

Press Release

Date : December 6, 2018

Taiwan launches the policy of developing Taiwan into a bilingual nation by 2030 and deregulates bilingual education

At the Cabinet's weekly meeting Thursday, Premier Lai Ching-te, after listening to the report on the "Blueprint for Developing Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030" proposed by the National Development Council (NDC) instructs that the Blueprint for Developing Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030 is an important policy of our country, all the government agencies should implement those measures proposed in the Blueprint with the joint effort of local governments, so as to enhance the overall national competitiveness and our people's soft power of English proficiency. Particularly, education is the most important element within the said Blueprint; and that the Ministry of Education is to relax related educational laws and regulations so as to build a flexible and innovative learning model and comprehensively activate the bilingual education system, and to submit the draft amendments of related laws/regulations to the Legislative Yuan for review within three months.

In the Blueprint proposed by NDC, the major two objectives are to "enhance Taiwan's international competitiveness" and "improve Taiwan citizens' English proficiency", and the four concepts for the implementation are to "comprehensively improve Taiwan citizens'

English proficiency from the demand side”, “reduce the urban-rural divide with digital technology”, “take into account the development of the bilingual policy and native language policy” and “develop international competitive advantage for young talents”. The Blueprint was formulated from the view of demand side to improve Taiwan citizens’ soft power of English proficiency, which is different from the past practices of primarily focusing on biligualizing the infrastructure such as public signage. Meanwhile, this policy aims at reducing urban-rural divide with digital technology to help children in remote rural areas enjoy the same English resources just as children in the urban areas can. In addition, while promoting bilingual policy, the government also recognizes that the promotion of native language policy is equally important and will not suppress the promotion of the education for native language. Most importantly, in the face of competition from talents all over the world, if Taiwan’s younger generations are to excel internationally, good communication skills in international language are indispensable. Thus, in order to further enhance Taiwan’s international competitiveness and then attract more multinational companies to invest in Taiwan, so that younger generations can have better career development in their hometowns, the government plans to turn Taiwan into a bilingual nation, by fully utilizing resources of the private sector and to create the maximum benefits with minimum costs, so as to realize the vision of forging a bilingual Taiwan by 2030.

NDC has indicated that, the government had implemented several

programs in previous administrations, such as the Plan for English-friendly Environment Building, aimed at building a bilingual infrastructure to expand Taiwan's tourism resources. The Blueprint is promoted based on the said past achievements to further improve the soft power of our people's English proficiency. As for whether the government will move toward adopting English as our second official language will be further discussed based the outcome of the implementation of the bilingual policy after 2030, which is different from the background and policy goal that Singapore and Hong Kong has adopted English as official language.

The Blueprint is comprised of various measures drafted by 28 ministries/commissions based on their respective authorities and responsibilities, and the NDC has put together all those measures and put forward 16 key individual strategies and 8 common strategies. The Blueprint will be reviewed timely by the NDC based on the situation of the implementation every year. Among all the strategies, the most important one is the comprehensive activation of the bilingual education system, which includes: establishing a flexible and innovative learning model by relaxing related regulations, promoting lively and living English teaching, expanding the promotion of talents with English proficiency, using digital technology to create universal individualized learning opportunities, and accelerating the internationalization of the education system.

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies of promoting a bilingual education system, there are some other individual strategies

proposed by relevant competent ministries, including establishing a full English TV channel, encouraging the Taiwan Broadcasting System to produce and broadcast English programs, increasing English programs in radio stations, creating a friendly bilingual tourism environment, bilingualizing government procurement documents, providing English digest of indictments involving foreigners and foreign enterprises, suggesting the Judicial Yuan to provide English digest of important judgments, creating a bilingual friendly investment environment for science parks and industrial parks, encouraging enterprises to enhance their English capabilities, enhancing English proficiency of labor force, and etc. And there are also common strategies, including bilingualizing the official website of each government agencies, bilingualizing foreigner-related official documents and laws/regulations, bilingualizing the front line public service, bilingualizing open public information, enhancing the bilingual service of cultural and educational institutions such as museums, cultivating English communication skills of government officials, conducting tests for technical personnel in English and bilingualizing the certificate, etc.

After Premier Lai listened to the Ministry of Education's reporting on "Promoting English as an official language of Taiwan policy report" on September 19 this year, the Premier instructed the administration to develop Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030, and the NDC was designated to serve as the coordinating agency and to put forward a blueprint for implementation of the policy.

With the instruction by Premier, NDC has held several meetings with central government agencies, local governments, and domestic and foreign chambers of commerce. Taking into consideration the opinions from various chambers of commerce and the general public, the NDC has drafted the Blueprint to build Taiwan into a bilingual country by the target year of 2030.