Installing Young Dreams into the Old Town in Taiwan: Townscape Education as a Catalyst for the Cross-Cultural Youth to Develop the Historical Dasi Together

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Abstract

The town of Dasi is the first old-town to promote its historical main streets, cultural heritage, and local foods with an emphasis on community participation. In this research, through collaboration with a private vocational school in Dasi, the focus is on engaging a group of teenagers whose dreams of this small town have been dismissed for a long time. A summer workshop was designed to teach students how to become involved in the community. Finally, through analysis and discussion the issues of how educational institutions participate in local development and what positive influence education may have, was raised.

Keywords: Environment and social interaction; cross-cultural research; cultural landscape; design interface

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1. Introduction

Dasi is a famous town with historic streets in northern Taiwan. The local government has promoted its historical main streets, cultural heritage, and local foods through community participation. The "Takoham Foundation" was the first community-based organization in Dasi. They bring to life and raise awareness for the local community through the use of a national art festival, thereby maintaining local assets and investing in community development. During the 1990's, the state and local government invested heavily in the potential of a few ardent residents who became the solid base for development of Dasi. They operated local organizations with special construction and management focusing on local control.

However, in recent ten years, the government has invested resources unequally and has focused mainly on the Ho-ping street area. The result was gradually creating dissatisfaction among local people in regards to the local management of problems (e.g. the vendors, traffic jams and too much garbage). The concern was that the conservative community and bad living conditions might create stagnation within the local business community, thereby encouraging local youth to migrate elsewhere. With the successful grassroots tourism promotion of the past two decades, Dasi has gradually transformed into a town of short-term tourism and commercial (mainly retail sales orientated) enterprises. Traditional old town lives' have been replaced with the weekend flood of tour buses. Narrow streets fill up with tourist parking. The local young people have become detached from the historical town center and old streets and it's cultural roots. In other words, Dasi has mistakenly been transformed in a direction, and with an emphasis, away from the grassroots based style that the small town tried to instill twenty years ago. This ironic situation highlights the crisis and begs the question: "What is the value of locally controlled development"?

1.1. Issue 1： The rise and decline of construction within the Dasi community

It has been twenty years since the promotion and community development of Dasi's historical district began. The first national art festival in Taoyuan began in 1994. The Taoyuan cultural studio held a historical references exhibition – "Back to the Wonderland", and "Units of Finding the Wonderland"- with an emphasis on Dasi traditional furniture relics, the tour also include Taoyuan sightseeing based on those relics, the traditional woodcarving industry and the river terraced landscape of Dasi.

Nevertheless, due to the lack of political resources, many of the society-oriented associations, old towns are seriously facing problems of human resource shortages. Since 1996, for more than a decade, those activities have not included enough youth and new people to continue their growth and purpose, this further leads to the result that local culture is difficult to further develop and limits the substantial mobilization of the community.

1.2 Issue 2： The gap between perspectives of local government and realities

In the development blueprint of the local government, Dasi is within the center of the eastern county project in Taoyuan county. This area includes the towns of Dasi and Longtan village. To develop the ecological leisure center of eastern cities, it focused on Dasi as a key town for cultural relics and sightseeing.
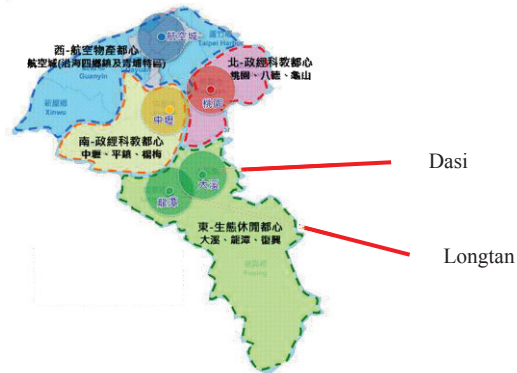
Fig.1. Taoyuan country

While the plan of the local government is based on the same rationale, it lacks the transformational impetus and grassroots vitality of the local culture. This results in a top-down approach to planning and is not as effective. Domahidy (2003) notes that it is the difference between "rational" and "natural" will. The former is the function of the instrumental application of knowledge and logic; the latter is the acceptance of the outcomes of the mutual bonds of civic interaction. As an example, and to correspond this thought to the sightseeing-theme, the government built a sky-path, an elevated path that allows people to view the local special scenery from above. This path attracted a large amount of tourists, however, and in turn brought more traffic, garbage and urban night-life commerce problems. This also has significantly affected the quality of living, and the special differences of identity when it comes to the local culture. In turn, the Dasi "Old Street" was forced to tolerate the rising number of tourists that has created traffic problems in this old section of town. Therefore, the question is whether or not the profit from the tourism business has been balanced with the maintenance in the quality of local life?

Fig.2. Crowded tourists in the historical area

1.3 Issue 3： The uni-value orientation of the local culture

Dasi has been marketed on the old cultural image formed 20 years ago, but jeopardizes the living space of current residents. Even the reconstruction of the Jhong-Jheng Park and the resulting traffic jams on holidays has not evoked a bad response from the locals, but rather, they have accepted the conflict and inconvenience while looking at the possible benefit. The local people have blindly accepted the benefits of the tourism industry without thinking critically about the resulting problems. The government invested in Dasi mainly with the consideration of existing sightseeing resources. By assisting local communities in the construction of cultural assets, and weaving the social network through the filter of logistics from the

tourism industry, they have ignored the aspect of common life and culture that should cultivate a new generation's participation in public business.

Criticism to the cultural consuming direction of growth from the locals are: 1). Relying on outside experts to build up the local culture, so that the residents have little input in the direction of the local-culture. Local identification needs to be built from cultural symbolism, and a self-realization through community construction. 2). The social structure of the community is in disarray as a result of outside involvement and therefore does not function as a positive influence in further development of the society. Local social groups are prone to responding to rapidly increasing recreational demand and develop the local cultural capital respectively. There is no cooperation or interaction between store owners, thereby creating a lack of awareness to the cultural trends.

Plein's research (2011) also pointed out that the exit of businesses means the further erosion of community, but he had an active view to "bring the traditional culture back into the core downtown area to recapture the vitality of the past", then "that there might be a new opportunity to reinvent community". The experts should guide locals to discover what their culture is while halting business erosion. The community should not only make the decisions but also create their future through communication with each other.

1.4 The research purpose

Encountering the issues of Dasi, we propose cultural development from an education viewpoint. The essence of sustainable development for historical towns should be based on interpersonal interactions and diverse networks of social engagements. In the traditional industry view, the continuity of local industries should be kept in mind, to promote cross-generation and multiple cultural experiences that can encourage people to be innovative in their approach to cultural resources. Based on action research, our paper investigates how to use the historical town center as an urban outdoor classroom that will encourage a group of teens with different cultural backgrounds to work together and develop the old town community.

In an attempt to resolve these issues, we designed the "Education Imported Community" to encourage community-involvement, enhance the function of community and include local educational institutes. The purpose is to develop the native education program and explore the Dasi culture and a sense of involvement by the youth:

- How to strengthen local identification through the educational interaction?
- How to offer the youth opportunity to join through the local educational resource?
- Questions that need to be asked are: How to build up self- identification through the identification and critical analysis of local culture in educational activities? How do we understand who we are? What kind of environment do we need? When the value of local involvement has been solidly established, then community construction can be performed.

2. Take an action with local education institution

Before we discuss these complex local development questions, we have to return to the nature of living – to start from an individual, and guide people to imagine and narrate their life. To fix the original problem we propose practical projects while approaching a common consensus through inter-community communication. In that case, the individual self can be realized through social interaction. This can be depicted through "learning social issues" (Fig.3), "managing the relationship with the community members" and "engaging community members to act in the community" (Kwok-bong ,2009；Yu,2002). The power of grassroots organizations can give suggestion to the real life needs of the

community. This down-to-up approach may remedy the instrumental rationality approach currently being used in community growth, thereby satisfying the residents.
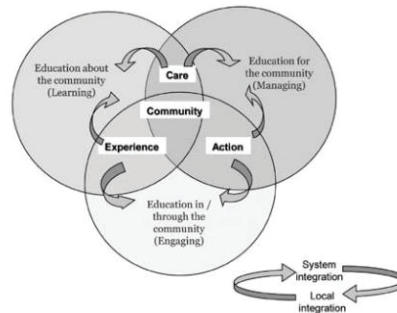

Fig.3. Classroom in community reflects; Source: Kwok-bong, (2009) and Yu, (2002)

The local identification is constructed through human social interaction, translating to the value of social activities. A properly designed educational activity will guide and help people realize their identity and help them find an authentic life value and industry. It will also open the possibility of new aspects in approaching local complex and composition problems, therefore, we will try to begin with local educational activities aimed at the younger generation. We will also introduce project-based learning into the class to help extract the creative opinion of the youth.

2.1 How the curriculum make the local identify

Self-identification also comes from interpersonal interaction. People can realize self-value through educational activities and deem their community as the field that helped build their identification. Local education is not only knowledge recognition, but also, in respect to real life, creates self-value through building of interpersonal relationships. Education is a loop of social activity, and the society is the place of education. Principles of " Classroom in Community" indicated three connections between school and community (Kwok-bong ,2009；Yu,2002)：(1) To connect school and the community: community education / classroom in community. (2) To connect teachers and the community: teachers as both the community learners and problem-posers. (3) To connect curricula and the community: "Community capital" and "Curriculum capital". From the angle of the community construction, teachers in different specialties can give distinct vitality and help reveal the multi-cultural aspects of the locale. For instance, Ze-san high school integrated local culture with programs by professional teachers of drama, child-care and dining fields to aggressively create a culture. We want students not only to know about the local but also have an idea with the local future.

2.2 The education resource in Dasi

There are kindergartens, elementary schools, junior high schools and senior high schools within the local educational institutes, and many unofficial educational institutes, such as tutoring centers, associations (e.g. Mother Storytellers from Love Town Association in elementary schools) etc.. Associations are vital in the process of self-identification, and local cultural education will help break the uni-direction learning program, and merge the local consciousness and direction of a local cultural area. Educators can help develop appropriate educational activities that will help students cross the

generational cultural divide. Official and unofficial educational institutes can make students see the culture of their living environment through teaching, outdoor education, interviewing, playing games etc..

The study will aim to expose the lessons and observations of the experience of "Digging Dasi!", an educational activity during the summer 2011. Expectations were to build local cultural identification within local youth through unofficial programs. At the present, the issues and characters of Dasi teenager mentality and subculture are complex, and the goal of these educational activities area follows:

- To explore the topic of developing the future image of the old town, especially the place beside the Ho-Ping old street district
- To consider the opinion and vitality of youth in the management of the community as a mechanism for the younger generation to join in defining the culture and development of their town.
- To analyze past achievements of the old town and to invoke an image for the inhabitants of the future.

For the purposes above, we divided the project into three categories. We consulted Bloom (1956) the "cognitive domain", "affective domain", and "psychomotor domain" in designing the curriculum. So that students can present their ideas creatively we used project-based pedagogy. Thus, there were three categories used in evaluating the effect of the students' learning experience(Fig. 4): perceivably, sensitivity, and creativity.

The first is to make things perceivable. How do the students at feel or understand the historical and cultural significance of a place in their first analysis? Second is to make things sensitive. How can they discover the characteristics in the historical districts? The last is to make things creative. How can they express their ideas through their creativity?
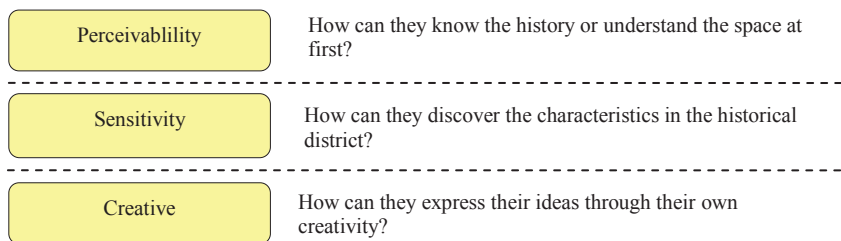
Perceivablility	How can they know the history or understand the space at first?
Sensitivity	How can they discover the characteristics in the historical district?
Creative	How can they express their ideas through their own creativity?

Fig.4. Three categories for evaluating the effect of project-based learning

3. The curriculum design

Local educational institutions instruct in specific knowledge, which is different from what our test case was presented; a more unique instruction. The curriculum has local and specific peculiarities. Before students were taught, they received fragments of information about their neighborhood. Although they live in the same community, each has different perspectives and understanding regarding the community. Thus, how we encourage each student to discuss known differences from each other is important.

The subjects for this experimental course were all second year high school students. The students' majors included auto-mechanics, restaurant services, accounting, and so on. Some of them live in Dasi's old town district.

A workshop in the local senior high school was held during the summer of 2011, which was called "Digging Dasi". The title was meant to suggest the imagery that there was still "golden" information in Dasi that had not been discovered and still needed to be told. The objective was for students to discover this information and share it with others through the lessons. There were six lessons in the workshop and every lesson took two hours; one hour of study and one hour of discussion. Students were divided into five groups for the purposes of team-oriented tasks, they were encouraged to present a performance in several genres: music, dance, opera and video. The result was to show viewpoints of the younger

generation, local identification, and subculture. The curriculum was designed for step-by-step teaching, and subsequently evaluated using the three values of curriculum shown the Table 1.

Table 1. The curriculum design framework

Lesson topic/ categories for guide	Learning Sheet	Marking Perceivable	Making Sensitive	Making Creative
Image of Dasi	Drawing a graphic map of Dasi and explaining it.	We show the photos of the streets of Dasi and guide them in discussion of the characteristics.	Guided students to "read" spaces by using the five senses-see, listen, smell, touch, and eat.	Student tried to show what they felt through some symbols on Dasi map.
History of Dasi	Taking some photo in which you interact with the environment and explaining it.	We invited a local woman to present the history of the historic streets area.	Students used the five senses to "read" the park.	Students tried to explain what they experienced with space by their action.
Life of Dasi	1. Acting as a "Carrier" that in the paste to known the vestige of the path.	1.We showed old pictures of the path to the river and told the old story of life here.	2.Students imagined the past scene though they acting as carriers.	
	2. Holding an interview with three local people to find their story in Dasi.	2.Students interviewed the residents to know their life in Dasi.		
Dig in Dasi	Finding the locations of these photos that are in the Lost-area. Then taking some photo in which you interact with the environment and explain it.	We discuss with students about their cognition of the Lost – area and told the life style here.	Students discerned the characteristics of space and wrote what they saw and feel.	Students tried to explain what they experience with space by their action.
.Say Dasi	Introduce your performances.	Students discussed about what they wanted people to know about Dasi.	Students discussed about how they felt during these classes.	Students discussed about how to present their ideas.
Presentation	Explaining your vision of the space in Dasi. What you like and dislike and why?	Students gave some critical ideas about the living space.		Students show Dasi through a self-made performance and presented it by video as creations.

3.1. Design the lessons

The students would know location by three domains： Townscape, History, and Life of Dasi. These lesson topics were "Image of Dasi"、 "History of Dasi"、 "Life of Dasi"、 "Digging in Dasi"、 "Saying Dasi". Finally, we wanted students to make a performance to introduce Dasi from their viewpoints (Fig. 5). In order to interest the local community and government in different ideas for "local culture", we planned a public presentation.

Fig. 5. (a) the final presentation; (b) the public exhibition

3.2. The effects of lessons

To understand better, here we show photographs of the lessons (Fig. 6-11). Each class was taught through lecture, visiting, and playing games. Then students would give feedback though a learning sheet. We wanted to guide them through each work lesson so that it would help them to think about the final project.

4. Analysis

Perceptibility: Before the workshop, we discussed with the teachers several times to know and understand the students' background and learning situation. Since we knew they were all vocational school students that did not excel at reading and listening, we excluded the indoor lessons. We had them learn through alternative means. For the composition of knowledge, we used space, historic, and life information for students to discover through some interesting action, like finding, walking outside, and using games to encourage them to concentrate.

Sensation： We showed a special viewpoint of the space through video so as to let student feel space through the use of different senses. We designed a learning sheet to find out their feeling about the space during every lesson, students then shared with each other. Students would have different viewpoints after sharing and do critical analysis from "I agree/ don't agree, because…" statements.

Creativity： The vocational school had some special courses in music, opera, dance, and movie, so students sometimes would be creative in these classes. Taking advantage of this information we tailored a curriculum towards performance because we knew they would not be too shy to perform in public. The final project was also presented in this method because we understood that they were used to doing that sort of thing.

Perceivable → sensitive → creative

1. Image of Dasi

Fig. 6. (a) showing the maps of Dasi street ; (b) discussing how the students feel ; (c) the concept map of the space

2. History of Dasi

Fig. 7. (a)local guider is speaking ; (b) students are finding the characteristics of space; (c) explaining their creation

3. Life of Dasi

Fig. 8. (a)students interview with the local; (b)the history about carriers in Dasi; (c) who is the fastest carrier?

4. Dig in Dasi

Fig. 9. (a) introduction to the Lost area; (b) finding the places; (c) have another with the space

5.Say Dasi	

Fig. 10. (a) discussion about the final project; (b) students talk to each other; (c) make interesting ideas

6.Present ation	

Fig. 11. (a) neighborhood space exercise; (b) discussing their critical ideas of their town; (c) the presentation

5. Findings

The creative educational action is a new experience in the community. The site, the story of its development, and its transformation also provide students with an example of civic responsibility, and civic leadership, allowing different individuals and groups to become committed to being good stewards of the environment (Levine ,etc., 2001). To add young viewpoints into the discussion is vital and desirable. This might help the social network become more sustainable. We discuss the findings in two categories. One is the local community development from the presentation and public exhibition with the community. The other is the use of the presentation as an educational tool for interaction with the local leadership/community.

6. Presentation and public exhibition with the community.

After the workshop we gave a presentation to the local people and their parents to show the students' creations and all of the projects they made in each lesson. After the presentation, we compared the conversation during the interaction phase of the project with the initial feedback of the students and teachers. There were four effects from the creative workshop

- It encouraged young students to have concern about their neighborhood: The education process developed from conceiving to feeling then encouraged students to have critical thought regarding the space.
- Accumulate the record for living culture in Dasi：There was an interview with a resident, in which students had to record the new understanding on the learning sheet. Furthermore, some of them put this information into their own creation.
- Arouse some original and creative idea for the space：We saw what the young people experienced the local space though their creations. While the local people began to understand from a different viewpoint, this could stimulate a new image of the future. The most important benefit is that young

people might join the community to discuss problems and ideas because they understand how to express their ideas.
- Make some different issues of the old town- Dasi：We uncovered some special issues as a result of the discussion with the students：a) The living quality is becoming worse in the historic area and there is currently no policy to prevent it. b) While talking about the culture of Dasi, people have consistently disregarded the native culture nearby the historic area. c) People think conservatively of their space and wish to preserve this image. They actually don't want to change. d) The space for young people's leisure is lacking in variety and locations. e) The current tourism trend is monotonous and focuses solely on the historical aspect of the culture. f) The zhen- tou performance is a local culture but most people don't like it.

6.1. The educational project might be a catalyst in a community meeting.

The young people can imagine more for the local identity and their identification of self. As we take the students' creations to the community meeting it encourages people to think about what their children can do in Dasi. They began to talk about that：
- Changing the ideas of preservation for local cultural heritage from buildings or other things to living people or traditional industry is important. An example of affected industries would be the industry of wood production, tofu foods, tea..etc.. we must think about how to put innovation into traditional industry.
- Perhaps the famous local industry -woodworking- can be involved in vocational education in local high school?
- Begin to consider the multiculturalism in Dasi, like the native cultures, young people, and eco environment.
- Creating some learning space in the neighborhood to encourage young people to identify with the local community. They might bring some creativity and innovation to the communities.

Learning is an attraction for active people, they learn new things from classes, and communicate with others within the community. They not only learn, but also can teach what they want to share to others. Teaching can help people identify in local communities. In this research, we think that this type of learning environment will encourage local people to participate in communities. The partnership is reflected in the value-added way that supports environmental stewardship, experiential learning and education (Levine ,etc., 2001), thus we want to encourage local populations to：
- Cooperate with the educational institutions to develop creative curriculum that will discover local characteristics and improve local identification.
- Build learning spaces for the school curriculum, community actions, or tourism. The learning action will be taught through both formal and informal means.
- Constantly discover local historic, living, industrial, and business culture, attempting to introduce people through many kinds of curriculums.

7. The way forward

In this research we have analyzed the effect of the workshop that broke the restrictions of the classroom in school. We redefined the classroom and used the community as part of the curriculum. So the first thing to do is to change the education viewpoint and make a creative curriculum for local education.

The second call to action is "participation of community". We began to think education could be a social interaction of communities. That through learning, people can develop more interesting or creative

ideas for the environment. Especially the youth, the workshop style education also empowers them to present their ideas in their own ways.

The last point is the culture of space. During the workshop we found students learned by themselves, they asked, thought, and discussed about the neighborhood where they lived. Dasi with historical, ecological, and industrial culture has a lot of resource to be used as lessons. That people could build some "educational station" in Dasi to make a learning townscape is highly likely. For example, woodworking is the traditional industry on the historic street and some masters have retired closing the original store. The wood-culture might be lost, thus the senior high school could have a woodworking course that would help young people earn money after graduating while continuing to preserve a core part of Dasi's cultural heritage. On the other hand the old store could be re-opened to be a woodworking classroom.

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