

The Recruitment-Retention Nexus in Skilled Migration: Evaluating Taiwan's Talent Policies through the Case of Indian Engineers

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ABSTRACT

*This paper examines Taiwan's skilled migration strategy for addressing labor shortages in its high-technology sectors by analysing talent policies and migration data through the lens of the recruitment-retention nexus. The main theoretical contribution of the study is the conceptualization of recruitment and retention as a single analytical framework rather than as separate policy stages of attraction and post-arrival integration. Like most developed nations, Taiwan, one of the global leaders in the semiconductor industry, is experiencing increased demand for highly skilled professionals while also facing demographic decline, intensifying the labour shortage. The Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professionals, the New Southbound Policy, and the Employment Gold Card are key policies introduced by Taiwan to attract international talent. This research combines qualitative policy analysis of Taiwan's skilled migration policies with quantitative descriptive analysis of official Ministry of Labor data on Indian professionals holding Class-A special or technical work permits between 2019 and 2025. The findings show an average annual year-on-year growth rate of **10.1 percent** in the number of Indian professionals holding Class-A work permits, indicating a significant increase in the number of Indian engineers working in Taiwan. The gradual decline in year-on-year growth after 2022 also suggests that fewer work permits are being presented for renewal, indicating emerging challenges in the long-term retention of Indian professionals in Taiwan.*

1. Introduction

Taiwan is one of the most important technology hubs in the semiconductor industry as it is one of the largest producers of the world's most advanced integrated circuits (ICs). As Taiwan's semiconductor and high-tech sectors grew, demand for highly specialized engineers and technical professionals has increased significantly. Despite its leadership in the global semiconductor market, the island faces a critical shortage of skilled labour. Taiwan's labour market is rapidly shrinking, given its small population of 23.6 million, an aging population, and a

low birth rate. From 1950 to the early 1980s, Taiwan transitioned from an agriculture-based economy to a labour-intensive export manufacturing economy and eventually to a capital and technology-intensive industrial system (Kesarwani & Lincoln, 2023). This rapid technological transformation caused a gap between the domestic talent supply and industrial demand. While educational reforms have been implemented to address these structural challenges, Taiwan has simultaneously increased its reliance on international talent to sustain the development and competitiveness of its technology-driven economy. Talent shortages are not new to Taiwan; in the postwar period, it faced similar challenges, as most young talent who chose to study abroad experienced critical brain drain. Government-led industrialization policies, export promotion strategies, and investments in science parks and research institutions enabled Taiwan to develop a strong high-technology sector centred around the semiconductor industry. Hsinchu Science Industrial Park, currently known as Hsinchu Science Park, emerged as a critical milestone with the industrial revolution in the early 1980s, which helped attract overseas Taiwanese professionals and facilitated technological and knowledge transfer through transnational networks linking Taiwan with global innovation centres such as Silicon Valley successfully transformed earlier patterns of brain drain into brain circulation, as many highly skilled Taiwanese engineers returned or maintained cross-border professional networks that contributed to the development of the island's high-tech industries (Chang, 1992). However, in recent decades, the structural conditions that supported Taiwan's earlier technological rise have changed significantly, and Taiwan is now a rapidly aging population with extremely low fertility rates and a shrinking workforce. According to the National Development Council (NDC) population projection reports, the total population will decline significantly in the coming decades, while the elderly population will continue to grow. Taiwan's skilled labor shortage crisis is not merely a statistical reflection of low birth rates or an aging populace; it constitutes a critical threat to the nation's global competitiveness, particularly within the semiconductor sector, where it maintains a position of global leadership. As a result, Taiwan has begun shifting its policy focus toward recruiting foreign talent, particularly highly skilled engineers and technology professionals. The current skilled labor market is competitive but also presents opportunities for mutually beneficial talent mobility. India possesses a growing pool of highly educated technology professionals and engineers, creating opportunities for complementary relationships with Taiwan's growing demand for skilled professionals. This paper studies Taiwan's evolving approach to skilled migration through the lens of the recruitment-retention nexus. Over the last decade, Taiwan has implemented various policies, such as the New Economic Immigration Bill and the Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professionals, to attract skilled foreign talent (National Development Council, 2023). To effectively address Taiwan's skilled labour shortage, attracting foreign talent is not enough; long-term settlement and integration of such talent is necessary. Which leaves us with the question: do current Taiwan policies focused on solving the labour

shortage address both recruitment and retention? To address this issue, this paper highlights the importance of understanding recruitment and retention as a single framework rather than separate policy stages. While most of the existing literature focuses either on attracting skilled migrants or on their integration after arrival. Drawing on push-pull theory, the policy coherence framework, and organizational equilibrium theory, the study develops a theoretical framework to examine how macro-level policy structures shape the experiences and retention decisions of foreign professionals. Using Work permit data of Indian engineers working in Taiwan's high-tech sector as a case study, the paper analyses recruitment trends alongside policy provisions to evaluate whether Taiwan's talent strategies effectively translate attraction into long-term settlement.

2. Objectives

1. To assess whether Taiwan's talent attraction policies in high-technology sectors primarily focus on recruitment rather than long-term retention of foreign professionals.
2. To analyse five years of Indian technical work permit data under Taiwan's *Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professionals* in order to estimate recruitment trends, approximate retention rates, and assess how these patterns reflect the effectiveness of Taiwan's current talent policies.

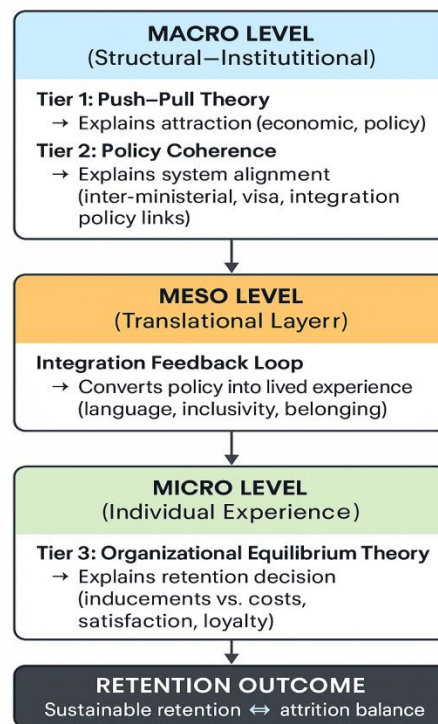
3. Taiwan demographic decline and industry development

According to National Development Council reports, Taiwan's population peaked at 23.6 million in 2019 and is projected to decline substantially, reaching approximately 14.4 to 15.8 million by 2070. The working age population, ranging from 15 to 64, which forms the core of the labor force, peaked in 2015 and has been declining since 2016, and is projected to shrink by over 9 million people by 2070. These demographic changes are closely linked to Taiwan's persistently low fertility rate, which fell to 0.87 in 2023, one of the lowest in the world (National Development Council, 2024). These demographic changes coincide with growing labor shortages in Taiwan's technology sector. In 2021, a total of 27,701 engineering positions were reported unfilled, and the number increased to 35,167 vacancies in the first half of 2022 (Zhang, K., 2025). More recent nationwide labor market surveys conducted by the Ministry of Labor reported approximately 276,000 job vacancies across the industrial and service sectors, with manufacturing accounting for about 92,000 vacancies, the largest share among all industries. (Ministry of Labor, 2025). These figures indicate that workforce shortages remain significant in Taiwan's industrial sector, particularly in manufacturing and technology-related occupations.

4. Theoretical Framework

Push-pull theory serves as the foundation for studying the factors influencing human migration from the country of origin to the destination (Lee, 1966). Later literature expanded this framework by focusing more on the destination country's pull factors. For example, Nikou and Luukkonen (2024) used the foundations of push-pull theory to examine factors that determine international student's decisions to remain in the host country and those that push them toward onward migration. This research extends this framework to understand the factors that push international talent in Taiwan, particularly Indian engineers working in Taiwan's high-technology sector, toward onward migration.

Figure 1. The Recruitment-Retention Nexus Framework



Migration decisions, particularly among highly skilled professionals, are not determined solely by economic incentives. Instead, they are influenced by a combination of non-economic factors such as professional opportunities, research environments, social conditions, and quality-of-life considerations (Mihăilă, 2019). These factors are also shaped by the broader policy environment of the host country. The policy coherence framework emphasizes the importance of aligning policies across different sectors and institutions so that migration, labor, and social inclusion policies reinforce rather than contradict one another (Hong & Knoll, 2016). On an individual

level, organizational equilibrium theory further explains how migrants evaluate the balance between their contributions and the incentives they receive within firms, which, in turn, influences their decisions to remain in the host country or to migrate onward (KNOMAD, OECD, & UNDP, 2020). Grosskopf et al. (2024) further expanded this perspective beyond purely economic incentives to societal incentives, highlighting the importance of social integration on the retention decisions of foreign professionals within host societies.

By integrating these three theories, this research aims to provide a multidimensional lens for studying recruitment and retention policies as a continuous process, enabling an evaluation of how macro-level policy frameworks influence micro-level experiences and retention decisions among foreign professionals.

4. Methodology and Data Source

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative analysis and descriptive quantitative analysis to examine the institutional framework of Taiwan's foreign talent policies and the empirical trends in the recruitment and retention of foreign professionals. The qualitative analysis of the study relies on secondary data from official documents and policy reports published on government websites, including legislation, policy guidelines, and institutional reports issued by Taiwan government agencies such as the National Development Council, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Education, and the Executive Yuan. The quantitative component involves descriptive analysis of labor statistics based on official data on the number of foreign professionals holding Class-A special or technical work permits by nationality. In particular, the study examines the work permit data of Indian professionals from 2019 to 2025. These statistics provide empirical insights into recruitment and retention trends in Taiwan's high-technology sectors. The descriptive quantitative indicators used in the study include year-on-year growth and overall growth rate in work permit numbers.

5.1 Limitations

The study relies primarily on secondary data from policy documents, reports, and Government websites. Therefore, the study cannot fully capture the lived experiences of foreign professionals in Taiwan. In addition, the statistical data used do not track individual migration histories; rather, they track the total number of work permits issued to foreign professionals, as these may apply for new permits when their previous permits expire or obtain secondary permits. Despite these limitations, the combination of policy analysis and official labor statistics provides a useful framework for identifying institutional patterns in Taiwan's approach to foreign talent recruitment and retention.

6. Taiwan's Talent Recruitment and Retention Policies- Overview

Taiwan's talent shortage has been addressed at multiple policy levels to develop domestic talent and attract international skilled labour. This paper focuses on the policies implemented to address the skilled labour shortage by attracting skilled foreign talent. Within Taiwan's governance structure, the Legislative Yuan establishes a legal foundation for global talent policies, while the Executive Yuan and its ministries, including the National Development Council, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and many other institutions, implement these policies through administrative programs. These policies can be broadly classified by their role in the recruitment-retention process: recruitment facilitation policies, residency and settlement policies, and integration initiatives.

6.1 Recruitment facilitation

Taiwan's International talent policy is largely focused on facilitating the recruitment of highly skilled foreign talent and mid-level technicians to address talent shortages in high-tech sectors. The Act for Recruitment and Employment of Foreigners, initially drafted in 2017 and later enacted in 2018, is one of the major policies. The policy was subsequently amended in 2021 and 2025; the most recent amendment will take effect in January 2026 (National Development Council, 2025). This Act simplifies the legal basis for visas, work permits, and residency pathways for high-skilled foreign talent. This act also provided incentives, such as tax reductions, simplified application procedures, and expanded social benefits for immigrants in the high-skilled foreign professional category. (National Development Council, 2023). Under this Act, foreign talents are classified into three categories. The first category is foreign professionals, which includes engineers and researchers who are recruited via the employer-sponsored visa and work permits, and the second category is Foreign Special Professionals who are considered to experts in their respective field, and they receive special benefits like the Employment Gold Card which combines a work permit, visa and residency into single permit (Talent Taiwan, 2019). The final category is Foreign Special Professional, which represents the highest level of foreign talent with exceptional international achievements and is given the highest benefits and an easier pathway to residency. Although these categories distinguish different levels of expertise and benefits, they all belong to Taiwan's high-skilled foreign workforce and are generally recorded under Class-A professional work permits in official labor statistics (Ministry of Labour, 2019).

Taiwan's foreign talent recruitment strategy is also supported by its broader foreign policies. The New Southbound Policy (**NSBP**), launched in 2016, promotes educational, economic, and technological cooperation between Taiwan and 18 partner countries in South and Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. Through scholarships, academic partnerships, and professional training programs, the policy aims to attract international students and skilled professionals who

may later transition into Taiwan's workforce. Students from New Southbound partner countries now represent a substantial share of Taiwan's international student population, making these educational exchanges an important pipeline for future talent recruitment. (Dao, 2020)

6.2 Residency and Settlement

The initial phase of the act was to attract foreign talent; the 2021 and 2025 reforms focus on retaining foreign talent. One of the most significant reforms involves the relaxation of requirements for obtaining permanent residency. Under recent amendments to Taiwan's foreign talent legislation, certain categories of foreign professionals can apply for permanent residency after three years of residence. Additional policy reforms have expanded rights for family members of foreign professionals. Spouses are now permitted to work in Taiwan without requiring separate work permits, while children may extend their residency and apply for employment authorization upon reaching adulthood. In addition, foreign professionals who obtain permanent residency can participate in Taiwan's national labor pension system and receive immediate access to the National Health Insurance program (National Development Council, 2025). To encourage students brought in via the new southbound policy and scholarships to transition into Taiwan's labor market after graduation, visa regulations were also relaxed. Time spent studying in Taiwan, particularly in graduate-level programs such as master's or doctoral degrees, can also count toward residency requirements (Ministry of Education, 2025). These policy changes reflect a broader effort to encourage long-term settlement among foreign professionals by improving the legal and social stability.

6.3. Integration and Social Inclusion

Beyond economic incentives, integration policies and effects are aimed at improving the everyday experience of foreign professionals living in Taiwan. These initiatives focus on facilitating social integration, improving access to public services, and supporting the development of inclusive communities. One important initiative is the Talent Taiwan centre, through which the local government provides various services to help ease the integration of foreign professionals into society. Regional talent service offices provide assistance with housing, visas, access to healthcare, and other administrative procedures. Major cities such as Taipei and Kaohsiung have also established multilingual support services and cultural programs intended to facilitate community engagement and improve the social environment for international professionals (Yahoo奇摩新聞, 2023). Other Policy initiatives, like Bilingual 2030, are also aimed at improving everyday living conditions for migrants, thereby enhancing English proficiency in public services and education. This involves training civil servants to provide English-friendly service, increasing bilingual signage and resources, and ensuring that offices,

schools, and city events provide information in English (National Development Council, 2023). However, there has been no recent public update regarding the implementation of these bilingual policies on government websites

6.4. Policy Analysis (objective 1)

Overall, Taiwan's efforts to manage international talent represent a multi-layered institutional approach, but the policy emphasis across these layers appears uneven. The initial stages of these policies were largely focused on recruiting foreign professionals, with measures primarily centred on economic incentives and streamlined administrative procedures. In contrast, later retention-focused efforts, such as those aimed at integration, social inclusion, and long-term settlement, often involve multiple institutions and rely heavily on local-level initiatives or sector-specific programs. There are also limited mechanisms to reinforce these policy objectives at the organizational level, particularly in encouraging companies to hire and retain international graduates.

However, the 2025 amendments to the Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professionals indicate a gradual policy shift toward strengthening long-term retention mechanisms. While earlier policies were primarily designed to attract foreign professionals, the amendments increasingly address the long-term needs of these professionals and their families. For example, recent reforms have expanded benefits, including spousal work rights, access to labor pension programs, and immediate enrollment in the National Health Insurance system for qualified foreign professionals. This is particularly significant because most foreign residents in Taiwan, including international students, must reside in Taiwan for at least six months before becoming eligible for National Health Insurance. Granting immediate access to health insurance for certain categories of foreign professionals, therefore, represents a policy effort to improve settlement conditions and encourage long-term retention.

These developments suggest that Taiwan's foreign talent policy is gradually evolving from a purely recruitment-focused strategy toward a more comprehensive recruitment-retention framework. This shift supports the study's argument that recruitment and retention should be understood as a continuum rather than as separate policy stages. While Taiwan has made significant progress in attracting international talent, further policy development may be needed to strengthen the recruitment-retention nexus by ensuring that integration policies, institutional coordination, and workplace practices reinforce long-term settlement opportunities for foreign professionals.

7. Quantitative Findings (objective 2)

This study analysed official statistical data published by Taiwan’s Ministry of Labor (MOL) on the number of Indian professionals holding Class-A (Special or Technical) Work Permits between 2019 and 2025. The dataset represents the official number of valid work permits by nationality issued each year, which reflects the population of high-skilled foreign workers legally employed in Taiwan under the Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professionals.

As previously mentioned in the methodology section, the dataset represents the total number of valid permits issued in that particular year, rather than individual workers. The figures include both newly issued permits and permits held by existing professionals whose permits have been renewed. Because the data do not track individual migration histories, it is not possible to distinguish precisely between new recruitment, permit renewal, or exit. For this reason, the analysis focuses on year-on-year growth and the average growth rate in valid permits as indicators of changes in the number of Indian professionals working in Taiwan.

Year-on-Year Growth

$$\frac{S_t - S_{t-1}}{S_{t-1}} \times 100$$

Where S_t represents the number of valid work permits in year t and S_{t-1} represents the number of valid work permits in the previous year. And the average growth rate represents the mean of the year-on-year growth rates over the study period.

Table 1: Indian Professionals Holding Class-A Special or Technical Work Permits in Taiwan (2019–2025)

Year t	Valid Work Permits S_t	Year-on-Year Growth %
2019	1,813	—
2020	2,077	14.6%
2021	2,202	6.0%
2022	2,496	13.3%

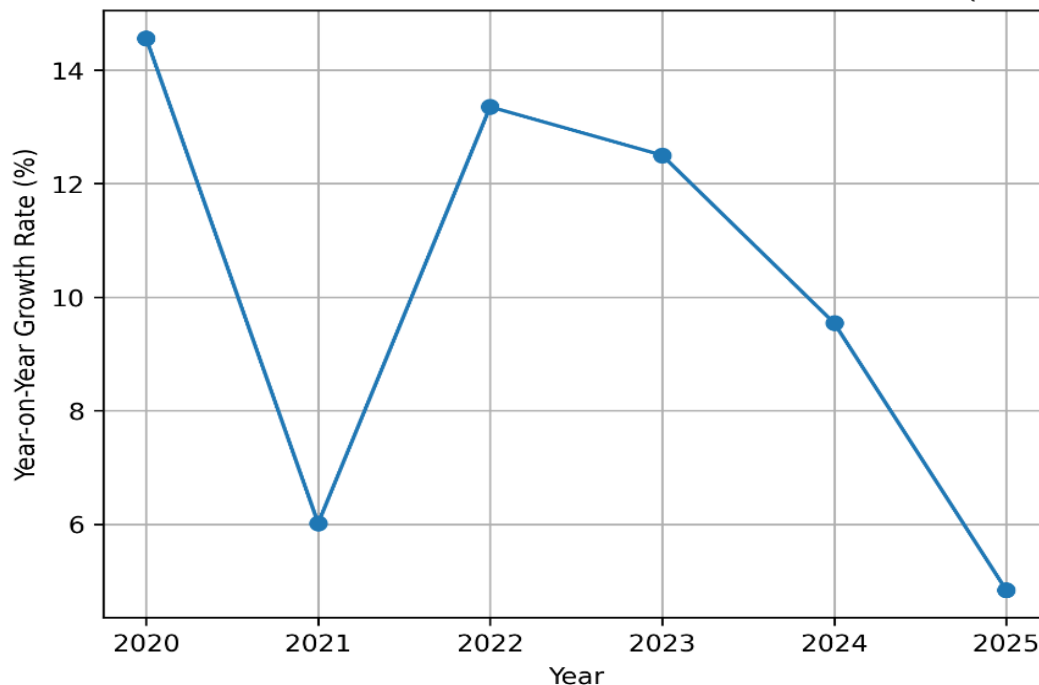
Year t	Valid Work Permits S_t	Year-on-Year Growth %
2023	2,808	12.5%
2024	3,076	9.5%
2025	3,225	4.8%

Average annual growth rate (2020–2025): 10.1%

Source: Ministry of Labor, Taiwan. Foreign Professional Work Permit Statistics by Nationality (2019–2025). Available at: <https://statdb.mol.gov.tw/html/year/year12/313170.pdf>. Author’s calculations.

Figure 2: Year-on-year growth of Indians holding Class A work permits

Year-on-Year Growth of Indian Class-A Work Permits in Taiwan (2020–2025)



Source: Author's own interpretation of year-on-year growth data from 2020 to 2025.

From Table 1, it is clearly visible that the number of Indian professionals holding Class-A technical work permits in Taiwan increased steadily between 2019 and 2025. The total number of

valid permits rose from 1,813 in 2019 to 3,225 in 2025, representing a sustained increase in the number of Indian professionals employed in Taiwan's high-technology sectors, which can be interpreted as a positive outcome of Taiwan's recruitment strategies.

However, a closer examination of the growth rates reveals a more nuanced pattern. Year-on-year growth was strongest in 2020 (14.6%), slowed in 2021 (6.0%) during the COVID-19 period when international mobility and hiring activity were disrupted, and increased again in 2022 (13.3%), likely reflecting renewed labor demand in the semiconductor and technology industries during the post-pandemic recovery (Wang, 2024). After 2022, growth remained positive but gradually slowed, declining to 4.8% by 2025.

As shown in Figure 2, the sharp drop in 2021 and the gradual decline in year-on-year growth rates in the following years may indicate a reduction in permit renewals, with a larger share of permits representing new recruitment rather than long-term retention. This interpretation is consistent with Taiwan's ongoing efforts to actively recruit foreign talent, including Indian professionals, as reflected in recent recruitment campaigns by major semiconductor companies targeting Indian engineers for full-time positions and internships in Taiwan (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, 2025).

While the data suggest that Taiwan continues to attract Indian professionals into its high-technology sectors, the slowing growth trend may also indicate challenges in the long-term retention of foreign skilled professionals. Nevertheless, the overall average growth rate of 10.1 percent per year indicates that Taiwan continued to attract an increasing number of Indian professionals into its high-skilled labor market throughout the study period.

8. Discussion and Conclusion

Taiwan has developed multiple institutional mechanisms to attract highly skilled foreign professionals, particularly in high-technology sectors such as semiconductors and information technology. The economic incentives like tax benefits, pension plan, scholarships embedded in major recruitment-oriented policies, such as the Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professionals, the Employment Gold Card program, and talent pipelines developed through the New Southbound Policy (NSP), function as strong pull factors that position Taiwan as an attractive destination for highly skilled professionals in the competitive global labor market. As shown in the qualitative findings, an overall year-on-year growth rate of 10 percent increase in the number of work permits from 2019 to 2025 indicates a significant rise in the recruitment of Indian engineers. However, the policy analysis reveals that Taiwan's talent strategy is implemented across multiple government institutions, including the National Development Council (NDC), the Ministry of Labor (MOL), the Ministry of Education (MOE),

and various national and regional-level institutions. Recruitment policies are largely designed and implemented at the national level, primarily focusing on economic competitiveness, industrial development, and the growth of Taiwan's technology sectors. While the policies related to integration and long-term settlement are often implemented at the local level. These initiatives include regional talent service centres, municipal support services, and community-based integration programs designed to enhance the everyday experiences of foreign professionals living in Taiwan. This distribution of responsibilities may create gaps between policy design and policy implementation, generating challenges for policy coherence and institutional coordination. When coordination between institutions is limited, foreign professionals may encounter administrative or social barriers that influence their long-term settlement decisions. At the individual level, these challenges can significantly influence retention decisions, as the perceived social incentives may be weaker than the economic incentives offered to highly skilled professionals who can obtain comparable employment opportunities elsewhere. While individual experiences may appear varied and even chaotic at the micro level, examining a larger collection of experiences can reveal broader patterns and trends (de Haas, 2021, p. 4). This highlights the importance of further research on the lived experiences of foreign professionals, particularly Indian engineers working in Taiwan's high-technology sectors. Even when recruitment policies successfully attract foreign professionals, factors such as workplace integration, language barriers, opportunities for family settlement, and broader forms of social inclusion play an important role in shaping whether these professionals remain in Taiwan or pursue opportunities in other destinations

The findings of this study collectively suggest that Taiwan has made significant progress in developing policy and institutional mechanisms to attract highly skilled foreign professionals, particularly in high-tech sectors such as semiconductors. However, the analysis also indicates that long-term retention mechanisms remain comparatively underdeveloped, particularly in policy coordination, social integration, and workplace inclusion. These findings support the argument that recruitment and retention should be understood as a continuous process rather than separate policy stages. Strengthening coordination between recruitment policies and long-term integration mechanisms may therefore be essential for improving the sustainability of Taiwan's foreign talent strategy and supporting the long-term competitiveness of its high-technology industries.

Finally, focusing on specific diasporas, such as the Indian community in Taiwan, may provide valuable insights for improving talent retention. Further research examining the experiences of Indian engineers working in Taiwan could help inform the development of more targeted integration policies. Given Taiwan's growing demand for highly skilled professionals and India's large pool of technical talent, developing specialized integration and support mechanisms for

Indian professionals could strengthen long-term talent retention and contribute to mutual benefits for the two countries.

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