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## **An Exploration on Ethnic Group Courses - from the Indigenous' Cultural Value System in Taiwan**

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**Abstract.** Articles 14 and 15 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples assert that indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions in their own languages and in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning, in order that their cultures, traditions and histories may be appropriately reflected in education. States should take effective measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to provide indigenous students with the opportunity to receive education in their own language and about their own culture. The study of Taiwan's indigenous culture is a unique representation of each ethnic group's culture, and to meet the needs of social development, ethnic issues should be promoted in education. The ideal curriculum, as mentioned by Tye (1979), has to be transformed into a formal curriculum by incorporating it into the national syllabus, and then into a practical operational and experiential curriculum through the perceptual curriculum understood by teachers. In other words, the content of national education (including the three levels of national concept, national system and national material) must be transformed in the "curriculum-determining levels" of ideal, formal, perception, operation and experience. In Taiwan, there are four major ethnic groups, including the provincial, Minnan, Hakka, and aboriginal peoples, which have a very diverse and complex culture. However, the process of transforming indigenous cultures from understanding to practice has caused many confusions among teachers, which has become a key issue in the development of ethnic curriculum. The past curriculum has a more mainstream cultural established curriculum nature, but the multicultural promotion of ethnic characteristics has a sprouting and teaching revitalization orientation, which makes the original "mainstream established curriculum" and "characteristic ethnic curriculum" incompatible with each other stand out, resulting in a kind of reconciliation demand. Therefore, this study mainly investigates the life and curriculum landscape that emerges from the knowledge of indigenous peoples and their cultural value system, and further interprets the meaning of the curriculum behind it. It also analyzes the connotations of cultural value system response teaching and explores the development and application strategies of ethnic-specific curricula.

**Keywords.** Ethnic Course, natives, cultural knowledge system

### **I. Introduction**

Articles 14 and 15 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples assert that indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions in their own languages and in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning, in order that their cultures, traditions and histories may be

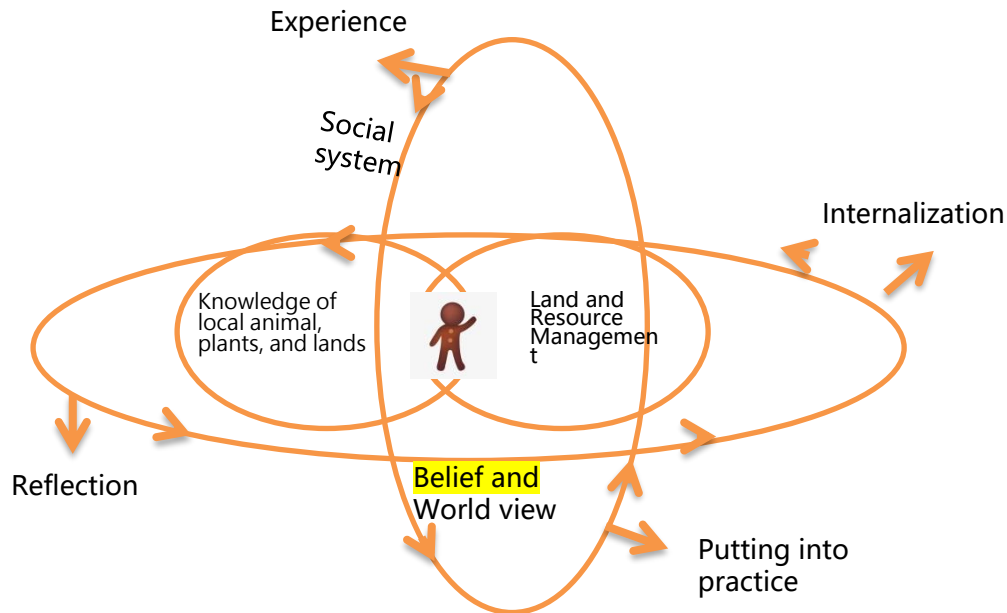
appropriately reflected in education. States should take effective measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to provide indigenous students with the opportunity to receive education in their own language and about their own culture. The study of Taiwan's indigenous culture is a unique representation of each ethnic group's culture, and to meet the needs of social development, ethnic issues should be promoted in education. The ideal curriculum, as mentioned by Tye (1979), has to be transformed into a formal curriculum by incorporating it into the national syllabus, and then into a practical operational and experiential curriculum through the perceptual curriculum understood by teachers. In other words, the content of national education (including the three levels of national concept, national system and national material) must be transformed in the "curriculum-determining levels" of ideal, formal, perception, operation and experience.

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## **II. Indigenous knowledge and cultural value systems**

Western science and non-aboriginal knowledge are mostly based on objective standards produced by scientific methods such as logical evidence, which can be used to determine the universal value of any civilization and its knowledge (Matthews, 1994). Compared to the epistemological nature of indigenous knowledge, the unique knowledge system of the aborigines does not require explicit formulaic rules or complicated theories. It is the full use of people in their daily lives and is the precious knowledge that survives from the interaction of humans and communal lands with nature (Semali & Kincheloe 1999). According to Weiqi Zhang (2010), Aboriginal knowledge has three characteristics: (1) Aboriginal knowledge is local, generated in daily life, and cannot be separated from actual life; (2) Aboriginal knowledge is holistic, and cannot be distinguished by modern classification of knowledge. Traditional ecological knowledge, as studied by Berkes and others, points out the diversity of traditional ecological wisdom, emphasizing the different aspects of the environment. composition and the interactions therein. They believe that each traditional people has its own understanding and unique traditions of ecological relationships and resource management, and that the accumulated knowledge, beliefs and practices developed through traditional ecological wisdom are passed on through traditional songs, stories and beliefs. Traditional knowledge forms a conceptual feature of the environment that emphasizes the symbiosis between humans and nature. It includes local knowledge about local natural resources (plants, animals and land), land and resource management systems for local adaptive practices and resource management, social systems that reflect on the political, economic, social and cultural structures of mainstream capitalism, and beliefs and worldviews that reflect on the relationship between people and land. A local development approach based on the co-evolution of people and the

environment and respect for the carrying capacity of ecosystems can explain and respond to changes in ecosystems (Berkes, Colding and FolkeBerkes, 2000).



**Graph 1 Traditional Ecological Wisdom Explains and Responds to Changes in Ecosystems**

In recent years, there has been a series of aboriginal movements, an increase in aboriginal subjectivity, and the development of multiculturalism. On the basis of cultural relativism, aboriginal knowledge is not a synonym for "barbarism," and aboriginal education is gradually being emphasized. Instead of using scientific data as a criterion for development, many studies have been conducted in specific areas to promote the continuation of aboriginal knowledge and to gradually accept aboriginal knowledge such as ecological soundness and biodiversity, and to incorporate the management of forests into the revision of the Basic Forestry Law (Briggs & Associates, 2008). (Sharp, 2004; Li,2000). Taiwan has also started to promote the tribal collective construction movement since 1990, in which the process of learning old knowledge generates new knowledge, explores indigenous peoples' knowledge, creates local characteristics, and actively uses tribes as the basis for developing cultural performances, life crafts, intellectual tourism, and other industries (Yiren Lin and Chu Yuning; 2006). Therefore, the development of an indigenous knowledge system based on the cultural connotations of indigenous peoples can be seen as the focus of the current indigenous education tradition and innovation.

### **III. Implications of responding to teaching on cultural value systems**

Due to the different periods of immigration in Taiwan, the culture is very diverse and not purely Westernized. In the application of multicultural education, the problem of localization is more often than not encountered. Since the connotation and development of culture are dynamic, it is worthwhile to further study the response of the changes to the curriculum and teaching.

### **The meaning of teaching multicultural education**

Multicultural education is an educational initiative to provide equal education to students of different races, cultural groups, and social classes on campus through curriculum reform to promote social justice and equity. Through the development of cognitive, affective, and skill strategies, students are taught to become familiar with their own culture and the cultures of other ethnic groups, and to develop attitudes and feelings of respect for others and the interpersonal skills to live in harmony with other ethnic groups. (Mei Heui Liu, 2011)

Multicultural education is in fact a very complex concept, which includes education against ethnocentrism, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equality teaching, culturally responsive teaching, curriculum integration, and empowerment of school-based culture. In order to achieve this goal, we have developed five content orientations: 1) Cultural Curriculum Orientation, which emphasizes the incorporation of multiculturalism into the curriculum and teaches students to appreciate and recognize differences; 2) Cultural Responsive Teaching Orientation, which uses the mother cultures of minority students to respond to the mainstream curriculum and treats students' mother cultures as a tool for learning rather than an obstacle; 3) Critical Education Orientation, which exposes the ideology behind the curriculum and the relationship between knowledge and power. 4) The multicultural teacher orientation encourages teachers to have multicultural consciousness, the ability to distinguish between prejudice and injustice, and the courage and ability to act against hegemony (Nieto, 2000); and 5) cultural and Identity Orientation: This is a deep personal awakening and call to action.

In a pluralistic society, the concept of global citizenship across borders is fermenting. Individual identity is also intertwined with multiple identities, resulting in a new form of pluralistic identity, which is also a space for multicultural education.

### **Implications of culturally responsive teaching**

The purpose of culturally responsive teaching is to help students with cultural differences to have the opportunity to pursue good performance. By using students' mother cultures, prior knowledge, and life experiences as a bridge for learning, students' learning motivation and self-confidence can be enhanced through intellectual enrichment, and emotional enrichment can be achieved (Madam Ho & Hsi-Chi Lin, 2006). Cultural response advocates call on teachers to avoid using the mainstream culture as a standard to judge students' learning behaviors, and advocate that teachers should understand the cultural connotations of students' behaviors and use the students' familiar mother culture as a scaffold to develop authentic activities that link or explain the mainstream culture in order to implement appropriate teaching based on students' cultural differences (Lin, 2008).

Compared to multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching has more challenges, its goals and objects are more specific, it respects differences, and it strives to create a safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environment. It emphasizes the importance of culture in teaching and learning, and the curriculum and teaching activities must be conducted in a manner that is culturally relevant to students. Therefore, culture-responsive teaching must have the following characteristics: 1) a keen understanding of students' life experiences and compatibility with students' culture; 2) designing the curriculum based on students' mother culture; and 3) organizing learning activities in an interactive mode (Lin, Chin-Tsai, 2008; Phuntsog, 1999). Lin Hsiu-Chiu-Chiu and Lee Tae-Yuan (2014) also stated that using "ethnic group" as a unit to design the curriculum and thus elicit students' ethnic identity can promote the preservation of ethnic culture and benefit students from teaching.

Although the so-called "teaching system" has systematically dealt with various factors that affect teaching and learning, such as contextual factors, internal and external environmental factors, learner-teacher factors, and school administration, to achieve specific teaching and learning objectives, there is still much room for improvement in how teachers respond to students' mother cultures in the teaching and learning process. However, there is still much room for improvement in how teachers respond to students' mother cultures in the teaching process, and it is worthwhile for educators who are concerned about cultural education to show more care.

### **Characteristic curriculum development in response to cultural differences**

A distinctive curriculum is a grassroots, school-based curriculum that meets the needs of a national goal-directed curriculum that practices cultural expression of diversity activities (Gudmundsdottir, 2001). With the upsurge of multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching, more and more people are finding that academic gaps are not compensated for by remedial instruction alone. Students' learning styles, prerequisite knowledge, and readiness are based on their home cultures and languages, and differences need to be reinterpreted from a cultural perspective.

Phuntsog (1999) appeals to different languages, cultures, and cultural perspectives as an asset rather than a burden. In the past, educational failure was often attributed to the lack of ability of students of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds, resulting in misattribution of student self-experimentation, which was often seen as racist. The concept of cultural difference challenges the stereotypes of race in society. When curriculum and life experiences are linked, culture is a response to past experiences and knowledge is a practice in the local context. When the curriculum and its life experiences are linked, culture is a response to past experiences and knowledge is a local practice. Differences are then respected, accepted, shared, promised and anticipated for future experiences (Eisenhart, 2001).

Valuing student differences is the first step in the development of a diverse education and is a necessary condition for the development of a distinctive curriculum. The development of a distinctive curriculum that responds to cultural differences must have four elements: 1) learners are able to construct knowledge in different ways; 2) learners' intrinsic identity is consistent with their cultural needs; 3) sincere interaction among all participants; and 4) the creation of a curriculum environment. The Special Interest Curriculum reflects the school-based curriculum development and is in line with the policy philosophy of quality, parity and appropriate talent, which has led to a repositioning of the position of valuing difference.

### **IV. Ethnicity Curriculum in the context of Indigenous Cultural Value Systems**

According to Shulman (1986, 1987), the body of knowledge that teachers should possess consists of the following seven items: (a) content knowledge; (b) general pedagogical knowledge; (c) curriculum knowledge; (d) pedagogical knowledge; (e) knowledge of learner characteristics; (f) knowledge of the educational context or situation; and (g) knowledge of educational goals, objectives and values. The knowledge of the learner's characteristics and the knowledge of the educational context or situation, for indigenous education, is the knowledge that teachers will understand the indigenous knowledge system and teaching integration to present, so that students can easily understand.

There are five main points of application of the Aboriginal knowledge system to Aboriginal education. First, the indigenous knowledge system is a manifestation of indigenous peoples' understanding of life and education, which means that indigenous peoples are willing to uphold their beliefs and hope to apply them in teaching practice. Thirdly, the practice of the

indigenous knowledge system is centered on the "self" to absorb and accumulate knowledge that is useful to the individual. Fourthly, the indigenous knowledge system is a unification of the individual and the public, the context and the universal, the ambiguous and the verifiable; fifthly, the indigenous knowledge system is a cultural-political science, a social, cultural, economic and political aspect, whose rules or systems reflect various conflicts, harmonization and conflicts of the society. Value. The value of its courses may multiply or decay as they are transformed.

Therefore, an education system with indigenous peoples as the main subjects should be based on the culture and needs of the indigenous peoples in accordance with their cultural value system. Its legal system, academic structure, administration, objectives, teachers' qualifications, curriculum, students, and funding are different from that of the general education system. Therefore, it should be different from the general education administration in terms of admission channels, progression to higher education, study courses, and credit recognition (transfer). In the past, the government has included indigenous culture in the curriculum, which accounts for only 1% of the 3,300 elementary and secondary schools in Taiwan. The curriculum is not comprehensive and is mostly oriented towards songs and songs or arts and crafts. In general, the basic skills of aboriginal students are low (Chen Zhi Lie, 2013). In recent years, with the support of the Ministry of Education, the Original Citizens' Association and the local government's decrees and administrative resources, the curriculum has been restructured, with each school aiming to cultivate an authentic ethnic person and choosing to conduct cultural education in a manner consistent with ethnic cultural values. In addition to learning and passing on the original life and culture of the indigenous tribes, the school also encourages innovation, internationalization and globalization. For example, when the school designed the curriculum to introduce the culture of killing pigs, it is not only to teach students about the ritual of killing pigs and reconciliation rituals, but more importantly, to teach students what kind of meanings are implied in it. In the culture of pig killing, it is important to teach the students how to support each other (killing a pig is costly and cannot be done by just one person, many relatives and friends are needed to help), sharing (sharing of meat), ethics (the head of the pig is sent to the headman's house; different parts of the pig have different affinity and distance), understanding (seeking a consensus of understanding between humans and God), love (blessing for sincere and genuine relationship) and other qualities and connotations.

From the perspective of the development of indigenous peoples, improving the overall quality of indigenous peoples is not just a superficial and simplistic approach. Schools can develop special courses based on the culture of the ethnic groups. They can uphold the educational philosophy of tribalization of schools and tribalization of schools, and combine the strength of the indigenous Chinese teachers and tribal people to implement a living ethnic culture curriculum.

### **V. Ethnicity-Based Curriculum Teaching Strategies**

With the rise of multicultural awareness, there are more contacts between different ethnic groups and society. The strengthening of cross-ethnic contact will naturally help to improve inter-ethnic relations. However, it is not enough just to strengthen the social contacts because the negative impressions may be false. The teaching materials should be filtered and the values behind the messages should be stated to avoid any inappropriate connections. The development of an Indigenous curriculum can inspire teachers to develop an awareness of the curriculum, which in turn can lead to critical and reflective teaching practices. The germination and awakening of the awareness of the indigenous curriculum is a response to life styles, values, interpersonal relationships, and other cooperation, experience, and feelings reflected in the

teaching process, as well as a process from misunderstanding to understanding. The following three points should be grasped in promoting the special curriculum for indigenous peoples.

**Student-centered teaching:** Learning from students' personal experiences, linked to their own life experiences, enables students to establish their own "learning thinking". Therefore, student-centered teaching is an important key to developing an ethnic-specific curriculum.

**Making good use of community resources:** Teachers should make good use of collaborative learning and community resources to develop the Ethnic Identity Curriculum, such as inviting tribal elders/parents/cultural workers to participate in school affairs and educational activities, urging tribal elders/parents/cultural workers to give speeches at schools, and making good use of community manpower to teach the traditional culture of the indigenous people. Students can come into contact with different cultures through practical participation and understand how culturally responsive teaching works, so that the original habits and skills of the tribe can be integrated into the students' learning curriculum. In addition, we have established a tribal parents' association and combined it with community development associations and village organizations to promote school projects.

**Building a friendly environment:**

In order to create an ethnic curriculum, the university needs to create a learning environment that is "culturally appropriate to the local conditions". In order to enable students to learn in a friendly environment, the campus can be decorated with traditional tribal culture and build a consensus among tribal groups. In recent years, the emphasis on experiential activities in secondary schools has been seen as beneficial in promoting whole-brain thinking and multi-sensory learning. This is reflected in educational contexts and school spaces, such as campus architecture, classroom spatial arrangement, and resource reuse, reinforcing the place and importance of environmental psychology in the classroom. The development of community-based curriculums, functional changes in equipment and facilities, and spatial reorganization allow different communities and cultures to be represented in the living environment, where norms, knowledge, beliefs, and social interactions are subliminally transformed. In order to respond to the needs of mainstream learning activities with culture, it is important to create a friendly campus environment.

Ideals are like seeds, and education is about sowing the seeds of the future, which is only worthwhile if it takes root on the ground. The phenomenon of localization and one-sidedness has been gradually avoided in the various education programs for indigenous peoples. Therefore, respecting the subjectivity of indigenous peoples, integrating their cultural values, developing a knowledge system that belongs to them, and planning and implementing special courses and activities for them are important issues that must be addressed in the promotion of education for indigenous peoples.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Taiwan passed the third reading of the draft amendment to the Indigenous Peoples Education Act in May 2019, expanding the implementation of indigenous peoples education from aboriginal students to all teachers, students and citizens, in order to establish a complete indigenous peoples education system and promote respect for ethnic groups and multicultural development. In order to create a complete indigenous education system, the Committee on Indigenous Nationalities will regularly invite relevant ministries and departments to discuss the development of an indigenous knowledge system for teacher education and curriculum development based on the characteristics of each ethnic group and culture, as well as the establishment of a special law for indigenous schools in order to provide a curriculum that is more in line with the needs of indigenous peoples and cultures and to enhance the effectiveness

of indigenous education. The construction of the indigenous knowledge system is the starting point of indigenous education. Learning is not only the transfer of knowledge, but also the construction of a meaningful connection with life and culture. It is important to choose an appropriate curriculum. When students' learning responds to their experiences, when the setting is open and free, when an atmosphere of exploration and experimentation with new activities emerges, and when images of life, knowledge, identity and culture are constructed through the negotiation of social relations, teachers and students are able to construct personal meanings and transmit "our stories" within the classroom.

The overall operation of the policy is under the authority of the central education department and the Committee of Indigenous Nationalities. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the formulation and promotion of relevant laws and regulations, and the local education units are responsible for the implementation of the policy. Indigenous peoples have not been used to writing for a long time; therefore, the formation and transmission of their traditional knowledge relies mainly on living traditions. Indigenous Cultural Value System Indigenous peoples express their knowledge of the world and the basis for their survival in the face of the world, focusing on the development of indigenous education and cultural characteristics. It is applied in the classroom, with emphasis on the application of curriculum activities and the living environment. The cultural value system of indigenous peoples is inseparable from the teachers' curriculum understanding and practice. Curriculum understanding has an adaptive quality, through which teachers begin to know what they are teaching and why they are teaching it, by observing and interpreting Aboriginal culture from different perspectives. All students' learning experiences, learning activities, learning projects, knowledge, content, results, and finished products must rely on the practice of teachers in the classroom to be implemented.

Indigenous cultural value systems are not static words in a book, but interact with students in a variety of ways in the classroom. Teaching is more alive and active in relation to the cultural context in which the students live. The real life world, around the teaching and learning of the curriculum knowledge, the specific experiences and emotional ties that are generated, allow daily activities and life experiences to unfold, and through the elaboration and reflection on life, construct and shape the life experiences of teachers and students, and peers to grow and interact and learn together.

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