

Taiwan's Educational Reform and the Future of Taiwan

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I. Images of Taiwan

Taiwan is an island in east of Asia and west of the Pacific. It ranges approximately from 120° to 122° east longitude and from 22° to 25° north latitude. When Portuguese navigators sailed to the island 450 years ago, they were so attracted by its beauty that they exclaimed, “Ilha Formosa,” meaning “beautiful island.” That is how Europeans first came to know about Taiwan.

Taiwan’s land territory is 36,000 square kilometers and its sea territory, about three times as large as its land. As far as the land territory is concerned, Taiwan ranks 141st, larger than 41% of the rest of the countries. With 23 million people living on it, Taiwan has a population that ranks it as one of the largest, at 48th in the world.

The latest statistics indicate that Taiwan’s GDP ranks 23rd of all nations. In November, 2006, Taiwan’s foreign reserve totaled over US\$ 250 billion which was the third largest in the world. Taiwan’s electronic industry, as is widely known, has been occupying an important niche in the global market, with its TFT-LCD and semiconductor industries leading the world. I believe the 3C products you are using now must contain parts which were made in Taiwan.

This island-nation with a fairly sizeable population has long been excluded from the United Nations, and it is unable to participate in or contribute to the international community. Lacking an internationally recognized legal status, the people in Taiwan are deprived of the position and treatment to which they are duly entitled. This is yet another instance showing the United Nations’ failure to honour universal values of human rights. This harsh reality faced by Taiwanese people is indeed a political as well as a historical issue.

Be it political or historical, the issue cannot be avoided when we talk about Taiwan’s education. Today, in my official capacity as Taiwan’s Education Minister, I would like to share with you some of my views on Taiwan’s transitional past and present, from the perspective of education. As a professional historian, I will attempt to analyze and discuss the issues by positioning them in the context of Taiwan’s long-evolving history.

II. Historical Taiwan

Archaeological data reveals that Taiwan's prehistoric remains can be traced back tens of thousands of years. Human dwellings appeared on the island as early as six or seven thousand years ago. Anthropologists generally believe that Taiwan's indigenous peoples are of proto-Malayan ancestry, belonging to the Austronesian-language family. These earliest inhabitants probably came to settle on the island from southeastern Asia. As claimed by several academics, Taiwan is one of the original places of the Austronesian tribes. Even up to today, according to the official classification, at least 13 different tribes of indigenous people still live on the island. Several thousand years ago, their ancestors were believed to have migrated and dispersed to the other islands in the Pacific. However, to countries with early civilizations and rich historical records like China, Taiwan for a very long time seemed like an alien place.

It was not until a relatively late period in history that the Chinese came to know about Taiwan's aboriginal peoples, in fact, not much earlier than the European navigators mentioned above. Neither the archaeological data unearthed in Taiwan nor the documental evidence preserved in China indicates that Taiwan, an island 144 kilometers away from China, had ever been ruled by the Chinese earlier than that time.

In the 17th century, Taiwan started to be known to people in the east and west. The first foreign rulers of Taiwan were the Dutch who were affiliated with VOC—the Dutch East India Company which dealt with the expansion of the Dutch colony and international trade in the region. These colonizers came all the way from western Europe to the Orient. Because of the Dutch's mercantilism, Taiwan became a trading and major shipping center for goods in Asia and other places. The island, once unknown to the civilized world for thousands of years, thus made its quick entry into the world system. Skipping the stage of nation-building, Taiwan was immediately drawn into the world trade system, directly from its phase of a primitive tribal society.

The Dutch began to colonize Taiwan in 1624 and were ousted by Koxinga (國姓爺, aka Cheng Cheng-kung 鄭成功) in 1662. It was Koxinga, a general of the Ming dynasty, to be followed by his son and his grandson, who established the first Han-Chinese political administration in Taiwan. Like the Dutch, Koxinga built in Taiwan a sea-faring, marine-based kingdom, with trade routes ranging from Southeast Asia over to Japan in northeast Asia, and exercised a dominating power over the entire region. However, Koxinga's regime, lasted only 21 years, and was later destroyed by the Ch'ing dynasty in 1683. After the Ch'ing dynasty's conquest,

Taiwan was designated as an administrative district, on the margin of the Manchu empire. Historically, we can correctly claim that Taiwan has never been officially governed by a Chinese sovereign power until that time.

A large-scale migration of Han people from China began after the Dutch first colonized the island. To increase trade, the Dutch induced people to migrate from China to Taiwan in the 1630s. Most migrants came to cultivate the land for agricultural crops; some of them, however, engaged in commerce and trade. Accompanying Koxinga was a massive group of Chinese troops and dependents. During the reign of the Manchu empire, particularly in the 18th century, an ever increasing number of Chinese migrants came to settle in Taiwan, thus transforming its demographic structure. The Han Chinese eventually constituted a majority of the population, whereas the indigenous peoples became the minority. On top of that, political and economic factors further elevated the Han Chinese and made the Han Chinese culture the dominant one in Taiwan.

Then, 212 years later, in 1894, after its defeat in a Sino-Japanese war, the Ch'ing government ceded Taiwan to Japan in compliance with one of the conditions stipulated in the peace treaty. Taiwan, again, fell under the rule of a foreign power, which lasted for half a century. At the end of World War II, Japan surrendered to the Allies and gave up its sovereignty over Taiwan. It withdrew from Taiwan all its political and military power, which was then taken over by the Nationalist-ruled ROC government in 1945. Since then, the ROC (Republic of China) remains as the official name for Taiwan. However, the name ROC is not longer recognized by most international organizations, including the United Nation, even though it has maintained formal diplomatic relations with 24 countries and it has exchanged ambassadors or consuls with them.

III. People without Autonomy Because of Repeated Foreign Rules

This panoramic view may give you an understanding of the complexity of Taiwan's history. As you can see, repeated foreign rule has deprived people in Taiwan of their autonomy; invariably the rulers managed to change the lifestyles and culture of the Taiwanese people. For example, under the control of the Dutch, many indigenous people had to give up their animism beliefs and were converted to Christianity. Without having any written language

system, they were taught by the Dutch the Romanization system to transcribe their own languages. However, this system gradually faded out after the arrival of the Chinese regime.

The troops led by Koxinga were loyal to the then collapsed Ming dynasty and were resisted to the rule of the Manchu empire. This is why they ventured to relocate themselves in Taiwan. However, after the Ch'ing armed forces took over Taiwan, these Ming-dynasty loyal subjects, avowed they would rather die than shave their hairs and leave "pig-tails" (queues). After conquered by the Ch'ing empire, they could not and would not change their national identity.

For over two centuries, during its rule of Taiwan, the Ch'ing empire transformed Taiwan into a Chinese-centered society with its subjectivity based on Chinese culture. Following the Japanese colonization, the Taiwanese people, once again, were forced to accept a new national identity, a new language and a new culture.

By the time the Nationalists (KMT) took over Taiwan in 1945, the inhabitants in Taiwan, having been subjected to Japanese rule for 50 years, had more or less adopted Japanese culture. They were different from their grandparents' generation, who were the subjects of the Ch'ing empire; they were also at a variance with their contemporary Chinese in thought, culture and identity. They talked and wrote to each other in Japanese and they gained new knowledge and information about world civilization through Japanese. However, with the arrival of the Nationalist government, they, once again, had to make drastic changes and major adjustments, from learning a new language and culture to acquiring a new national identity.

Such an historical experience, undeniably, has passed on to Taiwanese society a heterogeneous cultural legacy, which has both enriched and complicated the contents of Taiwanese culture. Yet, the changes in political power have compelled people living in Taiwan to face, after several intervals, the touchy issues of national identity and self-positioning, and to experience the linguistic as well as cultural impacts exerted by the new regime. These impacts came mostly through the means of education (in its broad sense) administered to Taiwanese by foreign rules over various periods of time. Through the education mechanism, the rulers engineered the process of forming a new national character.

The KMT ruled Taiwan for over 50 years, following the above-mentioned historical tracks. Examining contemporary Taiwan's education problems, particularly in humanities education, we may have to ask such questions as: "What is the Taiwanese identity?" "What constitutes Taiwanese?" The KMT has inculcated in Taiwanese society such contents as: "There is only

Chinese culture; there is no such a thing as Taiwanese culture”; “People living in Taiwan are all Chinese.” Are these statements historically true? These issues constitute the fundamental subjects of Taiwan’s liberal education.

IV. Authoritarian Rule, Authoritarian Education

When the KMT-ruling ROC government took over Taiwan in 1945, it immediately launched a movement to rid Taiwan of any challenging traces of Japanese rule—the de-Nipponization movement. Instead, the KMT government pushed an all-out “Chinese education” program for the local people. The use of Japanese was forbidden in schools and within governmental agencies. Instead, Mandarin, a Beijing dialect, was designated as the sole official national language, and which was to be used on all occasions. In this initial stage, the Taiwanese people did not oppose to this policy. However, less than two years after the takeover of the Nationalist government, the tragic 228 Incident broke out on February 28th, 1947. In its aftermath, the Taiwanese people attempted to fight against the corrupted and totalitarian KMT government on all fronts. Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石), however, sent troops from China to Taiwan in order to suppress the uprisings, resulting in the cruel murders of an incalculable number of Taiwanese people. This incident, of huge historical significance, has created an enormous impact on Taiwan’s recent history. After this incident, Taiwanese people completely reversed their original attitudes with regards to China as their “Motherland” and started to seriously reflect on their destiny as “Asian orphans” (亞細亞孤兒), as Wu Tso-liu 吳濁流, a famous Taiwanese writer, termed it. Since then, the relationship between the Taiwanese locals and the ruling KMT government has not only been dictated by the dichotomy of the ruler vs. the ruled, but has also been compounded with opposing elements, which result from different ethnic groups: local Taiwanese vs. ruling Chinese outsiders.

The all-out Sinonization (中國化) education program, as put forth by the KMT, eulogized Chinese civilization as the epitome of world civilizations, embodying the highest achievements of humankind. Chinese history claimed to be the greatest on earth. All subjects, including language, literature, history, geography and knowledge pertinent to character formation, were China-centered, strictly controlled by the government, while anything relating to Taiwan was reduced to a minimum, or even forbidden to be introduced. In primary and secondary schools, which were responsible for the formation of national citizens, students were denied any systematically related Taiwanese history textbooks. Therefore, they did not know that Taiwan

has its own literature and arts. Taiwanese were even taught to despise their own beliefs and cultural traditions. Ironically, their understanding of China proper was far deeper than the Chinese, and yet their knowledge of their homeland was almost nil. Thus, Taiwanese lost their historical memory and hence their own identity.

To protect and safeguard their privileges and vested interests, the KMT declared the rule of martial law, which continued to be enforced all over the island for 38 years, from 1949-1988. On campuses lurked almost ever present thought police, who never failed to spy, on behalf of the KMT and to check people's loyalty to and obedience of the ruling party. Liberal-minded teachers and students were always subject to their surveillance and control. Military education was required of all high school and college students. Military personnel or so-called drill-masters were universally stationed at all civilian educational institutions. Thus far, I have not been able to think of any other country which had adopted such similar mechanisms. It was during this period that the KMT combined Fascist education and Chinese-oriented education, blending them together, into one like twins.

V. Awakening of Self-Consciousness

In 1988, with the lifting of martial law and the death of Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國 Chiang Kai-shek's heir and successor), the political rein was transferred to Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), a native Taiwanese. In the 40 years previous to this, there had already been a succession of movements staged to pursue democracy, freedom and social justice in Taiwan. Jointly led by the liberals of the ruling party and the oppositionists of the Democrat Development Party, these movements finally converged to become to an irresistible torrent, which culminated in the so-called "silent revolution," ushering in the western-style democracy. Since then, it has progressively become a part of Taiwan's life-style. The gigantic transformation came to its fruition in the last decade of the 20th century. During those ten years, Taiwan not only marched towards becoming a free society with a western-style democracy, but, most remarkably, started a journey of searching for its self-identity.

This force has emerged from Taiwan's grass-roots society. People began to ask: "Who am I?" "If Taiwan is a nation, what kind of nation is it?" People from all walks of life tried to explore answers to such philosophical, soul-searching questions and gradually the quest for self-identity became ever more popular in Taiwan. Eventually it struck a fatal blow on the

KMT's China-centered education policies, which had been advocated and implemented for half a century.

Based on our observations, over recent years, the polls regarding the Taiwanese' perception of their own identity clearly reflects that, when asked "Are you a Taiwanese or a Chinese?" the number of those who identify themselves as "Taiwanese" rose from approximately 20% in the early 1990s, 36% in 2000, to 60% in the latest poll, 2006. Those who declare themselves to be "both Chinese and Taiwanese," on the other hand, decreased from 60% or 70% to the present-day approximately 30% . During the reign of martial law, this issue never existed, because people were educated to regard themselves only as "Chinese." Interestingly, after the liberalization of politics, the percentage of this group of people has dropped, as time goes by. Now, it constitutes less than 5 %. In other words, Taiwan-centered subjectivity has become the mainstream in the island-nation's thinking. The polls clearly indicates that, regardless of political inclinations and provinces of origin, a great majority of people living in Taiwan have forsaken the thinking mode of "Chinese" (be it ROC or PRC), and have simply chosen "Taiwan" as their nationality.

This change was brought about by changing social ideas. Faced with this new situation, Taiwan's school education, which used to be bound by China-centered ideology, inevitably had to be reviewed and necessary adjustments made. However, just as Taiwan's two major political parties argued against each other over the issues of Taiwan's separation from or reunification with China, Taiwan's education, likewise, has also been caught in the same dilemma, which involves very complicated factors. Some are bound by their fixed mode of thinking, which can hardly be abruptly changed. Some are out of the consideration for Taiwan's security. Whereas in another country, be it democratic or totalitarian, no controversy over the teaching of their own country and culture would occur. However, in transitional Taiwan (an "abnormal" country), trying to pass on to school children knowledge about their own land and people has turned out to be an enormous challenge. This peculiar phenomenon can only be accounted for by putting it in the context of Taiwan's real politics.

Of course, it is understandable that after a long exposure to China-centered education, people living in Taiwan, consciously or subconsciously, have great difficulty in separating themselves from "Chinese culture." However, we also realize that cultural identity differs from national identity. A nation-state can have different cultures; a culture can also be shared by different nation-states. Examples abound in the past and present world. Taiwan is one of them. The

main body of its culture is Han-Chinese culture, but it also contains other cultures. Even though Taiwan is of Chinese (Han) culture, it remains as a foreign nation to China. Culturally, there are also differences between Taiwan and China. Moreover, the terms “Chinese” and “Chinese culture” are merely two long-held concepts, very complex in their contents. However, they have been highly politicized, before this academic subject was thoroughly studied.

Actually, history is not all. Past history cannot hold a contemporary people in perpetual bondage. People living in the present do not have to follow the previous tracks. The consciousness of Taiwanese subjectivity is based on the respect for the right of self-determination to which Taiwan’s inhabitants are entitled.

This is a universal principle lying behind a civilized society.

VI. The Dawning of Self-Knowledge

As mentioned above, through formal school education, the KMT tried to re-form Taiwanese into Chinese. Objectively speaking, such a policy turned out quite a success. Nevertheless, as Taiwanese became self-awakening and yearned for a different form of school education, teaching materials about Taiwan were gradually incorporated into school curriculum.

The most telling example is the pilot course—“Understanding Taiwan”—initiated in the first half of the 1990s. Students of Grade 7 (13 years old) were inaugurated to a systematic and all round course, which was officially launched in 1997. The texts for this particular course consist of three books: *Taiwan History*, *Taiwan Geography* and *Taiwan Society*. These books provide junior high school students with essential knowledge about Taiwan’s history, society and geography. In the latter half of the 1990s, however, Taiwan witnessed another major curricular reform. Traditionally, primary and junior high school subjects were broken down according to specific disciplines, such as history, geography and social studies. Such a breakdown was scheduled to be abolished and, in lieu of that, new fields (broader in scope) were to be designed. Under such a theoretical framework, separate knowledge about Taiwan’s history, geography and society was to be coherently integrated with other branches of knowledge to become a new subject, called “The Field of Social Studies.” Its contents cover knowledge about Taiwan and elsewhere. Because of this, the course “Understanding Taiwan” ceased to exist in 2001.

Despite such a change, a new course on history was been designed for senior high school students (namely, from year 10 to year 12). In previously history courses, Taiwanese's high school students learned primarily Chinese history, plus some portions of world history. The new course was divided into three components: Taiwan History, Chinese history and world history. This change of history course design might have been influenced by my concentric framework about history education. The framework proposed that the teaching of history should start from an understanding of Taiwan, from local to global, to be expanded to China, Asia, and the world. However, the framework was put forth before I was appointed Minister of Education. When I conceptualized such a framework, I was only a scholar, and had not been involved in politics.

The new history course for senior high school contains a comprehensive account of Taiwan's history, an increased space dealing with world history, and a shortened version of Chinese history. For students in Taiwan, through their high school history education, they get to know about their native place and learn of today's world history and civilization. This approach is more important than in the past when the focus was only on China. Undoubtedly, the launch of the newly modified history course will exert an immeasurable influence on the younger generation in their quest for self-knowledge and national identity. That is why the course faces daunting resistance and opposition from a small group of politicians, who vehemently advocate Taiwan's reunification with China.

However, from an educational point of view, I think we should pay more attention to the educational theories lying behind the philosophy of designing such a new course: from local to global; that is to say, students should first know the place and the time that they are living in.

Taiwan has one of the strongest economies in the world. Due to being solely based on its strong international trade power that Taiwan has been able to enjoy its present-day prosperity. This is why Taiwan's students need to have a solid knowledge of world history and civilization. Taiwan has constantly been exposed to China's enormous threat: it carries anti-Taiwan military exercises annually with 800 missiles aiming at the island and it never gives up with its attempts to take over Taiwan by force. Besides, China has repeatedly obstructed Taiwan's participation in international activities, be it political or non-political. For example, Taiwan has been denied entry to the United Nations each year and has been handicapped in many international athletic competitions. Because of China's interference, Taiwan is unable to join the WHO, an organization whose function is vital to human life across the borders. What is

more unthinkable is that, due to China's political pressure, Taiwan faces tremendous difficulties in delivering humanitarian relief and rescue workers to calamities-stricken areas in other countries.

China's inhumane and hostile attitude towards Taiwan, however, justifies the reason why it is imperative for Taiwanese to understand China as a culture. Only through a full understanding of Chinese historical tradition and thinking models can people in Taiwan devise ways of surviving its threats with dignity and integrity. Therefore, throughout the process of Taiwan's democratization and liberalization, Taiwan, on the one hand, must walk out of the shadow of an education which focuses only on China, in order to search its own self-identity; on the other hand, it also must undertake a more objective study of China and gain a deeper understanding of China.

Before, we put forth the course "Understanding Taiwan" in the middle of the 1990s and offered the course "Taiwan History" to senior high school students in 2006. We have admittedly encountered incredible resistance and opposition during the stages of devising, proposing and giving public hearings. Eventually, we overcame all these obstacles and officially launched our initiatives as planned. The main reason for our success is that we have had the public support of mainstream Taiwanese, whose subjectivity and consciousness had become stronger and stronger. Any reforms or changes in education are no more than the people's response to their needs and fulfilling their expectations. It is now an unstoppable tide for Taiwanese who are trying to find within their land, their own identity. The trend cannot be manipulated top-down by any politicians; rather, it is a congregation of societal force from the bottom up. This force has already developed into a driving power, and has shaped Taiwanese' new character and is forging Taiwan's collective consciousness.

VII. Liberalization of Education

In the 1990s, during the process of forging Taiwan's collective consciousness, for the agenda regarding education reform were two kernel issues: the liberalization of education and the diversification of education. Liberalization is the form, whereas diversification, is the content.

The liberalization of education in Taiwan is a movement to liberalize individuals, including teachers and students, as well as the educational system which was formulated and left behind by the previous authoritarian government. This movement is one of the social movements triggered by the political democratization and its strength comes from the people.

On April 10, 1994, Taiwan's middle-class citizens organized and staged a mass demonstration demanding educational reform. The movement, later called "410 Demonstration for Education Reform," has become a landmark in Taiwan's history. Its main appeal was to demand the removal of all unreasonable controls and bondages imposed on education by the authoritarian government and to return to the student-centered educational liberation movement. It demanded a shift of the concepts of "de-centralization" to "individualization." That is to say, the previous top-down linear government system, from central to local, from governmental agencies to individual schools, needed to be replaced; in its stead, teachers and schools should be able to form the mainstay of education, and take charge of education matters.

One of the most important changes in Taiwan's education after the demonstration was the compilation and publication of textbooks that were to be used in primary and secondary schools. In the past, it was under the dictates of the central government to compile and publish school textbooks. Now private presses are allowed to compile textbooks out of their own resources and to publish them after the approval of scholar reviews. The decision of textbooks use now falls under the responsibility of a committee comprising of instructors at each individual school. Teachers can also write and compile their own teaching materials to meet their separate needs. As a result, the mechanism adopted by the authoritarian government to use the content of textbooks to control and mold students' thought has thus, been demolished.

There has also been a similar and noteworthy change for the teacher training programs. Formerly, teacher training was monopolized by a teachers college system. The ruling KMT party realized the powerful impact exerted by teachers on students; hence, it exercised particularly severe control over schools for teacher preparation. Consequentially, institutions for training prospective teachers, namely, teachers colleges for primary school teachers and teachers' universities for high school teachers, despite their differences in size and structure, used to be rather parochial, conservative and uniform in their milieu. They were often criticized at having to provide training programs and education modes which had to cater to the

totalitarian government's policies. It was only natural that the teachers were thus trained as most able to serve as the rulers' tools.

In the 1990s, the movement demanding the liberalization of education opened up the channel for teacher training. Upon approval, any university is now allowed to set up its own teacher training program and to offer it to interested students. As a result, the sources for school teachers have become diversified. Some prospective teachers may have already completed their own major programs before entering teacher-training programs. As they embark on their teaching careers, they, naturally, can enliven their teaching by creatively bringing in other branches of knowledge.

As far as students' access to higher levels of school choices are concerned, more channels have now become available for them to choose from. Ever since the 1990s, several reforms have been made in order to open up more diverse ways for admitting students. The decades-old method to admit either junior high school students to senior high schools or senior high school students to universities, via annually held joint entrance examinations, is no longer the only option. That is to say, students' futures will no longer be determined by, or at the mercy of, one single entrance examination. Under the new multiple-channel entrance system, students can now apply for admission based on their performance on the Academic Achievement Test as well as records of their other talents. Naturally, they may also gain access to higher levels of schooling by taking traditional unified entrance examinations.

The liberalized and pluralistic educational environment in Taiwan has made our youngsters more articulate, more creative, more curious, more adventurous and more daring than their older generation.

The liberation of education has soon brought about fruitful results, as clearly manifested by Taiwanese students' excellent performance in various international competitions, such as academic-oriented International Olympiads on mathematics, physics, and chemistry; skills-based International Technical Competitions, creativity-focused International IF Competitions, and the International Animation Competitions. It is generally believed that because of the liberalization and diversification of education, students' abundant potentials can and are induced to full their development.

However, educational reform is not merely a reform that takes place on a campus. More importantly, it is also a social reform, even a challenge to cultural traditions. The changes in

the education system, curriculum design and teaching methods will definitely exert a great impact on the general public's customary or fixed modes of thinking, or even their traditional value systems.

The reforms brought about by the liberalization of education, such as the freedom extended to private presses to compile and publish textbooks and the establishment of multiple channels to admit students to higher levels of schools, are vastly different from the previous policies or measures, which allowed only one definite set of textbooks and only unified way of admitting students. Taiwan society has been deeply influenced by Chinese examination culture. As we all know, the age-old and long-lasting Chinese examination system used to be praised for its impartiality; people from all walks of life could take the examination without discrimination. However, the tradition of holding such a fair examination exacted a huge price out of the nation, such as the loss of creativity and the enclosure of values. After the liberalization of education and prior to the full establishment of a pluralistic value system, it is inevitable that some gaps or the so-called periods of chaos would appear because the society at large has not yet been able to adjust itself. These maladjustments suffered by the general public often turned into a political issue, manipulated by some politicians for their own purposes. This can be clearly illustrated by a recent case when some people maintained that one uniformed set of textbooks and one set of identical teaching materials be reinstalled. Taiwan is still marching toward freedom and there is some distance to go before we reach our goal. Reaching our goal is closely linked to the mindset, the philosophy of life, and the cultural traditions of our citizens. It will be farther than the building of Taiwanese subjectivity.

Educational liberalization and political subject-building, however, are in essence and in parallel, without contradictions either in theory or in practice. The challenges faced by both, come from the same group of people. The issue is in fact closely connected to a more profound and essential topic. However, I believe as long as people in Taiwan learn to give full respect to other individuals' choice of values, the liberalization of education will then win sufficient protection, and the political problem of national choice will naturally find reasonable solutions.

VIII. University Autonomy

Taiwan's education system dictates that all the administrative affairs of educational institutions, from kindergarten, primary school, middle school, college, to graduate school, have some

association with the Ministry of Education. Previously, in the authoritarian time, colleges, in particular, were the very place that the autocratic rulers extended their control. In the early years of the KMT regime, there occurred several incidents involving police officers on college campuses, which resulted in the arrest of college students. Yet, the spirit of student protest movements ignited by the May Fourth Movement, in the beginning of the 20th century, did not die out at Taiwan's universities. Occasional student movements have created thorny problems for school authorities and the government.

Youths aged 18 and above normally have attained a certain level of maturity in character and in thought. It is only natural that they should harbor doubts about and raise challenges against this type of authoritarian rule. In order to safeguard the stability of their regime, the KMT, shortly after its takeover of Taiwan, started to arrange military personnel to be positioned on every campus; including secondary or tertiary education, at senior high schools, senior vocational schools, junior colleges, and universities. Those military servicemen kept a close watch on the political thought and behavior of both teachers and students, and were responsible for their thought control.

While Taiwan's democratization was on its way in the 1990s, several cases of student protests occurred, demanding that the government speed up its democratic reform and to force those congressmen elected in 1947 in China to give up their seats, and to abolish the 100th clause in the Criminal Law, which had been stifling free speech with the threat of the death penalty. Meanwhile, protests against the presence of military personnel on school campuses were cried loud and clear. People publicly demanded that, in line with current trends that the residue of Fascism be completely eradicated from all school campuses.

As Taiwan gradually transformed itself into a true democracy, the military personnel on campus have had to change their functions, from formerly serving as the ruling party's thought police to acting as security guards and student counselors. Such a turnover, however, did not tap into those servicemen's original training: after all, they had been trained to be combat officers with military expertise and warring skills and they had been expected to protect the country from being invaded. Limited by their training and work experience, they simply lack the professionalism needed for their present functions as security guards or psychological counselors. Moreover, in today's world, no other country, not even a totalitarian one under the rule of a military dictator, has allowed military officers to be stationed on campuses. In response to people's aspirations, the Ministry of Education has in recent years been actively

pushing a reform designed to phase out all military personnel from civilian schools and colleges. To truly liberalize our campuses, we have come up with a well-thought out scheme; which is, to discharge military drill masters, once they reach the age for retirement. The vacancies left by them will no longer be filled in. It is expected that by 2010 our school campuses will have no any military personnel.

Formerly, the rulers had exercised some form of control over universities in one way or another. Since the 1990s, however, demands for university autonomy has become the mainstream thinking of our society. Many academics started to engage themselves in a number of social movements. Besides advocating freedom and democracy, they requested that the University Law under review include the provision of university autonomy and all related laws be revised accordingly. Most significant of all, the changes regarding the election system of university presidents is generally regarded as a landmark in Taiwan's higher education.

During the authoritarian era, it was the Ministry of Education that had the right to choose and appoint university presidents. In the 1994, following the reform, candidates for university president had to go through a two-stage election process. After the election, the university would recommend two to three finalists to be approved and appointed by the Ministry of Education. Such a reform, gave the university a certain degree of autonomy, compared favorably with the previous system; while still giving the Ministry of Education the authority to make the final decision. In order to give autonomy to the university, a further revision of the University Law was later proposed and passed in 2005. Now, a selection committee formed by each university has the authority to appoint a president.

Because democratization of the 1990s has brought autonomy to Taiwan's campuses, now universities, through due process, have full power to appoint their administrators at different levels, to design curricula without interference, and to manage their own funding with a high level of autonomy. The hiring and promotion of the academic staff are also determined by various committees at universities. In a word, the governmental influence on our universities has been reduced to a minimum, even though the government still provides public universities with most of their funding. We will promote university corporatization as our main target of higher education policy to bring fully autonomy to Taiwan's campuses.

IX. Popularization of Education and Pragmatic Application of Education

To do it justice, the KMT government during the martial law period had some education policies which exerted a long and positive influence on Taiwan. Two most prominent examples are: the popularization of education and the cultivation of technical persons.

In order to popularize education, the KMT government, in 1968, extended the schooling years of compulsory education from 6 to 9. Students aged 6 to 15 have since been entitled to receiving a free education. When the policy was initiated, Taiwan's economy had not taken off yet; the government was not financially sound, and there were not sufficient teachers and facilities. In retrospect, this policy, which was decided by President Chiang Kai-Shek, proved to be a correct one; the quality of Taiwan's human resources has therefore been elevated.

In the 1960s, private junior colleges were allowed to set up and to provide more students with vocational education and technical training. Under the Japanese rule, Taiwan's technical and vocational education had the attention of the colonizers; yet, it was limited to the secondary school level. The KMT's decision to raise the level of technical people up to junior college level has made a great contribution to Taiwan's economic development.

At that time, Taiwan's economy rested on labor-intensive, export-oriented industries producing livelihood-based home-use goods and aiming to open up international trade. Many five-year junior colleges were established to provide students aged 16 to 20 with industrial and commercial vocational education and training. When students graduated, at the age of 20, they were equipped with basic job skills and were ready for work. Higher-quality manpower thus met the needs of the development of industry and business and created Taiwan's economic miracle of the mid-70s. Taiwan successfully transformed itself from an agricultural society to an industrial and business society and, together with South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore, was known as one of "Four Tigers in Asia."

In the late 1980's, Taiwan's economy took another turn. High-tech industry gradually became the focal point of economic development, needing different types of human resources. To meet the new demand, more higher education institutions were needed to cultivate higher-level technical people. One of the issues addressed by the previously mentioned "410 Demonstration for Education Reform" was to increase the number of universities. Through establishing new universities and transforming junior colleges into four-year colleges or universities, there were more than 160 universities and technical colleges by 2005. The

number of students enrolled at four-year institutions tripled, as compared with that of 1985; it was six times higher than that of 1970. In a nation with a population of 23 million people, this number indicates a rather high percentage, with 67.7% in gross enrolment rate, for the whole population. University education is no longer for the elite but for a broader segment of the entire society.

However, the rapid expansion of higher education, though having partly met the needs of the high-tech industry, has given rise to some incompatible phenomena. Because of the large increase in students' number, it has become very difficult for universities to maintain the high academic quality of the past. However, most universities are still in favor of the pursuit of pure academic research, keeping a fair distance from reality. The knowledge students acquire on campus fails to match the expectations of the industry. Today's university education has been criticized for being impractical: a student graduating from college is tantamount to becoming jobless.

This incompatibility has been brought about by both structural and cultural factors. Taiwan's higher education consists of two separate systems, each having its own channel for admitting students. Comprehensive universities only admit graduates from general senior high schools, while universities or colleges of technology take in graduates from senior vocational high schools. The two systems are strictly separated without interflow.

In Taiwan, peoples' attitudes towards the pursuit of knowledge have been deeply influenced by Chinese culture. Traditionally, the Chinese people attach higher value to the learning of the metaphysical and less to that of the physical. In other words, the pursuit of theory and thought is the focus of upper class people, whereas the learning of practical skills is that of the lower class. Therefore, when it comes to choosing a path for further studies, students with good academic records would normally choose to enter general senior high schools and go on to comprehensive universities. Consequently, senior vocational schools and universities of technology can only admit those students with poor school grades.

All countries need high-quality academics engaging in the research of cutting- edge theories, but they need only a few. In fact, the number of those who have great originality and potential to make breakthroughs within academic fields constitute only a tiny percentage of their society. When universities in Taiwan were relatively few, the conventional concept to slight practical matters was naturally kept within bounds. Yet, as the channel for getting access to higher education opened up, this conventional concept became rampant like floods

rushing out of a dam. Out of vanity, parents, regardless of their children's interests, aptitudes, and abilities, forced their children to enter universities, graduate schools to get higher degrees. They did not attach importance to the cultivation of practical skills. Under such circumstances, university graduates naturally have great difficulties in entering the job market, just as the Chinese saying goes, "Scholars are good for nothing."

Because this conventional concept still prevails and because universities of technology used to receive less government funding than, comprehensive universities, the former institutions, were set up to offer courses of a more practical nature. Currently, there is also the tendency to stress theoretical studies, aiming to be in par with comprehensive ones. After the popularization of higher education in Taiwan, if the conventional attitude towards education continues to prevail and if the ratio for allocating education funding remains unchanged, we can predict that there will be a large group of college graduates who will neither have the capability to conduct cutting-edge research nor the practical skills needed for jobs. If this problem arises, it will mean that there was a huge waste of the nation's educational resources, and this would pose a serious danger to the future of national development.

When higher education can neither turn children into citizens of competitiveness nor improve the country's economic development, the policies for higher education must be reviewed and adjusted accordingly.

In this connection, two important policies have recently been put forth to help boost Taiwan's higher education. One of them is to assist a limited number of research universities by allocating more educational resources to them. For instance, in 2005, 10 to 12 universities of this nature won extra funding, which totaled 50 billion New Taiwan dollars (1.51 b. US dollars) to be allocated to them consecutively over a five year period. Another important policy involves strengthening the cooperation between the university and the industry and narrowing the gap between them. As the quality of higher education is vital to a country's competitiveness, each institution, be it comprehensive university or university of technology, should map out a fair proportion of their resources directed toward advanced research, fundamental academic studies, and practical application to industries, and develop its own distinct identity. The universal principle lying behind the pursuit of higher education is one of pragmatic application regarding the knowledge thus gained. A higher education sector with due attention to practical application will be able to play a similar role in the 21st century,

as did the junior colleges of industry and commerce from the 1960s to the '80s. We are optimistically looking forward to seeing beneficial outcomes.

With the advance of a knowledge-based economy, Taiwan should not only continue to develop its high-tech industry, but also develop another industry of great potential—the culture-based creative industry—which can yield products of gradually increased added values. This new industry, now one of the government's focal points, plus others, will help maintain and further strengthen Taiwan's competitiveness in the world.

Taiwan's industry started from export-oriented processing and developed through the stages of contract manufacturing and high-tech industries. Though we have thus earned sizeable revenues, we are still lacking in the development of our own brand names. The creation of new international known brand names is closely linked to a culture-based creative industry. To compete with others, Taiwan should produce its own brand name goods by integrating advanced technology and rich cultural content. This new industry will be of crucial importance to the future growth of Taiwan.

In order to better prepare our students for the future, we have made several changes in education policies. On the senior high school level, students are given more time to understand their own aptitude and interests. The policy regarding students' choice of the field of study at senior high schools has been modified. In the past, students had to decide which field of study to concentrate on, in the 11th grade. Now, they can wait until the last year of senior high school to choose between humanities and social sciences and life and natural sciences. On the college level, we are promoting a policy which allows college students to choose their departments in their second year. We are also strengthening general education and cross-disciplinary studies. More programs will gradually replace traditional academic departments. These changes rely on the conceptual as well as structural reform in Taiwan's higher education sector.

X. Establishment of Taiwan's Core Values

Education for creativity is based on the respect for individual values, which is relatively lacking in traditional Oriental societies. Taiwan's education reform has walked out of bondage towards openness, which allows the pursuit of one's own value system. Only when each

individual within a society is respected, can that society permit the existence and growth of human rights, democracy, freedom and the rule of law.

After the lifting of the martial law in 1988, the pursuits of personal dignity, human rights, political democracy, historical knowledge, cultural understanding, and normalization of one's nation constitute the goals Taiwanese are striving for. These are the core values of Taiwan society. To sum up, they are the formative elements of Taiwan subjectivity. Meanwhile, education cannot be detached from the reflection on and the revival of one's own culture. People in Taiwan should re-visit our past and re-view our present. Otherwise, it is virtually impossible to reach a consensus on its future directions. This is not only an issue related to historical interpretation, but also an issue connected to social values.

As we review the journey taken by people in Taiwan over the past half century, there are some milestones worthy of note. The first one is the economic takeoff of the 1970s with the transformation from an agricultural society into an industrial and commercial society. The second is the political democratization of the 1990s, from a totalitarian regime into a free and democratic country. To Taiwanese at large, democracy and freedom are ingredients of their lifestyle, not just political slogans or catchwords. Their actualization goes far beyond the ideological or conceptual level as upheld by those early 20th century Chinese intellectuals of the Age of Enlightenment. The third one is political and cultural collective identity. In 2004, when I assumed the position as Minister of Education, I proposed four directions regarding education policies: First, to cultivate modern citizens, that is, to get across the ideas of human rights and rule by law in order to realize democracy. Second, to establish the consciousness of Taiwanese subjectivity, that is, to unearth the "Taiwan" buried under the debris of "China" and make it stand upright. Third, to advocate a global vision, that is, to compare Taiwan's education with those of other developed countries in the global context so as to shorten the distance. Last, to emphasize the importance of social justice, that is, to allocate more educational resources to minority ethnic groups and disadvantaged individuals.

Throughout this talk, I have attempted to present a concise accounting of Taiwan, by placing it in a panoramic and long-range framework and by analyzing the complex relationships between its education and society, culture and politics. The picture I have shown you carries Taiwan's historical truths, as well as Taiwanese's dreams to strive for. Even today's realistic international political situation is very hard for Taiwan, we are not a downcast people. Internally, we will continue to pursue a more mature democracy, to develop an even better

economy, and to protect all individuals' human rights. Externally, we will also try our best to bear the responsibilities, as a member of the international community.

We hope we can share our experiences of education reform, economic development, political democracy, and social transition with other countries in the world, particularly those which suffer from the problems of poverty, poor sanitation and unsound education systems. Taiwanese take pride in their friendliness, hospitality, kindness and peace-loving nature. Ever since we had written historical records, we have never attacked or invaded other people; rather we have been eager to make friends with all those peace-loving people on earth. However, we Taiwanese insist we have rights to choose our own lifestyle. We earnestly hope that the international community will seriously understand our unusual situation and kindly respond to our goodwill.

In the process of pursuing democracy, Taiwan has emulated the United Kingdom, the model of modern democracy. Although our two countries are different in historical background, cultural traditions, and national characteristics, the respect for human right, belief in self dignity, and political party politics of your country , have left indelible impression upon the people living in Taiwan.

Over the past 30 years, my ideals, namely, respect for individual dignity and quest for social well-being, which I have been striving for, are closely related to the learning that I gained in this hall three decades ago. Today I am very much honoured and privileged to have this opportunity to come back to Old Theatre, reminiscing the old days.

I would like to conclude my talk here and I hope you will favor me with your comments. Any comments or questions from the floor will be most welcome. Thank you.