

Taiwan has a rating system in the making

Written by Chow Mei-li 周美利

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The news that the Chinese government has established a social credit rating system sent shivers down everyone's spines. The system records and rates every citizen's daily activities, calculating a "credit rating" using a "social credit scorecard," and imposes limitations on a person's rights and privileges based on the score.

For instance, purchasing more alcohol lowers the score, while buying diapers increases it, and it affects whether a person's children can enroll at a good school, whether a person can travel abroad and even their ability to buy plane or high-speed rail tickets.

More than 10 million Chinese are already unable to buy plane tickets, and more than 4 million people are ineligible to travel by high-speed rail.

In short, the system is the most powerful tool any government has had to control its citizens.

Quite unexpectedly, it turns out that Taiwan's government is about to quietly launch a similar "credit system" for senior-high school students, setting up a thorough and comprehensive "academic history and learning progress file."

Last month, the draft Directions Governing the Ministry of Education's K-12 Education Administration Establishment of a Academic History and Learning Progress Database for Students of Senior High School Education (教育部擬定高級中等教育學生成績學習歷程檔案建置管理辦法) was distributed to teachers.

According to the draft, a close record would be kept, starting on their first day, for every student.

The record would include basic personal information, although exactly what is still unknown; records of every class, including test scores and exam grades; proof of learning progress, perhaps to be uploaded every semester in the form of documents, digital audio and video files, scanned images of assignments or other evidence of learning progress; and proof of diverse activities, perhaps such as service as a class leader, competition participation, certificates,

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volunteer activities, self-study plans and results, internships, school club activities or participation in student associations.

High schools should also “collect every other self-recollection relevant to students’ academic history and learning progress, learning plans and reflections, and records of prerequisite or preparatory college courses for students attending advanced classes of science,” the draft states.

This comprehensive file would say more about students than they know themselves; it is intended to be used for rating purposes by a university when a student wants to enroll — but this is a Taiwanese “credit rating system” in the making.

Have students and parents approved of this, the largest-scale collection of personal data ever? Will the data be used for other purposes? What if the data are hacked and shared with China or people with malicious intent?

If the records could be used to evaluate an application to university, could they also not be used to rate a person for employment or credit approval?

Even worse, this unconstitutional practice infringes upon human rights and it is conducted using the taxpayers’ money.

Do Taiwanese want to spend money collecting data on their own children and allowing others to rate their children?

The plan is in its trial stage, but it is already a severe threat to the basic human rights and freedom of future generations.

Policy implementation requires continuity, but must the Democratic Progressive Party administration really follow its predecessor’s every policy, challenging its own values and the

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fundamental values of democracy and freedom?

Is the government really going to implement this policy, which infringes upon human rights and contravenes the Constitution?

As parents, we must not stand idly by and let it happen.

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Translated by Chang Ho-ming

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