



COMPULSORY EDUCATION

In 1968, the MOE instituted a policy of compulsory education in Taiwan, to ensure that Taiwan's youth would receive the necessary training and competencies needed to become successful global citizens. Under this policy young people from the ages of 6 to 15 years old would have to attend elementary and junior high school for a total of 9 years of mandatory education.

Recently due to lower birth rates a restructuring of many elementary schools, especially in remote areas of Taiwan has been occurring. Given that, primary education in Taiwan has placed undue emphasis on course content, which was designed to enable students to successfully pass exams, it has come under re-evaluation.

To face this challenge and others, the MOE has been carrying out 10 years of educational reforms which are designed to create a more dynamic and creative learning environment, for Taiwan's young children in order for them to become capable of creative thinking and to be able to compete successfully in today's fast-paced world, as adults.

Other improvements in primary education include digital technology, for example the addition of e-boards (white boards) and computers in classrooms, and exposure to information technology at lower levels of primary education.

The Ministry is also working to introduce English instruction at an earlier age, using materials and methods that will encourage students to learn in a productive and natural way. The overall aim is to produce youth who are competent young people.

Preschool and Compulsory Education

1. Preschool Education

Although preschool education is not compulsory for children aged 2 to 6 years old, their parents

group usually send them to kindergarten. In 2010, the percentage of preschoolers climbed to 93.77 percent from 91.60 percent in 2007. This relatively high number was due to the rising number of dual-income families.



To provide equal education opportunities for preschool children, particularly those from disadvantaged families in remote areas, the MOE implemented the first phase of a project involving free tuition for five-year-olds, which was initiated August 1, 2010, on the outlying islands of Kinmen, Matsu, Penghu, Green Island, Orchid Island and Liukiu Township, including the indigenous areas within Hualien and Taitung.

On August 1, 2011 a policy allowing, tuition-free education for five-year-olds was instituted. Parents of children attending public schools could save up to NT\$14,000 per year in expenses. Those children at private cooperative schools will be able to save up to NT\$30,000 per year. The number of students that expected to benefit from this program will be nearly 206,000. Families with household incomes under NT\$700,000 will be eligible to apply for education subsidies.

2. Compulsory Education

The 1982 Compulsory Education Regulations stipulate that children aged 6 years old and above must begin primary education without taking any entrance exams.

After 6 years of primary education, they will graduate with an elementary school diploma and will be eligible to enter junior high school without taking any entrance exams. Upon completion of their 3 years of junior high school, they will receive a junior high school diploma.

Compulsory education for all students is now 9 years. As of SY 2010, there were a total of 2,661 primary and 740 junior high schools in Taiwan, which offered mandatory education for 2.44 million students.

In 1998, the MOE reduced class sizes in order to allow teachers to spend more time with their students. Since 2011, primary school class sizes have been reduced to 26 students per class, while at junior high schools, class sizes allow 33 students. Further reduction will occur by 2013, when class sizes will allow only 30 students.

Compulsory Education Policies

1. Promoting Quality Education

Over the last few years, the Ministry has been promoting a series of policies to extend the present 9-year compulsory education to include senior secondary and early childhood schooling, with the aim of creating a more complete educational structure and quality of education.

Concrete measures to enhance the quality of education involve turning schools into learning communities, promoting multicultural education, replacing fixed curriculum standards with flexible curriculum outlines, adjusting the size of schools, implementing smaller classes, encouraging school autonomy, improving the counseling system for guiding and supervising student behavior, upgrading teachers' professionalism, ensuring high quality in teaching, improving assessment methods, distributing educational resources fairly, offering a larger variety of after-school tutoring



for economically disadvantaged students, and promoting more refined teaching methods.

The MOE continues to encourage teachers to participate in seminars, lectures and hands-on workshops to improve their teaching skills and research efforts. In 2010, a total of 8,230 primary school and 4,555 junior high teachers took part in workshops on teaching evaluation.

To ensure that economically underprivileged children have an opportunity to receive the same basic education as other children, the MOE launched an after-school program in 2006. As of July 2011, a cumulative total of



981,193 students from single-parent families, middle and low-income households, and indigenous areas have benefited from this policy.

2. School Lunch Program

Healthy school meals can provide students with almost one-third of their weekly fiber and protein requirements, but most schoolchildren with physically handicapped parents and/or middle and low-income families and jobless parents cannot afford to join this meal plan.



To solve such challenges, the Ministry passed a budget of NT\$1.24 billion in the fiscal year of 2010 to help 265,986 students to enjoy healthy school lunches.

In addition, the MOE feels that the central and local governments need to take responsibility for what children eat in their schools. To make school lunches much more healthy, the Ministry is working on the quality of school meals by hiring nutritionists and improving on-campus lunch services for students.

From 2007 to 2011, local governments will be expected to hire 348 school nutritionists under the Ministry's financial support program.

3. Swimming Education

In 2009, only 42 percent of elementary, junior and senior high school graduates could swim. To cut the number of deaths by drowning, the Ministry launched a national swimming initiative between which began in 2010 and will run until 2021. After the initiative has been implemented more than 80% of students in Taiwan will be expected to know how to swim.



In Japan, there are 188 pools per 100,000 school-aged children. In Taiwan, there are only 9.6. The fatality rate from drowning is three times higher in Taiwan than it is in Japan.

To promote swimming education, to narrow the gap between the number of rural and urban swimming facilities, and to improve students' swimming proficiencies, the MOE has subsidized 66 schools island-wide to either renovate or build swimming pools.

The number of students who died from drowning, in 2010 was 43, a decrease from 23.21%, in 2009.

4. International Education

As an active participant in the global community, Taiwan is increasingly becoming a more multi-cultural society. Many overseas Taiwanese are returning to Taiwan and the number of spouses from other countries continues to increase yearly. To ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to learn and grow, the Ministry is promoting international education at the primary and junior high school levels, by adding students from a variety of cultures to its compulsory education system, thus, encouraging students to broaden their horizons.

Some Taipei schools including Shi-Dong Elementary School and Xin Sheng Elementary School now provide Mandarin Chinese

language programs for international students and children of returning overseas Taiwanese. They also enroll children of foreign spouses' to help them to improve their Mandarin Chinese proficiency.

5. Unique Rural Schools

Rural schools of Taiwan have been under the threat of closure in recent years because of declining birth rates.

To save the futures of these schools, the Ministry initiated a project in 2007 to promote sustainable campuses with unique characteristics at primary and junior high schools. A total of 421 allotments have been authorized by the central government, for the years of 2007 to 2010.





The Amis Culture Shines at Tien-kuang Elementary School



Tien-kuang Elementary School in Taitung County in southeastern Taiwan is under threat of closure because of migration to larger cities. Those who remain echo the national trend of having fewer children.

Located in an area largely Amis community, Tien-kuang has only 42 students, and Amis make up 70 percent of the student body. Since 2007 the school has implemented a MOE-subsidized project for sustainable

campuses. Principal Gao Chin-chin invited Amis seniors to develop a distinctive curriculum with traditional culture-related courses such as making bamboo fireworks and musical instruments.

In March 2007, the school asked the Taitung-based Amis Kakeng Musical Group to teach students to play traditional musical instruments including bamboo pan flutes, drums and bells. Students from the fourth to sixth grades founded the Tien-kuang Kakeng Musical Group, which performs for schools and communities throughout Taiwan.

In addition to learning traditional instruments, students can also study Amis weaving. Learning from experienced weavers, they make hats, pencil bags, purses and other items on looms they can later use in daily life.

Teachers and parents collaborated to turn an abandoned ballpark into a garden where many native plants are grown. The garden helps students gain a better understanding of edible plants as well as healthy meal planning and cooking skills.

Ye-liou Students Go Kayaking on Graduation Day

Since 1999, Ye-liou Elementary School in New Taipei City has held a unique graduation ceremony. Each year, the school's graduates go kayaking and swimming on graduation day to celebrate finishing their primary education.

Located in a small fishing port on the north coast of Taiwan, the school enjoys access to rich geological and marine resources. Over 60 percent of the local children are from fishing families.

To promote marine education, their teachers designed a program to raise environmental awareness and respect for the ocean.

Students begin their marine studies on their first day at the school. Fifth and sixth-graders take swimming and kayaking lessons every week, school principal Tseng Hsiu-chu adds.

At the invitation of the school, Wang Kuo-chang, a professional diving instructor and Chairman of the Ye-liou Parents Association, teaches sixth-graders. Each year Mr. Wang asks his students to draw a picture of a dream

kayak. Later, these students vote on the best picture. Once selected, Mr. Wang teaches the class how to build this kayak. When they finish their class project, students must demonstrate their efforts as part of their graduation grade.

On June 8, in 2011 World Ocean Day, a total of 100 people including graduates, alumni and local lifeguards took part in the graduation ceremony. Thirty graduates went kayaking around Ye-liou Fishing Port then jumped into the water to show how well they could swim around the port.

Broad smiles spread over the sixth-graders' faces as each are accomplished these two feats. Each student received their graduation diploma from the principal knowing they had achieved much and had obtained excellent results on their class project. This was an unforgettable moment for them and a graduation that they will remember for the rest of their lives.