

An Answer to Qian' Question: - China Lays Out Its Long Term Talent Development Program

Before passed away, the prominent and highly respected scientist, Dr Qian Xueshen raised a question to the Premier Wen Jiabao at his bed side: Why China's education system failed to produce world class scientists?

This so-called "Qian's question" has since been widely discussed in China.

This week, China came up with its first answer to "Qian's question" by announcing its "National Program for Long-term Talent Development (2010-2020)" and urged government at all levels to seriously implement the Program. The program has been developed for two years by more than 40 experts from economic, education, science and technology and social fields. The team has done researched on 42 strategic topics and 161 sub-topics that involved over 2000 researchers.



The program, also known as "Brain Plan", is China's first strategic plan focusing at the talent development and management. A major focus of this program is to change the way of speeding up economic development by first developing a new generation of world class talents in the face of intense international competition. The program has been seen as a necessary measure to transform China from the world factory to a country of creation.

The new program can be briefly summarized in "6 short phrases" or "24 characters" as people in China would refer it to: Work towards faster development; Put talent development first; Based on the need; Set mechanism for creation; Lead by top management and Implement at all levels.

Based on this program, China's top talent pool will increase from current 100 M to 180 M by 2020. That will double the percentage of people received higher education from current about 10% to 20% of all laborer population and will require investment from current 11% of GDP to 15% GDP. With an anticipated 5-8% annual increase in GDP for the next decade, the actual investment could be tripled from its today's value.

An important change in the talent management system that could contribute to such increase is to remove Research Institutes, Universities and hospitals from a government system that is based on ranking. They will be managed independently by the elected Board and have more authority and freedom in recruiting international talents regardless of age and background.

Within the program, the issue of recruiting overseas talents has been discussed twice. .

Under section 4, clue 7, it mentioned that China will strength is effort to attract high level overseas talents by implementing a series of policies related to residency, taxation, insurance, housing, child education, family arrangement, as well as assignment to leadership position and eligibility for Academy members. It will increase its effort in building science and technology parks and provide startup funding and other financial supports for entrepreneurs from overseas. Such policy could also be extended to include foreign, non-Chinese experts.

Under section 5, clue 7, it again emphasizes the implementation of so-call "Thousand Talent" plan that aims to recruit 2000 high level talents in 5-10 years. So far about 1000 have been approved, most of them were working at University and Research institutes in US and other countries.