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Social and cultural preconditions for the process of democratisation in Taiwanese education

KEYWORDS

Taiwan, educational goals, school improvement; educational reform

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on changes introduced in Taiwan's education since 1949, which reflect the social changes taking place in this country. Special attention is drawn to the origin and the course of two particularly important processes, i.e. democratisation and *taiwanisation*, which have radically changed the face of education, revealing Taiwan's 'balancing' between the East and the West. While depicting their essence, also complex links with Taiwan's policies towards China and its orientation onto economic growth were taken into account.

Adam Mickiewicz University Press, pp. 125-144
ISSN 2300-0422. DOI 10.14746/kse.2018.14.12

Introduction

Taiwan is definitely distinctive of other countries and regions of Asia. Its exceptional status can be described as a transitional form between a nation and a state. It is a democracy without nationality and is recognised as such by the international community¹. Its inability to declare independence results from fear of a military threat from the People's Republic of China (PRC).

¹ J. F. Copper (2003), *Taiwan. Nation-State or Province?* Wyd. VI, Publisher: Westview Press Boulder, pp 31-33.

Unhinged relations on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have constituted a problem for both China and Taiwan since the beginning of the 13th century. Over the course of history, there have been many disputes and conflicts. The first official relations between the neighbours were established in 1206, when the Mongolian chief Genghis Khan (the first from the Yuan dynasty), incorporated Taiwan into Chinese possessions². Since then, the importance and position of the island has been of various consequence to mainland China. It was colonised by the Dutch for the period of 37 years, but already in 1661 it was retrieved by the continental forces, and the colonisers were expelled. After 1880, a part of Taiwan remained under French occupation for a short period of time. Transfer of the island to Japan proved to be significant for the fate of the Taiwanese community after losing the war with it in 1895 and keeping within its borders until 1945. Eventually, Taiwan was handed over to China after World War II. Despite the various influences experienced by the people of Taiwan, the period of Japanese rule is seen as ambivalent. On the one hand, it was an absolute despotic power, but on the other hand, it contributed to the material and cultural development of the island.

Initially, "the return to the fatherland"³ was positively perceived by the society, but with time tensions arose, which on 28 February 1947 led to the outbreak of open hostility towards the nationalist government. Meanwhile, the internal conflict in China resulted in the proclamation of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949. This event had far-reaching consequences for Taiwan. In December 1949, the nationalist government of the Republic of China headed by the Kuomintang (KMT) fled to its territory. Initially, it was planned to reinforce its position and prepare to take over the power and the whole of China. As a make-shift project, the island was established as the Republic of China in Taiwan. In this way, the Chinese population was divided into nationalists living on the island and communists living in mainland China. Each of the parties submitted claims to represent the whole of China. In the uncertain future of Taiwan after 1949, there seemed to exist no solution that would satisfy both sides of the conflict. However, tensions occurred not only on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, but also on Taiwan itself. Kuomintang's rule on the island began with the introduction of martial law

² K. Wu-Ping (2007), Wpływ stosunków chińsko-tajwańskich na rozwój gospodarczy Tajwanu, „*Studia i Materiały*”, no 2, Wydział Zarządzania UW, p. 104.

³ In 1911, the Republic of China (RCh) was established on the continent, and on 1 January 1912, republican rule was introduced. Thus, after the end of World War II, Taiwan came under the rule of the Republic of China and the system of "people, by people and for the people" - a term introduced by the creator and founder of the new state Dr. Sun Yat-sen, cf.: *ibidem*

and authoritarian power, which lasted until the decree on martial law was repealed in 1987 and replaced with a less strict law on national security. Notwithstanding its trying situation, Taiwan kept developing at an extremely rapid pace.

Since 1949, in the light of the highly ambiguous future of the island, Taiwan flexibly yo-yoed between East and West and it is a safe assumption that since then it has been undergoing constant changes. Their dynamics draws attention to its ability to use own potential in shaping and implementing strategic interests. It is also highly pragmatic, positioning itself as a 'rotating' centre of trade within the South China Sea. This strategy brings results. Currently, Taiwan is the 20th world economy and produces almost 1% of global GDP. The evolution of the island's economic potential has become a key attribute of Taiwan, conducive to the increase of competitiveness of its economy. Substitution of an economy based on high labour inputs with an industry that uses advanced technologies has proved to be a key component of the success. As a result, Taiwan has become a leading state in the global IT market.

The changes that have taken place in Taiwan over the last 50 years have not just been related to its economy, as they have also incorporated the area of politics, society and culture. Their intensity took off after the abolition of martial law (1987). At that time, the Taiwanese political system changed from authoritarian to democratic, and the first fully democratic presidential election took place in 1996. Numerous social reforms (including women's rights, consumer rights, political pluralism or environmental protection) were associated with these changes.

Also, education constitutes an important indicator of social change, as it is the foundation of the nation. Taiwan's education is modelled on the American educational system. Thus, since 1968, compulsory education covers nine years (7-15 years). The first cycle is a 6-year primary school level (7-12 years), the next three years is the middle, lower secondary level (13-15 years), three years of the upper secondary level (16-18), concluding with four to seven years of the tertiary level at colleges or universities. Additionally, technical education programmes provide alternative educational paths. Special educational programs for adults of all ages, as well as lifelong education programmes, are important supplements to the modern face of Taiwan's education which enrichen its educational mosaic. There is no doubt that the decision of 1968 to extend compulsory education from six to nine years has been one of the most positively assessed changes introduced in education since 1949. This is all the more remarkable that Taiwan can boast of the wonderful achievements of Taiwanese pupils in international rankings and international measurements of the last two decades, when you consider a relatively short time in which these nine years of study were in force, as the period of compulsory educa-

tion was extended by another 3 years (in total 12 years of education up to 18 years of age) as late as in 2012.⁴

The Government of Taiwan, when assessing its educational policy, strongly emphasises the systematic expansion and improvement of education implemented since 1949, which was in a specific way related to the sector of the country's economy. Namely, educational changes were introduced at a pace surpassing that of economic growth. The introduced educational reforms also adequately reflect the social changes taking place in this country, which expose two significant processes: democratisation and taiwanisation, related to the transition from uniformity to diversity, from authoritarian centralisation to decentralisation, deregulation and pluralism.⁵

The authoritarian period (1949-1987)

Having lost the civil war to the Communist Party of China in 1949, the Kuomintang (KMT) party, following the command of Chiang Kai-shek, withdrew to Taiwan and started its rule in a one-party system. The transfer of the central government to Taiwan in 1949 was officially treated as a temporary solution. This was reflected in education which prioritised preparation of competent employees for the use in continental reconstruction, when the communist regime would be overthrown in the future. Such assumptions were only possible during martial law, which was in force during the authoritarian period. However, they constituted a basis for shaping the government's view of education as a process that should be centrally controlled and used for state (national) purposes⁶.

Systemic assumptions in shaping values and civic attitudes⁷ were adequately reflected in KMT's opposition to the ideology and political practices of the com-

⁴ See: Ministry of Education Republic of China, Education in Taiwan, Department of Statistics, Taipei 2013/2014, pp. 8-10, in: https://stats.moe.gov.tw/files/ebook/Education_in_Taiwan/2013-2014_Education_in_Taiwan.pdf accessed: 20. 12. 2017; N. Clark (2010), Education in Taiwan, in: World Education News & Reviews, in: <https://wenr.wes.org/2010/05/wenr-may-2010-feature>, accessed: 20.12. 2017.

⁵ T. Cheng-sheng (2007), Taiwan's Educational Reform and the Future of Taiwan, Minister of Education, Taiwan and Member of the Academia Sinica, Taipei Presented at London School of Economics and Political Science January 10, 2007, in: http://www.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/units/TaiwanProgramme/Events/PublicLectures/TaiwanEducationalReform_English.pdf accessed: 20.12.2017.

⁶ C. Liu (1958), A Report on Education to the Provincial Assembly. Department of Education, Taiwan Provincial Government: Taiwan, p. 6.

⁷ S. Doong (2008), Taiwan's new citizenship curriculum: Changes and challenges, [in:] D. L. Grossman, W. O. Lee, & K. J. Kennedy (eds.), *Citizenship curriculum in Asia and the Pacific*. Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong, Comparative Education Research Centre, pp. 43-60.

munist government in China. Chiang Kai-shek declared in 1968 that moral and civic education served to prepare pupils to be “people and good pupils”, as well as “good Chinese citizens who love their country and others (...) and appreciate Chinese values and culture”⁸. It may be assumed that the foundations of education were built on two historically conditioned bases: Confucianism and the tradition of examinations inherited from China. In an article written jointly with Chris Murphy, Meihui Liu states: “we, the Chinese are proud of our long history and traditional culture and the Taiwanese consider themselves guardians of this tradition”⁹.

The KMT government instigated initiatives to revive Chinese culture by strengthening national education, promoting the Mandarin language and continuing Confucian traditions and culture. These actions were considered by the government of the KMT as a priority because they saw the loss of moral virtues and adoption of Soviet designs in Chinese education on the continent¹⁰. While attempting to promote patriotism, it was accepted, according to the Confucian tradition, that education is a force shaping a good society, and that it should be available equally to all on the basis of merit. A high value was ascribed to social harmony, which meant for individuals immersing in society and subordinating their needs to the common good¹¹. This tradition clearly stands in opposition to the strong foundations of individuality and independence, highly appreciated by the West. According to Douglas Smith, even in modern Taiwan, behaviour that is clearly individual is seen as ‘aberration’¹².

In the authoritarian period, the government administration was in favour of binding traditional Confucian ethics (decency, justice, honesty and honour), virtues (loyalty, obedience, kindness, love, faithfulness, justice, harmony and peace) and the essential dogma of the New Life Movement by Chiang Kai-shek: order-

⁸ Chiang Kai-shek, cf: M. Liu (2002). Civic education at the crossroads. [in:] J. J. Cogan, P. Morris, & M. Print (eds.), *Civic education in the Asia-Pacific region*. New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer, p. 96.

⁹ C. Murphy & M. Liu (1998), Choices must be made. The case of education in Taiwan, “Education” no. 3(13), pp. 9-10.

¹⁰ C.-M. Lee (2004). Changes and challenges for moral education in Taiwan. “Journal of Moral Education” no. 33(4), pp. 575-595.

¹¹ H.-Z. Ho, Y.W. Lam & K.-H. Yeh (2013), Character Education in Taiwan: A Reflection of Historical Shifts in Sociocultural Contexts, “Childhood Education”, vol. 89, pp. 362-367.

¹² D. Smith (1992), The Chinese family in transition: implications for education and society in modern Taiwan, Paper presented at the *Comparative Education Association/World Bank Seminar*, Annapolis, Maryland (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 295), p. 7, cf: C. Murphy & M. Liu (1998), Choices must be made..., op. cit., p. 10.

liness, cleanliness, simplicity, saving, punctuality and accuracy¹³. In accordance with the thesis that goodness can be learned and society can achieve harmony only through knowledge, at all levels of education subjects that cultivated desirable values were introduced¹⁴. School classes taught pupils to oppose communism, to maintain national and ethnic identity, and to worship political leaders. In primary schools, there was a subject *Life and Ethics*, while in middle schools *Knowledge about Society and Morality* included learning moral virtues similar to those taught at the primary level, but additionally introduced topics related to politics, economics, law and culture, such as the Three Principles of the People : nationalism, democracy and prosperity, introduced by the founder of KMT Sun Yat-sen¹⁵. School textbooks were organised in a sequence reflecting the Confucian pattern that originated in an individual, and then expanded to larger social groups and environments, such as: family, school, society, country and the world. Similar content was addressed at the lower secondary level, while at the tertiary level, the views of Sun Yat-sen, widely known in Taiwan as the “Father of the Nation”, were analysed¹⁶.

Some subjects, especially *Chinese Language, History, Social Science* and *Geography* were ideologically biased. In addition, from 1968, the development of textbooks was monopolised by a specially created institute (*National Institute for Compilation and Translation*, NICT) in the sector of the Ministry of Education (TMOE). When analysing the content of textbooks, Chi-Ming Lee draws attention to six thematic areas: orientation on traditional culture, resistance to communism, glorification of the nation, worship of political leaders, focus on ethnicity and justification for male chauvinism. In further analyses, he justifies the three main features of shaping a narrow mind through Taiwanese moral education and these are: maintaining social order (guarding the nation), attention to maintaining an ideal pattern of a person in line with the preservation of all traditional values and the strengthening of the Chinese identity, rather than Taiwanese identity¹⁷.

The enforcement of the desired content was favoured both by the central government and by specialised sectors within it¹⁸, but also by locally controlled edu-

¹³ T.-Y. Hung (2007), American new character education movement and its implication for grade 1-9 curriculum in Taiwan. “*School Administration Bi-monthly*” no. 48, pp. 300-314.

¹⁴ Z. Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000, p. 26.

¹⁵ T.-Y. Hung (2007), *American new character education...*, op. cit.

¹⁶ H.-Z. Ho, Y.W. Lam &K.-H. Yeh (2013), *Character Education in Taiwan...*, op. cit., p. 364.

¹⁷ C.-M. Lee (2004), *Changes and challenges...*, op. cit.

¹⁸ In the sector of the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (TMOE), the Committee for Discipline and Moralism (CDM), founded in China in 1939, was reactivated to strengthen ideological education, cf: *Ibidem*.

cation. The Ministry of Education defined the content of curricula and textbooks, forcing pupils to address political and ideological subjects. It was important to pass on the anti-communist political ideology and dissemination of traditional Chinese culture and values to the next generations. Top-down ideals and values were present in various school subjects, their role was often emphasised in textbooks based on the history of national heroes or historical figures from imperial times¹⁹. Head teachers favoured the enforcement of the desired content in recruitment procedures. Another aspect of supervising pupils' discipline, such as behavioural patterns and lifestyle habits, was represented by the Department of Discipline (DoD) established in each school. Studies carried out during this period indicate that pupils' argumentation in moral issues was based on the promoted principles and values, rather than on critical thinking recognised as a basis for evaluation in the systems of Western states. The observed problem of reproduced knowledge was used by successive reformers when introducing changes in the curricula²⁰.

In the authoritarian period, "the goal of primary education was to support good citizens or the well-being thereof. The goal of vocational education was to train skilled employees in production. The goal of university education was to educate excellent leaders"²¹. This division, as well as the government's policy in the area of planning workforce with appropriate qualifications, have played a part in the reconstruction of the economy. It is assumed that the emphasis on vocational training in Taiwan has been one of the main pillars of continuous economic growth since the 1970s²². The high level of literacy in the society, which was achieved at an extremely fast pace, was of consequence as well.

Political elites of Taiwan, free of social control, monopolised all sectors by implementing an effective programme of economic development. There were two prime values for KMT, which at all costs had to be preserved: the hegemonic position of the party and the constant modernisation of the country²³. By securing education and infrastructure, the Taiwanese state-party ensured stability of the country by resolving or suppressing social conflicts and unrest. It attracted foreign investments and provided flexibility in adapting the country to internal and

¹⁹ J. F. Meyer (1988), *Moral education in Taiwan*, "Comparative Education Review", no 32(1), pp. 20 (20-38).

²⁰ C.-M. Lee (2004), *Changes and challenges...*, op. cit., p. 581.

²¹ C. Liu (1977), *Education is Dedication*. San Min Book Co: Taipei, Taiwan, p. 43.

²² Y. R. Young (1995), *Taiwan*, [in:] P. Morris, A. Sweeting (eds.) *Education and Development in East Asia*, Garland Press: New York, p. 122.

²³ See: M. Weiner (1966), *Political Participation and Political Development*. [in:] Weiner M (ed.), *Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth*, Washington, D.C.: Voice of America, pp. 228-231.

external challenges²⁴. The elaborated political system of Taiwan effectively pursued economic goals, which made it possible to define it after Jurgen Domesem as a development-oriented authoritarian system, whose specificity are two key features²⁵. “The first is not to interfere with KMT party monopolies in regulating all aspects of social and political life, as opposed to ideologically-oriented elites in totalitarian systems. The second feature is founding a political monopoly on the principles of development towards a developed mass society, rather than preserving the traditional social structure”²⁶.

The transitional period (1988-2003)

After the 1970s, Taiwan’s position in the international arena started to decline radically²⁷. The main reason was the breakup of diplomatic relations between Taiwan and the United States and the establishment of them with the PRC, which since 1972 has already represented all of China in the United Nations²⁸. As a result, Taiwan’s position in international relations was greatly reduced, starting the process of increasing isolation of the island, which was further deepened by the signing of *the Shanghai Communique* by US President Richard Nixon. The president said, “The United States accepts the belief of all the Chinese living on both sides of the

²⁴ “From 1953 to 1986, gross domestic product (GNP) grew at an annual rate of 8.8%, while the gross product per capita (GNP per capita) - 6.2%. In 1989, the income reached \$ 7,200. While in 1951 the income of 20% of the richest inhabitants was 15 times greater than the income of 20% of the poorest, by 1970 this gap narrowed to 4.58: 1, and then to 4.39: 1 in 1983. It made Taiwan one of the most egalitarian economies in the world. As a consequence, more than 50% of the Taiwanese population were in the middle class. “Dz. K. Ka-Lok Chan (1996), authoritarian state and the Taiwanese economic miracle, “Political Studies”, no. 5, p. 123.

²⁵ J. Domes (1981), *Political Differentiation in Taiwan: Group Formation within the Ruling Party and till Opposition Circles 1979-80*, „Asian Survey”, no 10, pp. 1011-1028; See also: H.C. Tai (1970), *The Kuomintang and modernization in Taiwan*; Huntington, Moore (eds.), *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society*, Basic Books: N. Y.; E.A. Winckler (1984), *Institutionalization and Participation on Taiwan: From Hard to Soft Authoritarian?*, “China Quarterly” 1984, September pp. 481-499; T.B. Gold (1986), *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*, Sharpe: N.Y.

²⁶ Domes provides examples of authoritarian systems that are conservative by nature: Franco’s Spain, Salazar’s Portugal or Marcos’s Philippines, cf: K. Ka-lok Chan (1996), *Państwo autorytarne a tajwański...*, op. cit., p. 124.

²⁷ In the international arena, in the years 1949-1971, the Republic of China in Taiwan represented the whole of China at the United Nations, and similarly as the only representative of China, it was recognised by many countries of the world. During the “cold war” the island was under the umbrella of the US and until 1971 received official help and support.

²⁸ The authorities of the PRC emphasised that the problem of Taiwan is an internal issue of China, because it is an integral part of the Middle Kingdom.

Taiwan Strait that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China”²⁹. In a situation of increased isolation, Taiwan changed its policy of “tacit consent to the fact that the world recognises two entities on both sides of the Strait,” and the hostile attitude towards the continent gave way to “the idea of a peaceful fusion of both areas in the future”³⁰.

In the 1980s, during the presidency of Chiang Ching-kuo, Kuomintang partially relaxed the existing restrictions and began to tolerate the trips of Taiwanese citizens visiting relatives on the continent. Also the process of a peaceful introduction of democracy began, and a category of “New Taiwanese” introduced to the realm to internal policies. The process of Taiwanisation began to unite the island community as a homogeneous national organism, which was also considered an important step in the efforts to make the island an independent country³¹. Initiatives aimed at democracy, pluralism and social equality as well as capitalism and technological development were instigated, all of which had a huge impact on the education system. Eventually, legalisation of the Democratic Progress Party (DPP) in 1986 ended the KMT monopoly.

The abolition of martial law and major changes in politics prompted far-reaching transformations in education. A significant example was undoubtedly a change in the position and role of teachers based the Confucian model, in which they possessed absolute power and constituted a source of specific and objective knowledge. Moral and civic education also underwent change, which began to be perceived as dogmatic and anachronistic in the ongoing process of modernisation and social transformation³². As a result, the government introduced a program reform, emphasising the change of working content and methods in *Moral and Civic Education*, with an aim of solving social problems and social diversification. Anti-communist and pro-national ideologies were omitted for critical reasoning, which was particularly lacking in the authoritarian curriculum³³.

In 1993, the Ministry of Education provided primary schools with curricular guidelines, which included instructions on the questions of morality, obedience, patriotism and maintaining relationships with other people, as well as the socie-

²⁹ R. Nixon, Komunikat Szanghajski, cf: K. Wu-Ping (2007), Wpływ stosunków chińsko-tajwańskich na rozwój gospodarczy Tajwanu, „Studia i Materiały” no 2, Wydział Zarządzania UW: Warszawa, p. 105.

³⁰ K. Wu-Ping (2007), Wpływ stosunków chińsko-tajwańskich..., ibidem.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² See: A. Sprenger (1991), Higher moral education in Taiwan. [in:] T. Van Doan, V. Shen, & G. F. McLean (eds.), Chinese foundations for moral education and character development. Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, pp. 155-176.

³³ C.-M. Lee (2004), Changes and challenges..., op. cit., p. 582.

ty and the environment. In addition, the curriculum included lessons on health awareness and critical judgment. In the case of lower secondary schools, guidelines regarding the curricula for *Social Science* and *Moral and Civic Education* were implemented. The curriculum for the upper-secondary level was designed to instil in pupils the rules of social life, responsibility, the need for cooperation and mutual respect, as well as acknowledgement of other ethnic cultures³⁴.

The curriculum for *Civic Education* was amended from a model oriented on Chinese language and culture to a model of social awareness promoting indigenosity, by including information about local Taiwanese customs, history and geography, or multicultural issues. In addition, knowledge of democratic processes and legal concepts was introduced to the curriculum during this period. Desensitisation of the curricular content constituted yet another important aspect, which was clearly visible in the reinterpretation of traditional Confucian ethics based on examples from everyday life. It was a common practice for teachers to supplement the content of textbooks with newspapers or law-related materials and to develop thinking and discussion skills on current topics that were controversial and related to moral and social issues. Also, school activities aimed at developing ways to reduce prejudices and develop greater respect for local residents and local events were organised. However, as indicated by Chi-Ming Lee, there remained the problem of the new approach and greater involvement of teachers as the subject was not included in the scope of the entrance examination and as such, it became devoid of essential meaning in the Taiwanese education system³⁵.

At the end of the 1980s, deregulation processes took root in education. Thus, the government began to share control with other agencies that were increasingly influencing the direction of educational reforms. The market started to play a role in providing textbooks, and the role of law in education management was strengthened. There was also a change introduced to the allocation of power structure among teachers, head teachers and educational administration. Public interest in education reform was also augmented. This phenomenon intensified after the adoption of the Act on Public Organisations in 1989. In the adopted direction of reforms, the following were of great importance: The Council for the Promotion of Teachers' Rights, The Humanistic Education and the Foundation Taiwan Teachers' Association (Taiwanese Teachers' Association). They were an ever stronger group and became important players in the reform process, consistently putting pressure on the government. As a result, a movement for the reform of civic education was

³⁴ Ibidem., pp. 583-584.

³⁵ Ibidem.

created³⁶. Some examples include academic teachers' campaign for university autonomy and reform projects in the field of primary and secondary education postulated by various groups: teachers, pupils and their parents, or religious organisations that claimed that Taiwan's education should be liberal, democratic, local and apolitical. For the government it meant balancing between extreme choices³⁷. In this situation, education reform became a controversial area of social policy in Taiwan that involved various social groups. Their effectiveness was evident in the policy adopted by the Ministry of Education (TMOE) and in the proposed reforms³⁸.

In the official assessment, the school system was permeated by the phenomenon of learning by heart, which eliminated the potential to develop creativity, imagination, critical analysis and the ability to think independently. It was certainly an accepted way of learning, in line with Chinese tradition, which had served the public well for at least 2000 years. Mastery had resulted from memorisation and replication in accordance with the Confucian principle: "respect your superiors, remember your lessons and practice new skills many times"³⁹. Unfortunately, in the school reality, within the existing memory-oriented regime, geography became recitation of geographical names; learning English an exercise in remembering answers to questions on grammar, literary science was meant to test of the ability to quote fragments word for word etc. In addition, a simple relationship was significant, i.e. that if you are not tested, you are not taken seriously⁴⁰. Among teachers, it was a commonplace attitude that "performing tests and comparing achievements was meant to force them to provide pupils with higher requirements as pupils themselves were becoming more demanding, as were their parents and school staff. For them, tests were the only indicators of didactic effectiveness in teachers. Unfortunately, such priorities supported dissemination of instructions related to mindless memorisation"⁴¹.

³⁶ W.-W. Law (2002), *Education Reform in Taiwan: A search for a 'national' identity through democratisation and Taiwanisation*, "Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education", vol. 32, pp. 61-81.

³⁷ X. Song (2009), *Between Civic and Ethnic The Transformation of Taiwanese Nationalist Ideologies (1895 – 2000)*, VUBPRESS Brussels University Press: Brussels, pp. 167-212.

³⁸ T. Cheng-sheng (2007), *Taiwan's Educational Reform and the Future...*, op. cit., pp. 11-14;

³⁹ A. McKnight (1994), *Chinese learners of English: A different view of literacy?* "Open Letter", no 4 (2), p. 41.

⁴⁰ P. Sedlak (1983), *An evaluation of EFL methodology in the R.O.C.* [in:] C. Feng-Pu (ed.) *EFL Readings for Chinese Teachers*. Wen He Publishing, Co.: Taipei, p. 415.

⁴¹ T. Cheng (1993), *Learning to Read in Chinese First Grade Classrooms* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 362 581), p. 10, cf.: C. Murphy & M. Liu (1998), *Choices must be made...*, op. cit., p. 12.

In September 1994, the Council on Education Reform was established. The government's decision to introduce changes was a reaction to the growing dissatisfaction of the public with the current education system, which in the public perception was assessed as 'too rigid'. Pupils were not able to choose their own educational paths that would guarantee the development of their particular talents. The pressure to achieve was also criticised and it was maintained that learning must be seen as more than just taking exams strictly related to memorisation of extensive, mostly irrelevant content.

The main assumptions of the reform were proposed by three social groups and two government agencies. The social groups with a more radical approach emphasised the need for decentralisation, public participation and a more pluralistic political orientation, i.e. pointed to areas reflecting wider needs of the changing socio-political environment in Taiwan. The curricular change was accentuated quite differently by governmental agencies that were more focused on promoting improvements in the general quality of education⁴².

The objectives of the reform included increasing resources for education, improving the equality of access, improving the quality of teacher education, as well as changing curricula and textbooks. Reducing pupils' workloads was seen as a priority as well. In the new proposals for curricula and teaching methods, return to normalcy was publicised as the leading slogan. A commission established by the Ministry of Education was meant to evaluate and verify (simplify) the content of textbooks for the upper-secondary level. It postulated such amendments as, e.g. reduction in the contents of textbooks by 20 to 25 percent, elimination of ambiguities, duplications and continuity problems. However, the planned changes in the teaching content failed to modify entrance examinations. The Ministry of Education also tried to reduce the number of items by combining areas of similar nature, e.g.: *Geography*, *History* and *Social Science* were integrated as a new subject of *Social Sciences*, as well as *Physics*, *Chemistry*, *Biology* and *Earth Science* were to become *Science of Nature*. It was also suggested that the curricula for primary and lower secondary levels should be more closely related to pupils' lives and consist of more interconnected units. In addition, the Education Reform Council, by introducing educational standards, enabled schools to take autonomous decisions regarding curricula. Changes in curricula and educational standards were intended to enable schools to influence decisions about what is taught and to encourage teachers to become involved in the development of curricula. As a result, several recommendations regarding teaching emerged, such as:

⁴² C. Murphy & M. Liu (1998), *Choices must be made...*, op. cit., pp. 13-15.

- reduction of teachers' maximum contact with their pupils to 20 hours per week and introduction of greater flexibility in organising other professional duties;
- two-level reduction in the size of classes. By 1998, a class was to have a maximum of 40 pupils, while in 2006 this number was to be reduced to 30;
- adapting the didactic process to pupils' individual needs and socio-cultural conditions of a given class;
- changing efficiency standards for each subject in order to assess pupils' results and obtain feedback for teachers about the need to help those who do not achieve a sufficient level;
- replacement of the 10-point scale in the classification system with a five-point scale. This approach is interpreted as a measure limiting competition between peers;
- encouraging teachers and pupils to treat all subjects equally, without being divided into 'low or high status' subjects⁴³.

The modern times (since 2004)

An important indicator of the democratisation of modern societies of the 21st century is the extent to which human rights are implemented into the practice of everyday life. Unfortunately, in Taiwan human rights issues have been taboo for many years. Undoubtedly, it was influenced by the very complex connections between history, culture and politics. As a result, education in the field of human rights has not been bestowed with due attention. The breakthrough was as late as in 2000, when the Ministry of Education organised the first press conference devoted to human rights, and in 2001 guidelines for Human Rights Education were announced. These activities were meant to highlight the Taiwanese resolution on the promotion of human rights in education⁴⁴. Both the government and civil society organisations (such as the Taiwanese Association for Human Rights) ran a series of promotional activities on human rights addressed to both pupils and teachers. Education on human rights in Taiwan has been linked to the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, restricting disciplining methods in the work of teachers and pupils, creating a safe learning environment free from criticism and violence, as well as increasing respect for pupils and defending their rights of

⁴³ *Ibidem*

⁴⁴ C.-M. Lee (2004), *Changes and challenges...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 585-588.

freedom⁴⁵. At the end of 2003, these assumptions were already transformed into guidelines of the Ministry of Education, which were to be implemented as a result of integrated activities of teachers, pupils, administration, parents and the local community in the process of creating a “quality school”. Two key assumptions were considered. The first was related to the strengthening of the role of parents in education. The second, with the view that the quality of education is based on school policy and professionalism of teachers.

In the new millennium, new educational reforms have promoted more progressive attitudes, decentralisation, local autonomy and the rights of pupils, parents and teachers⁴⁶. Parental programmes have been introduced to schools, so that parents themselves will become more and more involved in school activities. An important aspect of socio-cultural changes was found in redefinition of the role of gender and parenthood, which clearly manifested itself in the objectives of moral and civic education⁴⁷.

After the end of the transitional period in 2003 and the beginning of the government deregulatory trend, textbooks on the development of character were no longer subject to the control of the National Institute of Compilations and Translation, nor were they issued by the Institute anymore. More importantly, in line with the guidelines established in 2004 by TMOE, moral education was included in the lessons of *Social Science* at primary and secondary levels and was modelled on a core curriculum developed in the United States⁴⁸. Its content exposed respect for the different gender, ethnic and socioeconomic status of individuals and groups, as well as concern for nature and the environment. Resignation from a separate school subject in the field of moral education caused many doubts reported by teachers and school officials. In 2004, the Ministry (TMOE) issued a Moral and Character Education Improvement Program (MCEIP) aimed at: developing pupils’ moral skills, encouraging creation, democratic strategies, shaping and integrating values in formal informal and hidden curricula, supporting schools in building a culture oriented towards pupils’ needs; enabling pupils, school employees, parents and school community leaders to participate in school culture based on character development; support for non-governmental organisations, cultural foundations and the mass media. Achieving the goals was meant to contribute to a better understanding of the links between moral education and the experience

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ P. Chen (2008), Strategic leadership and school reform in Taiwan. “School Effectiveness and School Improvement” vol. 19, no 3, pp.293-294.

⁴⁷ H.-Z. Ho, Y.W. Lam &K.-H. Yeh (2013), Character Education in Taiwan..., op. cit., p. 365.

⁴⁸ S. Doong (2008). Taiwan’s new citizenship curriculum..., op. cit.

of everyday life and the preparation for being full citizens of the world⁴⁹. Efficiency indicators⁵⁰, as well as a nationwide competition addressed at schools to check teachers' creativity in achieving goals and creating innovative educational activities⁵¹, developed by the ministry of TMOE, were meant to constitute support for the implementation of the new MCEIP program.

Introducing new values into the education system (or more broadly social) is not an easy matter. On the one hand, the new values were to strengthen individuality, so indispensable in the development of creativity, innovation, and thus the competitiveness of the society. On the other hand, they could not arise at the expense of values that had been accepted and strongly embedded within the society. In 2009, research was carried out in the area of Taiwanese school culture, during which pupils, parents and school staff were to select basic values to be implemented by schools⁵². It is not a surprise that many of them reflected Confucian ideas. Based on the key values identified for the school community, a set of formal and informal activities was created by practitioners and scientists. They included discussions on controversial topics, raising pupils moral dilemmas or constructing inter-school didactic classes that involved pupils in decision-making processes, among others⁵³.

We may assume that a key challenge today is to balance Confucian values with moral and civic needs. Integration of global and local influences without dismantling identities has been the most important issue in the planning of educational changes⁵⁴. Some researchers criticise the Taiwanese society for following traditional values, for identification with behavioural patterns which constitute obstacles to shaping young characters in a contemporary, pluralistic society. In publications, it is commonplace that modern societies provide platforms on which people 'test' and verify their opinions, for by revealing them, they automatically subject them to public criticism. However, the ubiquitous culture in Taiwan perpetuates the status quo, in effect, blocks or even prevents critical thinking and binds individuals to uncritical preservation of traditional virtues. Hence, it is increasingly possible to come across a position justifying that the only way for Taiwan is to go through moral relativism, and then to build a modern and universal system based on the

⁴⁹ C.-M. Lee (2009), The planning, implementation, and evaluation of a character-based school culture project in Taiwan. "Journal of Moral Education", no 38(2), pp. 165-184.

⁵⁰ C.-M. Lee (2004), Changes and challenges..., op. cit., pp. 585-588.

⁵¹ C.-M. Lee (2009), The planning, implementation and evaluation..., op. cit., p. 166.

⁵² T. Cheng-sheng (2007), Taiwan's Educational Reform and the Future..., op. cit.

⁵³ C.-M. Lee (2009), The planning, implementation, and evaluation..., op. cit.,

⁵⁴ T. Cheng-sheng (2007), Taiwan's Educational Reform and the Future..., op. cit.

values of democracy, justice and care for the citizen⁵⁵. The dilemmas certainly testify to the existence of tension between modern and traditional values, and overcoming them will affect the future shape of education in Taiwan.

Summary

Although the process of democratisation of Taiwan, which has been progressing gradually since the 1980s, is no longer doubted, the long-lived strong autonomy of the party-state, as well as limited modern potential resulting from contradictory demands in the wake of both domestic and international policies, make up a difficult situation, not found anywhere else in the Far East. In light of the divergent views of the governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the question how effectively (or whether it is possible and reasonable) Taiwan can move from a development-oriented authoritarian system to a development-oriented democratic system that ensures the maintenance of a strong state that satisfies expectations social and solving contentious issues, still remains. The jury is still out.

However, the Taiwanese society is changing. Moreover, the observed changes have been instituted at a much faster rate than in most industrialised nations. While the process of industrialisation and urbanisation in the United States lasted 50 years, in Taiwan the same process was completed in less than 20 years. The GDP growth rates have been 8 percent per year since 1970. Against this background, the transformation process of Taiwan shows the transition from a largely agrarian economy to an emerging post-industrial society. However, not only the process of transition is important, but also its pace. Because it was three times faster than the big changes during the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain⁵⁶. Taiwanese education system developed at a comparable pace to that of economic development. Education has been an arena for developing, manifesting, consolidating and communicating democratic ideals, respecting ethnic and cultural differences, and supporting the 'new national identity' of Taiwanese citizens. Equally rapid was the process of transition from teaching (mainly based on passive methods) to learning and helping pupils to acquire the skills of self-directed learning, as a basis for lifelong education⁵⁷.

The peaceful transfer of power in 2000 from KMT to DPP was a tangible proof of a fairly well-established democracy. The phenomenon is explained by

⁵⁵ C.-M. Lee (2004), *Changes and challenges...*, op. cit., p. 590.

⁵⁶ K. Wu-Ping (2007), *Wpływ stosunków chińsko-tajwańskich na rozwój...*, op., cit.

⁵⁷ N. Clark (2010), *Education in Taiwan...*, op. cit

researchers through the existence of two groups of interrelated factors. The first includes socio-economic conditions conducive to the development of democracy, such as: successful economic growth, demand for greater autonomy among entrepreneurs and professionals, the development of the middle class, increased level of education within the society, interactions with the outside world, in particular with Western countries and as a result of ongoing trade, the need to respond to democratic values and to be able to adopt them. The second group of factors is of socio-political character and concerns the redistribution of power between the state and the society, which has made democratisation in Taiwan a peaceful transition without bloodshed or revolution⁵⁸. Two stages were important in this process: transformation from an authoritarian system to democracy as part of the KMT domination (the first presidential election in 1996) and the second stage: transfer of power from KMT to the DPP in the 2000 presidential election. The structure and functioning of various institutions in Taiwan makes it possible for citizens to actively participate in political life, including the organisation of the opposition.

The process of democratisation of social life in Taiwan was confronted with Confucianism supported by the education system⁵⁹. Many scholars saw Confucianism as politically limiting, and even thought that it had an oppressive influence on the development of capitalism. For example, Max Weber identified it with the strength that contributed to delaying the Chinese economic development. In his opinion, the recognition of the unchanging order of society, attachment to ancestors, and criticism of the pursuit of wealth, discredited the economic development of societies and as such, constituted evidence for historical superiority of the West⁶⁰. Unfortunately, Weber's assumptions were not confirmed in Taiwan. In the early 1980s, Roderick MacFarquhar published an article in *The Economist*, in which he justified the relationship between Confucianism and economic activity (capitalism) and emphasised its positive role in economic development⁶¹. An equally significant force of transformation in Taiwan turned out to be education,

⁵⁸ See: K. Wu-Ping (2007), *Wpływ stosunków chińsko-tajwańskich ...*, op. cit.; K. Ka-Lok Chan (1996), *Państwo autorytarne a tajwański...*, op. cit.

⁵⁹ H.-L. Pan (2007), *School Effectiveness and Improvement in Taiwan*. [in:] T. Townsend et al. (eds.), *International Handbook of School Effectiveness and Improvement*. Springer: Dordrecht, p. 277.

⁶⁰ M. Weber (2010), *Etyka protestancka a duch kapitalizmu*, Wyd. Aletheia: Warszawa; M. Weber (1968), *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, The Free Press: New York.

⁶¹ For more see: R.S. Suleski (2005). *The Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University: a Fifty Year History, 1955-2005*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

which Prime Minister Lien Chan recognised in 1996 as a key factor responsible for the achievements of Taiwan's economy and politics⁶².

Unfortunately, in the process of change, as Lee notes, the system based on old moral values 'went bankrupt', while the new, more open system has not yet been established. Therefore, some people are willing to accept moral relativism, which may result in a lack of social cohesion and in the building of a properly modern system of values relating to democracy, justice and care for citizens⁶³. This undoubtedly requires a systemic approach and mutual cooperation as well as a positive impact within families, schools and communities. This direction leads to the need to answer the questions of how to balance the culture of the East and the West and how to avoid the crisis of cultural identity, as well as how education can help reduce the tension caused by the opposing political ideologies. These are questions that must be peacefully addressed through education, and Taiwan is constantly looking for new answers.

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⁶² T. Cheng-sheng (2007), *Taiwan's Educational Reform and the Future...*, op. cit.

⁶³ C.-M. Lee (2012), *Moral and character education in Taiwan: History and lessons to be drawn*. Report for: The Jubilee Centre for Character and Values, Character and Public Policy: Educating for an Ethical Life, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, cf: H.-Z. Ho, Y.W. Lam &K.-H. Yeh (2013), *Character Education in Taiwan...*, op. cit., pp. 366.

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