

Southeast Asian Labors in Taiwan: Plight, Policy, and Prospect

Hui-Hsin You, B.A.,

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, 2017

ABSTRACT

With the dramatic rising wage and the failed industrial upgrade after the 80s, Taiwan began to import cheap labor from neighboring countries. Until 2016, the total number of Southeast Asian labors is about 605,935, taking roughly 2.5% of population. This number will continue to go up in the near future.

The Southeast Asian labor issue in Taiwan represented political economic rift among political parties and interest groups, as well as the cultural shock for Taiwanese people and their visitors. Series of incidents of discrimination revealed how Taiwan not ready to embrace the liberal belief and multicultural society.

After intensive discussion of pros and cons of Southeast Asian labors policy in the literature review part, this paper adopted extensive interview approach to garner the first hand information of how foreign labor (from Indonesia, Philippine, Vietnam, Thailand), Taiwanese employers, and labor agency (仲介) created the policy puzzle.

The finding of this research suggested that labor agency and the regulation related to it, is both the means and ends of the problem. Therefore, to bring fair rights for both foreign labor and local Taiwanese labor, to avoid notorious discrimination, to provide sufficient workforce and to balance the economic development, Taiwan government must be consistent, transparent and sincere to reform the current policies.

Key words: Southeast Asia labors, discrimination, multicultural society, policy puzzle