

Let the Ministry of Education Serve Education

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Recently, the focal point of domestic educational debates is “Pursuing the natural science track will yield better return on investment,” which exposes the imprinted materialism in Taiwan's educational policy.

The Ministry of Education (M.O.E.) always centers on human resource concerns when making educational policy, especially in setting quota for academic and vocational high schools, or establishing university departments. Apparently, M.O.E.'s educational policy is in direct service to the economy sector, and its role being reduced to a subordinate “human resource plan bureau” of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Indeed, education should contribute to economic development, but economic development is not the ultimate goal for education. Education, ultimately, must assist every citizen for maximum inner growth, so they are cultivated to live out their potential in the society.



As humans, spiritual and cultural pursuits are of sovereign importance, otherwise, while pursuing monetary wealth, their human value might be compromised and became subordinated by material circumstances. Moreover, Article 2 of the *Educational Fundamental Act* States: “...*The purposes of education are to cultivate modern citizens with sense of national identity and international perspectives by fostering the development of wholesome personality, democratic literacy, ideas of rule of law, and humanities virtues,...*” However, currently in Taiwan, the system requires tracking into the natural science and social science in senior high school, plus prevalent academic credentialism, the “humanities virtues” purpose of education, I'm afraid, has been hurtfully neglected for too long.

In realistic educational scenario, during the Department Required Test held in July, most test takers of the natural science track not only take their designated Mathematics A, but also take Mathematics B which is designated for the social science track students. By doing so, they get a chance to enter the business and management departments in the social science track. Hence they have snatched many lots in the social science track departments, and the social science track students are marginalized. Therefore, “the natural science track has a better competitive edge” commented by educational officials is not a surprise. But is such educational policy good for Taiwan? In fact, the development of natural science relies on humanities virtues, or humans will be enslaved by technological inventions.

For example, only with humanities virtues can one appreciate the essence of “Necessity is the mother of invention,” and only under the guidance of humanities, science will be conducive to human existence, that is, humans are the purpose for scientific development, and technological evolution is a means to serve that purpose. This relation must be firmly established. We can speak confidently, after achieving such goals, that Taiwan is a “prosperous” paradise glorifying human values, not merely a capitalist “predator” or “parvenu.”



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The state is both in charge of educational policy making and official examinations, and all citizens are required to receive compulsory education when reaching a certain age; therefore educational policy has prevalent influences. If national educational policies induce citizens to acknowledge “money” and “material wealth” as dominating values, then the coldness and selfishness among citizens are a natural consequence. Can you expect such citizens to engage in public affairs? Can you expect them to contribute to the society even if that is within their capacity? Can they be loyal to the country during interest conflict?

Educational policy is like the two blades of a sword, with mighty direct impact on citizens' rights. It should be central to government officials' concern. If it is not conducive to the society at large, and not intended to achieve maximum happiness for maximum population, setbacks for the government are inevitable. This poses a huge challenge for government officials to employ their wisdom to cultivate humanitarian policy makers and administrators.

Once succeeded, a paradoxical phenomenon seems an inescapable trap for all social movements: for example, educational reform, a social movement arising from discontent with existing educational system, once succeeded, with agenda crystallized into policies and laws, their implementation will also meet the bottleneck intrinsic to all established systems. In Taiwan, policy and law making affairs are mostly dominated by government officials (who are a part of the system), and educational reformers cannot be introduced and given leadership roles, which seems to be a clue to explain why the several decades long educational reform ends in failure.

Think about this: the outsiders are striving to weave dreams, but the insiders are in charge of making them come true. The chaotic scenario is not that hard to imagine.

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