

NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS HINGES UPON THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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The Deputy Minister of Ministry of Education (MOE), Lu Mu-lin arrived at TKU on March 25 and 26 to give a speech on the future vision and competitiveness of Taiwan's higher education in the first cross-strait conference on "Policy of Excellency at Higher Education—its review and future development" held by TKU's Center for the Study of Higher Education. In addition, more than 200 presidents, professors and eminent scholars of various universities/colleges from both sides of the Taiwan Strait, such as National Beijing University, Xiamen University and East China Normal University from Mainland China, and National Taiwan University, Taiwan Normal University as well as TKU also joined the conference. President Chang presided over the opening ceremony whereas the Founder, Dr. Clement C. P. Chang delivered the opening speech.

One of the focuses of the conference was on the competitiveness of Taiwan's higher educational institutes. In the speech given by Deputy Minister Lu, he expressed the urgency of not neglecting the importance of elite education in order to compete worldwide. An elite education, he believes, needs to be equally addressed especially after a successful implementation of a 'populist' education policy in Taiwan. Only by harmonizing both types of policy in our higher education, he continued, we can withstand the international pressure of fierce competition we are and will be facing.

Deputy Minister Lu also pointed out the consequences of not doing so in his speech. Bluntly put, he said that we would certainly lose out if we do not bring ourselves on par with the world standards. In order to be in line with the rest of the world, he suggested that each university and college should adopt a state-of-the-art management mechanism that can adapt to new

challenges and thus stimulate necessary changes and improvement. Government, on the other hand, should establish a reliable assessment system to gain insight to the academic and administrative achievements of each educational/research institute. By so doing, government can encourage innovation and promote quality in higher education more efficiently.

Chen Bo—chang, the Dean of TKU' s College of Education and Peng Sen—ming, Director of Center for the Study of Higher Education, National Ching Hwa University also put forward similar ideas in this regard. The former pointed out that universities require strong leadership more than ever before, as the running costs have been increasing steadily over the past years due to the drop in the number of students, a fall in academic standards and proliferation of information technology on campus. Strong leadership, in his view, can make swift and wise decisions, which will enhance the efficiency in dealing with challenges. He mentioned the success stories he saw in some of the American elite universities by breaking down the 'golden triangle' philosophy all these universities have in common—firstly, sufficient funding, secondly, first—rate faculty staff and students and thirdly, highly efficient administrative management and policy. These universities are ideal in serving as our benchmark, he added.