



**D Dong's Response to
Councilor Cheung Man-kwong's Motion:
"Concern about Academic Freedom"**

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1. Introduction to D-Dong

D-Dong is one of the few non-district-based youth organizations in Hong Kong. It was established by a group of high-calibre young people in 2010.

Our major focuses are issues related to youth culture and policies, and we releases research reports regularly. All research are conducted in the most serious and professional manner. We are eager to increase the public awareness of youth problems and youth issues, and to recommend polices that are beneficial to the young people in Hong Kong.

Moreover, we encourage the young people to contribute to society and participate in various community activities. D-Dong is the ideal place for them to experience the joy of contributing to Hong Kong and China.

D-Dong is an elitist organization. All the members are carefully chosen in order to satisfy the demanding requirement of the organization.

2. Response to Councilor Cheung’s Motion

Academic Freedom protects scholars and academic institutes from external influence. Under the umbrella of such principle, academic research can be performed in a fair and objective manner.

D-Dong is a policy research institute in which youth from different sectors put their heads together for a better Hong Kong. We believe that freedom of speech and academic freedom are core values that human society embraces and also important pillars that promote the overall development of Hong Kong.

In response to Councilor Cheung's motion, the following points are made:

A. Concern about Alleged Political Influence over Academic Research

Recently, there had been reports about alleged political influence on academic research. These reports had been widely discussed, allegedly involving people from both the pro-establishment and pan-democrat camps with varied level of concern shared.

We think that academic research must be conducted in a fair and objective manner. Any acts that are intended to achieve political aims should be condemned, but in reality it is often difficult to prove the intention of such acts. Therefore, scholars and institutes shall explain to the public once involved in such scandals, so as to safeguard the credibility of the institute. The institutes involved shall also launch voluntary investigation, restoring public confidence and also providing the bodies involved to explain and testify in a fair mechanism.

B. Distinction between “Criticisms” and “Suppression”

Some might hold the opinion that some print media, which continuously publish articles with critical views towards certain scholars, are committing acts infringing academic freedom. However, it must be pointed out that infringement of academic freedom must be based on sufficient proof for unreasonable acts intended to pressurize scholars to give up principles of objectivity and professionalism in their research.

Print media continuously publish articles with critical view points towards a certain party does not provide the ground for unreasonable acts intended to pressurize the body. We believe that free and open discussion is vital to bringing about improvements. The public would appreciate the rationality of points made in a rational discussion; but if points are ad hominem and are made in an irrational manner, the media or the writer would lose its reader population and credibility.

In response to the motion, we stress that criticisms are not to unreasonably pressurize, and repeated criticisms over scholars cannot be taken as infringing their academic freedom. In a society with speech freedom, we shall embrace discussions with diversified views, while we believe in the readers' rational judgments. We shall not deny media watch over scholars and academic institutes, even if they enjoy academic freedom that does not contradict with media's watchdog role.

C. Freedom of the Press shall also be embraced.

In the motion, the "leftist media" is particularly mentioned; publication of articles with critical viewpoints towards some scholars on these media is taken by some as infringement of academic freedom.

Whatever stances they are taking, media should not be treated with different standard. Other than articles written by the reporters, newspapers publish most commentaries from free-lance writers with varied viewpoints. Is Councilor Cheung suggesting that the newspaper should censor viewpoints of the writers in its editing? Seemingly Councilor Cheung holds different standards towards leftist media. Is it an act of pressurization? Councilor Cheung shall clarify the above puzzle.

Media shall enjoy its freedom of the press. Writers' viewpoints shall not be a field that the editors shall censor. Providing the platform facilitating discussion is an important function for newspapers; newspapers are not responsible for the viewpoints that writers writing commentaries take.