

Pro-independence groups last Sunday called on the government to step up efforts to increase localization of the education system and curricula.

Critics of localization have argued that changes to curricula — such as reducing the emphasis on Chinese history and classical Chinese language and literature — will steer Taiwanese away from their “Chinese roots.”

This mentality is precisely why the education system must be reformed.

Commonwealth nations like Canada and Australia were established by western European explorers, but their populations are much more diverse than that. Today, their educators recognize the importance of including the histories of native people in their pedagogies, as well as recognizing the plurality of their populations due to centuries of immigration.

In January, protesters rallied against using the Hanyu pinyin romanization system — which is used in China — for station names along the Taoyuan International Airport MRT Line.

However, such protests miss the point of localization, which is meant to emphasize the plurality of languages in Taiwan rather than reimagine the way the colonial language is represented.

Using the Taiwan-developed Tongyong pinyin romanization system would not make a difference for those unfamiliar with Mandarin, while it is simply confusing for those who have learned Mandarin using Hanyu pinyin, which has become the world standard for writing Chinese using English letters.

A better approach would be the one taken by Singapore, where Hanyu pinyin is used, but also Malay, English and Tamil, which can be seen in that country’s station names.

## Localization of education

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
Sunday, 10 September 2017 06:54

---

Localization efforts in Taiwan could focus on a better use of Hoklo (also known as Taiwanese), which 74 percent of the population speaks, Hakka or Aboriginal languages in place names, as well as emphasizing in the education system the histories of the communities the languages represent.

These languages and histories could be taught alongside those of China in a manner that pays heed to every heritage, while being relevant to students' lives today.

Canadian students, for example, learn the history of western Europe and about the histories of African-Canadian and Asian-Canadian people, but educators there are also discussing how to better incorporate the histories of the country's First Nations.

Taiwan could be a pioneer in East Asia by enacting similar policies.

What should the aims of the localization of the education system be and how can they be achieved?

Schools would best serve their students by exploring the nation's development over the past few decades: discussing the achievements of Taiwanese who are outstanding in their fields, examining the works of Taiwan's writers and artists, and helping young people contribute to the nation's development.

A 2002 UNESCO white paper cited a lack of competent staff, a lack of funding, resistance from teachers and the constraints of university entrance exams as key factors contributing to failures in implementing localization policies in education systems worldwide.

The Ministry of Education must ensure that principals are committed to the ministry's aims for education reform and that their schools are staffed with teachers who are equally committed to the aims, as well as competent in teaching new curricula.

## Localization of education

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
Sunday, 10 September 2017 06:54

---

This is made even more critical by the fact that China has been influencing secondary-school educators as part of its “united front” tactics, inviting them to China and encouraging them to take a pro-China, pro-unification stance in classrooms.

Therefore, localization is not just an important step toward Taiwanese independence, but also toward helping young people build a strong national identity.

Taiwanese share a commonly “imagined community,” to borrow the words of Benedict Anderson. An inclusive education system — one that is not mired in colonialism or unrealistic dreams of a nationalist-led greater China — will manifest in social harmony and effective governance.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2017/09/10](#)