

## Kuan owes public an explanation

Written by Huang Tien-lin 黃天麟  
Tuesday, 27 March 2018 06:58

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National Taiwan University (NTU) president-elect Kuan Chung-ming (關中明) has been dogged by scandals since a committee on Jan. 5 announced his selection. Nearly three months have passed and yet the controversy over his appointment to head the university shows no sign of abating.

Concern over Kuan's election first surfaced after local media reported that Kuan is an independent director at Taiwan Mobile Co, while company vice chairman Richard Tsai (蔡啟芳) also sat on the selection committee. Following allegations of a conflict of interest, Kuan was accused of plagiarizing a student's paper in a conference paper he coauthored.

On March 15, Kuan was accused of having illegally taught at Xiamen University less than one year after retiring as National Development Council minister.

At an internal university meeting on Saturday, five motions calling for a probe into his election were voted down. Meanwhile, the NTU College of Management, basing its probe on answers from Xiamen University, said Kuan had followed proper procedure, filing four applications with the government to lecture in China, and that he did not take up a formal teaching post or serve as a thesis adviser in Xiamen.

The school's handling of the matter raises more eyebrows.

If Kuan did not teach in Xiamen, nor served as a thesis advisor, why was he listed among its faculty on the Web site of Xiamen University's Wang Yanan Institute for Studies in Economics?

NTU said that Kuan filed applications to lecture at Xiamen University, but how could his applications receive approval without a letter of appointment from the school for such positions in the first place?

Media have also alleged that Kuan from 2005 took up teaching positions at China's Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Xi'an Jiaotong University and Xiamen University.

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Academia Sinica, of which Kuan has been a member since 2002, said it was never notified.

The latest allegation would have legal implications, as Article 33 of the Act Governing Relations Between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (兩岸人民關係條例) says that “contractual cooperation between Taiwanese and Chinese universities must comply with regulations, not be driven by political agendas, and must be declared to the ministry beforehand,” and Article 34 of the Act Governing the Appointment of Educators (師範法) bars full-time faculty from teaching part-time or working part-time outside the school that employs them.

Considering his failure to honestly disclose his relations with Taiwan Mobile Co in his NTU presidential candidacy application and alleged academic misconduct, Kuan certainly has much to explain.

NTU, being the nation’s highest-ranked university, should also be held to the highest ethical standard, and set an example for its students and the public. Of all the criteria for the selection of the school’s president, possessing “noble integrity” was listed first.

In Taiwan’s value system, which emphasizes achievements, educational degrees and positions, many have forgotten that the main purpose of education should be fostering integrity and honor. How is NTU to serve as an example when it forgets the importance of integrity in the selection of its president?

Former National Security Council secretary-general Ting Yu-chou (丁玉周) once said about leadership: “Ethics is the soul and lifeline of every individual, and an asset that never depreciates in value. A mistaken decision can be made good, but ethical failings are next to impossible to redeem.”

Kuan owes the public a clear, first-hand explanation; only by doing so can he end the whole commotion and prove to the public that he possesses the moral and academic integrity befitting the head of the nation’s premier university.

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2018/03/27](#)