



## **Three's Company: China and Taiwan Vying for Mandarin Education in India**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Authors DL and PT co-designed the study, co-managed the analysis of the study, and co-wrote the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

With decades of stupendous growth and political détente between India and China, Mandarin has become an important human capital for Indians. India clearly shows a preference of Taiwan over China, when mediated between them for different Mandarin resources, even before the epidemic and Sino-India border conflicts. Recently, there have been suggestions to replace Confucius Institutes with Taiwanese institutions, and Taiwan has urged for strengthening cooperation with India in Mandarin education. This paper aims to discuss the feasibility for Taiwan Education Centre to monopolize the Mandarin education market of India. Through data collection and detailed analysis of literature by scholars of Taiwan, China and India, this paper argues that Taiwan alone is incapable of occupying the whole Indian market due to the inadequacy of Mandarin teaching resources and complex tripartite political relations. Moreover, the current trilateral strategies adopted by China, India and Taiwan dissuade the common interests. We propose a customization, cooperation and supervision model to advance Mandarin education in India, and further analyze

the feasibility and potential resistance towards the cooperation. This paper is helpful to understanding the Chinese teaching situation in India. It addresses a timely question and offers possible resolution not only to India but also to other countries who are skeptical of Confucius Institutes.

**Keywords:** Mandarin education; India; China; Taiwan education center; political relations; cooperation; dilemma.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Coinciding with China's growth as a global economic power, Mandarin has become the most popular foreign language in India. More and more people learn Mandarin in private schools and some parents are requesting to include Mandarin in the curriculum [1]. The 2019 draft of National Education Policy (NEP) reaffirmed the significance of Mandarin and relisted it as one of foreign languages that would be taught in the secondary education system.

The Indian government has attached great importance to the promotion of Chinese education since 2010. To this end, India frequently juggled request for Mandarin education infrastructure from China and Taiwan. In September 2010, Indian Human Resources Minister, Kapil Sibal first asked the Chinese Education Minister for help to teach Mandarin at the primary level<sup>1</sup>. Receiving an affirmative answer, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) of India quickly announced in 2011 that it would introduce Mandarin into the secondary education system with a pilot plan that Mandarin would be incorporated in 500 middle schools and then extended to 11,500 schools<sup>2</sup>. To meet the goals, India turned to Taiwan for additional help. In May 2011, one month after the CBSE announcement, Kapil Sibal asked Taiwan's Education Minister for 10,000 Mandarin teachers. Taiwan could not satisfy the request, and instead compromised by co-establishing the Taiwan Education Centre (TEC) with Indian universities. Three months later, the first TEC opened at Jindal Global University and announced that Mandarin courses would be available. Thereafter, India immediately turned to China. In October 2011, the Indian education delegation visited Hanban (China's National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language) and discussed about possible cooperation, but no

formal agreement was reached. When CBSE's pilot program failed because it was difficult for Indian teachers to acquire Mandarin in such a short time in January 2012<sup>3</sup>, CBSE quickly signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Hanban in August 2012. Hanban promised to help India train 300 Mandarin teachers, provide 100 scholarships per year to Indian teachers, and assist in developing teaching materials<sup>4</sup>.

Existing research on Mandarin teaching in India is seriously lagging behind the importance of Mandarin in India. Historically, Mandarin teaching and research were considered as a branch of China Studies and Sinology Studies [2][3] without adequate attention [4]. Several papers provide detailed descriptions on the history and the current situation of India's Chinese teaching [5][6][7][8]. Other papers mostly concentrate on micro aspects; for example, when discussing the problems of India's Chinese teaching, researchers focus on language differences especially in sounds, tones, and grammar [9][10][11], teachers [12], and teaching methods and materials [13][14], i.e., subjects related to TCSOL (Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages). Accordingly, suggestions are offered to correct these problems [7][10][8]. Only few papers discuss macro issues. Xue (2019) studies learning motivations [15]. Zhao (2014) discusses political constraints for Confucius Institutes in India [16].

Despite India continues to solicit for help from China and Taiwan, compared with other countries (Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, etc.), Mandarin education in India is still very immature. There are about 40 universities offering Mandarin courses in 2020. With the increasing criticism towards Confucius institute (CI) triggered and intensified by the deterioration of Sino-US and Sino-India relations, calls to replace Confucius Institutes with Taiwan

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.deccanherald.com/content/96768/chinese-language-introduced-part-cbse.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scio.gov.cn/ztk/dtzt/91/13/1/Document/1257860/1257860.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/cbse-brings-tutors-from-china-to-teach-mandarin-in-22-schools/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.scio.gov.cn/ztk/dtzt/91/13/1/Document/1257860/1257860.htm>

institutions have surfaced in the US and India. In December 2020, the US and Taiwan signed the Taiwan-U.S. International Education Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding and launched the Taiwan-U.S. Education Initiative to enhance language education cooperation<sup>5</sup>. More recently, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee under the Taiwan Executive Yuan announced in June 2021 that it will set up 20 Taiwan Mandarin Learning Centers (华语文学习中心)<sup>6</sup>. Taiwan sees the movement as a golden opportunity to broaden its influence and regain its recognition through Mandarin education. Declarations to occupying the Mandarin education market flooded Taiwan's media. Chen (2020) argues that comparing to China, Taiwan is a (more) reliable partner for India on promoting Mandarin education. He further suggests Indian government to have more strategical cooperation with Taiwan [17]. Indeed, the border conflict between China and India in 2020 and the decline in Sino-US relations present a good opportunity for Taiwan. In India, the number of TECs (15) is now significantly more than the number of CIs (3).

This paper focuses on Mandarin teaching in India, especially the effectiveness of India's Taiwan Preference strategy and whether Taiwan can monopolize the whole Mandarin teaching market. This paper adopts qualitative research methods. We carefully searched over the Chinese (Mainland China scholars and Taiwanese scholars) and English literature. Papers written by Mandarin teachers and managers who have (had) worked in TEC in India, as well as the official documents of China, Taiwan, and India, are the most important documents for our study. Since there are by far few papers centering on Mandarin teaching in India, this paper not only increases the overall knowledge of Mandarin teaching situation in India, but also proposes a mutually beneficial plan that balances the tripartite parties who resist deeper cooperation due to lack of trust. This cooperation plan may be applicable to those other countries who don't trust China and Confucius Institutes.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 briefly presents the current situation of Mandarin education in India. Section 3 describes the operation of TEC in India, highlighting the special privilege it received from Indian authorities. We also describe the difficulty of TEC

to monopolize the Indian mandarin market, In Section 4, this paper proposes a tripartite cooperation model and evaluate its feasibility and potential resistance. The paper concludes by summarizing our results and discussing limitations of our analyses.

## 2. INDIA'S MANDARIN EDUCATION MARKET

### 2.1 National Education System

Among more than 50,000 universities and colleges of India, only 23 offered Mandarin courses in 2012 [18] and 40 in 2018 [19]. Most of the Mandarin teachers are Indians. Sharma (2013) surveyed 16 universities offering Mandarin courses and found that just two employed only three foreign Mandarin teachers [18]. Some courses adopted textbooks from the 1990s with outdated teaching methodology.

Colleges and universities are the main venues for training future teachers. Few Indian Mandarin teachers received training from the small number of colleges and universities that offer Mandarin majors, resulting in a shortfall of qualified teachers in basic education. According to the 2002 National Education Survey, very few schools offered Mandarin classes in the 35 states, except for Uttar Pradesh [20]. To date, Mandarin has not yet been formally included in India's basic education system. The major deficiencies are qualified teachers, suitable teaching materials and unified Mandarin education standards and tests [7,8,18].

### 2.2 Private Mandarin Training Centres

Wang (2013) indicated India had the strongest demand for learning Mandarin compared to the United States, Germany and Russia [21]. Many private Mandarin training centres were established to capture the unmet demand left by the immature national education system. The CNBC website listed more than 25 centres in Mumbai and 120 centres in New Delhi and its suburbs in 2013. Those centres quickly attract many students. For example, the Yin Hua Mandarin School (印华中文学校) opened in 2010 with only six students. By 2018, it had 18 branches across 4 major cities [19]. While private centres have more native teachers than official schools, Indian teachers remain to be the majority [22].

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.roc-taiwan.org/us/post/9111.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/world-58170293>

Hindi and English are the two national official languages, whereas 22 regional languages are also recognised by the Constitution. The census showed Hindi and English speakers accounted for 57.1% and 10.6% of India's total population, respectively <sup>7</sup>. Thus, most Indians, with insufficient English proficiency, are unable to learn Mandarin via internet courses where English is the primary medium of instruction. They need teachers' guidance or/and tutors.

### 2.3 Confucius Institute

Although many countries have established their own Mandarin education systems through Confucius Institutes (CIs), India chose differently. The first CI proposal between Peking University and Jawaharlal Nehru University failed in 2007, others did not function well either. In 2009, the CI co-founded by Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) and Zhengzhou University had to change its name from CI to 'China Language Centre' at the request of VIT. Nonetheless, Mandarin teachers still had difficulty obtaining visas. VIT's CI made no real progress until 2012 [22]. Most Mandarin volunteer teachers dispatched by Hanban were sent to private training centres [7]. It was not until 2013, with the help of the Human Resource Minister, Kapil Sibal, that the first truly operational CI opened at the University of Mumbai [23]. Today, there are three CIs and three Confucius Classrooms (teaching Mandarin in primary and secondary schools) in India, yet none of them function smoothly. They are all under the Indian government's scrutiny after the border conflict.

### 2.4 Taiwan Education Centre

Though India was cautious in accepting the help from China, it extended an olive branch to Taiwan. In April 2011, the Indian Human Resource Minister, Kapil Sibal, requested 10,000 teachers from Taiwan to incorporate the Mandarin into the Indian education system. On August 2011, Taiwan responded by establishing Taiwan Education Centre (TEC) in India to offer Mandarin courses [23]. There are currently 15 TECs in India.

## 3. THE DIFFICULTIES FOR TAIWAN

Taiwan dispatches some other teachers to India, but the number is very small. Thus, TEC is the core of Taiwan's language education institution in

India. If India intends to strengthen cooperation with Taiwan, the most likely way is to expand the scale of TEC. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the operations of TEC. The TEC was established by the Taiwan Ministry of Education to promote higher education and attract foreign students to study in Taiwan. Additionally, the TEC runs Mandarin courses and proficiency tests. The first TEC was established in 2006 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The relationship between the TEC and India date back to 2007, when negotiations failed between Kunshan University and India. After Kapil Sibal asked Taiwan for teachers, the Taiwan Education Ministry entrusted National Tsing Hua University (NTHU) with the TEC project in India. Three months later (August 2011), the first TEC in India opened. Since then, 14 more TECs were added (Table 1). The TEC in India adopted a university-to-university model: Taiwan dispatches teachers, paying their salaries and allowance, while India provides teaching facilities and accommodations for teachers.

As a government founded program, the TEC follows Taiwan's policy. From 2011 to 2016, the TEC focused on recruiting international students and Mandarin education. In addition, since 2013, the TEC began to coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to offer assistance to improve the relations between Taiwan and India. After 2017, in line with the New Southbound Policy, TECs in India provide further assistance in facilitating economic exchange between Taiwan and India.

### 3.1 Mandarin Education

Each TEC employs a small number of teachers, usually one or two teachers per centre. Most TEC learners are college students, but TECs also provide courses for the school staff members, military officers, diplomats, tour guides and enterprise employees. To accommodate the language level of the students and the curriculum plan of the school, most TECs offer elementary listening and speaking courses. It is worth emphasizing that, although Taiwan education uses Zhu Yin phonetics, TECs teach China-created Pinyin to cater to the needs of Indians. Beyond regular courses, TECs add vocational Mandarin courses, such as short-term business and tourism, and offers lessons on Chinese history and culture, business communication, and other social content. In each course, the teacher intentionally uses the class as a platform to enhance Indians' favourable impression

<sup>7</sup>[https://censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language\\_MTs.html](https://censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language_MTs.html)

towards Taiwan. In 2012, TECs helped organise the Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language (TOCFL) pre-test [23]. Since 2016, India provides a regular testing site for the TOCFL.

TECs have made substantial contributions to Mandarin education in India. First, they provide India with high-quality Mandarin courses at different levels and help Indian universities (Amity University) introduce Mandarin into the curriculum [24]. Second, TECs invigorate the Mandarin-teaching market and create deeper and more elaborate partnerships with Indian universities by facilitating cooperation in teaching materials and language tests between Taiwan and India.

Beyond Mandarin education, TECs in India have proved the effectiveness and legitimacy of the TEC project. The Taiwan Education Ministry currently operates eight TECs in seven other countries, including Japan, Mongolia, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam. TECs located in these countries are trapped in non-sustainability due to frequent changes of sponsoring universities. Conversely, the TEC in India is a clearly successful program, which has remarkably increased the number of Indians to study in Taiwan and gained public trust and brand name. While learning Mandarin, Indian students are offered relevant internship opportunities. CIs publicly emphasise language teaching being the main objective, whereas for TECs Mandarin is a tool to maximise economic and diplomatic interests.

### 3.2 Taiwan's Predicaments to Monopolize the India Market

TECs have indeed achieved some success in India, but Taiwan itself is still incapable of replacing China as the main provider of Mandarin education.

Firstly, in spite of 10 years of hard work, TECs remain small in scale, enrollment remains low and the geographical coverage is narrow. From 2011 to 2018, the total number of participants was 6,200<sup>8</sup>. This may indicate that Taiwan's Mandarin education resources were insufficient and TECs adopted the elite model. To make the situation more complicated, under the guidance of both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TECs in India undertake multiple missions. Being an agent for two

principals, TECs need to maintain a careful balance. As a Mandarin education centre, the utmost task of a TEC is to recruit Indian students; total enrollment is the key performance indicator. The Taiwanese government does not think highly of TECs and, consequently, offers little financial support [25]. The budget cut in 2013 led to the suspension of the partnerships with Sri Ramaswamy Memorial University and Manipal University [23]. The advocate to senior government leaders for improving Taiwan's economic and diplomatic influence through TECs was not successful.

Secondly, India is not a very attractive destination for Taiwanese. Unfavourable images towards India (e.g., poor living environment) discourage Taiwanese teachers from going to India. Not to mention that COVID is ravaged in India now. Moreover, teachers are paid less attractive salaries due to insufficient funding of TECs. As a result, teachers in TECs are always undersupplied.

Thirdly, Mandarin becoming a popular language is closely related to China's remarkable economic achievement. Many foreigners learn Mandarin for the purpose of communicating with China, not Taiwan. Indians also value the Mandarin market more. In terms of Mandarin education, it should be noted there are indeed obvious differences between Mandarin education in Taiwan and in China. Simplified characters and Pinyin Plan (汉语拼音方案) are taught in China, while traditional characters and Zhu Yin phonetics (注音符号) are taught in Taiwan. Different standards lead to different Mandarin proficiency tests. China organizes Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) since 1992 and Taiwan holds TOCFL (Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language) from 2005. Since neither test is recognized by the other, Indian students prefer HSK. While TECs have greater influence than CIs, there are fewer TOCFL attendees than HSK attendees. The effect of TECs' Mandarin education is diminished when learners choose China's HSK over Taiwan's TOCFL. These numbers suggest that TECs may simply serve as a stepping stone in that Indian students learn Mandarin at a TEC and then choose to work or study in China. In order to expand the number of learners, TECs have catered to China-version standards. If Taiwan wants to monopolize the Indian market, it must cultivate more Mandarin teachers. These teachers ought to meet the needs of Indians. This may indicate that Taiwan should change the existing teacher training

<sup>8</sup><https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?post=134542&unit=11>

standards and match the standard from China, not only to Indian learners but also Taiwanese teachers who will engage with Mandarin teaching in India.

Finally, it may face the blockade of insufficient Mandarin education resources domestically and external obstacles from China and India. Historically, Taiwan-India relations do not improve when China-India relations deteriorate. Despite the unresolved disagreement, India always recognises the One China Policy and sustains long-term relations with China [26]. Conversely, China has the power to influence Taiwan-India relations. If China insists, it would be difficult, if possible, for Taiwan to capture the Indian market. Should Taiwan successfully take over India's Mandarin education market, China may impose political or economic pressure on India.

### 3.3 Cooperation and its Feasibility and Resistance

We have analysed the main participants in the Indian Mandarin education market, the Indian national education system, TECs and CIs. Table 2 summarises the strengths and weakness of each participant.

Indian universities have a history of devaluing Mandarin. The long-lasting neglect affects the overall Mandarin education ability of Indians, resulting in a lack of Mandarin education infrastructure, especially qualified Indian teachers to support the basic education system. While private training centres proliferating across major cities have attracted many Indians, ambiguous quality and high costs shut the door for others. India needs a more affordable and accessible Mandarin course.

China is the largest supplier of Mandarin education, with sufficient teachers, financial resources and rich experience in cross-national language promotion. China is the best candidate to cater to India's needs. However, China faces subtle resistance and finds no channels to explore those advantages. In contrast, despite the fact that TECs lack funds, teachers, and experience, India clearly expressed a preference for Taiwanese teachers. After providing ten years of Mandarin education to Indians, TECs appear to be incapable of, or unwilling to, helping India build solid Mandarin infrastructure that India can ultimately manage and develop by herself.

**Table 1. TECs in India**

No.	Run time	Location	Partner University
1	2011	Delhi	O. P. Jindal Global University
2	2012	Delhi	Amity University
3	2013	New Delhi	Jamia Millia Islamia
4	2013	Chennai	Indian Institute of Technology Madras Campus
	2015	New Delhi	Jawaharlal Nehru University (closed now)
5	2016	Chennai	Sri Ramaswamy Memorial Institute of Science and Technology in Chennai
6	2017	Mumbai	Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in Mumbai
7	2019	Chandigarh	Chitkara University
8	2020	Chennai	Vel Tech University
9	2020	Chennai	Hindustan Institute of Technology & Science
10	2020	Kasauli	Shoolini University
11	2020	Dadri	Shiv Nadar University
12	2020	Dehradun	Graphic Era University
13	2020	Assam	Assam Don Bosco University
14	2020	Delhi	Ramajas School R.K. Puram
15	2020	Gandhinagar	Raksha Shakti University

**Table 2. Mandarin market participants in India**

	<b>Form</b>		<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
India	National system	Higher education	teach by India itself	lacks Mandarin infrastructure
	Private sectors	Basic education Training center	teacher training center universal education	lack of teachers
China	CI	Mandarin school	voluntary learning	no standard and certification
			big market	high costs and ambiguous quality
Taiwan	TEC		inheritance leading	fewer students
			largest supplier	not trusted by India
			low cost and well-resourced	no channel
			second-high quality	
			meet the needs of more people; bigger job market	
			trusted and well-grounded	high cost and insufficient support
			high quality and India's preference	limited scope and effects

Given this background, a strategy of customization, cooperation and supervision may strike the necessary balance. As the consumer, India simply presents its demand. As suppliers, China and Taiwan are responsible for offering Mandarin infrastructure, cooperating in teacher training, educational methods, teaching theories, research and development of teaching materials, and language testing. The unique relationship between Taiwan and China adds supervision to cooperation, and ultimately offers India impartial teaching products. India could then organise experts to examine the content and quality of Mandarin products, and to propose modifications. After a few rounds, the three parties will have jointly established a sound Mandarin education system in India.

### 3.4 Feasibility

India needs Mandarin and Taiwan is unable to supply. The request for 10,000 Mandarin teachers and the thriving Mandarin training centers clearly demonstrate that India has a great demand for Mandarin. Indians attach great importance to native language teachers, specifically Taiwanese teachers<sup>9</sup>. Students often choose a particular school if the teachers are native Mandarin speakers [18][25]. Taiwan is unable to monopolize the Indian market, which leaves a common foundation for cooperation. Moreover, if Taiwan bluntly expands Mandarin education in India, it may trigger strong opposition from China, a scenario that Indian

authorities try to avoid. While India treats China as a protracted rivalry in politics, economically they are undetachable. To maintain economic and trade ties with China, the demand for Mandarin in India will remain strong. India will keep an economically-close but politically-alienated relationship with China. Improving the economy and national income remain India's most important goals. This will be even more critical after the epidemic. Scholars suggest that a lack of basic knowledge about each other is the key reason behind the distrust between India and China, and "Indians have little or no discourse on China" [27]. Confucius Institute is necessary not only for the Mandarin education but also for serving as a useful mechanism to foster people-to-people contact and raise awareness and knowledge about each other.

Cooperation between Taiwan and China is clearly feasible as researchers on both sides of the Straits<sup>10</sup> have repeatedly shown their willingness to cooperate. Mutual recognition between HSK and TOCFL is one of the major items. Officials negotiated but never put into practice. Mutual recognition between HSK and Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) in 2015<sup>11</sup> enhances the possibility of mutual recognition between TOCFL and HSK.

Cooperation is indeed beneficial to the three parties. Taiwan and China share a common

<sup>9</sup> <https://yaoindia.com/archives/504>

<sup>10</sup> [https://ogme.edu.tw/zh/news\\_detail/872](https://ogme.edu.tw/zh/news_detail/872); and <http://www.hwjyw.com/info/content/2012/03/05/23770.shtml>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.orientaldaily.com.my/news/mingjia/2015/04/15/78828>

language and culture. The increasing influence of Mandarin benefits both China and Taiwan. It has been recognized that language makes contributions in trade [28][29].

For China, as long as India's perception of China does not change, not only CI but any other programs from China may all share the same destiny. Taking advantage of TEC's brand image, China can promote Mandarin in the largest education market of India and broaden Mandarin learning from traditional education to tourism, business, legal affairs and other fields. The vitality and practicability of Mandarin in India is greatly enhanced, which may be spilled over globally. The increasing number of Mandarin learners in India expands Indian's access to comprehensive information, which is conducive to improving China's image and Sino-India relations.

For Taiwan, China's recognition is a passport to walk freely into India. Fostering a deeper partnership with China allows new TEC to expand its footholds and branches, open to new funding sources such as Chinese companies or possibly the Chinese government, and to attract more Taiwanese teachers.

India is the biggest winner. The domestic strong demand for Mandarin is satisfied. Language is the key factor for trade and economy is the biggest driver of language learning. It is relatively easy for Chinese businessmen to enter the Indian market speaking in English, but difficult for Indians to enter the Chinese market speaking in English only. Mandarin is a necessary tool for India to broaden its market share in China. Mandarin acquisition helps solve the employment problem, facilitate access of Indian businesses and capital to the Mandarin market and balance trade relations, cooperate with Taiwan through introducing key technologies into India. Politically, India will better understand China with the first-hand materials, thus reducing strategic miscalculation.

### 3.5 Potential Resistance

While the Mandarin may be the catalyst for the cooperation among the three parties, the actual outcome depends upon many factors influencing the supply and demand of Mandarin. Although India's Mandarin demand rebounded from the epidemic as more Indians took online Mandarin courses, the effects of online courses are unknown. Indian authorities' attitude towards

Mandarin is uncertain, and so is the sustainability of this upward trend in demand. When NEP was announced in 2020, Mandarin was removed, which caused a turmoil<sup>12</sup>. Under the current situation, maintaining India's Mandarin demand in the long run faces some unfavourable obstacles. Business and jobs, keys to motivate Indians to start and continue learning Mandarin, are handicapped when India banned products and apps, rescinded some contracts signed by Chinese enterprises. The number of Chinese tourists declined, and the citizens of India and China became further disconnected. A vicious cycle would appear as the weakened connection between the two countries leads to dimmer job prospects and demand for Mandarin.

On the supply side, data from HSK attendees and destination choice of Indian overseas students demonstrate that most Indians would choose China over Taiwan, including those who learned Mandarin from Taiwanese teachers. Thus, the different teaching standards between China and Taiwan may become a burden for Indian students. Comparisons of HSK scores between TEC learners and learners from other channels can show the efficiency of TEC teaching. If learning Mandarin at TEC prevents students from going to China or achieve good HSK scores, then Indians may require TEC to revise the current teaching plan. Traditional character has been the symbol to echo what politicians have long publicised that Taiwan is the orthodoxy in Chinese culture. It seems unlikely for TEC to bend to the request.

India's attitude to China is ambivalent. India needs resources and is open to cooperation. But India does not want teachers sent by Chinese government to teach students directly for fear of ideological penetration. Is China willing to help India train "non-pro-China" talents? Finally, the willingness of the Chinese and Taiwanese governments plays an important role. Cross-strait relations became strained after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) regained power, are the two governments willing to cooperate? Absent from the desire for collaboration from both sides,

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<sup>12</sup> Many Indians are concerned that Chinese may soon be completely banned, and their money and time invested on learning Chinese are gone as well. Public opinions also support the need for Chinese. In response to intense public pressure, Indian Education Ministry later issued a clarification that the policy neither prescribes nor prohibits study of any foreign language which will be as per the choice of students. By announcing that, Indian Education Ministry certified NEP 2020 doesn't prohibit study of any foreign language.



there is no ground to discuss any concrete cooperation plan.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper focuses on the Mandarin teaching situation in India, where India does not trust China and Confucius Institutes while Taiwan is trying to take over the Indian Mandarin teaching market. We find that there are currently three main suppliers of the Mandarin teaching in India: the Confucius Institute (China), the Indian National Education System and the Taiwan Education Center (Taiwan), each with own advantages and disadvantages respectively. After analysing the operation of the Taiwan Education Centre, this paper concludes that it is very difficult for Taiwan to monopolize the Mandarin teaching market. The reasons can be attributed to the following: the lack of attention and funding from the Taiwanese government, the insufficient effectiveness of TEC, as well as the incapability of Mandarin infrastructure of Taiwan. Meanwhile, China cannot freely enter the India market because she is not trusted. As for India herself, without the help of China or Taiwan, it is difficult to organize qualified Mandarin teaching. Therefore, we propose a plan for China, India and Taiwan to jointly promote Chinese teaching in India, which benefits all three parties.

According to previous studies, India did not pay enough attention to Mandarin teaching; instead, they have been focusing on Sinology. Taiwanese and Chinese scholars pay more attention to micro-teaching-study, while improving mandarin teaching methods is, at best, only a partial solution. During the past, India played a negative role and now it faces the urgent task of providing adequate and qualified internal Mandarin teaching infrastructure while deciding between China and Taiwan as the supplier of Mandarin resources and to what extent. Research in recent years has highlighted the increasing importance of Mandarin in India, which promotes the need for a good plan from the practical perspective of language policy. We propose a strategy of customization, cooperation and supervision. India can be a perfect pilot study for China-Taiwan cooperation. Furthermore, this solution can be applicable to the United States, Japan and Korea where the trust in Confucius Institutes is steadily declining.

Our analysis encounters several limitations. There is little filed research on the Mandarin teaching market in India and no interview with

relevant policy makers. Therefore, the feasibility of this solution remains to be verified. This research can be seen as a first step towards our long-term goal of promoting sustainable and quality Mandarin teaching. More detailed work should be done to reveal the Mandarin teaching situation and Mandarin education policy in India, as well as other countries. The results would produce a more suitable cooperation plan. Additionally, the details of the cooperation plan need to be coordinated meticulously including the cooperation model, whether to continue to use TEC's name, whether the cooperation level is on academic or official, how to determine the proportions of investment, whether to teach simplified or traditional characters, teaching materials and teachers, etc. The discussions may trigger other undesirable interferences.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

India is the world's largest Mandarin education market and soon will be the largest business market in the world. Mathachan (2019) predicts, by 2020 India's IT industry needs at least 14,900 Mandarin talents [26]. But India is facing a serious dilemma mainly caused by insufficient Mandarin teachers and teaching resources. The huge gap between demand and supply presents an opportunity for Mandarin education. Under the circumstance of declining Sino-Indian relations aggravated by the epidemic and border conflicts, Taiwan treats it as a perfect opportunity to strengthen Taiwan's Mandarin education and possibly replace Confucius Institutes. This paper discusses the possibility of manipulation of the Mandarin education market in India by the Taiwan Education Centre. The results show that not only Taiwan, the other two participants including India, China, all are unable to offer comprehensive Mandarin education. To address the dilemma, this paper puts forward a strategy of customization, cooperation and supervision to balance the three parties.

Applicability of the trilateral cooperation revolves uncertainties associated with the complex interrelations. While politics should not be a part of Mandarin education, history has proved that language is always connected with politics. Given the political significance of traditional characters and the official background of TEC, the willingness of the Chinese and Taiwanese governments must be taken into account. Only when the Taiwan authorities officially acclaim that they will abandon attempts to pursue political

and diplomatic agenda in India, can China and Taiwan begin cooperative negotiations.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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