

Task force mulls plan to emphasize Chinese history

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The Ministry of Education (MOE) yesterday denied it would put more emphasis on Chinese history, saying a task force was still considering making changes to the high school curriculum.

“The Department of Secondary Education’s stance on the issue is clear. We respect the expertise of the task force,” department director Chang Ming-wen (張明勳) told reporters at the ministry. “[The task force] has not finalized the changes. I believe members of the task force will consider public opinion when deliberating the issue.”

The task force will finalize the changes by June and hold public hearings before any changes are referred to a curriculum development committee composed of experts, representatives of teachers and parents, and school administrators for final review, Chang said.

National Taiwan University (NTU) professor of history Chou Wan-yao (周萬耀), who is one of the members of the task force, raised concerns about changes to the curriculum guidelines in an article published in the Southern Newsletter on Feb. 10.

Under current high school history curriculum guidelines, students are required to study Taiwanese history for one semester, Chinese history for another semester and world history for two semesters in their first and second years of high school.

Students majoring in liberal arts are required to take history on special topics in their senior year, but students majoring in science are not.

The ministry has been deliberating how to amend the curriculum guidelines because high school history teachers have complained that they do not have enough time to cover Chinese history. The ministry hopes new guidelines will take effect in the fall next year.

Chou said NTU professor of philosophy Wang Hsiao-po (王孝波), one of the members of the task force, proposed that students spend two semesters learning Chinese history, while reducing the time earmarked for world history to one semester.

Chou said although the task force voted nine to four in favor of granting both Chinese history and world history one-and-a-half semesters on Nov. 15 last year, task force convener and National Taiwan Normal University professor of history Wu Wen-hsing (吳文興) resolved to put Wang’s amended proposal up for further deliberation after the term of the task force expired on Dec. 31 last year.

Chou said some members of the task force had suggested that Taiwanese history should be merged with Chinese history since Taiwan has been part of China since ancient times.

Chou quoted a member as saying that “the new [Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT)] government would like to set things straight by amending the curriculum guidelines for Chinese literature and history.”

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Chou said she feared that the task force, which was reorganized at the beginning of this year after nine new members joined the 10 original task force members, would end up agreeing with Wang's proposal.

"If Taiwanese history and world history were both granted just one semester each, how are we going to nurture citizens with a global view when they receive such a limited education in world history?" she said.

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