



From regime change to paradigm shift: A philosophical perspective on the development of Taiwan's citizenship curriculum



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ABSTRACT

Citizenship education configured according to different curriculum paradigms is expected to produce differing outcomes. Conservative, liberal, and communitarian citizenship paradigms exhibit different varieties of citizens' characters and social roles. During the authoritarian period in Taiwan, the authorities created a conservative version of citizenship education stressing morality and obligations in order to cultivate 'obedient' citizens who would be easy to rule over. In the wake of democratization since the late 1980s, liberal thoughts gradually permeated Taiwanese society. The newest citizenship curriculum, officially introduced in 2010 across senior high schools, swings away from conservatism towards two other types, as the 18 interviewed curriculum designers have revealed in the research. Shifting from an 'obligations-oriented' to a 'rights-based' curriculum, the new guidelines aim to emphasize the indispensable value of human agency and the critical and reflective capability of the individual. Based on Charles Taylor and Wilhelm von Humboldt's 'holist individualism', an integrative approach to overcome the liberal-communitarian tension is created. The new curriculum is rooted in the liberal construct and softened by communitarianism to avoid fostering self-interested individuals and to encourage wider social participation.

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1. Introduction

Taiwan, lying around 120 km off the coast of Mainland China, was once a haven for Dutch and Spanish explorers in the seventeenth century, before coming under the rule of the Qing Dynasty of imperial China. Later it was taken by Japan before finally becoming the Republic of China (ROC). Since the Kuomintang Party of China (KMT), defeated by Chinese communists, moved the Republic of China from Mainland to Taiwan in 1949, Taiwanese society has experienced authoritarian rule under martial law, democratization and now constitutional democracy. Citizenship education (CE), as one of the most sensitive subjects, at the nexus between politics, society, and economics, has witnessed these 'regime changes' and been an integral part of the social transformation of Taiwan. Before democratization, education was predominantly guided by political forces and the curriculum and government-published textbooks were designed with disciplinary purposes in mind (Deng, 2012). In August 2010, a new citizenship curriculum renamed *Curriculum Guidelines for Civic and Society* was officially introduced in senior high school replacing the previous

rigid *Curriculum Standard*. After the deregulation of the textbook market supplies of teaching materials were no longer monopolized by the government. With the waning of political interference and growing openness of society, the curriculum's position in schools was more dynamically redefined and the contents of the subject gradually changed.

When it comes to the definition of citizenship, Ichilov (1998, p. 11) maintains that 'the classical definition of citizenship rests on the assertion that citizenship involves a balance or fusion between rights and obligations. More recent definitions stress the affinity and identity dimensions of citizenship'. The differing emphasis on rights and duties demarcates the great divide between the liberal and communitarian paradigms of CE. The former champions unimpeded basic rights, personal identities and autonomy; the latter stresses collective membership and social engagement. While democratic countries lean to differing degrees between these two flavors, Heater (2002) analyzing dictatorial regimes, observes a conservative style of CE, which aims to secure social stability and bolster the ruling class in power. Along similar lines, Arthur and Davison (2000, 16) also propose a 'paleoconservative' construct that is championed by more traditional and reactionary societies. These types, namely conservative, liberal and communitarian, have left their imprints on many countries' citizenship curricula and Taiwan is no exception. Other offshoots (for example, multicultural, radical, feminist

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constructs and so on) derived from the above three main streams which lean towards specific ethnic, cultural and gendered dimensions of citizenship, will not be brought into this general philosophical discussion of the curriculum.

The philosophical arguments ensuing from the publication of John Rawls' seminal book, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), and the debates between the liberal and Communitarian camps since the 1980s, have provided a new way to examine social issues, including education. This liberal-communitarian dialogue has enriched the theoretical foundation underpinning curriculum studies. A prime example is the advocacy of a communitarian curriculum by Bernard Crick in the English citizenship curriculum (*Advisory Group on Citizenship Education, 1998*) and the substantial discussions on different curriculum paradigms from both viewpoints. In Taiwan, influenced by the prevalence of western scholarship, the liberal and communitarian constructs gained momentum in recent curriculum developments reflecting the changes taking place in society. This research focuses on the curriculum designers of the latest *Curriculum Guidelines of 2010* who voiced their critical perspectives on the past CE in Taiwan and reveals what type of citizenship program they endeavored to create by unveiling the philosophical messages underlying the new curriculum. How the Curriculum Committee members approached these paradigms differently and found a new way of weaving them into the current Taiwanese CE will be exhibited in this empirical inquiry. Before developing the core argument, the trajectory of curriculum development in Taiwan as it rapidly transformed from authoritarianism to democracy will be illustrated so that the position from where the curriculum makers started before initiating their changes can be better understood.

2. The history of the Taiwanese citizenship curriculum and the switch of paradigms

When the objectives of the *Curriculum Standards of 1952 and 1971* are comparatively aligned alongside the new *Curriculum Guidelines of 2010*, it can be seen that the desired-for outcomes regarding the 'kind' of citizens to be fostered have been reshaped and in some respects re-invented. Based on the synthesis of the definitions of citizenship proposed by Ichilov (1998) and Delanty (2000), the notion of citizenship contains four essential components—rights, duties, identity and participation and varying the balance between the components formulates different types of citizenship. This section will illustrate which type was used in each period to demonstrate the switch of paradigms that has taken place.

2.1. Curriculum Standards of 1952 and 1971 in the authoritarian period

The establishment of the Republic of China (ROC) in 1912 in China (at which time Taiwan was a colony of Japan) was the end of Imperial China—the Qing Dynasty. In 1945, after WWII, the Chinese government, then led by the KMT party, recovered the island of Taiwan and its outlying islets from Japan. However, following the four-year full-scale Chinese Civil War, which saw the Communist Party take control of Mainland and declare a People's Republic, the defeated KMT moved the ROC government to Taipei in 1949. The aim of retaking the Mainland, which deterred the KMT from treating Taiwan as a permanent residence and developing a new nation-state, diffused through every aspect of the Taiwanese' life, including school ethos. Pride in being Chinese, explicitly promoted in the curriculum and textbooks, was utilized to strengthen people's Chinese identity, thereby maintaining the determination to return to the Mainland (Roy, 2003; Chun, 2005; Su, 2006; Clark, 2008). To prevent resistance from native Taiwanese and head off potential upheaval, martial

law was enforced and basic civil, political and social rights were restrained.

While the curriculum aims and the textbooks are closely examined, characterized by Chinese-centeredness, Confucian ethic principles and Chinese culture, the curriculum with its spirit of 'Han cultural nationalism' was focused on passing on monolithic Chinese consciousness to the Taiwanese (Hughes, 1997, p. 218; Lee, 2004; Yao, 2012). While a specific set of values centering on tradition, family, fraternity, morality and allegiance is regarded as the salient civic virtues to be transmitted to the next generation, this normative tendency demonstrate the features of the conservative paradigm (Arthur and Davison, 2000, p. 16). It attempts to convince pupils to follow the mainstream vision of life and consolidate the public's loyalty towards the existing social norms. The distinctiveness of national characters, moral principles, duties, and traditions are taught to have stood the test of time.

Besides, whereas 'citizenship' as a concept has a balance of rights and responsibilities, the emphasis on 'responsibility' and the repeated advocacy of 'morality' outshone the mention of 'rights' in the curriculum. Compared with the other paradigms, the conservative version substantially downplays the importance of 'rights' and 'social participation', instead putting emphasis on 'duties' and 'compliance'. This paradigm is, therefore, mostly used to maintain the status quo and cultivate obedient civilians by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes (Heater, 1999; Arthur and Davison, 2002; Heater, 2002).

In 1987, the lifting of martial law heralded democratization and the goal of retaking Mainland has gradually faded away. Since the 1990s, with the increasing popularity of the opposition party—Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) which urges the promotion of Taiwanese identity and native cultures, including Hoklo, Hakka and aboriginal heritages, the momentum of Taiwanization and multiculturalism has gradually replaced the previous ethnocentric curriculum structure (Morris and Cogan, 2001; Law, 2002, 2004; Liu, 2004; Lee et al., 2008). Moreover, the *Curriculum Standard* was eventually replaced by the current *Curriculum Guidelines*, which relaxed central control of the subject content and gave teachers more freedom to decide what to include in class. The sense of liberation palpable in this period heralded the end of the conservative era and the transition to the liberal strand of thinking. The Taiwanese citizenship curriculum mirrors the changes that took place in society, politics and values within this East Asian society and the evolution of the curriculum can be seen across its long history during both authoritarian and democratic regimes.

2.2. Curriculum Guidelines of 2010 in the democratic period

After the lifting of martial law and the subsequent social transformations of the 1990s, the new citizenship curriculum reveals the projected visions of a modern society. The curriculum identifies the 'Objectives' and 'Core Competences', which are supposed to be fostered in pupils. Three 'Objectives' includes:

- (1) Facilitating pupils' awareness of social science and related knowledge.
- (2) Fostering open-minded perspectives of pluralistic values and civil awareness.
- (3) Enhancing the ability of action based on democratic social participation. (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 1)

The 'Core Competences' further depict a clearer vision of future adult citizens with the ability to:

- (1) Obtain multifaceted knowledge of psychology, sociology, culture, politics, morality, law, economics, sustainable development, etc.

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