

China embraces massive influx of returnees

China is in the middle of the third major influx of overseas Chinese students, media reported recently. Some experts predicted there will be a historical shift that China sees more inflow than outflow of talented people over the next 5 years.

Returning students looking for jobs at a recruitment fair this past spring. Photo: Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange under the Ministry of Education website

In making the transformation into a big talent attracter, China will slowly emerge as an important part of the global competition for human resources, the experts added.

China had a total of 545,000 students overseas in 2016, and 433,000 returning after graduating, with an increase of 36.2% and 58.6% respectively compared with 2012, according to an Education Ministry blue paper, issued in Jan. 2017. As China grows into the world's largest source of overseas students, the gap between the two directions narrows, with data showing more than 80% of overseas Chinese students return to the motherland to pursue a career.

Many of these overseas-educated young people, in various areas such as science, technology, economics, education, culture and so on, have contributed to build China's innovative economy.

Analysts attribute the country's attraction for these returnees to the economic progress and greater competitiveness of China, which jumped seven places on the 2017 World Competitiveness Yearbook from Lausanne's International Institute for Management Development. The country also showed the best performance in employment among the 63 economies surveyed.

Some ambitious support policies from the Chinese government in recent years have helped lure foreign-educated, talented people back. For example, the National Special Support Program for High-level Talent, dubbed the "10,000 Talents Program," was announced in 2012 with the goal of getting 10,000 brainy people specialized in the natural sciences, engineering, philosophy,

social sciences and higher education to come to China.

At the same time, more than 300 business incubators were set up to encourage entrepreneurs among the returnees and a large number of attractive jobs were provided.

Another policy, China's "1,000 Talents Program", got the thumbs up from the Spanish newspaper, El Pais, in an article. The program opened in 2008 with the goal of luring top overseas scientists and professionals to key innovation projects, laboratories, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), state-owned commercial and financial institutions, and high-tech industrial parks.

Data shows that the program has managed to haul in more than 7,000 high-level talents, grouped in 13 batches, creating the largest ever influx of returnees since 1949, and becomes China's most influential talent-attraction brand.