Chapter 9
Social Design Through Facilitation and Collaboration:
Sustainability Education Experiments in Planning and Design Courses

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability and social design are paradigms central to contemporary planning and design education. This chapter takes sustainability and social design beyond the subject of teaching and instead focuses on incorporating these values as a way of practice in professional education. Using a case study approach, it explores the emerging practices of teaching experiments in the collaborative design and planning teacher learning community (CPDTLC), an informal community of practice with shared interests in collaboration at National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan. Four pedagogical approaches—learning by doing, reflection, collaboration, and community context—are the common practices among the members. Design thinking is used to analyze the social design innovations of CPDTLC. The experiences here reveal different scales and dimensions of social design in the classroom and beyond, and delineate an emerging teaching-learning relationship for new curriculum formation in the future.

INTRODUCTION

On a sunny afternoon, a group of faculty members with design and planning backgrounds got together in the open space of the Institute of Creative Industries Design in Tainan, Taiwan, writing energetically on sticky notes and whiteboards. This is a year-end evaluation luncheon for a teacher community named the Collaborative Design and Planning Teacher Learning Community (CPDTLC), at National Cheng Kung University (NCKU). Keywords such as time, happiness, creativity, and diversity appeared, which
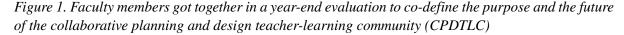
generated four letters and four levels; the creation of which was led by a faculty member who specializes in facilitation. The four letters are A (advantage), W (weakness), B (benefits), and D (dangers). The levels are identified as big, wide, small, and necessary. Together, they represent a matrix of issues and challenges for the teacher community. To reflect the theme topic of "collaborative" for the learning community, the evaluation meeting was conducted through participatory methods and aimed to collaboratively define the future purpose and goals of their community of practice for the next year. In the end, the whiteboard listed several themes and tasks, all of which were headed by a vision to "create and manage a common space for the co-evolution of community members" (Figure 1).

Both sustainability and social design are subjects and paradigms that are influential to the contemporary planning and design profession and to education. While sustainable development has also been a leading paradigm in the spatial planning and design profession for the past twenty years, to seek the holistic balance between the built and natural environment, the concept of social design has been embedded in planning and design disciplines historically to satisfy the needs of multiple social groups. This chapter takes sustainability and social design beyond the subjects of teaching and, instead, focuses on incorporating these values as a way of practice into the organizational context of higher education. How social design as a method to develop strategies and pedagogy that promote sustainability teaching in planning and design education is the inquiry central to this research.

Using a case study approach, this chapter explores the emerging practices of teaching experiments that have taken place in CPDTLC, an informal community of practice with shared values and interests in collaboration methods and practices. The following content will begin with the conceptual framework of sustainability education and social design, and its need for pedagogical innovations. A case study is provided by the introduction of CPDTLC participants describing their motivation for initiating these pedagogical experiments. Following that, the paper will cover the pedagogical strategies that faculty members have in common and then relate their experiences within the literatures in planning and design education and learning theories. In the end, the Design Thinking framework is used to conclude with a

Figure 1. Faculty members got together in a year-end evaluation to co-define the purpose and the future of the collaborative planning and design teacher-learning community (CPDTLC)

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