

TAIWAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

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Executive Summary

1. Taiwan's higher education reform has been following the global trend of public sector reforms. It is a multiple process of decentralization, deregulation, enrollment expansion, marketization, and privatization.
2. Local factors such as political democratization, industrial upgrade and social activism together shaped the emergence and development of Taiwan's higher education reform.
3. The higher education reform started in the early 1990s and is still ongoing with constant controversies and protests from different stakeholders involved in the reform.
4. The university governance reform in Taiwan, including reforming its relations with the government and university intra-governance, is relatively successful, because major popular appeals, such as university autonomy and academic freedom, have been achieved through legislation and effective implementation.
5. In contrast, another major popular appeal, higher education expansion, has been achieved quickly but with many unexpected negative consequences, and become the most problematic part of the whole higher education reform.
6. Higher education expansion has lifted Taiwan from the stage of mass higher education to that of universal access to higher education and generally reduced education inequality.
7. On the other hand, the expansion has also caused problems such as college graduates' high unemployment and a job and qualification mismatch.
8. Marketization of higher education has been promoted by the Taiwanese government to reduce its financial burden caused by the higher education expansion and to improve universities' competence and accountability.

9. After marketization, revenue generation has become one of the most important priorities for most universities, which in turn has led to significant tuition fee increases.
10. Taiwan's future higher education reform needs to cope with the urgent challenges of a lack of students and a need to corporatize public higher education institutions without further impairing their public service function.