

The KMT Party-State in Education and the Media, 1950s-1960s

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Introduction: The partification of education and the press

The 'partification of education' (*danghua jiaoyu*) was an aspiration of the Chinese Nationalist Party leadership from the 1920s in China. At that time, it meant requiring schools to teach classes in 'party principles' (*dang yi*). In theory, this task was to be handled by a specialist teacher with party membership, but this proved impracticable. The Nationalist Party had been conceived as an elite vanguard. Membership processes were selective, and very few teachers were members. The party's approach to membership shifted in the Second World War, when it began to dramatically expand recruitment in competition with the Communist Party. This, to an extent, emulated European fascist parties, which had broad memberships primed to lead mass mobilizations of the public. By the end of the Nationalist Party's rule in Mainland China, probably around half of all secondary school teachers were party members in the Nationalist capital region in southern Jiangsu.

In Taiwan, the Nationalist government recruited large numbers of teachers from the mainland between 1945 and 1949. Throughout the martial law period, Taiwanese people often assumed that one had to be party member to be a school principal, or even an ordinary teacher. This was not an explicit policy. The government preferred to present a professional ideal of teachers and education leaders as qualified by education credentials alone. The term 'partification of education' was now used by critics of the government, who persistently alleged that there were unwritten rules requiring party membership and that the Nationalist Party used schools to bolster its rule, including in the early years of democratization.

The Nationalist government also maintained strict controls over the press in the martial law era. At times, independent sections of the press produced robust discussion of social and political problems, as the journal *Free China (Ziyou Zhongguo)* did between 1957 and 1958.¹ In one editorial, the paper argued that "The officials also should not think that as long as they can keep intimidating people and making everyone keep their mouths shut, they will be able to maintain control."² In 1960, *Free China* was shut down, and the paper's founder Lei Chen, who had already been expelled from the Nationalist Party in 1954, was charged with sedition and imprisoned. Similar examples are cited in the first source below.

¹ Dominic Yang, *The Great Exodus from China: Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Modern Taiwan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 121.

² Yang, *The Great Exodus*, 121.

The first document below is an extract from questions asked by Li Wan-chu 李萬居 (1901-1966) in a 1953 session of the Provisional Provincial Assembly. Li was a 'Half-Mainlander' who grew up in Japanese Taiwan and moved to Shanghai to study in 1924.³ Two years later he went to France to study, then returned to China in 1932. He returned to Taiwan with the Nationalists in 1945 and took charge of a conservative state-run paper *New Life News* (*xinshengbao*). Li was a member of the Chinese Youth Party, which he had joined in France. He also became the first deputy speaker of the Taiwan Provincial People's Political Council (*canyihui*), an indirectly elected advisory body formed in August 1945. Many of the Council's members were arrested after the 2.28 massacre. Li left *New Life News* after 2.28 and founded *Public Forum News* (*gonglunbao*).

In 1950, the Provincial People's Political Council was reconstituted as the Provisional Provincial Assembly (*linshi shengyihui*), which became the Provincial Assembly (*shengyihui*) in 1959.⁴ In all forms it was an advisory body with no real power. It made proposals to the provincial government, heard provincial government reports, asked questions to representatives of the provincial government, and accepted petitions from the public. Nevertheless, it was directly elected from 1954, and was the highest representative body in Taiwan. It was the only institution in Taiwan in which the government could be questioned by representatives of the people. The branch of government to which its representatives submitted questions was the provincial government, which handled civil affairs, agriculture, transport and education. National defence, foreign relations and foreign trade were handled by the central government.

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³ Biographical details from Chien-Jung Hsu, *The Construction of National Identity in Taiwan's Media, 1896-2012*, 65-66.

⁴ Chiang Ta-shu, "From the Taiwan Provincial Assembly to the Taiwan Provincial Consultative Council: The Readjustment of Organizational Functions and Structure," *Issues & Studies*, 35, no. 2 (1999): 9.

6. Taiwan Provincial Assembly Historical Database. Translated by Joseph Lawson. Primary Sources on Taiwanese History, 2021, <http://taiwanprimarysources.com>.

Chung, Ch'un (仲春). "I Attended a Friendship Conference for Women School Teachers (我參加中小學女教師聯誼會)." *Taiwan People's Voice News* (臺灣民聲日報), August 7, 1962. Translated by Joseph Lawson. Primary Sources on Taiwanese History, 2021, <http://taiwanprimarysources.com>.

Document 1:

**Extract from the record of the fifth session of the first Taiwan
Temporary Provincial Assembly, on 14 December 1953**

臨時省議會第一屆第五定期大會

[https://drtpa.th.gov.tw/index.php?act=Display/image/8789=Ycq
bZd#HExb6](https://drtpa.th.gov.tw/index.php?act=Display/image/8789=Ycq
bZd#HExb6).

002-01-050A-03-6-8-00-00145

1. Regarding the ruling party and education: This [provincial] assembly received a complaint last December from someone who declared they were a teacher at Taipei Girls' Normal School, fiercely attacking the principal of that school, Ch'in Tse-hsien (秦則賢). After I read it, I sighed deeply. What was Ch'in's record in administering the school? I have no way of knowing and no grounds to criticize. But one line is worthy of everyone's attention as we implement constitutional government today. This line astonished me. At the start of the complaint the writer claimed that "Ch'in Tse-hsien became the principal and a party member at the same time, bypassing the local party branch, which is against regulations and should be investigated. With only three months experience in the party, Ch'in has a muddled understanding of the party, and has neglected the party work in the campus branch, even obstructing it in every possible way to the point that there is no way for it to progress." But the ruling party should take its activities out of schools, and the ruling party must not use students as tools in its political struggle. Although this is not clearly stated in the constitution, it is widely supported in public opinion. Our country has had constitutional government for several years now. Yet evidently there are still people who believe that lack of a long record in the party should make you ineligible for a position such as a school principal, or that non-party members should not be teachers. The fine talk in the complaint is the result of the participation of education, and it makes one shudder to hear it. Of course, this is only what some people think, but I wonder what the government, or the ruling party's central committee, would have to say about this view?

2. Regarding stories that you cannot get a position as a principal, or even any teaching post if you are not a party member: I have heard stories that at any school (except universities), that only Chinese Nationalist Party members can be principals or even teachers. In the

last two years, I have received many complaints from people who said that they were pushed out because they were not party members. Does the government have such a policy?

[...]

5. Regarding freedom of speech in Free China: According to section 2, article 11 of the constitution of the Republic of China, people have freedom to speak, teach, write, and publish. This fundamental provision sounds magnificent and beautiful. The words sweep me away when I read them. Of course, this is an exceptional time, in which we resist Communism and the Soviet Union. There must be certain limits on freedom of speech, but the government should also be more tolerant. Severely punishing people for careless mistakes and slip-ups, in my view, results in a loss for the government, and, more importantly, a loss for the nation. An employee of the *Public Forum News*, due to over-excitement, published some trivial news. This was just a momentary slip, but the result was that the chief editor, the editor, and the journalist were all imprisoned for six months, with suspended sentences of two years. I do not know if the chairman of the provincial government has heard about this or not? If the government cannot even tolerate a detached, objective, and impartial newspaper, how can we expect anyone to be contented and compliant? The *Independent Evening News*⁵ published an article with some ridiculous content, and though I believe this to be a completely innocent mistake, it was also harshly punished. Was this not excessively strict? Was there any legal basis for the punishment? The editor of *China News* was also sentenced to prison, which seems excessive. What is the [provincial] chairman's view?

[...]

Respondent: Yu Hung-chun (俞鴻鈞), chairman of the Taiwan Provincial Government.

1. Regarding the question of party membership and education, I can guarantee that, except for the Communist Party, the government treats

⁵ *The Independent Evening Press* was established in 1947 as the first Chinese-language evening paper in Taiwan. One of its founding principles was to 'support no party or faction'. In 1950, it republished 'Feeble Old Man of the Grass Mountain' (*Caoshan yi shuai weng*) from a Hong Kong paper, which was interpreted as an attack on Chiang Kai-shek.

all parties the same without discrimination. If a school principal dismisses a teacher, there must be another reason. It cannot be because that teacher is not a member of the Nationalist Party, because the Nationalist Party has no intention of not allowing non-party members to be school principals or teachers. Stories that only Nationalist Party members can be teachers or principals are nothing more than rumours. If the dismissals that Assemblyman Li refers to were illegal, I am willing to investigate these claims and resolve them.

[...]

4. Regarding freedom of speech, I personally agree that the government ought to show a degree of leniency. But the *Public Forum News* leaked military secrets, the *Independent Evening News* insulted the head of state, and the *China News* published lewd stories, so these cases should be punished according to the law. As for the severity of the punishment, this is a matter for the courts. It would be inappropriate for the provincial government to comment.

Women, school-teaching, and the KMT Party-state

Most schoolteachers in Taiwan in the first half of the twentieth century were men, although teaching was typically considered an appropriate career for the very small number of women who received a senior secondary or higher education. As in other East Asian countries, this situation began to change in the 1950s. In 1956, there were 24,762 teachers in state schools in Taiwan, of whom 11,601 were teachers' school graduates with qualifications that—following a government assessment exercise—were officially recognized.⁶ One third of these recognized graduates were women.

The number of women in teaching rose rapidly in the following decades. By the mid-1960s, members of the Taiwan Provincial Assembly began to express concern about the high ratios of women to men teachers, worrying that the burdens of marriage and childcare would make women less effective. The rise of women in the teaching workforce was driven by several factors. Traditional associations between women and childcare were important, but possibly not critical in the beginning. The idea that teaching is a form of care-work was not prominent in the 1950s. The connection between teaching and mothering had to be explicitly fostered, though the mass media, and in conferences like the one described below. Probably more important in the early stages of women's entry into teaching was the existence of gender-segregated schools, and the notion that girls' schools should have women teachers, an ideal that was unfulfilled in the 1950s since women were still only a minority in the profession.⁷ The rapid universalization of first primary and then secondary education in the post-war decades, in a context in which many girls were educated in girls' schools, therefore required large numbers of women teachers.

Since its founding the Nationalist Party was a highly patriarchal organization. The Nationalist leadership had made some limited effort to recruit women during its wartime expansion, but these efforts were much more noticeable in party's youth wing, the *Sanqingtuan*, than in the party itself. On the Mainland in the 1940s, the party targeted teachers for recruitment, but even in the capital Nanjing, not all teachers applied for membership or were admitted. Women teachers were far less likely than men to join, even controlling for level of education.⁸ As women became more visible in the Nationalist party-state in Taiwan with the rise of women in key

⁶ "全省國校教員將近三萬人," 中國日報, June 28, 1956.

⁷ "臺灣省臨時省議會/第二屆/第三次定期大會公報" (June 27, 1955), 002-02-03OA-06-5-3-05-00559, 台灣省議會史料總庫, <https://drtpa.th.gov.tw/index.php?act=Display/image/86277TIKluu#YGuF1>.

⁸ See J. Lawson, forthcoming. This research draws on registers of teachers from the Jiangsu Provincial Archives, folder numbers 4013-005-0948, and 4013-005-0955

professions such as teaching, the party made greater efforts to promote women's active engagement with party institutions, as can be seen in the document below.

Document 2:

**“I Attended a Friendship Conference for Women School Teachers
我參加中小學女教師聯誼會。” *Taiwan People’s Voice News* 臺灣民聲日報,
August 7, 1962. [http://das.nlpi.edu.tw/cgi-
bin/g32/gswweb.cgi/ccd=7xt_nQ/record?r1=141&h1=0](http://das.nlpi.edu.tw/cgi-bin/g32/gswweb.cgi/ccd=7xt_nQ/record?r1=141&h1=0).**

I Attended a Friendship Conference for Women Schoolteachers

-Chung Ch'un (仲春)

28 July. Although it's the middle of summer, the morning has no hint of muggy heat. Rays of sun break through the cloud, and the morning breeze brushes my face, comfortable and refreshing.

Feeling excited, I'm on my way to attend the third friendship conference of women schoolteachers. Walking south along Minquan Road, just past Taichung National Secondary School, one comes to a magnificent, lofty building, designed to reflect our national heritage. This is the newly constructed Teachers' Hall (會館)—our home. A true edifice! Astonished by its splendour, I was carried away! In that moment, I forgot the inflammation in one of the toes on my left foot and rushed forward inside the building, admiring the manicured lawn, the great red door, inlaid above with a floral pattern in silver with a gold border, the blue curtains, cream floor tiles, and the antique tea tables and chairs. Every room, every corner had a unique design; the perfectly matching colours were elegant and bright. It was beautiful but dignified and calm. Liu T'ang-chi (劉湯馭), the minister of education, and Tso Hsiu-mei (左修梅), a section chief in the city Nationalist Party branch, had arrived early to welcome us, making us feel at home as we entered.

In the palatial conference hall, uniquely styled lights hung like lanterns from a white ceiling. Strangely, the room was refreshing and cool even though there were no electric fans or air conditioning. Before the conference started, a few hundred women teachers crowded into the hall in relaxed and happy conversations. All of them appeared elegant and likable, fully embodying the proper demeanour of teachers!

At 8:30, Minister Liu, Chief Commissioner (主委) Chao from the city branch of the party, Assemblyman Wang from the provincial assembly, and Chief Commissioner (主委) Hsü from the Yangmingshan branch of the party arrived. I sat straight upright; would there be an important instruction? Or a specialized lecture? There were neither. Instead, there were relaxed, cordial words. First, Chief Commissioner Chao gave a friendly opening address explaining the purpose of the conference and introducing the senior officials and honoured guests. After that Minister Liu spoke: “After the construction of the Teachers’ Hall, I wanted to invite you first, to honour the promise made at the last conference. Women teachers are teachers in our classrooms, but also they are ladies (主婦) of our homes. Their hours spent teaching are longer than men, and their work in education heavier.” Because of this Minister Liu had cleared time in his busy schedule to come all the way from Taipei, where he would have to return in the fierce heat of the afternoon! That was right, we all bore the double burden of work in our schools and homes. We were not only women teachers at work, but also had the sacred work of giving birth, caring, and educating the next generation at home.

Next was Assemblyman Wang: “If anyone feels out of place in this Teachers’ Hall, that’s wrong. Everyone should consider themselves a joint owner of this hall. This magnificent building is for us to use for further study and improvement.” Money is not welfare, and welfare is something we all have to work together to achieve cooperatively, and he also said: “Japanese teachers get a salary that pays their living costs and a pension, but no other welfare benefits. They have it a lot worse than our teachers!”

Mr. Wang was right. Since Minister Liu started in his post, teachers’ pay and benefits had been adjusted several times. We had mutual aid for weddings and funerals, our children could get scholarships for professional college, we could get aid for going on study trips abroad, and this Teachers’ Hall had been built. Hadn’t this all been done for our welfare?

Finally, Chief Commissioner Hsü spoke: “We hope that all us sisters will join hands under the flag of the Chinese Nationalist Party, to unite in pursuit of the Three Principles of the People, the development of Taiwan, the counterattack against the Mainland, and the recovery of our

homeland's rivers and mountains, to complete the historic mission of the national revolution." Mr Hsü spoke only for a brief time, less than one hour, but the speech gave us inspiration and encouragement, and was concluded with enthusiastic applause. Afterwards the minister led us to an exhibition showing progress in education, with tables of statistics, photos, models, and examples of student work. These were laid out systematically, and hostesses were on hand to explain each item, so we could get a thorough understanding. Finally, we went to an air-conditioned dining hall. The tables were laid with cakes and refreshing juice, just like big family tables. We sat on comfortable chairs and talked with one another, and Mr. Liu stayed to chat with us. He had a friendly attitude, just like an elder sibling with young children.

On the way home, I felt something I couldn't fully articulate. Excited. Moved. That was it, excited by the grandeur of China's cultural heritage, and moved by the deeply meaningful experience of friendship at the conference. We were eager to unite in this friendship, and struggle in the mission to recover our country and fully promote China's great culture.