

Student slips by police in Taipei rally

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Student Yu Teng-chieh, center, scuffles with police outside the Ministry of Education in Taipei yesterday during a protest against curriculum adjustments.

Photo: Chen Chih-chu, Taipei Times

In an apparent attempt to petition Minister of Education Wu Se-hwa (吳思華) over a set of controversial adjustments to high-school curriculum guidelines, a high-school student yesterday managed to break through a police cordon in front of the ministry's building in Taipei, but was handcuffed and detained.

Yu Teng-chieh (余騰捷), who was later released, participated in the demonstration with a group of Taoyuan high-school students rallying in front of the ministry yesterday in an ongoing protest organized by students nationwide against curricular adjustments.

Rather than Wu, K-12 Education Administration inspector Hsu Chen-hsing (許陳興) heard the grievances, but students threatened to stage another protest at dusk if the ministry failed to respond to their request by 5pm yesterday.

The ministry modified the curricula in a "clandestine" manner, while trying to shift blame to high-school principals for canceling meetings with students over the adjustments last month, the students said.

Students scuffled with dozens of officers who formed a blockade in front of the ministry headquarters.

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Outnumbered and obstructed, students retreated and accused the ministry of using barbed wire fences against unarmed and underage students who wanted to speak to Wu.

Separately, the History Teachers Deep Roots Association said in a statement that Wu must recognize that “a new generation is on the rise,” and the ministry’s lack of response and reiteration of excuses would only inspire more protesters.

“Should you [Wu] resort to state violence against those unarmed students, teachers would fight against you with their lives,” the association said.

Wu’s failure to respond to protesters’ petitions has cost him respect and trust among academics, history teachers and high-school students alike, the association said.

The adjusted guidelines that Wu described as “constitutional and legal” have not been examined by an open adjustment process, the association said.

“This year’s curriculum is like a spoiled wine that the ministry, abusing its authority, nevertheless serves to teachers and students and forces them to drink,” the association said.

The association questioned Wu’s claim that the new curriculum would be implemented along with the old one, saying that this “cocktail of rancid wines” would be more unpalatable than the old curriculum, which was rushed through by the curriculum review committee in 2012.

Education must allow room for tolerance and pluralism, which are exactly what are wanted in the new guidelines, the association said.

“Why are students forced to accept the new curriculum, whose contentious nature and historical inaccuracy Wu acknowledged? Is it so difficult to respect teachers’ professionalism? Do high-school students not deserve a better history education?” the association wrote.

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Saying that it disapproves of the co-implementation of new and old curricula, the association called for a more transparent and appropriate history curriculum adjustment and review process, uninfluenced by political wrestling.

Speaking to legislators across party lines, the association said that the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) legislators should “wake up” in the face of Wu’s dereliction and the Democratic Progressive Party lawmakers have failed their duty to supervise the adjustments.

The association called for an end to “drastically changing textbook contents with each transfer of [governmental] power.”

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