

## History curriculum plan sparks school controversy

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After months of meetings, a Ministry of Education (MOE) task force charged with revising high school curriculums is coming close to approving a version that will increase emphasis on Chinese history over world history, education activists said yesterday.

Groups protesting the revision said they feared the move could have a spillover effect onto other historical issues including changes on how the 228 Incident and the Kaohsiung Incident are portrayed in relation to the development of Taiwan's democracy.

At present, high school students are required to take one semester each of Taiwanese and Chinese history and another two of world history. The revisions, if passed, would mean that students would first take one semester of Taiwanese history and then one-and-a-half semesters in Chinese and world history.

However, Chen Yi-shen (陳宜生), president of the Taiwan Association of University Professors, said yesterday he feared members of the task force could further increase the emphasis on Chinese history during its next meeting on Saturday.

According to committee members, National Taiwan University philosophy professor Wang Hsiao-po (王曉波) has proposed that students spend up to two semesters studying Chinese history.

"Our concerns that these changes will have a negative effect on students have fallen on deaf ears," Chen said. "The MOE says it will respect expert opinion from the task force, but the truth is that members are not free of bias."

"A string of changes by the MOE now mean that there are more pan-blue academics advocating Chinese ideas on the task force," Chen said.

A statement released yesterday by pro-independence organizations and signed by groups representing teachers and professors said the problem of political bias on the task force was becoming so serious that they were asking Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) to become personally involved in the matter and pressure the MOE to reject the proposed changes.

"The kind of history education they are proposing ... is deeply flawed. While the proposed economic cooperation framework agreement [ECFA] will unify China and Taiwan economically, the new [education] revisions are a political tactic designed for political unification," the statement said.

National Chengchi University history professor Hsueh Hua-yuan (薛華元) said there was concern within the education community regarding the content of the revisions and not just changes in course timetables.

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Earlier this month, activists led by DPP lawmakers met Education Minister Wu Ching-chi (吳清基), who said that changes were still under consideration and that final decisions by the task force would be subject to public hearings.

However, Hsueh said yesterday that: “The committee members have already reached a consensus to raise the emphasis of Chinese history over world history.”

Negotiations over the revisions are expected to be completed by the end of next month, Hsueh said, adding that it remained to be seen whether textbook publishers would have enough time to incorporate the changes into the 2011-2012 school year curriculum.

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