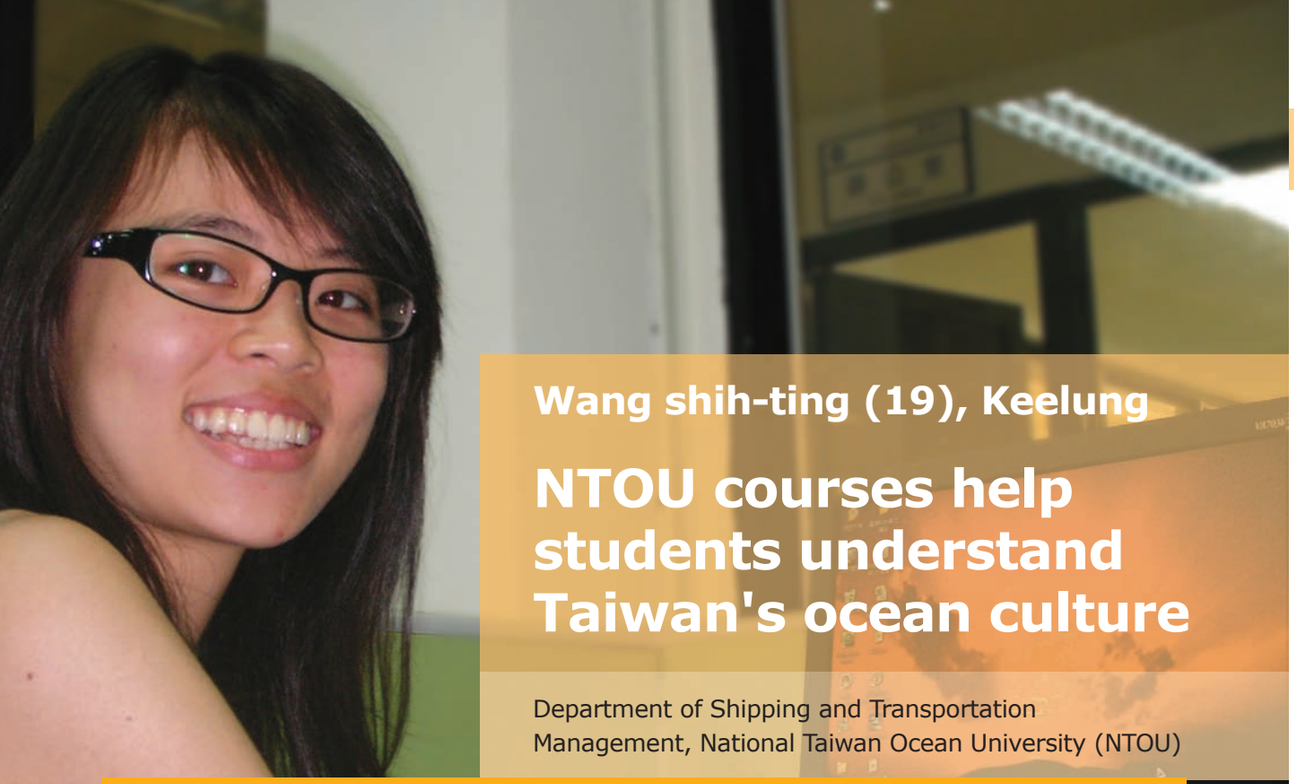
Higher Education

The MOE has launched a series of education reforms that have led to an increase in the number of higher education institutions and their students. Moreover, in order to maintain and improve the quality of higher education, some professional institutions such as the Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan evaluate school's administrative affairs, management and academic research. The quality of higher education can thus be ensured. To survive in this age of globalization, a small country like Taiwan needs international competitiveness drawn from its educational system and research capabilities.

Tug-of-war in Feng Chia University



Wang shih-ting (19), Keelung

NTOU courses help students understand Taiwan's ocean culture

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Upon receiving the offer letter from this university, the first image of Taiwan that came to my mind was that of a remote and lonely island lying on an endless ocean. But, when I arrived at NTOU, I saw a beautiful campus with seagulls flying over the nearby harbor on the Pacific Ocean.

NTOU is an excellent place to learn about the ocean. Its curriculum includes ocean sciences, literature and ocean economics. But this school is not just about the ocean. School authorities had a mountain pathway built that led to an area considered home to fireflies. Thousands of tourists take this pathway during the summer, the mating season for fireflies. I also took some courses on the habits of fireflies.

Among NTOU's many programs, the most fascinating for me was the internship with Taiwanese shipping companies such as Evergreen Line and Yang Ming Marine Transport Corp. Some of my classmates and I spent a whole summer break staying on board a cargo ship. It was a great opportunity to learn the practical side of shipping.

The MOE in March 2007, issued the White Paper on the Marine Education Policy by supporting the establishment of marine education databases and platforms for information exchange provided by government, academia, industry, and NGOs.

Marine culture courses have also been added into curriculums at all education levels and increased academia-industry cooperation have helped students develop a greater interest in the marine industry.

1. College & University Entrance Exams

Since 2000, the MOE has allowed multiple admission channels to colleges and universities. These include school recommendation, individual application, and examination and placement. School recommendation means that high schools make a list of students whom they recommend to college or university departments. Individual application means that high school students can apply with at most 5 departments in colleges or universities to take an exam. Examination and placement means that high school students take the entrance exam given by The College/University Entrance Examination Center. And based on their grades, they apply for admission into colleges and universities.

2. Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. Degrees

Students are awarded a bachelor's degree upon completion of their undergraduate study; they will obtain a master's degree upon completion of their postgraduate study. Universities of technology also offer both degrees. However, the curriculums at most universities focus on academic studies and research while the universities of technology focus on practical and specific skills training. Bachelor's programs at both higher education institutions require four years to complete; master's programs usually require two years and a doctorate (PhD) needs at least three years. Depending on the requirements of each school, students with distinguished academic performances could apply for promotion to a higher level.

Fostering a Global Vision

1. "Understanding Taiwan" curriculum

Twenty years ago, there was hardly any educational material about Taiwan. In 1990, the MOE started encouraging colleges and universities to include courses in each education level that would enable students to know more about Taiwan. Those courses were based on the educational principles of local culture and self-awareness. Because of Taiwan's geographic features, some courses dealt with an ocean culture drawn from the fact that this island is surrounded by water and that most people's daily activities and livelihood were related to the ocean. Some universities now teach courses such as oceanic science and culture, ocean literature, and deep-sea diving.

2. English-taught Courses

With the increase in foreign students studying in colleges and universities, the MOE has encouraged both public and private colleges and universities including National Taiwan University, National Chengchi University and Yuan Ze University to offer English-taught courses in order to build an on-campus bilingual environment. Many schools have also established foreign students affairs sections that assist foreign students with visa application and extension, and in dealing with most daily life matters. Up to 63.78% of foreign students are from other Asian countries such as Malaysia and Thailand; 36.22% of them study in technology- related fields.

3. Internationalization

The MOE has four important policies that seek to internationalize Taiwan's higher education:

a. International competitiveness

In 2002, the MOE launched the "Enhancing Global Competitiveness Plan" aimed at fostering international exchange activities, improving students' English capacity and encouraging more international students to study in Taiwan.

b. Increasing the Number of Foreign Students

Having more international students studying in Taiwan has been on the priority list of the MOE since August 2003. Higher education institutions offer scholarships and English-taught courses in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs to achieve this objective.

c. Encourage Taiwan students to study abroad

The MOE established the "Study Abroad Loan Program" in 2004 to encourage Taiwan students to study abroad. This year, the number of students studying abroad has increased by 10% to 37,171.

d. Taiwan Culture Research Program

The Cultural Division of the Taipei Representative Office in the U.K. and Prof. Stephan Feuchtwang, the chairman of the British Association for Chinese Studies (BACS) jointly organized in the summer of 2000 the Taiwan Culture Research Program (TCRP), previously known as the London Taiwan Seminar at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). On July 1, 2007, the program was expanded in scale and content. By cooperating with the leading foreign academic institutes, the MOE believes that "Taiwan Research" will attract attention on the academic stage in the U.K. and assert its scholarly resources.

Celebrities from Technological Education

Wang Chien-ming, left, and Ang Lee, right, have gained global fame and brought honor to Taiwan.

Many people who have a technological and vocational education have become successful in business, athletics or other professions. Wang Chien-ming, a pitcher for the New York Yankees, was a student of Taipei Physical Education College before joining that major league team.

Tsao Chin-Hui, another player in American major league baseball (MLB) attended Kao Yuan Junior College of Technology (which the MOE upgraded into Kao Yuan University in 2005). During his three years at Kao Yuan, Tsao gained international recognition for his baseball talents and was awarded a US$2.2 million contract by the Colorado Rockies in 1999.

Ang Lee, the best director winner for the 78th Oscar, studied at National Junior College of Arts (that was upgraded into National Taiwan University of Arts in 2001) after completing his senior high school at National Tainan First Senior High School (considered the best high school in Tainan City). Ang's parents were surprised at Ang's decision not to pursue an undergraduate degree and chose film studies instead.

These celebrities have become models for students thinking to develop a professional skill through the TAV education. The MOE has also earmarked more funds and resources to assist vocational schools upgrade their facilities and teaching content.

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Chen ying-tzu (22), Taichung

Diversified curriculum helps personality development

Department of Accounting, Feng Chia University

I have been studying at Feng Chia University in Taichung City in central Taiwan. This university won the "Excellence in Teaching and Learning" award from the MOE in 2006 and 2007. I believe this university's diversified curriculum has helped me absorb knowledge from different professions.

Feng Chia is a digitized campus and students enjoy wireless Internet connectivity and a digital library. This allows us to attend relevant courses from other domestic and international universities.

This school also assists students experiencing difficulties in their academic work and organizes student exchange activities that allow us to understand different cultures and improve our foreign language abilities.

In 2006, the MOE started the three-year Excellence in Teaching and Learning Project aimed at enhancing the quality of higher education. Last year, 58 public and private higher education institutions received subsidies totalling NT$ 3.5 billion. This year, subsidies were granted to 56 higher education institutions.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education

1. College & University Evaluation

With the number of colleges and universities having risen over the past decade, the MOE has focused on maintaining education quality by encouraging schools to establish self-evaluation systems. The MOE has also established an institution to professionally evaluate schools on their administrative and management systems, academic performance, and hardware and software resources. These steps will lead to objective quality standards, ensuring the quality of higher education.

The Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT), established by the MOE in 2005, trains professional evaluators who will eventually set up objective standards of education quality. In the future, the MOE will hold higher education evaluation regularly.

There are two important policies that are designed to enhance higher education. One of them seeks to allocate more educational resources to universities that have better performance. In 2005, for instance, the MOE set aside a total of NT$50 billion to 12 universities. Another policy encourages increased cooperation between colleges and universities and industry.

2. The increase in higher education institutions

The number of higher education institutions, junior colleges, colleges, universities and technological colleges and universities has increased in the past decade under Taiwan's education policy. Each city and county has at least one college or university. In the last decade, there was a rapid increase in the number of private colleges. In 2002, there were 154 higher education institutions. By 2006, the number had gone up to 163 largely due to the upgrade of junior colleges to colleges. From 2002 to 2006, the number of students in junior colleges decreased 55.66%. The number of undergraduate students soared by 25.38%; the number of students taking master programs increased by 58.17%; and the number of candidates for doctorate degrees increased by 59.52%.