

Students abandon curriculum meeting

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Students who participated in an “expert consultation meeting” at National Taiwan Normal University yesterday protest outside the venue after withdrawing from the meeting in protest of what they said was the Ministry of Education’s attempt to downplay controversy.

Photo: Wu Po-hsuen, Taipei Times

Students who participated in a so-called “expert consultation meeting” yesterday to review issues surrounding controversial history curriculum changes unanimously withdrew from the meeting venue in protest of what they said was the Ministry of Education’s attempt to downplay the controversy.

The meeting, held at the Affiliated Senior High School of National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei, was arranged at the order of the Executive Yuan in compliance with an agreement reached among lawmakers during cross-caucus negotiations in early August in the wake of student-led protests against what they called China-centric history curriculum guidelines.

The meeting was attended by six students, who unanimously withdrew from the scene shortly after proceedings began.

Chia Nan University of Pharmacy and Science student Yu Teng-chieh (余騰捷) said the ministry delayed publishing the minutes taken during previous meetings to design and review the curriculum guidelines.

The ministry’s reluctance to improve data transparency shows that it is insincere about resolving the controversy surrounding the guidelines and is “waiting for the issue to blow over,” Yu said.

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Protesters demanded that the ministry publish a roster of experts it contracted to address issues regarding the history guidelines.

Since the controversy erupted in July, the ministry has only disclosed the names of curriculum guidelines development committee members, who were responsible for compiling the guidelines, while information on academics involved in alterations and approval of guidelines are still unavailable.

In response, the ministry said the experts have reached a consensus on seven of the 17 controversies surrounding the guidelines.

Draft proposals on how to better adjust and compile history curriculum guidelines and how to improve the review process are to be completed by March next year, the ministry said, adding that a roster of experts enlisted for the consultation meetings would be published shortly.

Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Cheng Li-chun's (陳麗君) office director, Yu Yi-jan (余宜堅), said the ministry had asked academics on a task force to review curriculum guidelines and the curriculum approval committee whether they would like to be identified and most of them declined.

Yu Yi-jan said that the task force and the committee are held responsible by critics for the controversial guidelines, adding that academics in these two units probably did not want to be identified out of concern that it would provoke reproach.

Cheng, sitting on the legislature's Education and Culture Committee, has criticized the consultation meeting and said that it contravenes the Executive Yuan order.

As all resolutions made during expert consultation meetings must be forwarded to the approval committee, which has the right to decide whether to defer, the arrangement of such meetings does not help to improve an opaque decisionmaking process at all, she said.

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