

# Political Ideology and Taiwanese School Curricula

Ya-Chen Su

Southern Taiwan University of Technology  
Taiwan

Taiwanese textbooks play a central role in Taiwanese education. In the wake of the political reform and social protest movements of the 1970s and 1980s that prompted Taiwanese educational reform, critics have charged that traditional curricula tend to reinforce the dominant national Chinese cultural identity. The purpose of this article is to review recent research on the complex ideological processes in Taiwan's school curriculum. The article begins with an overview of the political and social impact on social studies curricula in Taiwan from 1949 to the present, followed by a theoretical discussion of the interrelationship between school curriculum and political ideology using an analysis of Taiwanese textbooks as evidence. The article then suggests a number of classroom practices and methodologies for elementary and secondary school teachers in social studies classes.

Key Words: Political ideology, social studies curriculum, the political and social impacts

Textbooks play a central role in Taiwanese education. After the Kimington (KMT or Nationalist) government fled to Taiwan in 1949, classroom use of nationally standardized textbooks was required until August 1996, when the government published a new edition of textbooks and permitted the private publication of textbooks. School administrators and teachers are now allowed to decide which publishers' textbooks are used in the classroom, where textbooks still provide the basic structure, as well as the majority of the content, of their classes.

Before 1996, Taiwan's national textbooks were designed and published by the National Institution for Compilation and Translation under the Ministry of Education (MOE). The Institution invited professors, educators, educational specialists, principals and school teachers to participate in textbook design and evaluation. This political control of school textbook publication invites a number of political

questions: What knowledge or perspectives is taught and produced in these texts? Did these textbooks represent the point of view of special political groups while excluding the perspectives and voices of less powerful groups? If so, do dominant cultural values presented in these textbooks affect the identity or understanding of the disenfranchised minority groups?

The debate over the content of social studies textbooks was spawned by a series of political reforms and social protest movements which pushed forward educational reforms in the 1970s and 1980s. According to C. H. Fei (1991), the peaceful political transition from authoritarian rule to a democracy has encouraged the development of a growing number of special interest groups, such as advocates for women's rights, indigenous Taiwanese, and Taiwanese of Chinese descent to pursue political rights and interests such as democracy, justice, and equality. As these groups have become more willing to participate in political rallies and protests to demand that the government consider their specific interests, they have further demanded that "Mainlanders" (post-1945 Chinese immigrants to Taiwan) should not be the only dominant group in the political structure, and that Taiwanese should join Mandarin as the official languages in Taiwan. These groups criticize

---

Ya-Chen Su, Department of Applied English, Southern Taiwan University of Technology, Tainan, Taiwan.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Department of Applied English, Southern Taiwan University of Technology, 137 King-Hwa Rd. Sec. 3. E-mail: yasandy2002@yahoo.com.

nationally standardized school curricula and textbooks for reinforcing national Chinese identity and Chinese themes of patriotism while at the same time ignoring the specific perspectives and voices of women as well as different social, cultural, and religious groups. In particular, these special interest groups have called for the incorporation of their historical expressions and cultural experiences in both school curricula and textbooks.

Under the pressures of these special interest groups and social changes, the government allowed private publishers to produce elementary and secondary textbooks. This leads to another question: how have social and political changes affected the ideological shifts from the previous to the current textbook practices?

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article is to review recent research on the complex ideological processes in Taiwan's school curriculum. The article begins with an overview of the political and social impact on social studies curricula in Taiwan from 1949 to the present, followed by a theoretical discussion of the interrelationship between school curriculum and political ideology using an analysis of Taiwanese textbooks as evidence. The article then suggests a number of classroom practices and methodologies for elementary and secondary school teachers in social studies classes.

### **Overview of Taiwan's History and Population**

During the imperial period of Chinese history (1683-1895) Taiwan was part of China. Following Chinese defection in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan as a condition of the 1895 treaty of Shimonoseki. At the 1943 Cairo conference, the United States and the United Kingdom promised Chiang Kai-shek, the national leader of the KMT government, that Taiwan and other territories "colonized" by Japan would be returned after the war. After the end of World War II in 1945, Taiwan was returned to the Kumington (Nationalist or KMT) government and became part of China once again. Between 1948 and 1949, Nationalist forces were defeated under Chin at the hands of Communist armies. Although Japanese rule had ended, many Taiwanese citizens felt that the KMT was at least as repressive as its predecessor. Public dissatisfaction led to an island-wide anti-KMT riot on February 28, 1947, in

which an estimated 3,000 to 30,000 Taiwanese intellectuals and members of the social elites were killed. This incident reinforced Taiwanese residents' distrust toward the KMT state (Mao, 1997). Following the communist party takeover of the Mainland in 1949, Taiwan became a refuge for Mainland outcasts who supported the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek.

According to Cooper (2000), Taiwan's population is comprised of four cultural and ethnic groups. Each group has its own dialect and cultural perspectives. The original inhabitants, the aborigines or "indigenous Taiwanese," are considered to be of Malay-Polynesian descent. Their descendants today comprise less than two percent of the population. There are two groups of early Chinese immigrants or Taiwanese: the Fukien Taiwanese who came from China's Fujian province directly across the Strait of Taiwan, and the Hakkas Taiwanese who came from south China near Hong Kong. Both groups together comprise nearly eighty-five percent of the population. The fourth group is composed of Chinese from various parts of China who came to Taiwan after World War II, mostly in 1949 after the defeat of the Nationalists and KMT government by the PRC (People Republic of China) Communists. They comprise less than fifteen percent of the population. After the government fled to Taiwan after 1949, the different political and cultural beliefs of Mainlanders, Taiwanese of early Chinese descendent, and indigenous Taiwanese led to cultural and political tensions between these groups.

Mainlanders, particularly those who were adults when they took refuge in Taiwan, insist that the Republic of China (ROC) has legal sovereignty over the entire Chinese nation, including both Mainland China and Taiwan. They believe in the importance of reunification in the future (Wachman, 1994). On the other hand, Taiwanese of early Chinese descents insist that unification is impossible because of the tremendous gaps in the standards of living, political liberties, and historical development of the "two" Chinas (Wachman, 1994). From the perspective of indigenous Taiwanese who are considered to be of Malay-Polynesian descent, China is not the homeland of their ancestors, nor is it the source of their cultural heritage. From their perspectives, Chinese immigrants took their lands and deprived them of their economic independence from the time of early Chinese immigrant exploration.

Up until the present, Taiwanese of early Chinese descendent and Mainlanders hold different perspectives on the issue of national identity (i.e., Taiwanese or Chinese) and Taiwan's relationship with Mainland China (PRC) (e.g.,

separation from or reunification with Mainland China). These issues often have created political and ethnic tensions during presidential and national elections.

## Political and Social Aspects of School Curricula

The following introduces Taiwanese political cultures and the political and social impact these forces have had on school curricula. Three time periods are introduced: the periods 1949-1975; 1975-1996, 1996-the present:

### *National Identity from 1949-1975*

**Political culture.** After the KMT-dominated government imposed martial law in 1949, individual political freedom was sacrificed to maintain national security. Describing the national security measures, Chang (1991) writes:

Freedom of speech, the press, and association were severely restricted, and the jurisdiction of the civil court was limited, most serious civilian crimes being tried by courts-martial. The mayors of Taipei and Kaosiung and the provincial governors were appointed by the central government rather than elected. Opposition political parties could not be formed to compete with the KMT in elections. . . . Elections were held only at the local levels (p. 40).

The KMT maintained “legitimate” one-party authoritarian rule until 1975, and martial law was not lifted until July 1987. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Taiwan’s dominant political group, the Mainlanders, developed a hegemonic political power base within Taiwanese politics (Chu, 2000). Moreover, from 1949 to 1975 the Nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-shek, held sole power over the armed forces and the National Party. Mainlanders held top positions at the national level and few Taiwanese politicians could reach these high levels of government. As Chu (2000) indicates, in order to reduce these tensions, a mainland-born president in the 1960s and 1970s was matched with a Taiwanese-born vice president as a way to symbolize the balance of powers between Mainlanders and Taiwanese of early Chinese descent.

**The Political Aspect of School Curricula.** The KMT government promoted a homogenous Chinese national culture and strong national identity. As Wachman (1994) states, during this period, the KMT had cultivated a “particular view of China, history, and culture associated with a value system

that validate the adoption of the appropriate – Chinese – identity and denied the legitimacy of any rival, subordinate, or alternative construction of cultural identity” (p. 41).

At schools the teaching environment was dominated by the unstated curriculum that promoted the legitimacy of the KMT’s authority in Taiwan. Lin (2003) explained how the classroom was filled with the pictures of political leaders and the government agenda:

Chiang’s (President Chiang Kai-shek’s) picture hung above the blackboard at the front of every classroom in all public and private schools in urban and rural areas. This status was obviously visible when one walked into any public school. Every morning for at least fifty minutes, all pupils gathered in a circle, sang the national anthem, saluted the flag, and listened to the principal’s orations on topics such as honesty, hard work, creativity, filial piety, brotherly love, neighborliness, cooperation, benevolence, responsibility, laws, patriotism, and peace (p. 136).

The curriculum emphasized teaching Chinese traditions and values, literature and language, where Mandarin became the only official language taught. In fact, students would be punished if they spoke Taiwanese, and most aspects of Taiwanese history, culture, language, and literature were ignored in the classroom. In 1976 the Ministry of Education established a national standardized curriculum guide for grades one through twelve, giving specific numbers of minutes for subjects and providing teaching objectives for each subject and each level. This system remained unchanged until 1990. The objectives in the 1976 national social studies curriculum guide were: to help students understand the origin of Chinese civilization; to discuss Chinese geography, history, and the cultural diversity in China; to study how the *Three Principles of the People* by Dr. Sun Yet-sen—nationalism, democracy, and livelihood—were fulfilled in Taiwan; to define Taiwan as a revival base for the KMT government to reunify China in the future; and to develop loyalty to Chinese nationalism (Su, 1998a).

Liu (1987) describes how the educational policy of the KMT government was to promote one single Chinese culture and ignored Taiwanese local cultures:

The KMT established policies that were intended to Sinicize the Taiwanese. They promoted a form of orthodox Chinese, Chinese gentry culture, and represented it as national culture – the culture of all Chinese. China’s monuments and geography, the high culture of its elite, the Mandarin dialect adopted as the national language, and the history of its heroes,

achievements, and development dominated school curriculum and were validated by the official expression in word and deed. Taiwan, and all that is distinctive about it, was largely ignored (cited in Wachman, 1994, p. 40).

The perceived superiority of Chinese culture and values was promoted in the popular media, movies, comic books and through patriotic ceremonies on national holidays, including the birthdays of figures such as Sun, Yet-sen, the forefather of the ROC; Chiang, Kai-shek, the father of the country; and Confucius (who promoted unquestioning and divinely dictated government rule over subjects), the greatest teacher in China; as well as Double Ten Day, the independence day of ROC. Such symbols of national history ignored the reality of Taiwanese cultural and historical development.

### ***Cultural Awareness from 1975-1996***

***Political Culture.*** The awareness of Taiwanese cultural consciousness, based on political transition and socioeconomic change, grew during the 1980s. During the 1970s and '80s, two progressive political leaders, Chiang Ching-kuo and Lee Teng-hui, facilitated the processes of democratization. After the death of Chiang Kai-shek in 1975, his elder son, Chiang Ching-kuo, formally took over the political leadership and served as President from 1978 to 1989. Unlike his father, who suppressed all forms of opposition, he was willing to gradually liberalize the political system and promote democratization (Lu, 1991). He brought more educated Taiwanese into the government and the Nationalist Party, which led to a new leadership values in the post-Chiang era.

As a result, the great political turning point in Taiwan was the peaceful transition from authoritarianism to democracy in the 1980s, bringing the KMT's acceptance of an opposition party. This new political group, called the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), largely consisted of Taiwanese of pre-1945 Chinese descent. Political reform demonstrated in street demonstrations and print media occurred between 1986 and 1988, drastically changing the political life of Taiwan.

After the death of Chiang Ching-kuo, Vice President, Lee Teng-hui, a Taiwan-born Taiwanese of pre-1945 Chinese descent, was appointed President during the remaining months of Chiang's term. Lee was successfully re-appointed as the Eighteenth President by the National Assembly in March 1990, where he continued to develop the process of democratic transformation.

President Lee was born during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945), and later studied in Japan and in the United States. Unlike the conservative KMT members, he abandoned the prevalent anti-Communist posture of the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1988 and promoted the concept of "one nation, two equal governments—The People's Republic of China governing mainland China and the Republic of China governing Taiwan. In his 1995 Six-Point Speech, President Lee proclaimed three "no's" in policy with China: First, no political negotiations would be initiated until mutual trust was well established. Second, no direct trade, postal and transportation links between China and Taiwan would be allowed until China stopped denying the ROC's sovereignty. Third, no negotiation would take place unless the PRC gave up using military force to settle what it called the "Taiwan's issue." All of these political actions showed that the KMT government had given up its claims to represent all of China and accepted the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party's leadership of Mainland China rather than emphasizing the hope for KMT's recovery of China in the future. The KMT government was seeking a new "national" identity.

The political transition that took place through Presidents Chiang, Ching-kuo and Lee, Teng-hui in Taiwan was not caused by a single factor alone. The social and economic changes, particularly social pluralization and the increased standard of living resulting from Taiwan's development in the 1970s and 1980s, also speeded up the pace of political transformation. As a result of the rapid economic development, the numbers of the well-educated and middle-class had been increasing. They became a powerful force in the process of political democracy and liberalization. As Wu (1995) states, the new middle class in Taiwan provided the political opposition with leadership, financial and electoral support. In particular, they observed that the government lacked an adequate response to such increasingly serious problems such as ecological crises, environmental pollution, and the unequal treatment of workers, farmers, veterans, women, and indigenous Taiwanese. They even gathered in public rallies and took to the streets to demand that the government solve these problems. These movements forced the government to realize that the political systems must make changes to accommodate the people's rising demands and expectations regarding their rights.

***The Impact of Political and Socioeconomic Changes on School Curricula.*** With political and socioeconomic changes, most schools and colleges taught new, Western-influenced

values and the ideals of liberal democracy, including the doctrine of reducing excessive governmental domination. Increasing numbers of social science department faculty members in universities were also educated in the West, particularly in the United States.

Through the influence of political changes and social protest movements, national standardized textbooks were criticized by many educators, historians, and specialists who had begun to examine whether these texts integrated the history, culture, and experiences of Taiwan's various social and cultural groups, such as Taiwanese of early Chinese descent, indigenous Taiwanese, and women. A growing number of researchers were focusing on the analysis of school curricula and textbooks. Educators such as Ou (1985; 1987), Shi (1993), and Chen (1994) criticized traditional national textbooks' emphasis on Chinese "themes" promoting nationalism, sexism, and racism. Ou (1989) protested that traditional texts focused on Chinese tradition and heritage, Confucian ideals, *Three Principles of the People* by Sun Yet-Sen, and national leaders such as former President Chiang Kai-shek. The textbooks emphasized national stereotypes of Communist China and the future goal of recovering China, without regard to the different perspectives of the various social and cultural groups within Taiwan. Ou also pointed out that only 7.14% of the content of traditional social studies textbooks discussed women's roles. Men were presented as principals, doctors, administrators, politicians, educators, and military officers. Women, when mentioned, were presented only as teachers, nurses, secretaries, and housewives. He concluded that new social studies textbooks should be written to help students develop an awareness of the fact that Taiwan is a pluralistic society, where women were to become important members of society outside of their traditional roles.

Based on the debate over national texts among educators, historians, educational specialists, and various social and cultural groups, the Ministry of Education formed a council of educators in 1985 to design new national textbooks and school curricula in order to meet the needs of Taiwanese people. The new set of textbooks were published and used between 1989 and 1995. A new national curriculum guide was promulgated by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education in 1993. According to Su (1998a), in contrast to the 1975 edition, the new 1993 curriculum guides focused more on Taiwan's growth and changes in the past and present:

Social studies curricula should help students to develop an understanding of the growth and values of Taiwanese politics, economics, and society. The diverse

cultures and values of social and cultural groups, particularly, those of indigenous Taiwanese, should be presented appropriately in textbooks (p77).

In 1994 the Ministry of Education added a mandatory subject area entitled, "Homeland Studies" for students in grades two through six studies for 40 minutes per week. Its objective was to provide opportunities and resources for students to learn local dialects, history, and geography of their community and hometown as well as develop an understanding of cultural and ethnic diversity within Taiwan's society. Since then, the Ministry of Education has launched a series of educational reforms, including opening up the textbook market to private enterprises, incorporating multicultural studies into the new curriculum standards, and developing curriculum to fit the socioeconomic and political changes. These governmental policies reflected their need to move from promoting the dominant national and cultural identity to respecting cultural and ethnic differences.

#### ***Multicultural Development from 1996 to the Present***

***Political Culture.*** For the first time in Taiwan's 400-year history, the first direct presidential election was held in March 1996. Presidents had been elected by the National Assembly up to this point. Lee Teng-Mai, the KMT candidate, won fifty-four percent of the vote compared to his nearest DPP competitor's twenty-one percent (Robinson & Brown, 2000). In March 2000, there were five candidates in the presidential campaign: Lien Chan (the KMT's candidates), Chen Shui-bian (the DPP's), Li Ao (the New Party's), Soong Chu-yu, and Hsu Hsin-liang (an independent candidate). Chen Shui-bian, DPP's nominee, defeated the other political parties and won the presidency for a four-year term. In 2004, President Chen won reelection, receiving fifty percent of the vote. These events suggest the successful transfer of political power from the KMT, the oldest ruling party, to the DPP, previously an opposition party, and that the democratic process is working.

The DPP has a different political agenda and policy regarding the relations between Taiwan and China than does the KMT. Their central goal is Taiwan's independence from the PRC of Mainland China. As Robinson and Brown (2000) demonstrate, the DPP claims that Taiwan has already met the conditions of independent statehood since it has a defined territory (including Penghu, Kinmen, Matsu, and other islands), has effectively governed a population of some 22 million, and has chosen its government through democratic elections. The DPP also claims that domestic polls show that

Taiwan's people view it as an independent nation.

When discussing Taiwan's relationship with China, President Chen Shui-bian encouraged cultural and economic exchanges and cooperation, but he refused to affirm the one-China policy. He instead viewed Taiwan as a sovereign nation, independent from China.

It seems that the DPP platform advocated by the majority of Taiwanese of pre-1945 Chinese descendents brought a new vision of national identity. However, the question is still raised whether the DPP can better represent what the different ethnic and cultural groups, as well as both men and women in Taiwan, desire in terms of their political interests and social values.

***The Impact of Political and Social Changes on School Curriculum.*** In 1999 the Ministry of Education announced the newly edited curriculum guide for grades one through nine, which was implemented in August 2000. Unlike the traditional national curriculum guide which had strict curriculum content, standards, and annual school credit hours for teachers to follow, the new curriculum guide gave schools and teachers more freedom to create their own curriculum based on students' needs. The goals of the 2000 new curriculum are to:

1. Give teachers more freedom to develop their own instructional lessons and curricula, where teachers' autonomy in course design and textbook selection is encouraged.
2. Give schools more freedom to develop a school-based curricula, where administrators and teachers work together to decide their own curriculum objectives and educational standards, select the textbooks, and set up lessons.
3. Encourage teachers and schools to help students understand and respect cultural and ethnic diversity existing in Taiwanese society, where multicultural issues are incorporated into elementary school curriculum.
4. Encourage teachers to integrate subjects into theme-based units, implementing a broad-based curriculum.
5. Require students in elementary grades to take "Homeland Studies" lessons every week, where they have to learn one of the Taiwanese dialects (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The new curriculum guide reveals that the economic and socio-political transformation of Taiwan's democratization has forced the Ministry of Education to take the initiative in a

series of educational reforms rather than maintain the status quo.

## **The Interrelationship between Political Ideology and Social Studies Curriculum**

Because political factors affect the formation of the educational system and school curricula, several questions arise: What knowledge is of most importance? Whose knowledge and values should be taught and produced in schools? How do ideology and values shift in relation to political and socioeconomic changes? The literature review below focuses on how school textbooks function as tools of political socialization, and how literacy education enables less empowered groups to demand the integration of their voices and experiences into the texts.

School curricula and textbooks serve to intentionally transmit selective knowledge, history, and culture in support of dominant social and political groups. Williams (1989) and Apple (1992) have argued that school curricula do not represent unbiased knowledge. Rather, certain political and economic powers shape the content of educational curricula so as to validate the existing power structure" or "existing social structure. Selective traditions, Raymond Williams notes, provide "historical and cultural ratification of the social order and are an important element of the 'hegemonic culture' which defines social reality for most people in a society" (cited in Taxel, 1989, p.34). As Taxel (1989) points out, the concept of a hegemonic selective tradition provides a powerful lens through which to view the persistence of racism, sexism and anti-union sentiment in a wide range of instructional materials, including literature and textbooks for children. The argument is that when children are repeatedly exposed to messages which misrepresent less powerful groups (e. g. women and ethnic groups), they are likely to develop negative attitudes and stereotypes of these groups. Similarly, if textbooks exclude or under-represent less powerful groups, readers may conclude that these groups do not contribute to the society.

According to Lin's analysis of social studies textbooks at the elementary level (1987), Taiwanese history and geography comprise only a small part of the pre-1997 KMT-sponsored texts:

In the twelve volumes used to educate elementary school students about social studies, about 30 percent of approximately 1,200 pages mention Taiwan.... The standardized college entrance exam, required of any

student hoping to get a college education, also deals sparingly with Taiwan. In 1987, of the forty-two items pertaining to geography, four were related to Taiwan, and of thirty-two items dealing with history, only one dealt with Taiwan (Lin, cited in Wachman, 1994, p.40-1).

Iu (1999) also illustrates that in the traditional text, limited space is devoted to discussing histories and experiences of ethnic minorities in China and Taiwan. Even though the text introduces their life experiences, most of the content gives attention to celebrating their diverse festivals and customs. Histories and experiences of ethnic minorities in China and Taiwan are often misrepresented, distorted or excluded from the text altogether. When presenting Taiwanese history and culture, these texts emphasize different aspects of the strong kinship between China and Taiwan in terms of cultural heritage, history, and politics.

Taiwan's contemporary historical texts also present a biased perspective. Ou (1987), Shi (1993), and Su (1998b) found that the texts emphasize the following themes: (1) the legitimization of the KMT's authority in Taiwan; (2) the idolization of the political leaders Dr. Sun Yet-sen and President Chang Kai-shek; (3) the importance of the recovery of Mainland China; (4) the glorious accomplishments of the KMT government in China and Taiwan; and (5) Taiwan's status as a model of Dr. Sun Yet-Sen's Principles. Ou demonstrates that, in order to reinforce anti-communist attitudes, the text provide additional lessons presenting one China in two different worlds: one pursuing democracy and capitalism and the other communism. It states that people in China live in political oppression and poverty. The Communist government is referred to as "the communist bandits."

Analysis of how gender issues are addressed in Taiwanese textbooks is found in studies such as Ou (1985), Kim (1988), Su (1998), and Lee (2001) who found that traditional texts are filled with gender bias. Males appear more frequently than females in the text and illustrations. Men dominate career positions and inhabit roles of power, leadership, and decision-making, while women are represented as supportive or subordinate and assume childcare roles. Jim (1988), in his examination of the traditional language textbooks for grades 1-6, found that the words selected to describe male characteristics are "rationality," "erudition," "intelligence," and "stalwart heroism." By contrast, the words used to describe women's traits are "sentimentality," "benevolence," "kindness," "gentleness," and "industriousness." These textual analyses show that national texts became a tool

for recreating the Chinese social order and achieving mass socialization.

More recent socioeconomic and political changes give rise to the question of how much the textbooks have correspondingly changed and improved. The new edited textbooks might include the history of various cultural, ethnic, and social groups as well as both sexes, but they may not develop it adequately or completely. In some cases mentioning these groups may have the effect of appropriating selective elements of their culture and absorbing them into the dominant traditions by bringing them into close association with the values of powerful political groups (Apple, 1992). Su (1998b) and Zheng (2003) conducted a textual analysis of the new set of nationally standardized social studies textbooks, published and used between 1989 and 1995, to determine whether they incorporated more accurately and appropriately histories, cultures, and experiences of different ethnic and cultural groups, as well as both sexes existing in Taiwanese society. Results found that, unlike the traditional set, the new set of textbooks deletes the content about the idolization of President Chiang, Kai-shek and the false depiction of the communist Chinese government. The texts are composed of numerous units introducing Taiwanese cultural, economic and social changes and growth. The ideological themes shift from cultural uniformity to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, but the central theme of the textbook is "national unity, albeit with distinctive ethnic differences" (Su, 1998b, p. 217). While the text legitimates the concept that Taiwanese culture reflects a mixture of many local Chinese cultures and customs, it overlooks the effects of aboriginal, Japanese, and western cultures on Taiwan (Su, 1998b).

In one case the narrative clearly states that aborigines were "the first, original inhabitants" who arrived in Taiwan before the early Chinese settlers, that early Chinese immigrants came mostly from the provinces of Fukien and Kuangtung, and that each of these groups spoke different dialects. However, it does not explain where the aborigines originally came from, how many tribes and languages they have, and what their current and past history is. Su states, "The text omits mention of the problems that form the background to the conflicts that exist between different groups, including language, cultural/national identity, and political ideology (p. 216).

The analysis of gender issues has produced similar findings. Huang (1998) and Su (1998b) found that gender biases have been eliminated and females are depicted in less traditional roles and relationships in the new set of texts, but they maintain the traditional expectation that motherhood is

the primary duty of women. Su demonstrates that, although the social studies text provides some discussion of the impact of women's employment on families, the increase in women's average levels of education, and women's changing roles in contemporary Taiwanese society, it merely reveals the bright side of women's progress. The problems women have faced in the past and present as a result of the history of sexism and the consequent rise of the women's movement to fight gender inequality are ignored.

The new set of textbooks develops the concept of respecting racial diversity as well as gender equality, but it maintains the status quo, where the people of Taiwan are depicted as being happy with what they have experienced. These omissions cannot help readers develop an insight into the existing tensions that have resulted from misunderstanding and inequality among groups.

In Taiwan's case, the peaceful political transfer from the KMT to DPP shows the progress of Taiwan's democratization, but educators and administrators currently face two dilemmas. First, although the government has allowed free competition among textbook publishers since 1998 to improve the quality of textbooks, the Ministry of Education still maintains control over the content of textbooks for final approval. According to Wu (1999), the opening up of the textbook market has created more choices for schools and teachers to select from, but "the incorporation of market forces in the textbook market does not necessarily mean the complete removal of the government's intervention in textbook publication" (p. 68). While giving schools and publishers more freedom to develop a "school-based curriculum," the Ministry of Education still prescribes curriculum standards and textbook content guidelines and criteria. (2) To accomplish the goal of incorporating diversity and objectivity in classrooms, texts published by private firms need to be screened, reviewed, and approved by the NICT before publication (Wu, 1999).

This situation suggests that textbooks can still become a political machine for the transmission of a particular set of official values prescribed by powerful political groups. This leads to the following questions: What knowledge and values are included in and excluded from texts during this recent time? Which groups' experiences receive attention in texts? Does the text transmit the government's agenda, to the exclusion of a broader perspective?

Second, although the policy of the new DPP government has emphasized the need to incorporate multicultural perspectives to develop a new national identity, another question arises: Do the texts accurately and appropriately represent the experiences, languages, histories, and perspectives

of diverse ethnic, cultural and social groups as well as both sexes existing in Taiwan's society? A good example is found in the subject area of "Homeland Studies." Xia (1995) states that it is a good start for students to learn Taiwanese dialects as well as history and geography of their hometown, thus helping to develop their self-identity. However, when teaching Taiwanese dialects, teachers face the dilemma of which language dialects should be taught or whether they should cover all Taiwanese dialects (which include two major dialects, Minnanese and Hakka, and 9 aboriginal languages, e.g., Pewian, Rukai) in order to show respect for each ethnic and cultural group. Liu (1999) indicate that even though the government encourages schools to consider the needs of diverse residents in the community to develop their own curriculum and materials for Homeland Studies, most schools merely focus on the study of Hakka dialect. The dialects of minority groups, such as primitive aborigines, are often ignored in classes. Both studies suggest that schools should offer a variety of local dialect classes and allow students to choose.

## Implications for Teachers and Conclusions

This article aims to integrate recent research in order to explore the ideological complexities of Taiwan's school curriculum from 1949 to the present. A number of studies conducted in Taiwan reveal that in order to legitimize the KMT's authority over Taiwan, nationally standardized textbooks served as a political machine for the transmission of particular values. They transmitted the governmental ideology of a unified nation and the related devaluing of the experiences and histories of other cultural and ethnic groups in Taiwan. The article also discusses how political transition and socioeconomic changes affect schools and textbook design. It concludes that, despite the opening up of textbook publishing and the political transfer of power from the KMT to the DPP, questions remain as to whether the texts can accurately and appropriately depict Taiwan's cultural and ethnic diversity.

After understanding the situation of the relationship between the text and political ideology, teachers should help students use their social studies textbooks in ways that reveal the ideology behind the text and promote reconstructive thinking. They need to help students penetrate the ideological views embedded in their social studies textbooks, and also identify the contradictions within these ideologies (Carlson, 1989). Besides this, Carlson also suggests that teachers need



to promote the use of several texts rather than a single text, each with its own perspectives, insights, and particular focus. They can supplement their lesson plans and lectures with reading materials dealing with controversial historical incidents and issues. As Carlson (1989) maintains, "Only when students are exposed to varied perspectives and interpretations can they develop critical thinking skills and a more complex understanding of historical events and developments" (p. 54). In Taiwan's case, according to Yen (2005), newly edited social studies textbooks produced by private companies list the historical event, February 28, 1947, but the information is limited, inhibiting readers' understanding of the multiple perspectives through which Mainlanders, Taiwanese of early Chinese descendents, and primitive aborigines experienced and interpreted this event. The possible reasons for misunderstanding and mistrust among these groups are omitted. She suggests that leading students beyond the narrow ideological confines of the February 28 incident thus necessitates new ways of thinking about history and profound delegitimization of the status quo. Teachers should provide opportunities and multiple materials to discuss the political conflicts and turmoil leading to and resulting from this incident. By helping to reveal these various viewpoints, teachers can help students realize that ideologies may also be contested. Tseng (2002) also indicates that the open market of textbook publishing has recently led to publishers producing a large number of textbooks. Teachers and administrators in most elementary and secondary schools form a committee to analyze and evaluate these textbooks. After analyzing and evaluating these textbooks, teachers can decide how to use them more effectively. He suggests that, to combat ideologies, it is important for teachers to supplement textbooks by providing alternative text materials that address what is missing in the regular textbooks, thus encouraging students to think critically.

## References

- Apple, W. A. (1992). The text and cultural politics. *Educational Researcher*, 2, 4-13.
- Carlson, D. L. (1989). Legitimation and delegitimation: American history and Textbooks and the Cold War. In C. de Castell, A. Luke, & C. Luke (Eds), *Language, authority and criticism: Readings on the school textbook* (pp. 46-61). Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Chang, W. (1991). Political development in Taiwan: The Sun Yat-Sen model for national reconstruction. In Y. Shaw (Eds.), *The Republic of China on Taiwan today: View from abroad*. Taipei: Kuan Haw Publishing Company.
- Cooper, J. F. (2000). *Historical Dictionary of Taiwan*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Chen, S. L. (1994). Cong duoyuan wenhua jiaoyu fenxi xiaojue shehuike di yuanshuming wenhua neihan (From multicultural perspectives: An analysis of the issue of indigenous Taiwanese in elementary social studies textbooks). *Teacher's World*, 70, 67-73.
- Chu, J. J. (2000). Nationalism and self-determination: the Identity of Politics in Taiwan. *Journal of Asian & African Studies*, 35 (3), 303, 19 p.
- Fei, C. H. (1991). A historical perspective on economic modernization. In R. H. Myers (Eds), *Two societies in opposition: The Republic of China and the People's Republic of China after forty years* (pp. 97-110). Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.
- Huang, W. J. (1998). *Guoxiao sheban guoyu jiaokeshu shebie yisi xingtai zhi nerong fenxi yanjiu* (The content analysis of gender ideology in the new edition of elementary language textbooks). Unpublished master's thesis, National Taipei Teachers College, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Iu, Z. I. (1999). *Guoxiao shehuike jiaokeshu zhong yuanshuming neihan zhi fenxi yanjiu* (An analysis of indigenous Taiwanese in elementary social studies textbooks). Unpublished mater's thesis, National Taipei Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Lee, R. E. (2001). Guoxiao shehuike xingbie yisi xingtai Shi fenxi yanjiu (An analysis of gender ideology in elementary social studies textbooks). *Journal of Pingdong Teachers College*, 14, 563-602.
- Lin, C. C. (2003). Political indoctrination in the curriculum during four periods of elementary school education in Taiwan. *Social Studies*, 94(3), 134-138.
- Liu, W. Y. (1999). Emeizu xiangtu wenhua jiaocai shishi zhi licheng yu kunjing (The experiences and difficulties in the implementation of homeland studies for Ami indigenous people). *Jiaoyu Yanjiu Zazhi (Educational Researcher)*, 68, 74-88.
- Lu, Y. L. (1991). Political modernization in the ROC: The Kumuntang and the inhibited political center. In R. H. Myers (Eds), *Two societies in opposition: The Republic of China and the People's Republic of China after forty years* (pp. 111-126). Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.
- Mao, C. J. (1997). Constructing a new social identity: Taiwan's curricular reforms of the nineties. *International Journal of Education Reform*, 6 (4), 400-405.

- Ministry of Education. (2003). *Zhonghua mingue jiaoyu tongji 2003* (The Educational Statistics of the Republic of China, 2003). Taipei: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2000). *Jiunian yiguan kecheng zhanxing cangyao* (Curriculum frameworks for k-12 Education). Taipei: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (1995). *Guomin shongzhaoxue Taiwan xiangtu yuyan fuzhu jiaocai dagang zhuanan yunjiu baogao* (Curriculum guidelines for homeland studies from K-12). Taipei: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (1976). *Guokiao kecheng biao zhun* (National elementary curriculum guides). Taipei: Ministry of Education.
- Jim, Q. H. (1988). *Zhong xiao xue yuwen zhong de muxing xingxiang yanjiu* (A study of the female images in elementary and secondary school textbooks). Taipei: Bookman Publishing Ltd.
- Ou, Y. S. (1987). *Kecheng yu jiaoxue: Gainian, Linian yu Shiji* (Curriculum and teaching: Concept, theory, and practice). Taipei: Wen Jung Publishing Company.
- Ou, Y. S. (1985). *Woguo guoming xiaojue shehuike yisi xingtai zhi fanxi* (An Analysis of ideology in elementary social studies textbooks). *Xiezhru Shizhuhong Xuebao* (Journal of Xiezhru Teachers College), 12, 91-125.
- Robinson, J. A. & Brown, D. A. (2000). Taiwan's 2000 presidential election. *Orbis*, 44(4), 599-614.
- Shi, J. S. (1993). *Yusu xingtai yu Taiwan jiaokeshu* (Ideology and Taiwan's textbooks). Taipei: Qian Wei Publishing Company.
- Su, Y. C. (1998a). Changing minds: How elementary social studies textbooks both reflect and change society. *International Journal of Social Education*, 12(2), 76-104.
- Su, Y. C. (1998b). *The Representation of Ideology in Social studies Textbooks: A study of Taiwan's Curriculum for Grades Four and Five*. Thesis (Ph. D): Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Taxel, J. (1989). Children's literature: A research proposal from the perspective of the sociology of school knowledge. In S. de Castell, A. Luke, & C. Luke (Eds), *Language, authority and Criticism: Readings on the school textbook* (pp. 32-45). Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Tseng, H. F. (2002). The study of textbook selecting policy in elementary school. *Journal of Research on Elementary and Secondary Education*, 9, 15-45.
- Wachman, A. M. (1994). Competing identities in Taiwan. In M. A. Rubinstein (Eds), *The other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present* (pp. 18-80). New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Williams, R. (1989). Hegemony and the selective tradition. In C. de Castell, A. Luke, & C. Luke (Eds), *Language, authority and criticism: Readings on the school textbook* (pp. 56-60). Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Wu, J. J. (1995). *Taiwan's Democratization: Forces behind the new momentum*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wu, M. Q. (1999). Guoli Bianyiguan Yinggai Fangqi Jiaokeshu Biankima (Should the National Institute for Compilation and Translation abandon the editing of textbooks). In Z. J. Huang (Ed.), *Taiwan Jiaogai 1999* (Educator Reform in Taiwan, 1999) (pp. 10-23). Taipei: Han Uen Bookstore.
- Xia, L. M. (1995). Zaingtu De Fanwei Neirong Yu Jiaoyu Yihan (The scope and content of Homeland Studies and its implications for education). In Z. J. Huang & L. S. Li. (Eds), *Ziangtu Jiaoyu* (Homeland Education) (pp. 63-111). Taipei: Han Uen Bookstore.
- Yen, Y. Y. (2005). The implications of critical discourse analysis on social identity. *Journal of National Chiayi University*, 76, 197-207.
- Zhuang, Z. C. (2003). Guoxiao shehuike jiaokeshu nerong: Yi Taiwan lishi wenben weili (The content analysis of elementary social studies textbooks on Taiwan's history). *Taiwan Education Review*, 624, 2-8.

Received December 28, 2005  
Revision received April 24, 2006  
Accepted June 6, 2006