

An Empirical Study on the Decade-Long Policy Evolution of Experimental Education in Kaohsiung and Its Pathways for Indigenous Cultural Preservation

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Abstract

Research Overview

This study examines how local governments in Taiwan have responded to the challenges of Indigenous cultural loss and the weakening of educational subjectivity through institutional transformation over the decade since the implementation of the Three Acts Governing Experimental Education. Under multiple structural pressures—including declining birth rates, assimilation within the mainstream education system, and population mobility in Indigenous communities—Indigenous education faces the dual challenges of cultural regeneration and institutional adaptation. In this context, experimental education has evolved beyond a form of pedagogical innovation into an institutional practice involving the decentralization of educational administrative authority, the restructuring of local governance, and the realization of Indigenous educational self-determination. In particular, how local governments translate cultural preservation from an abstract ideal into a sustainable institutional pathway has become a critical issue at the intersection of educational reform and social justice.

Purpose of Study

Focusing on Kaohsiung City from 2014 to 2024, this study aims to trace the evolution of Indigenous experimental education policy and to analyze how it has shifted from an early orientation toward post-disaster reconstruction and remedial intervention to a governance logic centered on cultural subjectivity and Indigenous self-determined development. The study further introduces the anthropological concept of Cultural Push as its analytical lens, conceptualizing educational policy as

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an institutionalized cultural driving force. Through mechanisms such as legal authorization, administrative resource allocation, and deliberative governance design, policies are expected to support tribal autonomy, school-based curricular autonomy, and cultural regeneration. The study also seeks to analyze the pathways through which these processes become institutionalized and localized.

Research Methods

This study adopts document analysis as the primary method, combined with policy text analysis and descriptive statistics based on secondary data. Official policy and institutional documents—including the Kaohsiung City Government Gazette, administrative directives issued by the Bureau of Education, city council proceedings, and school-level experimental education plans—are systematically collected to examine changes in policy instruments, models of administrative authorization, and institutional arrangements over the past decade. In addition, descriptive statistical analysis is used to illustrate trends in the number of schools, student enrollment, program types, and policy resource allocation in Indigenous experimental education, thereby capturing the overall trajectory of policy expansion.

This study focuses on indigenous experimental schools within the jurisdiction of Kaohsiung City. Two policy-representative cases—'B Elementary and Secondary School' and 'X Elementary School'—are selected for comparison. Both are indigenous schools with extremely small populations; one operates under a public-public management model (i.e., publicly funded and publicly managed), while the other follows a public-private management model (i.e., publicly funded but privately managed)—similar to charter schools in the United States or academies in the U.K.. These two cases respectively correspond to distinct policy pathways: migration-based social restoration and indigenous homeland-based language preservation, enabling a cross-case comparative institutional analysis.

Results and Discussion

This study is expected to show that the development of Indigenous experimental education policy in Kaohsiung reflects a gradual shift from instrumental remediation toward institutional empowerment. Early policy efforts are likely to focus on restoring educational resources and access in post-disaster contexts, whereas later developments are expected to place greater emphasis on the construction of cultural subjectivity and the support of Indigenous self-determined development.

From this perspective, educational policy can be understood as a form of “cultural push,” whereby institutional mechanisms—such as legal authorization, administrative resource allocation, and

deliberative governance design—serve to promote tribal autonomy, curricular autonomy, and cultural regeneration. However, the effectiveness of such policies as drivers of cultural sustainability is expected to depend not only on institutional design itself, but also on the depth of administrative delegation, the extent of cross-departmental collaboration, and the degree to which policies align with the endogenous cultural dynamics of Indigenous communities.

Furthermore, the study is expected to identify tensions between centralized legal frameworks and local governance practices, which may influence the flexibility and contextual responsiveness of policy implementation. Overall, this study seeks to provide an analytical account of how institutional arrangements and cultural processes interact in the development of Indigenous experimental education, offering empirical insights for future policy refinement and local governance reform.

Keywords: *Cultural Push, Indigenous cultural preservation, Kaohsiung City, document analysis, empirical research*