

Welcome Speech for the Tsing Hua “New Trends for Social Innovation: Social Sciences for 21st Century 新時代的社會創新：二十一世紀的社會科學” Forum April 18, 2011

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“In the 21st century, with Asia Pacific being one of the fastest growing regions on earth, and having nearly one-third of the world’s population, human interactions become highly dynamical, and is increasingly intense and complex. A serious pursue of social sciences, in research and the profound understanding of their relevance to humanity, is no longer a luxury but a must!”

Distinguished speakers and participants:

Preamble

I am honored to represent Academician Lih J. Chen (陳力俊,) President of National Tsing Hua University (國立清華大學) to be here today to welcome you to attend this Forum entitled “New Trends for Social Innovation: Social Sciences for 21st Century 新時代的社會創新：二十一世紀的社會科學.” According to the invitational letter to the participants from the Forum organizer, Professor Bih-Er Chou 周碧娥, I learned that in her capacity as the Chairman of the planning committee to develop a College of Social Sciences, she is organizing this Forum as one of the many activities towards the goal.

Although the organizers did not state it explicitly, I think in a Centennial Celebration of Tsing Hua, one must think about a new roadmap for the university in the new century. Hence what better way to kick off the celebration but discussion the main theme of this forum!

As a senior administrator for universities in the past decade, I was initially forced to think about issues well outside of my intellectual comfort zone. As time went on, I became quite excited about such opportunities. Indeed, the relevance of social sciences in a modern research university is indeed one area which occupied my thoughts often.

Research universities must be Comprehensive.

A world class research university in the 21st century should not and must not be uni-, dual- or tri-dimensional. This is especially true for universities in Asia Pacific today because in the past century the dominant and prevalent effort was to “*catch up with science and technology.*”

I would like to tell you an interesting and relevant story about the comprehensive theme of research universities. No doubt some of you know, there is an organization in the United States known as AAU, or American Associated Universities. This is an “elite club” of research universities whose members must have dual qualification: “comprehensive” and “excellent.” Judging from the way AAU inducts universities into the club, the dual qualification is taken with extreme seriousness. For example, it is globally known that Georgia Tech is an outstanding research university. But, it took it 110 years (2010) since the founding of AAU in 1900 to be inducted into the club. The reason was clear. For many years, Georgia Tech was almost exclusively and supremely known for its technological research programs. By 2010, it must have reached AAU’s threshold of comprehensiveness!

So it is music to my ears that the fact that National Tsing Hua University which is well known for its outstanding science and technology research programs, and is entering its second century, is also proactively promoting comprehensive intellectual activities, such as the activities of this Forum.

Social Sciences is by definition “interdisciplinary.”

Since coming to Taiwan, experiencing at least two universities in depth, I found that, as in nearly all universities globally, the definition of the term “social sciences” could be quite nebulous. For example, in the College of Social Sciences in National Cheng Kung University (國立成功大學,) Social Sciences *per se* include disciplines as disparate as “cognitive science” to “law.” Sandwiched between these disciplinary activities were more traditional ones such as political science and economics and less traditional ones such as education.

In National Tsing Hua University, social sciences activities are not confined in a single college. For instance, besides the traditional social sciences disciplines, law and economics are parked in the College of Technology Management, in which the other session Chairperson today, Chairman Chintay Shih (史欽泰 董事長) who was also the former CEO of ITRI (Industrial Technology Research Institute 工業技術研究院) was the former Dean. Activities closest to cognitive science and education here would be those pursued in the Institute of Learning Sciences and other institutes housed in a non-college organization known as the Commission of General Education.

The situation in Taiwan is not unusual. In fact, in the alma mater of President Lih J. Chen, University of California Berkeley, even though in the College of Letters and Science, it has social sciences *per se*, careful examination of its academic structure, one could easily conclude that social sciences disciplines are actively practiced throughout the university, even in its nationally known law school.

Since the adjective “interdisciplinary” is almost a cliché in a modern research university, and the fact that social sciences could be ubiquitous throughout campus, developing a College of Social Sciences could be an interesting, if not truly exciting, challenge in the 21st century.

Un-sustainability of capitalism

Finally, since what Professor Chou’s committee is not just the development of a Social Science College, but one which will exist in a top university in Asia Pacific, I believe the inspirational words in the Keynote speech by Dr. Lin (林金源 董事長): 資本主義的非可持續性 or the **un-sustainability of capitalism** should be underscored. In 2008, I made what in hindsight could be viewed as a “pre-echo” of Dr. Lin’s comment in my summary comment at the Asia Development Bank **Conference on Global Financial Crisis: Industrial Restructuring** in Tainan. I said that

“Throughout the 20th century, Asia was psychologically “coupled” to the West, and understandably so. With superior economic and intellectual strengths, it is quite natural that Asia viewed the West as the ‘standard of excellence.’ However, after such a period as this with the West so palpably exposing its social & economic weaknesses, this may be the first time in the modern global economy that Asia can psychologically “DECOUPLE” from the West. This is not to suggest that Asia should decouple economically and intellectually from the West; rather, I am talking about a “psychological decoupling” to undo a sense of reliance on the West, without which it

is unlikely that Asia will develop a deep sense of inherent self-confidence and without which the 21st century is surely not to be the “Asian Century.”

Epilogue

So what does all this entail? Well, it implied that social sciences is of fundamental importance since it deals with human behaviors, past, present and hopefully could map out a blueprint for the future. It also deals with human interactions, past, or present. Again, the future should be very much a part of the study.

In the 21st century, with Asia Pacific being one of the fastest growing regions on earth, and having nearly one-third of the world's population, human interactions become highly dynamical, and is increasingly intense and complex. A serious pursue of social sciences, in research and the profound understanding of their relevance to humanity, is no longer a luxury but a must!

For these reasons, and more, this Forum is of utmost importance to Tsing Hua. I should congratulate the organizers for your foresight.

Thank you so much for your attention and I am sure this will be a very fruitful and successful Forum.