

# Glocalization: Art Education in Taiwan

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## Abstract

Taiwan has always been subject to globalizing influences. In the past twenty years, the rapid development of information technology and increasing cross-cultural interactions has catalyzed a new “global village” consciousness. While some may see globalization as a recent phenomenon, in Taiwan, globalization started at least as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

This article traces the evolution of art education in Taiwan from a historical view, and argues that glocalization, instead of globalization, may be a better word to describe what happened in Taiwan and in its art education field. The term “glocalization” originated in the 1980s and was popularized by the sociologist Roland Robertson. Glocalization, a portmanteau of globalization and localization, is used in this article to emphasize the point that globalization and localization are actually complementary processes. The local is integrally tied to the global, and global to the local. Taiwan’s art education, for example, has adopted the experiences and theories of other countries and assumed unique qualities based on its own politics, economics, society and culture. From traditional apprenticeships to Western style public schools, Art education in Taiwan is influenced not only by what happens inside the field but also by general educational policies which reflect national identities, political and economic situations. The development of the profession of art education in Taiwan also engages processes of change, adaptation, and negotiation.

**Key Words:** Art Education, History, Globalization, Glocalization, Taiwan

## Writing in an Ambiguous Time

Taiwan<sup>1</sup> (Republic of China or ROC) has long been subject to globalizing influences. Under the Dutch and Spanish, the Ming Dynasty, the Ching Dynasty, Japanese colonial rule (1895 – 1945) and the Chinese Nationalist governance (1945 – 2000)<sup>2</sup>, Taiwan has historically been influenced by outsiders or by large population movements. These migrations and changes in governing entities have both created a nation of diverse interests and peoples, and caused a lack of consensus about Taiwan's national and cultural identity. In the past twenty years, the rapid development of information technology and increasing cross-cultural interactions have crystallized a new “global village” consciousness within Taiwanese educational thought, one which will have a deep, lasting, and reinvigorating impact on Taiwanese culture.

As citizens of a small “country/nation-state,” the people of Taiwan have a fear of being left behind, so we are always quick to accept novelty. Education, “a site of struggle and compromise,” has become both “cause and effect, determining and determined” (Apple, 2000, p. 58). Education policies interact with political, economic, social and cultural changes. Art, as a required course in the school curriculum, similarly undergoes directional changes. As Desai and Chalmers (2007) point out, “(s)chools have always been subject to an overwhelming variety of socio-political demands, which shift in response to the political climate – impacting art education in different ways” ( p. 6). In Taiwan, the powerful influence of historical and political forces on education cannot be ignored. Taking into consideration that “one way to reexamine the apparent inevitability of globalization is to situate the contemporary debate in a historical framework” (Burbules & Torres, 2000, p.3), this paper traces the evolution of art education in Taiwan within the

<sup>1</sup> Taiwan, also known as Formosa or Republic of China, comprises Taiwan Island and other islands including Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu.

<sup>2</sup> Chen Shui-bian, who was elected in 2000, was the first non-KMT president of Taiwan. The 2008 election of President Ma Ying-jeou then marked the second peaceful transfer of power back to the KMT.

context of globalizing forces, and then discusses our insights about this evolution.

Why is the Taiwan example important? Although we believe that the Taiwan example is unique, we also note that many aspects of what has happened here can also be observed in many other places in the world. With the collapse of centuries of European Colonialism throughout the world, the fall of the Soviet Union, and other events of great magnitude, newly emerging countries world-wide are establishing and reestablishing their own national identities, educational and cultural practices, and economic and political futures. And like nearly 100 new nations established at the end of World War II, Taiwan is also trying to work its way out of massive identity crises to fashion a future out of its tangle of historical legacies (Frazier, 2005).

The struggle of Taiwan for 'national' identity has been complicated by its past and present relations to the Mainland China. The future of Taiwan is yet uncertain just as the field of art education in Taiwan is continuing to unfold and change. Our uncertain future allows a sense of imagination but at the same time presents difficulty in drawing a final conclusion. With this uncertain future, this paper presents a view from the Asia-Pacific region. It reflects the current thinking of the authors who studied and worked for many years abroad before returning to Taiwan and working toward the advancement of its art education.

## The History of Art Education in Taiwan

The following section will briefly explain the history of art education in Taiwan, before discussing the complexities of the present situation. Due to word limitation and for the sake of clarity, many details were omitted. It is important to know that what presented in the following is therefore not a complete detailed account of art education history in Taiwan<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed account, please see Wang, L.Y. (2008). An overview of art education development in Taiwanese schools. In M.C. Cheng (Ed.), *Taiwan arts education history* (pp.105- 162). Taipei: National Arts Education Center.

## Educational Practices in Taiwan Prior to the Establishment of Public Schools

Evidence of human life in Taiwan dated back at least 15,000 years to the Paleolithic Age. "Taiwan's early aboriginal groups led a fairly insular existence and had no island-wide politically unifying organization. Naturally, there was no state" (Huang, 2007, p. 1). Although the original inhabitants of Taiwan left few written records of their origins, current archaeological research and linguistic analysis suggest that Taiwan's indigenous groups are Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian) people.

In 1622, the Dutch East India Company established a base on the Penhua Island but was promptly driven away by Ming Dynasty forces. The Dutch then set up a base in the south of Taiwan in 1624 and extended their hegemony over the island's southwestern coast. Meanwhile, in 1626, a rival Spanish consortium occupied areas in northern Taiwan, but was driven away by the Dutch in 1642. In 1662, Jheng Cheng-gong led an army of soldiers from southern China and ended four decades of Dutch governance. In other words, from 1624 to 1662, Taiwan was a Western colony, colonized by both the Dutch and the Spanish. A short span of self-rule under the Jheng family ended in 1683 and from 1683 to 1895, Taiwan was governed by China.

And beginning in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwanese lowland indigenous groups were inexorably driven into the island's mountainous interior, "overwhelmed by alien conquerors from both Europe and Asian, and by wave upon wave of immigration of Han people fleeing poverty and war in China" (Government Information Office, Republic of China, 2008, p. 1). Desiring better lives, and seeking refugee from upheavals during the transition between the Ming and Ching dynasties, the ancestors of Taiwan's Han people began migrating from China's southeastern provinces to the island in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. "Over the centuries, many indigenes have been assimilated into Han-immigrant communities, and many Taiwanese have both Han and indigenous ancestry" (Government Information Office, Republic of China, 2008, p. 1).

Little is written about Taiwan's history of art educational practice in these earlier days, but starting from the 1630s, missionaries began to set up

mission schools in Taiwan. Although music was part of the religious school curriculum from its earliest days. The role of visual art in these schools was less clear. In addition to the missionary schools, a traditional Chinese education system was also adopted in Taiwan.

One key feature of such a system was the competitive examinations at local, district, and national levels. “The competitive examination that all young men could take was the method for academic, social and economic advancement” because passing these tests gave one the opportunity to seek appointment in government, education, or other governmentally controlled sectors of society (Smith, 1981, p. 32). To prepare students for the exams, at the local level, a group of parents would employ a teacher to work with the young men of the village – either in small groups or on a tutorial basis. Instruction in these private lessons focused on the writings of Confucius and Mencius, the poetry and literary arts...etc. The methodology of the teaching/learning process consisted of copying the great texts of the past, interpreting them and memorizing those portions relevant to the times, and passing the inevitable district examinations (Smith, 1981). Teachers were often men, and so were the students. Wealthy families also hired artists and people who have passed the higher levels of examinations to teach their children Chinese painting and calligraphy. Children of lower socioeconomic classes could engage in traditional arts and craft making through apprenticeships. After acquiring the necessary skills from their masters, young men could be employed or start their own business.

### **Japanese Period (1895 – 1945)**

In 1895, Japan defeated China in the Sino-Japanese War (1894 – 1895). The Treaty of Shimonoseki ceded Taiwan to Japan. Taiwan, including Penghu Island, became Japan’s first colony. Perhaps for this reason, Japan was determined to make the administration in Taiwan a success. Public education was an important means of Japanese state control and intercultural dialogue. Elementary schools and teachers’ colleges were established; both male and female students started attending these modern schools. Courses in the visual arts and crafts gradually entered the public school curriculum. At that time there were no professional art schools in

Taiwan. Besides, since very few Taiwanese people were admitted to secondary schools and colleges due to educational inequity<sup>4</sup>, a new wave of young students started going abroad, especially to Japan, to earn higher degrees.

As traditional apprenticeships and private tutoring been replaced by Western style public schools, the teaching and learning of art changed drastically during the Japanese rule. For example, Japanese artists and teachers introduced to Taiwan new concepts of art and art education, most of which were developed in Japan and Europe. New ways of art making, such as gouache painting, watercolor, oil painting, and new training methods that emphasized drawing began to influence Taiwan artistic practices and fostered a new generation of Taiwanese artists. For example, the former director of Taiwan Museum of Art, Lee Wuh-Kuen (2006, p. 18) points out that:

The influence of western painting came through a number of different channels, including the modernization of art education, the impact of art schools in Tokyo and the Japanese art community in general and the organization of exhibitions such as the Imperial Art Exhibition, Taiwan Art Exhibition and Governor's Art Exhibition. These factors combined to usher in a new type of Taiwanese art – “outdoor landscape” painting – which produced works representing natural scenery and people, or recorded folk customs and allusions to current events.

Japan had a profound social and cultural impact on Taiwan. The direction and goals of art education were modeled upon those of Japanese schools. Japanese art education textbooks were modified and published for Taiwanese school children. Many recognized that under Japanese rule expanded educational opportunities were provided to school age children. But because of the attention that was devoted to transforming Taiwanese children into Japanese imperial subjects, Japanese colonial efforts also

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<sup>4</sup> Glaring inequities of treatment between Taiwanese versus Japanese students persisted despite slogans such as “everyone treated equally,” “ethnic coalescence” advocated by colonial authorities.

encountered resistance. Starting from self-organized armed resistance to cultural reform efforts led by the Taiwanese Cultural Association in the 1920s, Taiwanese people both embraced new changes and voiced their concerns using a variety of means.

### **After World War II (1945 – 1987)**

After Japan's loss in World War II in 1945, the Nanking-based Republic Of China (R.O.C.) government declared Taiwan a province of China, citing the Cairo Declaration<sup>5</sup> as its justification. Initially, Taiwanese people, who had been under Japanese rule for 50 years, welcomed the Chinese Nationalist forces. But the joy soon changed into sorrow and anger when the new authority appeared to be repressive and corrupt. The tension gradually burst out into the open in the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident in 1947. The follow up military suppression led to arrest and execution of many Taiwanese leading figures and students, lawyers, doctors...etc.

In 1949, the R.O.C Government led by Chiang Kai-shek and Kuomintang (KMT), also known as the Nationalists in China, after losing control of Mainland China to the communists, "retreat" to Taiwan and established ROC there. The lost mainland territories then became the People's Republic of China (PRC) established by the communist party.

The relocation of the KMT government from China to Taiwan brought a new influx of Han immigrants hailing from a variety of provinces in China, and significantly changed the ethnic makeup the people in Taiwan. On May 20, 1949, the Taiwan Military Garrison Command declared martial law on Taiwan. Although the imposition of martial law was justified on the basis of the civil war with the Communist and intended to be temporary, Taiwan remained under martial law for 38 years until 1987.

The change of government thereby brought another wave of educational reforms. Building upon the public school system set up under

<sup>5</sup> The Cairo Declaration was a result from Cairo conference at Cairo, Egypt, on November 27, 1943. President Franklin Roosevelt of the United States, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom, and the Chiang Kai-shek of the Republic of China were present. Some argue that the document is simply a statement of intent and non-binding press release. The counterargument is that while the Cairo Declaration itself was a non-binding declaration, it was given legal effect ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo\\_Declaration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo_Declaration)).



Japanese rule, many additional new policies and structures were introduced into Taiwan public education. School curricula began to adopt the system developed in Mainland China. Instead of teaching students to become loyal Japanese citizens, the new school curricula placed heavy emphasis on Chinese language, culture and history, intending to infuse a new sense of Chinese cultural and national identity. In the national visual art standards, the teaching of Chinese painting and other traditional Chinese art forms were listed as major components in art education. Despite the fact that many Taiwanese people's native languages are Holo (Taiwanese), Hakka and aboriginal languages. For many years, only Standard Mandarin (Chinese) was taught in schools; students were forbidden and even punished for speaking their native languages in schools.

Particularly during the period of Martial Law (1949 – 1987), economic growth and a solid Chinese national identity were the top priorities of the KMT. Art and crafts courses, although still officially part of the school curriculum, were sometimes “borrowed” to teach other “core subjects”. In addition to promoting Chinese culture heritage, art education was also considered as one of the ways to prepare students for their careers, and to instill a diligent work ethic. With the support of the government, mainstream Mainland Chinese values and practices came to dominate cultural life in Taiwan. However, increasing international trades and communication brought in other outside influences. The influences of the west were evident in many disciplines.

For example, art debates in Taiwan in the 1950s and 1960s focused on whether and how artists should incorporate traditional Chinese painting with new Western styles of art making. The profession of art education as a distinct discipline in the 1960s was just beginning to develop, and did not seem to be concerned with the possible conflicts between “East and West.” For Taiwanese art educators and researchers who worked hard to establish their own journals and deliberated about the best ways of teaching art, particular theories of art education that were developed and promoted in other countries seemed to be good ways of stimulating new ways of thinking about art education in Taiwan.



Starting from the 1960s Herbert Read and Victor Lowenfeld's ideas were translated into Mandarin. Children's drawing contests and exhibitions were held around the country. The importance of self-expression and education through the arts were advocated particularly by art educators<sup>6</sup>. This new approach echoed, to a certain degree, the "child-centered approach" developed in other countries. Although these drawing contests did successfully gain media attention and support among teachers, and help to promote the idea of not to judge students' works by adults standards, the concept of competition somewhat ironically contradicted the original ideas of child-centered approach. Regardless the interpretation (or possible misinterpretation) of Western ideology, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwanese art field has learned much from Europe and the US, despite worries about "following in the footsteps of others."

In 1971, when Taiwan (ROC) lost its seat in the United Nations to the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan also lost many of its traditional allies<sup>7</sup>. The lack of international recognition as a country as well as many other internal factors led the people of Taiwan to search for their local roots and to add "local" and "traditional Taiwanese" art forms in the schools. Since the 1980s, with the establishment of several large public museums in Taiwan, the development of art has entered a new era. The end of Martial Law opened up new possibilities of artistic creations and freedom of speech. The establishment of cultural centers, debates about the appropriate approach to art making, and development of new media have fostered the development of numerous art disciplines in Taiwan, which combine international influences and trends with special attention to localism. Large-scale and solo exhibitions in addition to international exhibitions have been launched in Taiwan over the past 25 years, elevating the development of art. Art education as a defined profession in Taiwan with an articulated theory, professional practices, goals, standards, and teacher professional preparation similarly has undergone dramatic changes during this time.

<sup>6</sup> Many of them taught in elementary and middle schools. In addition to being school teacher, they also started their own studios to teach young children drawing outside of schools.

<sup>7</sup> The number of Taiwan's allies dropped from 68 in 1969 to 23 in 2009.

## Contemporary Art Education (1987 – 2009)

The lifting of Martial Law in 1987 unleashed a new wave of political, educational, social and cultural reform. Issues related to Taiwan's national identity were openly discussed in public arena in educational venues, public forums, and through mass media. In addition to recognizing the rich cultures of Taiwanese aboriginals, the influences of Japan, China and the influences of other international countries were recognized as significant to Taiwan cultural, artistic, and educational practices. The process of adaptation – sometimes called Taiwanization or localization – signify how Taiwan is slowly developing its own identity.

On the one hand, new courses intended to help students learn more about local histories, folk art traditions and different dialects were added to the Grade 1 - 12 curriculums<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, new ideas that were already popular in other countries such as postmodernism, feminism and post-colonialism began to enter Taiwan's intellectual discussions and influenced many disciplines, including art education.

In art education, Discipline-based Art Education (DBAE) was introduced to Taiwan in the late 1980s. Elliot Eisner's and other DBAE proponents' ideas were translated and became the focus of several studies. At the same time, other paradigms for art education were considered. Over recent years, Taiwanese art educators, after obtaining advanced degrees from other countries, especially from United States, came back to Taiwan with new ideas about DBAE, community-based art education, multicultural art education, computer-mediated art education, and visual cultural art education. All of these ideas have enriched the repertoire of art education theories under consideration in Taiwan. Large scale art education research projects were conducted and new curricular reforms were underway. Graduate degree programs and new professional art education journals have now been established in Taiwan.

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<sup>8</sup> In addition to the required Mandarin and English courses, native languages such as Holo, Hakka and several aboriginal languages are now offered in the elementary schools. Although standard Mandarin is still the dominate language, there is an attempt not to lose the languages and artistic practices of the original inhabitants of Taiwan as a means of preserving Taiwan's cultural diversity and history.

Facing a new social-cultural climate, the knowledge-based economy, political uncertainty, and international competition, the Taiwanese government, under the push of several social groups, has taken new initiatives to address the effectiveness and relevance of the education system. Calls for school reform from parents and other social groups have inspired several of these new curriculum changes.

One of the major changes is the Grade 1 – 9 curriculum reform starting from 1997<sup>9</sup>, which re-organized previously separated subject and re-defined them as seven learning areas<sup>10</sup>. One of the seven learning areas is the Arts and Humanities curriculum, which comprises the visual art, music and performing arts. It means that previously separated visual art and music courses need to be integrated while adding performing art to the curriculum. The change toward an integrated curricular approach in Taiwan brought serious concern and unprecedented debates among art educators (Wilson & Kao, 2003). As some scholars proposed and examined different ways of curriculum integration, many scholars and teachers held reservations toward the integrated approach between different subjects. Even appropriateness of the wording “Arts and Humanities” was questioned.

Nerveless, the push for school reform continues to be strong. 2008’s “Education in Taiwan” report (<http://english.moe.gov.tw/public/Attachment/8111017533671.pdf>) states that:

Taiwan’s educational system has grown and expanded; now steps need to be taken to upgrade the quality of education. Globalization has greatly influenced education, the economy and politics. Like other nations of the world, Taiwan is working zealously to improve national competitiveness.

<sup>9</sup> Initial planning through the Curriculum Development Task Force started in 1997. Experimentation in selected schools began in 1999. The Grade 1 - 9 Curriculum was officially announced in 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Grade 1 - 9 curriculum includes the following seven areas: Language Arts, Health and Physical Education, Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, Science and Technology, Mathematics, and Integrative Activities.

An overall education goal was summed up in “Creative Taiwan, Eye on the world”. The Ministry of Education wishes use the following three core approaches to support the implementation of this motto: “adaptability in nature and ability, embracing globalization’ and supporting the disadvantaged” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.10).

## Conclusion

Over the past three decades we have witnessed, on the one hand, the success of Taiwan in creating an economic miracle and turning from a police state into a democracy, and, on the other hand, struggles for interethnic harmony, ‘national’ identity, and political setbacks in the international community (Law, 2003, p. 83). “Few nations face a future more fraught with uncertainty than Taiwan. Even whether Taiwan is a nation is questioned”<sup>11</sup> (Copper, 2003, p. 227), what complicates the issue of Taiwan national identity and autonomy is that our future is not just in the hands of the Taiwanese people. The positions of the international community, particularly America and China, on the “Taiwan issue” will influence the future of the Taiwanese people. In the meantime, Taiwan’s destiny will continue to be affected by its changing social, economic, and political conditions (Copper, 2003).

While some may see globalization as a recent phenomenon, in Taiwan, globalization started at least as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Colonization has shaped Taiwan’s economic, political and cultural life, and by extension, its art education theories and professional practices. From apprenticeship to Western style art training methods, to post modern concerns for diversity and plurality, and finally to interests ranging from global culture to preserving local identities and practices, art education in Taiwan has changed and absorbed both Eastern and Western artistic and educational theories and practice.

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<sup>11</sup> The People’s Republic of China claims that Taiwan is a province of China. Although there is an increasing percentage of people argue for Taiwan autonomy and even independence, there are also some others predicting that Taiwan will eventually become a part of China or Chinese federation.

As Robertson (1995, p. 27) notes, globalization has seen cultural tendencies for both homogenization and heterogenization in “mutually implicative” tension. Taiwan’s art education, although it has absorbed experiences and theories from other countries, raises questions about cultural colonialization and issues of autonomy, and exemplifies how one country both navigates and contributes to global, regional, and local conditions.

The term “glocalization”, instead of globalization, thereby perhaps is term that can better describe what happened in Taiwan and in its art education field. Glocalization, a portmanteau of globalization and localization, originated in the 1980s and was popularized by the sociologist Roland Robertson. The term is used in this article to emphasize the point that globalization and localization are actually complementary processes. The local is integrally tied to the global, and global to the local.

The Taiwan example suggests that that the concept of art education is semi-open and evolving. Education is not neutral or value-free. Art education is influenced not only by what happens inside the field but also by general educational policies which reflect national identities, political and economic situations. That is, the discipline of art education is shaped not only by what happens inside the profession of art education itself, nationally and internationally, but also by the political and economic contexts of different time periods. Ideas developed in a particular context were translated, re-interpreted, and juxtaposed with existing ideas.

National boundaries today are no longer distinct and cross-disciplinary collaboration is now accepted practice in education. As intellectual, cultural, artistic, and educational communities work side by side, the interaction and fusion of ideas is even apparent than ever. Although issues related to one’s national and cultural identities are still important issues to ponder, it seems counter-intuitive to claim one’s uniqueness within a context of cross-pollination, fusion, movements, and merging. Despite our many uncertainties about the future, we believe that Taiwan’s example will shed some light on the multiple-faceted nature of globalization, art and education. As our own “take” on globalization is local and localized, we maintain that “only through situated, local, and self-critical analyses can we begin to see

the two-way, mutually constitutive dynamics of local-global flows of knowledge, power, and capital, or systematic as well as unsystematic and uneven 'effects,' and of local histories that always embed 'the new' in existing and generative material-economic and cultural conditions" (Luke & Luke, 2003, p. 276).

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\* An earlier version of this article was published in English as Wang, L.Y. & Kuo, A. (2009). Glocalization: Art education in Taiwan. In A. Arnold, A. Kuo, E. Delacruz , and M. Parsons (Eds.), **Globalization, Art, and Education** (pp. 14-19). Reston, VA : National Art Education Association. Reprint with permission from NAEA.



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