

## Introduction

Globalization has impelled universities worldwide to augment quality of their learning environment in order to accommodate students of diverse nationalities. Recent years have witnessed the Taiwan government promoting global education at universities across the island with the hope of attracting more foreign students to higher education programs in Taiwan (“Taiwan’s scholarships,” 2010). This global education aims to explore opportunities for upgrading academic connections with overseas institutions of higher learning, and bolster the reputation of Taiwanese universities around the world (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2010). The Taiwanese President Ying-Jeou Ma added that to recruit international students to Taiwan will mean opportunities for local students to interact with them and thereby come to understand, respect, appreciate, and build relationships. Furthermore, given the presence of international students, local students might perceive academic competition from foreign peers, which would probably motivate the local students to work harder; besides, this should alleviate the problem of declining enrollment (“President,” 2009).

Ying-Jeou Ma stressed that we need to speed up our internationalization process so that we may offer a more favorable learning environment for international students. Hence the government has provided support to many Taiwanese universities’ enhancement of facilities, offer English programs and invite qualified professors to establish an ideal learning environment. Likewise, the government has offered scholarships to foreign students (“Taiwan’s scholarships,” 2010).

In 2004, four government agencies, the Ministry of Education, Foreign Affairs, Economic Affairs, and National Science Council of the Executive Yuan, together established the Scholarship Program of Taiwan (SPOT) to support international students’ quests to receive higher degrees in Taiwan (MOE, 2010). SPOT was established to promote professional knowledge, friendship, and cooperation between Taiwan and other countries (MOE, 2010). Another scholarship many foreign students applied for is the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (Taiwan ICDF) Scholarship (Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund [Taiwan ICDF], 2010a).

Taiwan's ICDF Scholarship offered foreign students from Central and South America, the East Caribbean, Africa and the Asia Pacific regions the opportunity to pursue advanced education in Taiwan. The purpose of the ICDF scholarship is to promote diplomatic relations among Taiwan and friendly nations, encourage foreign students to acquire professional skills to contribute to their countries after obtaining advanced degrees, and share Taiwan experiences of growth, thereby raising Taiwan's international status (Taiwan ICDF, 2010b). This program had been conducted for more than ten years. Presently, fifteen prominent universities in Taiwan participate in this program.

Foreign students who wish to study at Taiwanese universities apply at Taiwan's Representative offices or Taiwanese Embassies nearby the applicants' home countries. These offices select the elites from the prospective candidates. These foreign students can then freely choose professional fields at Taiwanese universities suitable for their interests or future careers (Taiwan ICDF, 2010a). Both the Taiwan Scholarship and ICDF Scholarship offer master's and Ph.D. foreign students two-year and three-year scholarships respectively. As a result, the number of foreign students pursuing degrees in Taiwan had shown growth in recent years. A news report indicated that 6,258 foreign students embarked on their degrees in Taiwan ("With internationalized education", 2009).

While the population of international graduate students pursuing advanced degrees in Taiwan is increasing, little is known about their studying experiences. Due to different cultural and educational systems, these sojourners face many challenges in Taiwan. It is crucial to investigate their studying experiences because we need to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their difficulties in order to establish strategies to cope with the challenges derived from Taiwan's internationalization process.

## Literature Review

Much research had explored various challenges that foreign students encountered while pursuing higher education at English-speaking Western universities (Robinson-Pant, 2009). While they pursued academic studies in a different language medium community, the characteristics they brought with them impacted their study abroad. This