

Service-Learning Model of Cultural and Creative Talent Cultivation for the Bamboo Industry Cluster

Tsen-Yao Chang^{1,*} and Kuo-Li Huang²

¹ Department of Creative Design, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology,
Yunlin County, Taiwan
changty8908@gmail.com

² Visual Communication Design, Southern Taiwan University, Tainan, Taiwan
z3z@stust.edu.tw

Abstract. Action research was introduced in the design of learning services. Cultural and creative talent cultivation activities were completed to review the value of local cultural crafts, such as bamboo weaving, in a town. Young students participated in the creation of bamboo weaving crafts to investigate the threshold and difficulties of learning the art, and to build a feasible model of talent cultivation for traditional industries. Based on observation, learning, exhibition, and action reflection, this study established a feasible model in understanding the difficulties and opportunities of the cultivation of new cultural and creative talents. Moreover, the study built a sustainable concept framework for the cultivation of human resources of local industries.

Keywords: cultural crafts, cultural and creative talent cultivation, industry cluster, action research, clustering potential points, agglomeration economies.

1 Research Background

The bamboo industry was prosperous in the early days of Taiwan, and a bamboo industry-processing zone was even established in Zhushan Township, Nantou County. However, the development of high-tech industries, the mechanization of traditional handicraft industries, the popularization of plastic products, and the impact of globalization greatly reduced the use of bamboo products. Consequently, the bamboo industry in Taiwan shrunk with the establishment of a world economic market. Farmers abandoned bamboo groves or replaced the bamboo with high value cash crops..Bamboo industry manufacturers have relocated their production base in Mainland China and Southeast Asia because of cheap labor. The industry cluster has declined. The socio-demographic imbalance is evident in Zhushan Township because its young population has moved. Currently, the local government has adopted the sightseeing business for local industrial transformation. The strategy resulted in forced changes in the lifestyle of indigenous inhabitants, diminished culture and traditions, and the lessened the identity and self-confidence of the residents toward the town. Zhushan, which is the center of the development of bamboo handicrafts in Taiwan, felt the impact of these realities and the changes in consumption pattern.

In addition, finding young successors to the master craftsmen became difficult. Therefore, the glorious industry of bamboo handicrafts was ignored, and thus, declined.

As the town of the bamboo industry is close to the university implementing the present study, visits and talks with local craftsmen were conducted. These visits identified core problems in the traditional bamboo industry to be aging workforce, difficult skills training, and inadequate familiarity or understanding of modern design among the craftsmen. Based on the needs and development potential of the local industry, a service-learning model for cultural and creative talent cultivation was established. This model emphasized local service and learning. Students from the Department of Design were guided in applying the design theories they learned to provide services for the town. Local residents were informed that the participation of the local artists in the learning activity would lead to the possible return of young people to the countryside. Craftsmen were provided with a new mode for teaching art. Creative effort, public concern for the bamboo craft culture, and student awareness for the bamboo craft and cluster industry were stimulated. Students were encouraged to consider how they could contribute to society based on what they learned in school.

2 Co-curricular Service-Learning into Action Research Process

This research incorporated service-learning into the cyclical nature of action research to develop creative learning for talent cultivation. In service-learning, the effect of the “learning” was obtained in the process of “service.” Service-learning emphasizes experiential education. Students apply what they have learned, utilize the knowledge and skills, and complete the interactive service process to meet the requirements of social justice through participation in the services for the surrounding areas. Kolb’s experiential learning cycle model comprises four stages, namely, experiential, reflecting, generalizing, and applying. Based on Kolb, design courses were established to encourage students to determine the causes of the decline of the local industry and to learn the local traditional bamboo weaving craft.

The case study on the bamboo industry in Zhushan enabled students to enter the field to learn and to understand the economic values and impact of modern design on the local industry. The present experimental curriculum was developed based on the four stages of the development of service-learning proposed by Fertmam, White, and White (1996). The implemented stages were preparation, service, reflection, and celebration. The corresponding activities were:

1. **Mission Preparation:** This stage included field exploration, surveys, and observation recording to establish the goals of the service-learning courses.
2. **Service Import:** The creative design service was introduced in the craft experience workshop to promote the teaching methods for cultural and creative talent cultivation based on the integration of design and crafts.
3. **Reflection Fermentation:** Participants (teachers, students, craftsmen of the community, local residents, and manufacturers) reflected on the positive interactions of the activities.

4. Result Sharing: The learning model was developed by exhibiting the school and community achievements, which expanded the interactions between the community and school.

In the present study, processes were established based on the spiral-type concept. Implementing situational teaching led to self-reflection. The concept was integrated with the activities of the four stages of action research. Teachers evaluated student learning at the end of the course, to improve future cultivation of cultural and creative talents of the community.

3 Curriculum Implementation Results

Practical experience included topic determination and four student exhibitions. Local newspapers and Internet media reported the overall results to provide the local government, industry manufacturers, and community the experience of the aesthetic nature of bamboo crafts and the valuable cultural resources of the community. The results of the responses of the participants are divided into four aspects corresponding to the contributions of this practical curriculum.

1. Service participation improved the practice of theories. The overall performance of the students enabled the teachers and craftsmen to discover the ideas and potential development capabilities of the young generation with respect to traditional crafts.
2. Integration of design and crafts facilitated the transformation of the local industry. The double-instructor system was adopted in teaching. The teacher provided the students with a design guide, while the craftsman provided the technical training in craft production. The craftsman and the teacher worked together to inspire the students to stimulate their interest in the production of crafts, and to rethink possibilities of design and crafts integration. The creative ideas on the cultivation of the workforce of the traditional industry integrated with modern design increased.
3. Experiential learning promoted diversified learning. The exhibition of the achievements enabled the participants, local government, and residents to discover the power of design service. The students not only learned from the teachers and craftsmen, but also learned how to organize actively the exhibition, release information to the media, and to create more works to meet the local needs. This process indicated active learning, and was vital to the cultivation of comprehensive designers.
4. Self-experience and civic awareness cultivation. Student accomplishments included bamboo woven crafts and active participation in the preparation of publicity items, activity space, and media contacts. When the crowds and media reports appeared, the students had imperceptibly changed their original learning attitude and thought more on how to enable more people to see the power of the design in the new era through their design works. The process of the course and the follow-up extension enhanced civic awareness of students.

4 Conclusion

Service-learning was integrated in the local design learning services. A series of cultural and creative talent cultivation activities was completed to review and to recreate the values of local bamboo weaving crafts. Young students participated in the investigation of difficulties of learning the art and the problems of talent cultivation in traditional industries. To develop an adaptable model of the dynamic growth of cultural and creative talent cultivation, Fig. 1 summarized the innovative relationship for the sustainable development of local cultural industries. The relationship established practical and sustainable cooperation among the three elements (teachers, students, the local industrial participants) of cultural and creative talent cultivation. The teacher mediated between the students and the local community to create a learning platform for cultural and creative talent cultivation. Participation in the cultural and creative talent cultivation corresponded to the four-stage model of Kolb, and addressed the industry request for talent cultivation. Fig. 1 showed friendly environments could cultivate cultural and creative talents, and revive the industry and improve quality management. The model supported an interactive clustering environment to resolve the current difficulties of the industry cluster.

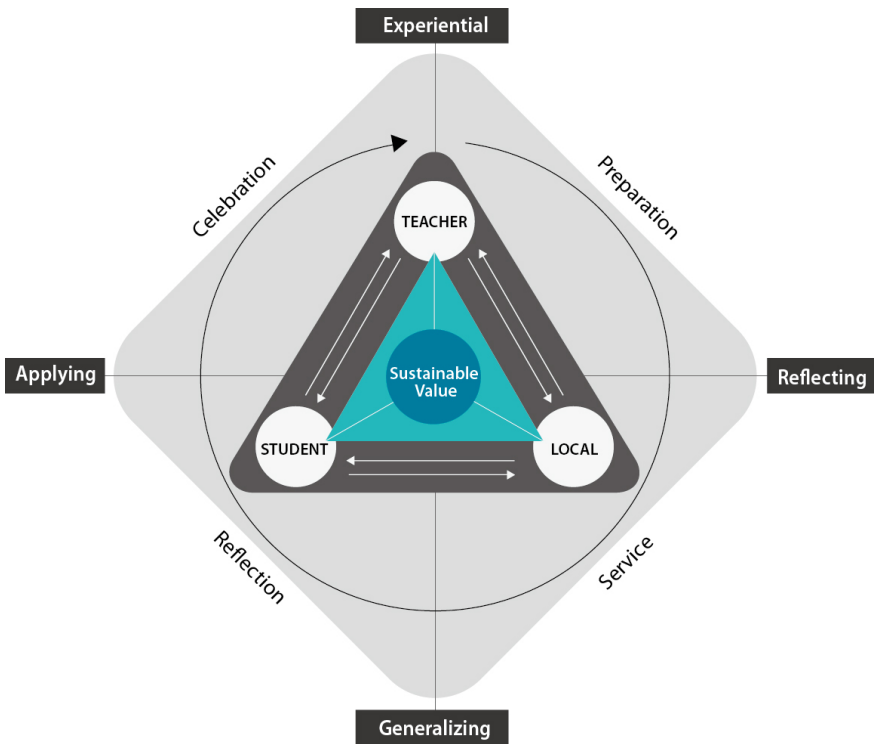


Fig. 1. Service-learning model

Acknowledgments. The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this research provided by the National Science Council of Taiwan under Grants No. NSC-101-2410-H-224-04.

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