

Internationalization initiatives of Taiwan's higher education: a stepping stone to regional talent circulation or reproduction of unbalanced mobility scheme?

Initiatives of
Taiwan's
higher
education

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Abstract

Purpose – As an emerging market of international education, Asian countries ambitiously launched internationalization initiatives and strategies to attract international talent. Since the 1990s, Taiwan's government has implemented various internationalization policies. Partly affected by the political forces of neighboring China, Taiwan's government launched the New Southbound Policy (NSP) as the main regional strategy in 2016. One of the aims of this strategy was to promote mutual talent mobility between Taiwan and New Southbound Policy countries (NSPC). The purpose of this study is to explore how the NSP influences the student mobility scheme in Taiwan.

Design/methodology/approach – This study adopted the qualitative document analysis to investigate and compare the major Asian countries' internationalization focus and summarize Taiwan's internationalization development process and policy priorities. Moreover, a qualitative approach was adopted in order to collect data from 2005 to 2018 to examine Taiwan's student mobility scheme under the policy change.

Findings – Under the influence of the NSP after 2016, the student mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC could be categorized into five categories in accordance with the mobility rate. Although the nation-driven policy was considered powerful, the unbalanced flow between Taiwan and NSPC became severe.

Research limitations/implications – The study lacked statistics on the degree level of outbound Taiwanese students going to NSPC. It could not compare the student mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC by degree level.

Originality/value – The research looked at the initiatives Asian countries have developed in order to raise higher education internationalization and regional status, which shed light on the national/regional approaches under the global change.

Keywords International student, Talent mobility, Internationalization of higher education, New Southbound Policy

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The number of global international students has exponentially increased over the past four decades, having risen from 0.8 million in the late 1970s to 4.6 million in 2015 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017). Furthermore, it is predicted to reach 8 million in 2025 (ICEF Monitor, 2017). In this study, talent refers to international students who study cross-nationally (UNESCO-UIS/OECD/Eurostat, 2019). It has two distinct facets among the bachelor's, master's and doctoral stages in higher education: credit mobility and degree mobility (King *et al.*, 2011). Since the onset of global



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student flows, the center of the international student market has long been dominated by Western/English-speaking countries, which are also traditionally economically strong countries (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Chen and Barnett, 2000; Prazeres, 2013). The conformity of academic hegemony with world economic and political performance was declared relevant to World System Theory (Chen and Barnett, 2000).

The high performance of US and British universities in world rankings particularly reflected Anglo-American academic hegemony; however, universities in the Asia Pacific region that were rising in the world rankings were predicted to soon overtake Anglo-American academic hegemony (Jöns and Hoyler, 2013). The potential growing number of Asian students was another noteworthy phenomenon besides the growing reputation of higher education institutions. According to OECD (2019), students from Asia accounted for the largest share of global international students across the OECD in 2017, approximately 56%. Asian countries were recognized as new study destinations for international students (Chan, 2012; Chen and Barnett, 2000; Jon *et al.*, 2014; Jöns and Hoyler, 2013), reflecting the emerging pattern of international student mobility (Collins, 2013).

Since 2010, Major Asian countries, in particular Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Malaysia, have adopted the internationalization strategy of becoming the “education hub” to enhance global competitiveness (Dessoff, 2012). The education hub policy highlighted Asian countries’ ambitions of recruiting students globally and raising the status and competitiveness regionally (Knight and Morshidi, 2011).

Taiwan, as one of the major Asian countries, also aimed to be an education hub. In 2016, the Taiwanese government launched the *New Southbound Policy* (NSP) as the new internationalization strategy to promote regional talent cultivation and sharing (Executive Yuan of Taiwan, 2016a; 2016b), with the ambition to expand and strengthen the connection between Southeast Asian countries and to re-position Taiwan’s position (Office of the President of Taiwan, 2016). In 2017, the *New Southbound Talent Development Program* (2017–2020) was proposed, with the aim of promoting mutual talent mobility between Taiwan and New Southbound Policy countries (NSPC) [1]. Therefore, this study looks at the following three research questions:

- RQ1. What is the student mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC by country after the implement of NSP in 2016?
- RQ2. What is the student mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC by degree level after the implement of NSP in 2016?
- RQ3. How might the NSP affect the current student mobility relationship between Taiwan and NSPC after 2016?

2. Asia as the leading force in reshaping the global flow of international students

Since higher education is an integrated space, any change in any location could subsequently lead to another change (Li and Bray, 2007). Global players in the international student market also have a dynamic dependency relationship. Both economic and political growth of peripheral countries and the changing role of Asian countries from sending countries to host countries affected the traditional assumed relationship (Waters, 2012). The simplistic dichotomies of mobility were challenged by the juxtaposed multi-centered countries globally. South to south mobility or the regional circulation deconstructed the traditional international student mobility (Madge *et al.*, 2014).

Asian students contributed to the global student mobility growth over the past three decades, especially those from low-income and middle-income countries. Ziguras and Pham (2014) stated that students from countries with relatively low income were more

inclined to study abroad for a few years to obtain a degree. [Kuroda et al. \(2018\)](#) concluded that outbound Asian students have grown steadily since the late 1990s and more than tripled from 771,496 in 1999 to 2,328,887 in 2015. Furthermore, intra-regional mobility contributed to the rapid growth of Asia's inbound students rather than students from Western countries. It could be said that the de facto regionalization of international student mobility and the intensive concerns of countries have made Asia both the source and hub for international students since the turn of the 21st century.

The regional change corresponded with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' research; the research stated that there were two major shifts of international student mobility: (1) students preferred to choose destination countries closer to home and (2) regional hubs attracted a great share of global students and became ideal destinations for regional students ([UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016](#)). China and Japan were reported as traditional destinations of international students, while Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand were predicted to be hot spots as international student's new choices ([Kuroda et al., 2018](#)). Regardless of whether they have been included in the ranking or not, most Asian countries, for example China, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Malaysia, actively transformed themselves from pure traditional senders to top destinations in the international student market ([Luo, 2017](#)).

At the macro level, Asia's growing economic and political power has reshaped global international student mobility. This is especially the case in regard to the same high-quality education with relatively affordable fees, a potential employment environment and job opportunities that attracted more international students, particularly within the region ([QS Asia News Network, 2017](#)). According to the QS report, recently, an increasing amount of prospective Asian international students saw the graduate employability issue as a major concern. It was reported that these students continued to value the quality of education but took into account career support from universities and the reputation of a university among employers when choosing universities they would apply for ([Quacquarelli Symonds, 2019](#)).

3. Major Asian countries view international students as the panacea for domestic development

Embedded in the globalization context driven by economic and academic forces in the 21st century, national, regional, institutional and individual levels must adopt certain policies or practices in response to the global academic environment of so-called "internationalization" ([Altbach and Knight, 2007](#)). Countries could adopt strategies as approaches to the internationalization of higher education. These strategies could include student study abroad programs, recruitment of international students, cooperation with overseas universities, development of education centers, or international curriculum or journal publications ([Ho et al., 2015](#)). As Japan and Korea are both relatively well developed Asian countries and share a similar background with Taiwan (see [Table 1](#)), their talent recruitment policies can to some extent reflect national attitudes toward regional student mobility and domestic environmental changes in the Asian region. Different from Japan and Korea's target at global talent, Taiwan grasped the growing interest of regional students toward Asian region and tried to use their advantages and build connection with regional countries to attract regional talent.

Japan was one of the leading countries in the development of higher education in Asia. Since 1983, Japan has actively evolved and expanded cross-border academic activities ([Luo, 2017](#)). Recently, the Japanese government devised "100,000 Foreign Students Plan" to recruit international students as their main strategy for higher education internationalization ([Sugimura, 2016](#)). Their goal was to receive 100,000 students by 2000 ([McVeigh, 2015](#)). Unlike the previous policies direction of aid mentality toward developing countries in the region, due to a demographic crisis, the Japanese government used international students to supplement skilled labor and activate domestic university reform after the 2000s ([Sanders, 2018](#)). In other

Country	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan
Level	Nation-driven	Nation-driven	Nation-driven
Specialized agency	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)	Ministry of Education (Former: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST))	Ministry of Education
Time	Since the 1980s	Since 2001	Since the 1990s
Internationalization focus	National build, human resource development, campus globalization	Campus globalization, promote higher education internationalization, raise national brand value	Campus globalization, promote higher education internationalization
Domestic context of recruiting international students	Demographic crisis after 2000s, rapid university expansion, shortfall of university enrollments	Low birth rate, rapid university expansion, low university enrollment ratio	Low birth rate, rapid university expansion, competition pressure, insufficient enrollment of private universities
Latest policy	The Top Global University initiative	Study Korea 2020 Project	New Southbound Policy
Policy act	University reform and global human resources development	Expand the scope of Global Korea Scholarship Program (GKSP), focus on the supporting system, employment and quality management	Promote talent co-cultivation, expand Taiwan Scholarships and Government Scholarship to Study Abroad, provide technical training, offer employment matching

Table 1.
Japan, South Korea and Taiwan’s internationalization process and the domestic context, policy acts of recruiting international students

Source(s): Authors

words, the shortfall of domestic university enrollments caused by a demographic crisis and the oversupply of universities caused by a rapid expansion from the early 1990s to 2014 accelerated the deterioration of Japan’s higher education (Luo, 2017; Sanders, 2018).

In order to improve higher education in Japan, the Japanese government launched the “Top Global University” initiative in 2014 as their main internationalization policy to last until 2023. The aim of this initiative was to accelerate the internationalization of Japanese universities and to gain a higher rank in the global rankings (MEXT of Japan, 2015). The policy focused on (1) university reform and (2) global human resources development (MEXT of Japan, 2020a) in order to enhance global competitiveness (Shimmi and Yonezawa, 2015). Alongside these two points of focus was the goal of doubling international students from 36,545 in 2013 to 73,536 in 2023 in terms of having diversified student population in universities (MEXT of Japan, 2020b). By 2016, the policy had achieved considerable success, which could be attributed to a diversified recruitment strategy of targeting regional countries (Luo, 2017).

The South Korean government initiated *The General Plan for Promoting Recruitment of International Students* in 2001 as the first international student policy to promote the internationalization of higher education. In 2004, with a new goal of becoming the northeast Asian hub, South Korea proposed *The Study Korea Project* and *The Development Plan for Study Korea Project* in 2008 to expand the recruitment of international students (Bae, 2015). The inbound mobility rate reached its peak in 2007 at 51.3%, then decreased gradually from

29.7% in 2008 to 6.8% in 2011 (Ko, 2012). Due to the declining sustainable population, the South Korean government launched the *Study Korea 2020 Project* as the latest policy and announced their intention to increase the number of international students from 90,000 in 2011 to 200,000 in 2020 (Korean Association of International Educators, 2013).

The *Study Korea 2020 Project* expanded the scope of the Global Korea Scholarship Program (GKSP) (Korean Association of International Educators, 2013) and focused more on the supporting system, employment and quality management for international students (Ko, 2012). Although the number of international students decreased consecutively for three years from 2012 to 2014 (Luo, 2017), the government kept the ambitious target of recruiting international students but postponed the time to 2023 (Mani, 2018). With a declining birth rate, the freshman-aged population dramatically decreased after 2010 (Kwon, 2013) and was predicted to cause 160,000 surplus university places by 2023 (ICEF Monitor, 2015). In other words, due to the low birth rate and the decrease in domestic college students (Kwon, 2013), international students were seen as a remedy for the low university enrollment rate and as the intensifier of higher education's international competitiveness in South Korea (Mani, 2018).

4. The context of Taiwan from a historical perspective

4.1 Building the international environment of universities

Taiwan's internationalization of higher education can be traced back to the 1990s. At that time, Taiwan's higher education underwent a vast development in regard to both the students and institution growth (Hou, 2012). Since the late 1980s, policies had been directed toward denationalization, decentralization and autonomization of higher education institutions (Mok, 2000) and Taiwan's government revised the *University Law* in 1994 to empower the higher education institutions. Universities had much more academic freedom and university autonomy in terms of controlling education affairs (MOE of Taiwan, 2001; Mok, 2006).

Directly following the revision of *University Law*, Taiwan's government launched *The Education Report of the Republic of China: Toward the Education Vision of the 21st Century* in 1995 to give universities the responsibility of expanding academic exchanges and foreign cultural and educational relations (MOE of Taiwan, 1995). Not long after, in 2001, the *White Paper of University Education* was released, marked the beginning of universities' active involvement in internationalization affairs. The white paper stated that universities should formulate a budget for promoting international communication and cooperation to improve the international environment of universities (MOE of Taiwan, 2001). At this stage, the recruitment of international students served the purpose of actively strengthening academic, cultural and educational exchanges with foreign countries and enhancing the international competitiveness of domestic universities (Executive Yuan of Taiwan, 2002).

4.2 Developing world-class universities and expanding recruitment of international students

Moving toward the target of becoming world-class universities, the government issued a series of national programs comprised of the *Promotion of University Teaching Excellence Program* (2005–2016), the *Development Plan for World-Class Universities and Research Centers for Excellence* and the *Aim for Top University Project* to pursue excellence. On the basis of competition mechanism, the specific goals included (1) accelerating the internationalization of top universities and expanding students' horizons; (2) enhancing the quality of research, development and innovation in universities and strengthening the international academic influence; (3) recruiting and cultivating talent to build up a human resource pool and (4) training top talent in response to social and industrial needs (Wang, 2014).

It was not until 2011 that the government announced the determination of expanding international student recruitment; under the pressure of growing trends, including an aging

population, low birth rate and the active attitude toward recruiting international students from traditional exporting countries, such as European countries and the United States, as well as neighboring countries, such as Japan, South Korea and China. Different from the previous stage, the recruitment of international students at this phase not only focused on the improvement of university education quality but also aimed at solving the insufficient enrollment problem of some private universities (MOE of Taiwan, 2011).

4.3 Cultivating domestic talent and exporting education to pursue the East Asian higher education hub

To construct Taiwan as the East Asian higher education hub, the government proposed to increase the number of international students from 56,135 in 2011 to 150,000 in 2021 (Executive Yuan of Taiwan, 2012). At that time, both recruiting and cultivating talent was necessary for Taiwan, due to the fading domestic atmosphere of studying abroad and the external threat of the rapid rise of China, India and South Korea (MOE of Taiwan, 2013). The government began to develop students' global mobility competence and to cultivate talented students who were familiar with Southeast Asian countries in enhancing Taiwan's economic influence and establishing an overseas base for future development (MOE of Taiwan, 2016).

4.4 Promoting talent circulation and responding to regional education needs

Recently, confronting political and diplomatic pressure from neighboring China, Taiwan's government declared that it would reduce its economic reliance on China and increase trade relations with regional countries (Chiang, 2018; ICEF Monitor, 2016; Hawksley, 2019). Beginning with the implementation of the *New Southbound Talent Development Program (2017–2020)*, Taiwan changed its policy practice from one-way recruitment of international students to mutual talent mobility and co-cultivation with regional countries. Considering the educational and industrial needs of NSPC, Taiwan provided customized professional training courses and Taiwan scholarships to actively attract outstanding talent. Domestically, Taiwan also encouraged young people to participate in exchanges and perform research or internships in NSPC to achieve the goal of regional talent sharing and circulation (MOE of Taiwan, 2017).

Overall, Taiwan's internationalization of higher education could be categorized into four stages according to the main target of national policies: (1) from 1994 to 2002: building the international environment of universities, (2) from 2003 to 2011: developing world-class universities and expanding the recruitment of international students, (3) from 2012 to 2016: cultivating domestic talent and exporting education to pursue the East Asian higher education hub goal and (4) after 2017: promoting talent circulation and responding to regional education needs. Different from Japan and Korea's internationalization policy direction toward global international student recruitment, Taiwan's latest internationalization policy mainly targeted the regional students. Taiwan's internationalization policy shift could be viewed as the embodiment of the regionalization of international student mobility, which also reflecting the national/regional initiatives under the global change.

5. Research method

A qualitative document analysis approach was adopted to summarize Taiwan's internationalization development process and investigate the government's phased development focus (see Table 2). Official policy documents were collected from 1994 to 2018. Moreover, a qualitative approach was adopted to collect Taiwan's governmental data

Development stage	Year	Taiwan's National policy
Building the international environment of universities	1994	Revision of University Act
	1995	The education report of the Republic of China: Toward the education vision of the 21st century
	2001	White paper of university education
	2002	Challenge 2008: Six year national development plan (2002–2007)
		Research-oriented university integration project
Developing world-class universities and expanding recruitment of international students	2005	The promotion of university teaching excellence program (2005–2016)
		The development plan for world class universities and research centers for excellence
	2006	«The development plan for world class universities and research centers for excellence» Session 1 (2006–2007)
	2008	«The development plan for world class universities and research centers for excellence» Session 2 (2008–2010) (the 2nd session of the plan was renamed as the Aim for Top University Project)
	2011	The aim for top university project (2011–2015) Higher education output: Expansion of recruiting international students action project
Cultivating domestic talent and exporting education to pursue the East Asian higher education hub	2012	Golden ten years: Visions of nation
	2013	The MOE talent white paper
	2014	Young scholar fellowship program
	2016	Promoting young students' global mobility project
Promoting talent circulation and responding to regional education needs	2017	The New Southbound talent development program (2017–2020)
	2018	Higher education sprout project (2018–2022) Promotional bilingual nation project

Source(s): Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2019a, 2019b, 2019c)

Table 2.
List of Taiwan's official documents

from 2005 to 2018 in order to evaluate the trend of the student mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC and investigate the mobility scheme change after the implementation of the NSP in 2016.

6. Major findings

Generally speaking, the NSP was a turning point in Taiwan's higher education internationalization policy, achieving success after 2016. As [Figure 1](#) shows, there was a significant growth in students from NSPC from 33% in 2016 to 41% in 2018. By analyzing the governmental data, this study drew five major findings in regard to the mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC.

6.1 Mutual mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC became more unbalanced after 2016

As the *New Southbound Talent Development Program (2017–2020)* stated, promoting talent sharing and circulation was one of the main goals of talent cultivation (MOE of Taiwan, 2017). However, this seemed to be a difficult goal. Although students from NSPC have had a gradual growth in recent years, Taiwan's students seemed uninterested in going to NSPC. It could be said that the mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC became more unbalanced after the

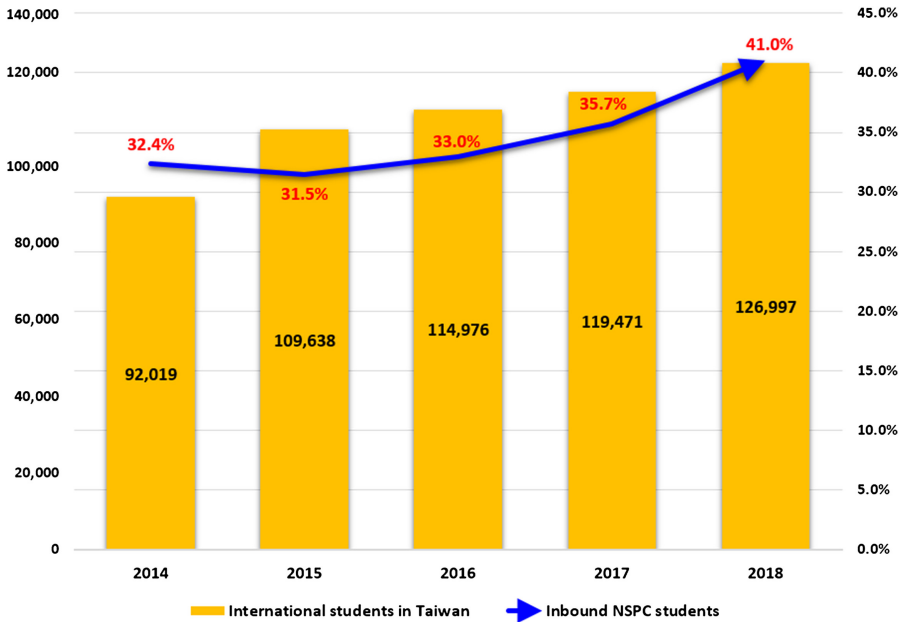


Figure 1.
Students from NSPC
account for the
proportion of Taiwan's
international students
during 2014–2016

Source(s): Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education [MOE],
Taiwan. (2019a; 2019b; 2019c; 2019d; 2020)

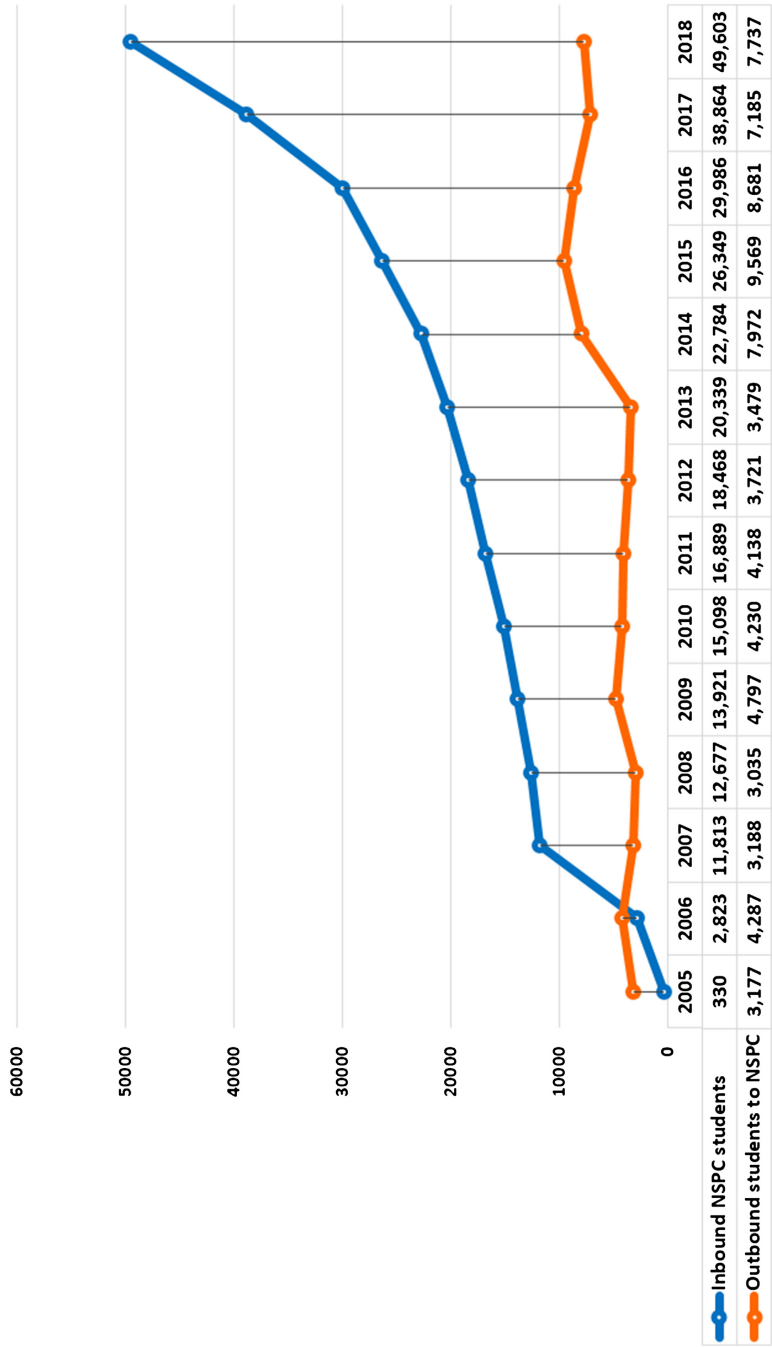
implementation of the NSP in 2016 (see [Figure 2](#)). One of the reasons for this may be the economic gap; there were only four countries of NSPC were high-income economies that were economically equivalent with Taiwan (see [Table 3](#)). According to statistics from the Taiwanese government, the study found that Taiwanese students have mostly chosen to study in Australia and New Zealand rather than other NSPC during the past decades (see [Figure 3](#)).

6.2 Inbound students from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, India and Philippines had rapid growth after 2016

[Figure 4](#) shows the inbound students from NSPC from 2005 to 2018. For more than a decade, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia have been the top three home countries of international students among all NSPC more than a decade. The ranking appeared to be the same as previous years; however, the growth rate changed dramatically after the issue of the NSP in 2016, particularly Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, India and Philippines. The highest increase was students from Vietnam. The inbound rate may implicate the potential international student market of Vietnam as [Figure 5](#) shows. The rapidly increasing number of overseas programs demonstrated the growing need of higher education for Vietnamese students.

6.3 The percentage of non-degree-oriented students from NSPC to Taiwan increased after the implementation of the NSP

Generally speaking, students from NSPC came to Taiwan over the past few years mostly to undertake a degree. Degree-oriented students invariably accounted for more than 60% of all students from NSPC annually. However, after the implementation of the policy, the



Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019); Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

Figure 2.
Inbound students from
NSPC to Taiwan and
outbound Taiwanese
students to NSPC
during 2005–2018

Table 3.
Income levels of
Taiwan and NSPC

Income level	GNI per capita (\$)	Country
High-income economies	≥ 12376	Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, Taiwan, New Zealand
Upper-middle-income economies	\$3996 to \$12375	Malaysia, Thailand
Lower-middle-income economies	\$1026 to \$3995	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam
Low-income economies	≤ 1025	Nepal

Source(s): World Bank country and lending groups, by [World Bank \(2016\)](#), Retrieved February 18, 2016, from http://www.worldbank.orghttp://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups#East_Asia_and_Pacific

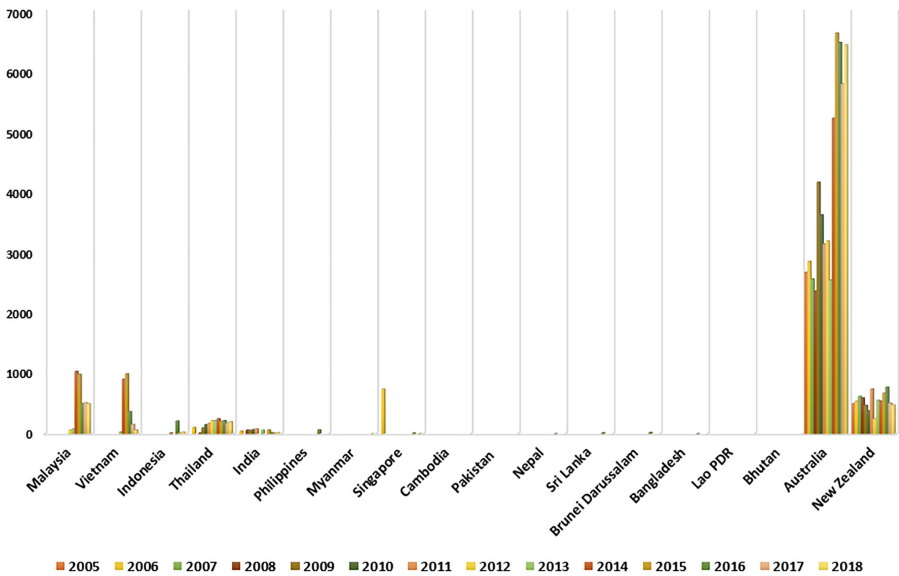


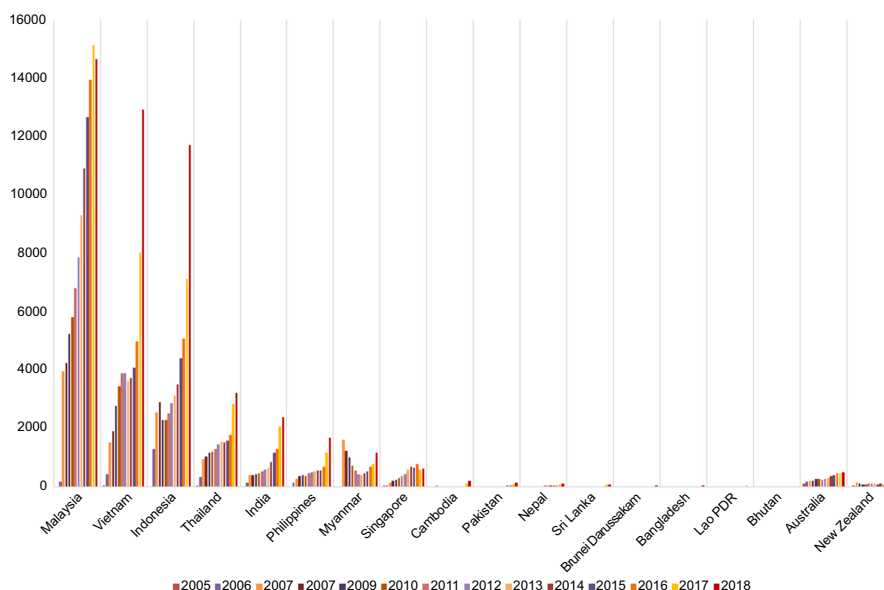
Figure 3.
Outbound Taiwanese
students' study
destinations of NSPC
during 2005–2018

Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019)

number of non-degree-oriented students skyrocketed from 12,790 in 2016 to 23,647 in 2019 (see [Figure 6](#)). Responding to the government's goal, the NSP customized many short-term vocational courses to provide professional training for students from NSPC ([MOE of Taiwan, 2017](#)).

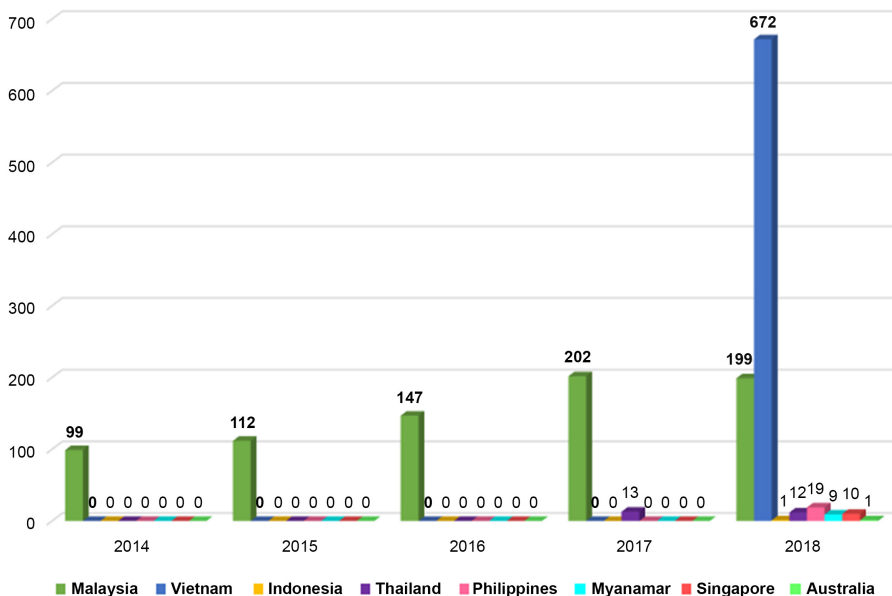
6.4 The growth rate of students doing a bachelor's degree ranked the first among inbound students from NSPC

[Figure 7](#) shows the condition of students from NSPC studied at different education levels in Taiwan. At bachelor's level, the percentage of students rose the fastest, especially



Source(s): Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

Figure 4.
Inbound students from
NSPC studying in
Taiwan during
2005–2018



Source(s): Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2019a; 2019b; 2019c; 2019d; 2020)

Figure 5.
Growth of Taiwan's
overseas programs
in NSPC

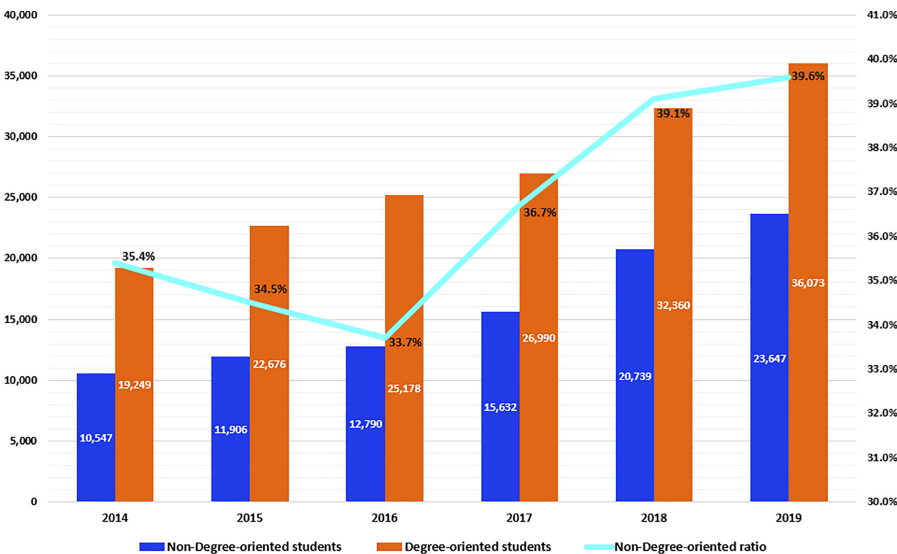


Figure 6.
Degree seeking types
of NSPC students in
Taiwan

Source(s): Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2019a; 2019b; 2019c; 2019d; 2020)

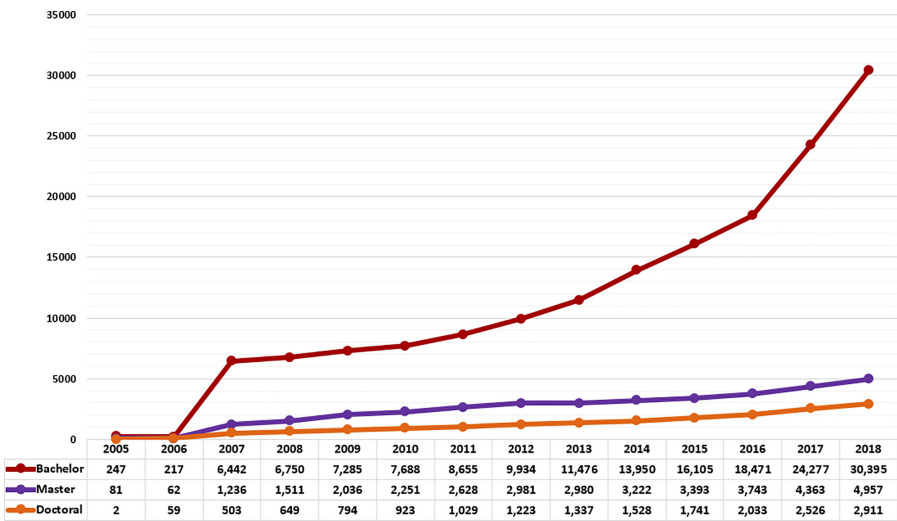


Figure 7.
Different education
levels of NSPC
students in Taiwan

Source(s): Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

after 2006 and 2016. The growing trend of students from NSPC after 2016 could be viewed as the impact of the *NSP*. However, in the *New Southbound Talent Development Program (2017–2020)*, one of the main focuses was to attract advanced talent to Taiwan to study master’s and doctoral degrees (MOE of Taiwan, 2017). Although attracting excellent

students from South and Southeast Asian countries was one of the major goals (Glaser *et al.*, 2018), the statistics showed that there is still much room for improvement. For talent recruitment, the government needs to improve the education quality or present other incentives to attract top talents from NSPC.

6.5 Student mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC under the impact of the NSP after 2016

By analyzing the governmental statistics, the study calculated the inbound rate of students from NSPC and outbound rate of Taiwanese students to NSPC separately for an overall comparison. Focusing on the period after 2016 and on the changes of mobility rate, the study categorized the student mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC into five types and presented these categories in a quadrant graph (see Figure 8). Different mobility rates referred different attraction level between Taiwan and NSPC. Furthermore, the study visualized the changing student mobility rate in Figure 9 to better demonstrate the interactive relationship between Taiwan and NSPC after 2016.

6.5.1 First type of student mobility model (first quadrant) – Growing inbound rate with growing outbound rate: India and Thailand. In regard to the first type of student mobility model, countries located in the first quadrant indicated that student mobility was an attractive prospect for both Taiwan and for NSPC. Students from NSPC and Taiwanese students became increasingly interested in studying at both sides after the implementation of NSP in 2016. Even though there was only a slight increase in the number of outbound Taiwanese students to NSPC and inbound students from NSPC to Taiwan, an upward trend between Taiwan and the student mobility relationship of NSPC was still exhibited.

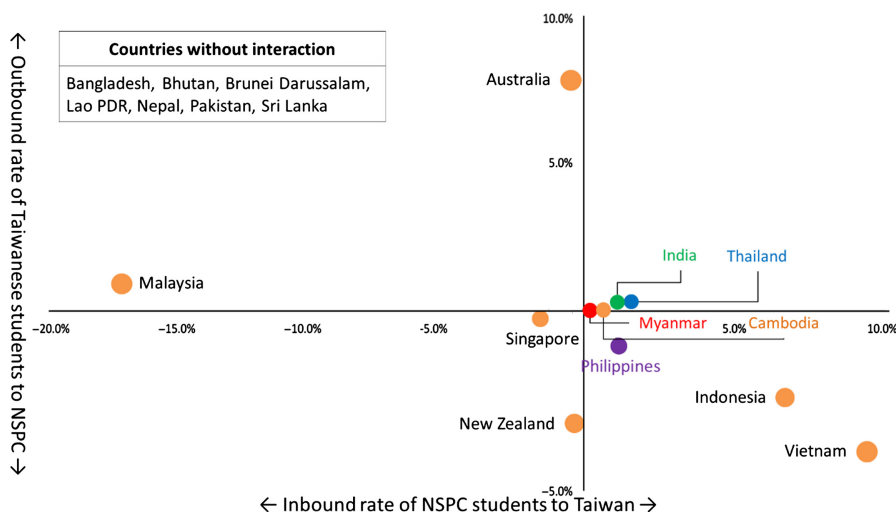
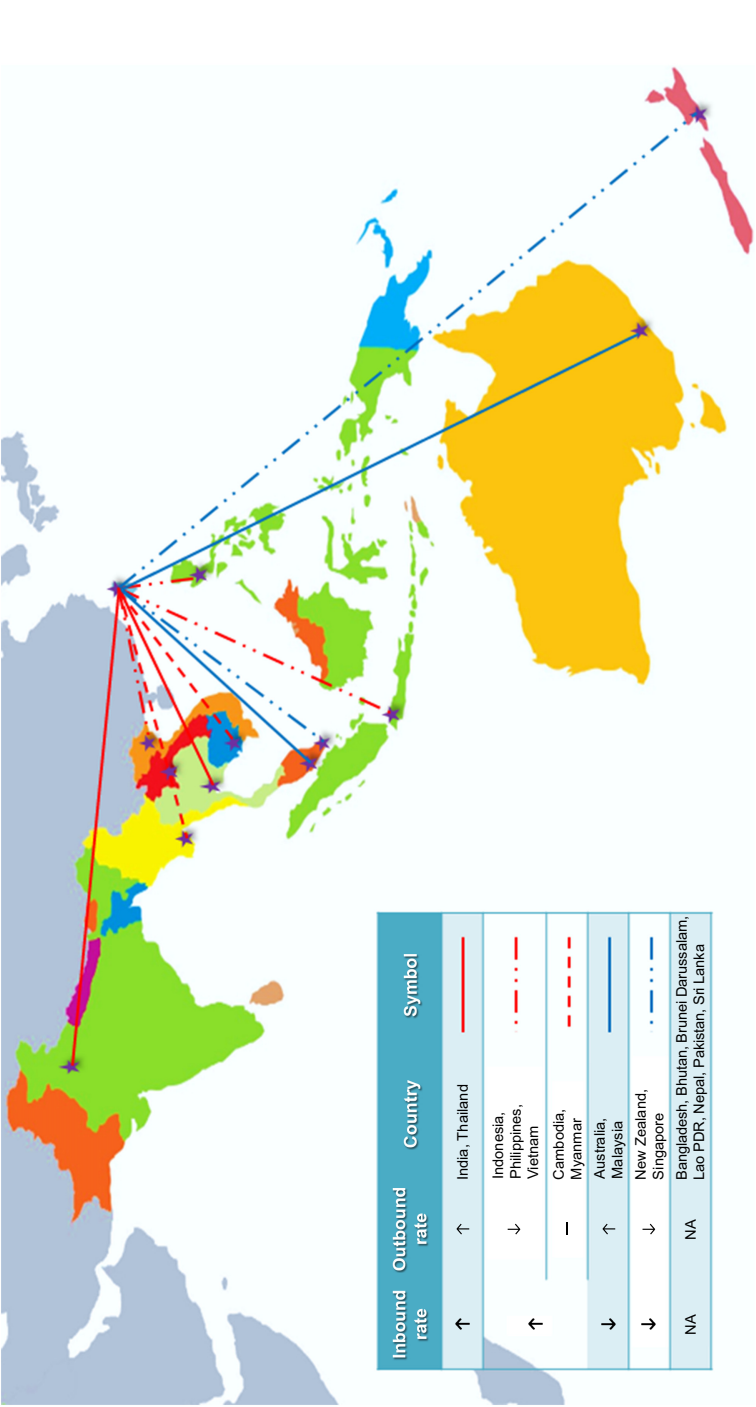


Figure 8.
Country distribution of
student mobility rate
changes between
Taiwan and NSPC
after the launch of the
NSP in 2016

Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019); Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

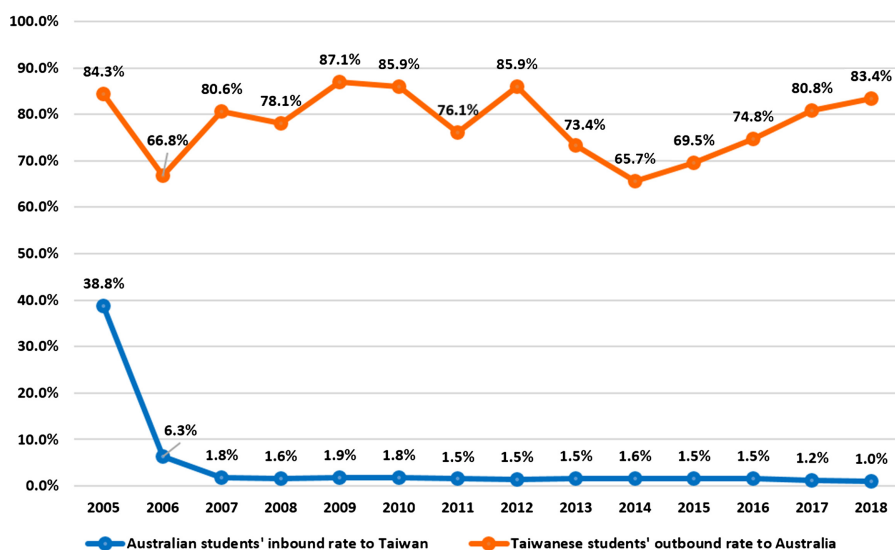
Figure 9.
Interactive
relationships between
Taiwan and NSPC'
students after the
launch of the NSP
in 2016



Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019); Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

6.5.2 Second type of student mobility model (second quadrant) – Declining inbound rate with growing outbound rate: Australia and Malaysia. In regard to the second type of student mobility model, countries located in the second quadrant were more attractive to Taiwanese students; in contrast, students in these countries showed less interest in studying in Taiwan. The mobility model was reshaped by the policy and by the changes in students' choices. For instance, Australia had been ranked the first study destination among 18 NSPC for a long time and continued to attract Taiwanese students after 2016. Even though there were still ups and downs, the ratio has been above 60% in the past few years (see Figure 10). Another emerging destination, Malaysia, has begun to attract an increasing number of Taiwanese students in recent years, even though the growing rate was still in its infancy (see Figure 11).

6.5.3 Third type of student mobility model (third quadrant) – Declining inbound rate with declining outbound rate: New Zealand and Singapore. In regard to the third type of student mobility model, countries located in the third quadrant indicated a lower attraction on both sides. The number of inbound students from NSPC and outbound students from Taiwan has simultaneously declined after 2016. The inbound rate of students from NSPC to Taiwan was much lower, approaching zero. This type of student mobility scheme demonstrated that the policy strength of the NSP could not be exerted on students in these countries. In addition, New Zealand and Singapore are relatively advanced, in terms of economic development, among NSPC. Compared with other less developed NSPC, it might be assumed that Taiwanese students would have a relatively high interest in them. However, it was interesting to discover that there was a weak interest from Taiwanese students toward New Zealand and Singapore (see Figures 12 and 13).



Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019); Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

Figure 10.
Student inbound and
outbound mobility rate
between Taiwan and
Australia

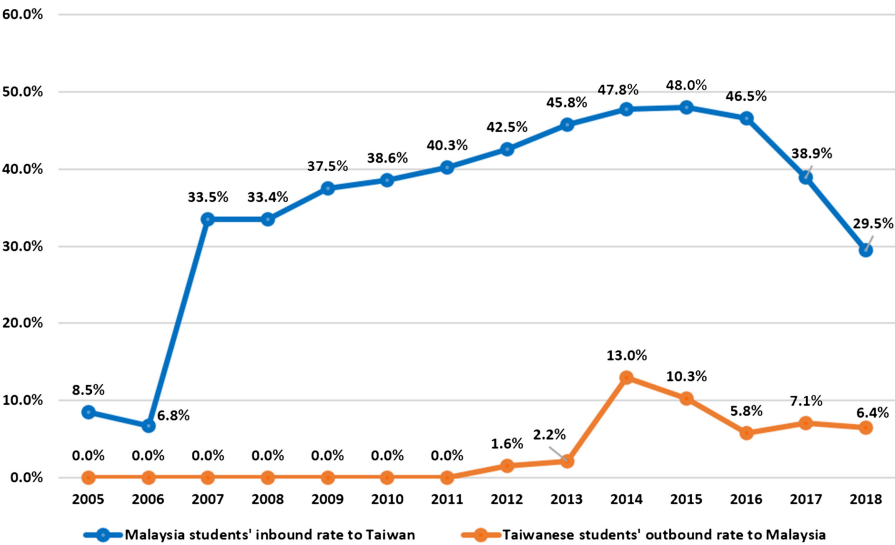


Figure 11.
Student inbound and
outbound mobility rate
between Taiwan and
Malaysia

Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019); Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

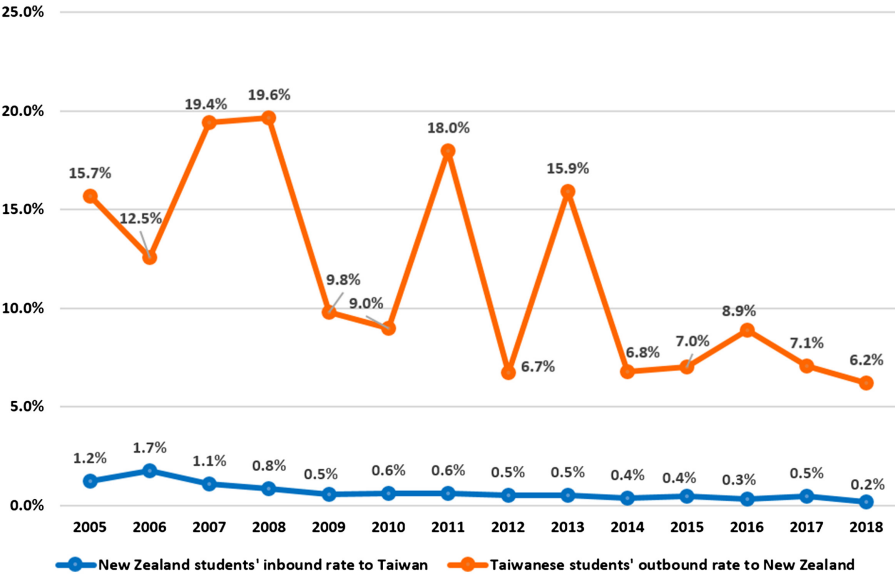


Figure 12.
Student inbound and
outbound mobility rate
between Taiwan and
New Zealand

Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019); Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

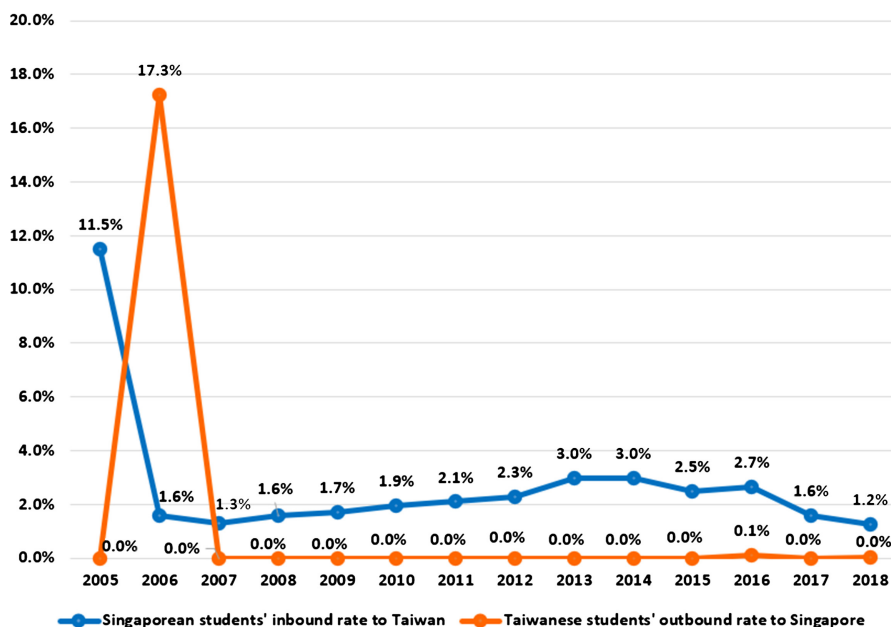


Figure 13.
Student inbound and
outbound mobility rate
between Taiwan and
Singapore

Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019); Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

6.5.4 Fourth type of student mobility model (fourth quadrant) – Growing inbound rate with declining or unchanged outbound rate: Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines and Vietnam. In regard to the fourth type of student mobility model, countries located in the fourth quadrant indicated a lower attractiveness to Taiwanese students; in contrast, Taiwan indicated a higher attractiveness to students from NSPC. Students from NSPC belonging to this type of student mobility model presented a high interest toward Taiwan. For instance, Figure 14 shows a large growth in Vietnamese students going to Taiwan after 2016. However, less Taiwanese students chose NSPC as their study destinations. The gap between inbound students from NSPC and outbound Taiwanese students became larger after the NSP was implemented.

6.5.5 Fifth type of student mobility model (countries without interaction) – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The fifth type of student mobility model indicated that it was not an attractive prospect for students from Taiwan to study in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan or Sri Lanka or for students from these countries to study in Taiwan. Among 18 NSPC, seven countries had very little interaction with Taiwan. Most of the countries are South Asian countries, except Lao PDR, which is a Southeast Asian country. Both the NSPC' student inbound rate to Taiwan and the Taiwanese student outbound rate to NSPC were lower than 0.3%, most often at 0%, even after 2016. The reason behind the figures, apart from certain academic or economic concerns, could be regarded as a lack of mutual understanding between Taiwan and NSPC (Sung and Lin, 2018). Thus, the policy could not play any role.

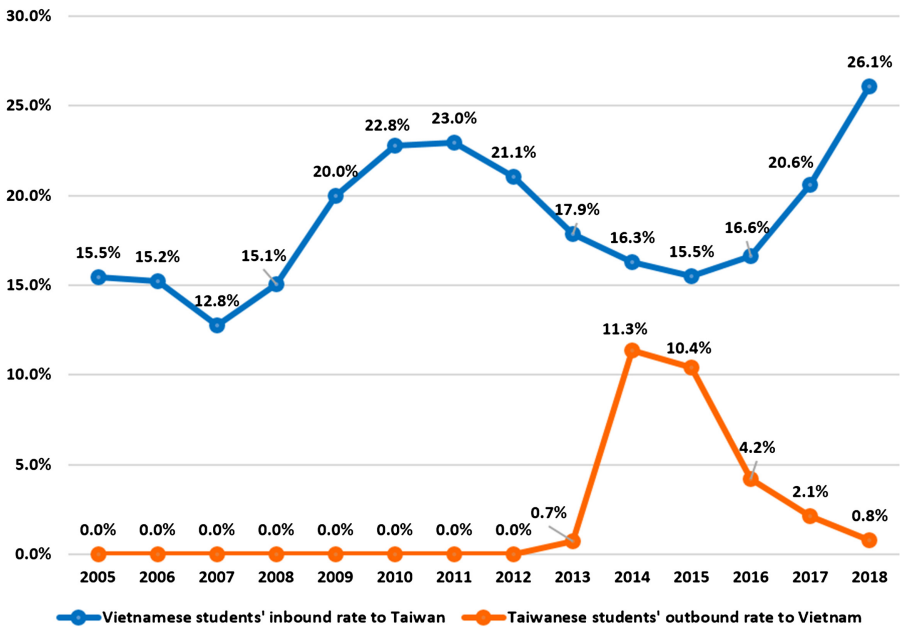


Figure 14.
Student inbound and
outbound mobility rate
between Taiwan and
Vietnam

Source(s): Department of International and Cross-strait Education [DICE], Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019); Ministry of Education [MOE], Taiwan. (2020)

7. Discussion

7.1 A powerful nation-led policy for whom?

From the statistical data, the study found a greater influence from the Taiwanese government for students from NSPC than Taiwanese students. Driven by Taiwan's policy, the inbound rate of students from NSPC has grown rapidly after 2016. In contrast, the rate of outbound Taiwanese students to NSPC did not seem to be particularly influenced by the Taiwanese government. [Sung and Lin \(2018\)](#) stated that the "go out" policy seemed to have little impact compared to the "attracting" strategy. For students in relatively developed countries, such as Taiwan, academic development, economic development and students' personal factors may be a major concern in regard to studying abroad. However, Taiwan's better education development, cultural similarity, scholarship provision and geographic proximity may be attractive for some developing countries ([Chang, 2017](#)). As [Kondakci \(2011\)](#) pointed out, the pull force of high-economically developing countries was much stronger at an individual level than in terms of macro-level dynamics.

7.2 A remedy or a strong assistance?

For talent recruitment, it is always important to clarify the major motives. Since international students were viewed as a remedy for the demographic crisis in many Asian countries, the recruiting goal was mainly focused on "number" growth. Having more international students was considered more internationalized. However, in regard to long-term national construction or the establishment of human resources, governments should clarify the purpose of recruiting students with different education levels and enact appropriate recruitment strategies. Take Taiwan's talent recruitment for instance, one of the major policy

goals was to attract excellent students from NSPC. However, most of the incoming students were bachelor's level. These students may be an instant remedy for Taiwan's higher education but may not be the excellent talent Taiwan needs.

8. Conclusion

Over the past few decades, Taiwan's government has been committed to promoting the internationalization of higher education. In the internationalization policies of many Asian countries, international students were mainly viewed as a remedy for the low birth rate or low university enrollment ratio. Similarly, international students were viewed as an indicator for evaluating Asian countries' degree of internationalization. However, advanced talents were needed for nation construction or development. How to strike a balance between the recruitment of international students and the establishment of a human resource pool may become a major concern for most Asian countries.

In order to promote talent sharing and circulation with regional countries, especially NSPC, Taiwan's government launched a series of scholarships and provided customized courses to attract students from NSPC. Statistics show that after the implementation of the policy, the number of students from NSPC going to Taiwan has increased. However, the mobility scheme seemed to remain single between Taiwan and NSPC and the mutual mobility became more unbalanced than it was previously. In general, due to academic development, economic development and graduation employment considerations, Taiwanese students had less interest in studying in NSPC.

Despite the overall unbalanced mobility that occurred, the NSP changed the mobility scheme between Taiwan and NSPC. Using the quadrant graph, the study demonstrated the subdivided mobility scheme that shed light on the Taiwanese government's internationalization policy for targeting NSPC. Countries located in the different quadrants required distinct strategies in terms of recruiting and on the domestic side to accomplish the mutual mobility goal. Certainly, the national driven policy was effective in promoting talent mobility, but a comprehensive assessment of costs and benefits is required to achieve policy goals and stand out in the international market.

Note

1. NSPC includes 18 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

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