

OUT OF AFRICA

Africa students head to China in record numbers

H2	ACT	PLAN	TRACK	PARK	OPP	THR	NEU
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In 2003, there were [1,793 African students enrolled in Chinese universities](#). The number rose to 81,562 students in 2018, increasing by 4,549% in a 15-year period, or by 303% annually.

This had been the fastest international student growth rate among all the world regions, according to Esther Benjamin, the chief executive officer of World Education Services and a former chief executive officer of Monash South Africa.

As of two years ago, 16.5% of about half a million international students in China were from Africa. Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe were the top five African countries with the highest number of students in China. Currently, China is second only to France as the most popular destination for African students seeking higher education outside the continent.

Academics suggest the main rationale underpinning China's recruitment of African international students is to build a soft power strategy in its engagement with African countries.

The pandemic may be putting the brakes on, however. [Actions targeting Africans and African Americans in Guangzhou](#), a southern Chinese city that is home to more than a dozen universities - evictions, forced home quarantine, being barred from buying essentials from local businesses - were all done in the name of disease control but were reported unfavourably on international news.

By the end of 2020, hundreds of thousands of foreign students from developing countries who left China in the first wave of the pandemic in March were [still unclear about when they would be allowed to return](#). This lack of communication from China has proven disastrous and, for the time being, has weakened China's soft power significantly.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Degrees taught in English

H1	ACT	PLAN	TRACK	PARK	OPP	THR	NEU
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Taiwan's education ministry is pushing forward with its goal of bilingual English-Chinese education in schools and more university degrees and postgraduate courses taught in English as part of an effort to attract foreign students to plug a demographic gap, improve the country's competitiveness and to compete head-on with universities in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Taiwan's goal is to become a bilingual nation, including at university level and attract more foreign students, particularly from Asian countries.

The ministry held meetings in late 2020 with the heads of top universities to select universities to move towards the goal of half of all undergraduate courses, 70% of masters courses and 90% of doctoral degree courses to be taught in English within a few years. This compares to fewer than a third of masters and doctoral courses taught in English at present.

The meetings come as the ministry last month earmarked TW\$3.61 billion (US\$127 million) over the next two years for bilingual education in all school grades before tertiary education.

The money will be for classes taught in English, subsidies for some subjects to be taught in both English and Mandarin Chinese, increased support for disadvantaged students and students in rural areas where there is already a shortage of teachers, and increasing teachers' English fluency by allocating funds for short-term study abroad programmes, Deputy Education Minister Tsai Ching-Hwa told local media on 4 October.

English-proficient high schoolers would then feed through to the universities.

FURTHER READING

