

Compulsory Education

Primary and Junior High Schools



Nine-year Compulsory Education

The nine-year education program from primary to junior high school started to be implemented in 1968 in Taiwan and in the outlying islands of Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu. But it was only in 1982 that the "Compulsory Education Regulations," defining the nine-year compulsory education, came out. The program is designed to integrate junior high school and senior vocational school curricula. Since then, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has undertaken continuing schemes to bring about educational reforms.

Regarding the educational system in Taiwan, primary schools fall under the jurisdiction of county/city governments. Children at least six years of age begin primary schooling without taking entrance tests. After six years, students graduate with a primary school diploma. Junior high schools similarly fall under the jurisdiction of county/city

governments. Under the nine-year compulsory education system, primary school graduates who are at least 12 years of age can start their three-year junior high school education. Graduates receive a junior high school diploma.

The MOE released the Education Reform Action Plan in 1998. This five-year plan covered 12 key policies, which had to do with preschool education and nine-year compulsory education. The targeted

completion of the plan was at the end of 2003.

In 2000, the Department of Elementary Education under the MOE completed the interim outline for the nine-year compulsory education. Thus, the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum started taking effect for the first graders in primary schools in 2001, and for the fourth graders in primary schools and first year students in junior high schools in 2002.

With globalization in the 21st century, governments around the world have all seen the need to engage in educational reforms to improve their nations' and populations' competitiveness.

Taiwan's diversified and quality learning environment emphasizes the pluralistic and general education of its nationals, thus, fostering talents with high academic performance and improving Taiwan's national competitiveness.

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Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum

Traditionally, everything is decided by the government, like the standard curriculum and the uniform. But such process is no longer suitable for a democratic and free society.

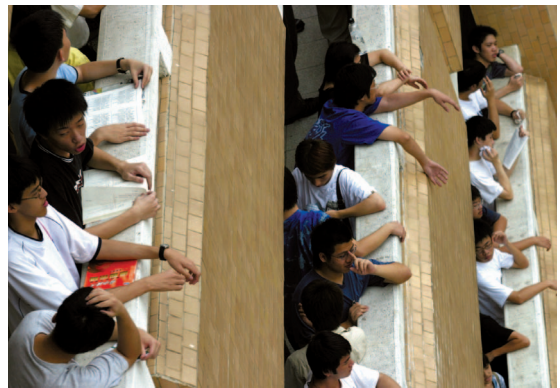
Taiwan government now empowers the local governments, schools and teachers to decide the curriculum and teaching materials depending on their respective needs and those of their students. Here lies the most important value of the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum with Multi-edition Teaching Materials.

The MOE has allowed non-governmental circles to decide the outline of curriculum; this means people on their own rethink how to design the curriculum and what methods to use to teach children and to sustain their interest in learning.

The policy has the following purposes:

1. To tie in with the values in a pluralist, democratic and free society;
2. To respond to society's need to utilize curriculum text with more diversification in both content and style;
3. To allow civilians who are not employed by

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the government to design the curriculum contents that suit their needs;

4. To give teachers greater decision-making power through participation in the writing and the editing of the textbooks.

The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum accounts for one of the MOE's important reform policies, aiming to diversify and increase the flexibility of school education. Moreover, it tries to change the writing style of curriculum materials. Furthermore, it explicitly spells out the basic skills that a student should have at each level.

The objectives of the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum are to respect the individual's development, challenge his potential, equip a student with knowledge of the modern democratic system, respect the values of a multicultural society, increase knowledge of science and accommodate the needs of modern life.

The main points of the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum are:

- * Reduction of the teaching time - Under the new policy, the basic course sessions take up 80% of the time, and the other 20% are for the teachers' flexible use.
- * Clearly define the learning areas for nine-year compulsory education - Traditionally, there are 11 subjects in the elementary school (grade 1-6) and 21 subjects in junior high school (grades 7-9). At present there are seven big learning areas

for all students from first to ninth grades. Included are language, physical education and health, society, arts, mathematics, science and technology, and combined activities.

- * The MOE also encourages schools to establish committees to examine and review the designed program and to evaluate the implementation of the curriculum developed by them.
- * Set index for students' academic attainment and their capability.
- * The new policy tries to convince both parents and students that the textbook should not be the only teaching material. The MOE also encourages schools to diversify in the use of teaching materials, drawing from approved textbooks, publications, multimedia materials, teaching materials developed by local governments, teaching materials edited by schools, and teachers' handouts.
- * English education will start from the 5th grade. Under the old system, it started from the 7th grade, which is equivalent to the 1st year in junior high school.
- * Aside from providing basic knowledge and skill learning, the curriculum should cover current affairs, including information technology, environmental education, sex education, human rights, career education and home economics education.

Improving the Quality of Education

Besides the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum, the MOE also aims to decrease the class size in primary and junior high schools in order to not only improve the quality of education, but also to achieve the goal of diversifying and individualizing education for students. From 1998 to 2005, the class size in primary schools was cut down to 29.26 students. From 2002 to 2005, the class size in junior high schools was reduced to 34.79 students.

The MOE always encourages students to expand their global perspectives and to adapt to globalization. The MOE perceives Taiwan when compared with other Asian countries as having several advantages, citing the sufficient qualified teachers and educational facilities, and excellent learning environment.

Currently, the MOE subsidizes schools in bringing in more qualified foreign teachers. It also tries to minimize the gap in the educational resources for English teaching in urban and rural areas. To achieve this, the ministry will carry out the following plans:

- * Take better care of schools in areas where indigenous peoples constitute the majority;
- * Provide more subsidies for the disadvantaged groups, including indigenous peoples, lower-income families, and the challenged students;
- * Subsidize local governments in employing more qualified English teachers and substitute teachers;
- * Subsidize schools in disadvantaged areas, helping train teachers and seeing to it they pass the examination before they start teaching.



Building the Concept of New Campus



Rebuilding efforts after the Sept. 21, 1999 earthquake gave rise to new campus designs that broke with traditional ones and started

a new trend for school campuses. The idea was to present the campus to the public and citizens as a brand new learning center. MOE plans to invest NT\$ 25 billion for the schools' reconstruction that is expected to be completed between 2006 and 2008. From construction to space design, six architectural principles stress on: security, simplicity, health, friendliness, environment sustainability and cultural assets. A campus is no longer just a venue where people gather. The new campus integrates educational functions, user-friendliness and considers the psychological make-up of its students.

Sustainable Campus

The MOE made the Promotional Plan for A Sustainable Campus under the Six Year Priority Development Plan of the Executive Yuan. The plan envisages the inclusion of environmental, energy and sustainable concepts into the entire educational arena.

To build a progressive, stable, clean and healthy environment, the plan's hardware includes ecological creation and green construction. A multi-dimensional campus could be constructed with practical educational functions by understanding a campus's location, culture, history and ecological uniqueness. Cooperation or association with nearby



campuses to create an educational resource network that allows sharing of resources could help to fulfill the concept of a sustainable campus.

Healthy Campus

In recent years, the MOE has actively promoted the concept of a "healthy campus" that deals with the problems of drugs and gangs as a step towards a healthy and better learning environment. Nurturing a harmonious learning environment is in accordance with the Executive Yuan's "Healthy Taiwan" policy. Hence by integrating education, police support, medical and social resources, and through publicity, investigation, prevention and counseling, campus security is strengthened and accidents reduced.



Friendly Campus

Having reliable teachers who know how to use their hearts. This is one of the primary objectives of the Ministry of Education's Four

Year Plan. It is an objective that helps in creating a healthy campus. In a friendly campus, students are happy. Other goals include: increase campus ability to handle cases of violence and emergencies; establish an educational environment without any sexual discrimination; install a system where slow learners are taken care of; teach "drug abuse prevention" and "AIDS prevention" among its courses; and promote the idea of no physical punishments in schools.

