

After hundreds of high-school students stormed the Ministry of Education to protest adjustments to the high-school curriculum guidelines for the second time within a week, many people began questioning whether such a strong reaction was warranted, arguing that the adjustments might not have a significant impact. However, the adjustments could have a profoundly significant impact.

Many people have said that the high-school students should not react to the ministry's adjustments because what they learn from textbooks is not that important, and most students do not even remember the content of their high-school textbooks after they graduate.

While some people might not remember the content of their high-school textbooks, the ideology that is hidden behind the curriculum can get under your skin and become a part of what you think.

For instance, most people in Taiwan believe that economic development and the construction of infrastructure are very important; so important that ecology, the environment and the agricultural sector may be sacrificed. The reason behind this belief is education.

Everyone who goes to school in Taiwan is educated under a curriculum that emphasizes the importance of economic development, of how important it is to be hard-working and how critical the Ten Major Construction Projects during the 1970s were. However, they are never taught how many people sacrificed their lives, health, family, as well as the environment, labor rights and food self-sufficiency, to build Taiwan into the nation it is today.

The textbooks never teach people how rapid economic development created pollution, food crises, dysfunctional families and huge gaps between urban and rural areas, or how it destroyed historic sites, twisted urban development and exploited laborers.

Many years later, people might not remember what the Ten Major Construction Projects were, but they would remember the positive descriptions about how the projects contributed to economic development, and therefore, when they learn that the government is launching a construction project that promises to create more employment opportunities and spark

Secret China-centric indoctrination

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economic development, their default reaction is to support it without even having to think.

On the other hand, there are countries where people value historic heritage, labor rights, the environment and disadvantaged groups over economic development. The reason behind the difference in mindsets is likely the education that they received at school.

The ministry's changes to the history curriculum guidelines, to shift the Taiwan-centric curriculum guidelines to China-centric ones, is the same thing — people who are educated under a China-centric curriculum may not remember all the details about what they learn at school, but the China-centric ideology will be implanted in their minds.

Of course some people would say that they still have a clear mind even after being educated under a China-centric curriculum, but not everyone is capable of thinking independently — otherwise, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) would not be in power and would not have occupied the majority of seats in the legislature for such a long time after the Martial Law period ended.

Certainly there are many improvements that could be made in the movement against the changes to the curriculum guidelines; however, if experienced social activists can make mistakes, it is unnecessary to blame the high-school students for the defects in their actions. Instead, what society should ponder are the values and meanings that the movement stands for.

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