

Groups team up to protest curriculum

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A group of civic organizations yesterday announced that today it would form an alliance to protest the Ministry of Education's handling of the high-school social sciences curriculum and the 12-year national education plan which they alleged was designed in a "black-box," or non-transparent, manner.

As the Taipei High Administrative Court in February ruled against the ministry's decision to implement a controversial curriculum adjustment — which the ministry implemented anyway — the groups said the ministry should attempt to make information more transparent and easily accessible to the public.

According to Action Coalition of Civics Teachers founder Chou Wei-tung (周偉東), the curriculum that is scheduled to be implemented in August does not conform with proper procedure.

The groups said the ministry's decision to change the term "Aborigines" (原住民) to "Aboriginal ethnicity" (原住民族), which they said would mean that the Pingpu (平埔) no longer exist, Chou said.

Pingpu is a controversial classification that past governments over Taiwan used to contrast Aboriginal people living on the plains with those living in the mountains. It is currently used to designate all Aboriginal people that are not officially recognized as such by the Taiwanese government.

The adjustments also skewed the "truth" on the White Terror era and has allowed the usage of discriminatory terms such as fei yung (匪傭), meaning Philippine domestic servants, and wai ji xin niang (外籍新娘), meaning foreign spouses, Chou said.

The ministry should cancel all changes made and re-establish a template procedure for the public to participate in the adjustment of future curricula, Chou said.

The groups said they would be paying visits to all major political party caucuses to lobby lawmakers to act against the ministry's plan, Chou said, adding that they also hope to convince

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the heads of local governments not to use the new books.

“We also hope that individual teachers do not use the booklist that has been decided on — without reference to proper procedure,” Chou said.

Chou called on Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) to implement the DPP’s Central Standing Committee’s decision of Feb. 5 last year, which called for all DPP-led local governments to depart from ministry policies and resist the new curricula.

The ministry’s failure to adhere to procedural justice in both the adjustments to the high-school social science curriculum and the 12-year national education plan is a scheme by President Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) administration aimed at “destroying Taiwanese society’s trust in democracy,” Humanist Education Foundation executive director Joanna Feng (鄧文如) said.

“If our democratically elected head of state does not act like the president of a democratic society but rather the emperor of an authoritarian empire, it is a mockery of Taiwan’s liberty and democracy,” she added.

National Alliance of Parents Organizations director-general Wu Fu-pin (吳福賓) said that the 12-year national education plan would affect millions of children and it was for this reason that the public should be interested in who made the decisions over the curricula, adding that the ministry should take a page out of Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je’s (柯文哲) play-book.

Ko’s openness in the handling of city governance has won him the support of Taipei residents, while the ministry’s opaque management of the curriculum issue would only drive the public away, Wu said.

In response, K-12 Education Administration Director Wu Ching-shan (吳清山) said the ministry’s planned adjustments to the high school curriculum were entirely legal and would commence at the appointed time.

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