

Petition over curriculum gathers pace

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The demands of an alliance of senior-high school students from southern Taiwan who oppose the Ministry of Education's planned adjustments to high-school curriculum guidelines are displayed on Facebook on Saturday. Students from 120 schools have signed a petition to protest the adjustments.

Screenshot by Hung Ting-hung, Taipei Times

Students from 120 high schools and vocational high schools nationwide had as of press time last night signed a petition to protest the Ministry of Education's planned adjustments to curriculum guidelines.

The ministry faces opposition from teachers and politicians, who claim the planned adjustments would force high-school students to use "China-centric" texts that gloss over past atrocities of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) during the White Terror era, as well as suppressing information on efforts of Taiwanese who fought for democracy.

Students from National Taiwan Normal University's (NTNU) Department of History supported the petitions, adding that it is necessary to support the "simple and sublime ideals" of high-school students in light of what they called "the forced passage of illegal curriculum changes."

Education has become a means by which the state influences students, but the passage of the "black-box" curriculum adjustment has no legal basis, as it has strong ideological suppositions, the students said.

Textbooks written with the proposed changes in mind would not offer high-school students a complete picture of history nor allow them to "decide for themselves what their historical consciousness should be," the students said.

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If textbooks lack a legal basis during procedural determination and have content that is lacking, how can ministry officials live with their consciences, the students said.

The students quoted German historian Max Weber's work *Science as Vocation*, in which he wrote: "Without this passion, this conviction that thousands of years must pass before you enter into life and thousands more wait in silence, according to whether you succeed in this conjecture without all this, one has no vocation for science and should do something else."

The students said the ministry should heed calls for textbooks to adhere to historical truths.

Taichung City Bureau of Education Director-General Yen Ching-hsiang (葉清祥) said the goal of education in many countries was to allow students to develop the ability to think independently as well as foster democratic values.

Yen said he was happy to see that the ministry's "erroneous" policy has not harmed democratic values in the hearts of students and has instead motivated them to participate in an effort to change society.

There are 503 high schools across the nation — 155 national high schools, 99 municipal high schools, 38 county high schools and 211 private high schools, according to the ministry.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2015/06/01](#)