relationships and enhancing educational cooperation.

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