

Textbooks spark call for boycotts

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Action Coalition of Civics Teachers spokesman Huang I-chung, right, holds up a textbook during a news conference in Taipei yesterday, calling on the Ministry of Education to withdraw certain curriculum changes.

Photo: Fang Pin-chao, Taipei Times

Civic groups yesterday announced a new alliance targeting Ministry of Education curriculum adjustments, urging local governments to boycott textbooks based on the new guidelines.

Representatives from 21 organizations urged the ministry to withdraw the adjustments, publish relevant meeting records and draft new rules mandating public participation in future changes.

Changes to high-school social studies curriculum guidelines announced last year by the ministry fueled controversy over what critics called ideological bias and an opaque design process.

The ministry is appealing a court decision ordering the release of committee member names, meeting transcripts and voting records for the adjustments.

National Taiwan University history professor Chou Wan-yao (周婉芳) said the scope of changes belied ministry claims of having made “minor adjustments,” adding that about 60 percent of the words within the guidelines were changed.

Many of the changes were inaccurate and reflected what she called the conservative ideology

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of committee members, she added.

For example, the guidelines use the phrase “Filipino servants” instead of “migrant workers” and replace “foreign spouses” with “foreign brides,” she said.

Action Coalition of Civics Teachers spokesman Huang I-chung (黃一忠) compared textbooks from before and after the adjustments to show that the changes failed to simplify the texts and to reduce pressure on social studies teachers, counter to ministry statements.

“They cut out sections on human rights and the White Terror era, while adding sections on the ‘family clan’ and Chinese culture that they felt were more important,” he said.

Tu Yu-yin (涂毓琨), a lawyer representing the groups in their lawsuit against the ministry, said that under ministry rules, textbooks issued before the adjustments could still be used, urging schools to boycott using new textbooks.

Huang said that most schools are determining which books to use next year, with decisions expected next month.

“The guidelines are only a rough outline,” K-12 Education Administration section chief Li Hsiu-feng (李秀峰) said. “Textbooks can have richer content and teachers can provide more diverse supplementary materials when they teach.”

She added that schools should consider students’ best interests, because standardized tests are to be based on the new guidelines.

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