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CHAPTER NINE

Whole-community approach as a way to support Indigenous learners in urban areas in Taiwan

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Abstract

The migration of Indigenous people to urban areas has led to an increase of Indigenous learners in urban schools where little adjustments are made in the curriculum, pedagogies or school environment to accommodate them. For Indigenous people, continued assimilationist practices result in identity issues, feelings of isolation, marginalization and challenges that restrict academic progress. This chapter draws on 24 in-depth interviews with Indigenous leaders, educators and academics in Taiwan. It presents their insights on how learning and living as migrants in urban areas are affecting Indigenous learners' identities and academic progress. It then showcases in detail two initiatives Indigenous people have been developing to support Indigenous learners and learning, and draws lessons for policy and practice from them. These include a community-based learning program (non-formal) and experimental schools (formal). Both of them are Indigenous-led, building on Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and engage community members of all ages, genders and skills.

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Introduction

As rural communities become economically less sustainable, Indigenous people are migrating to cities to pursue economic and educational opportunities. Now, around half of the Indigenous people in Taiwan live in urban areas (Lee & Chen, 2014). While the migration of the most productive population has led to further degradation of rural communities, the urbanization of Indigenous people also poses significant challenges to Indigenous people. These challenges include experiences of cultural shock and marginalization (Lee & Chen, 2014), the loss of Indigenous languages and cultures (Coca, 2013), and a lack of protection or security as the absence of academic credentials forces them to take on short-term, manual and low-paid jobs (Chiu, 2005; Hsieh, 2016).

As far as education is concerned, the schools that Indigenous learners have access to are either low in quality or culturally irresponsible in content and pedagogies (Snyder & Nieuwenhuysen, 2010). Urban schools make little adjustments as the urban Indigenous population is viewed as assimilated into the dominant culture and alienated from their own ‘traditional’ rural cultures and communities (Bang et al., 2013). Where the cultural and linguistic differences are acknowledged, education stakeholders rely on the discourse of cultural deficit (i.e., what Indigenous learners *lack*) to approach Indigenous education and deal with ‘problematic’ Indigenous identities (Nesterova, 2019a). The approach identifies Indigenous cultural differences as a key aspect of academic failure (Lee & Chen 2014). Such deficit thinking leads to teachers and school administrators blaming Indigenous students and their families for academic failure, disregarding the flaws of the system. One example of this is identification of

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Indigenous students as ‘learning disabled,’ after assessing them against monocultural conceptions of ‘intelligence’ and other related concepts valued in mainstream schools (Reyhner, 2006). Over the past decades, education has produced Indigenous people who are physically, psychologically and culturally removed from their own history, cultures, values, communities and spaces. Although Indigenous people are incorporated into Taiwan’s economic system, socio-economically they find themselves at the bottom of society (Chi, 2012). One key reason for this is a lack of appropriate or relevant education or skill training offered to them to acquire safe and decent employment.

Studies in such countries with Indigenous populations as Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada show that Indigenous students who attend schools that reflect their cultural references, languages and values have higher achievement and retention rates than those who do not (McCue, 2011; Wang & Harkness, 2007). While such findings showcase the importance of creating formal spaces for Indigenous learners where they can thrive academically, non-formal settings for community engagement are important, too. Indeed, community engagement in non-formal educational settings has proven to support and boost Indigenous students’ success and to aid Indigenous peoples’ development (see Moore & Nesterova, 2020). In this chapter, I argue for the need to utilize whole-community and intergenerational approaches, and build on the capacities and resources of community members to support Indigenous learners’ academic and personal development, to revive Indigenous cultures, and to enhance communities’ capital in urban areas. Drawing on my work with Indigenous communities, experts and educators across Taiwan, I present two initiatives adopted by Indigenous people to integrate communities and

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families into formal and non-formal education. One is a community-based learning program (non-formal) and the other experimental schools (formal). They are both led by Indigenous people, built on Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and they engage community members of all ages, genders and skills.

Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan

As of 2021, Taiwan has recognized 16 Indigenous groups which altogether number 571,816 people, or 2.42% of the total population. There are at least ten other Indigenous groups (referred to as *pingpu*) that are seeking official recognition (IWGIA, 2020). Indigenous peoples thus constitute a numerical minority in the country where the majority of the population comes from the Han Chinese background including Hoklo/Minnan people (about 70%), the Hakka (15%), and Chinese Mainlanders (12%) (Blust, 2013). The Indigenous groups belong to the Austronesian family that is distinct from the majority of the population in their racial, linguistic and cultural make-up. Despite the differences in size, location, and socio-cultural organization among the 16 groups, they share a common history of subjugation and assimilation, resistance, and fighting for their cultural and land rights and dignity (Nesterova & Jackson, 2018).

Since 1624, Indigenous people were incorporated into the framework of a modern state by European, Japanese and Chinese powers with a particularly brutal military subjugation and destruction of Indigenous traditional spaces by the Japanese (1895-1945) (Dupré, 2019). In the decades that followed – when martial law was established during 1949-1989 by the Chinese Nationalist Party – traditional Indigenous social organization was further disrupted due to the

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assimilation of Indigenous people into the dominant society and control of local, Indigenous elites. These processes have led to such issues as rapidly disappearing cultures and languages, the low socio-economic status and poor health of Indigenous people, economic instability of Indigenous communities, encroachment of traditional lands, and limited political and economic influence of Indigenous groups (Caster, 2016; Chi, 2012; IWGIA, 2020).

Assimilationist practices of colonial governments also led to the isolation of Indigenous people from their cultures and communities, institutional and personal discrimination, and destruction of traditional educational spaces that were seen as not valuable or beneficial by the dominant groups (Howard, 1994; Huang, 2007; Su, 2006; Teng, 2004). Education that has been offered instead failed to address inequities and injustices or remove barriers Indigenous people face in pursuing their rights and the development of their cultures and communities. As Taiwan shifted towards democratic development in the late 1980s, the government recognized Indigenous groups and their needs, and slowly started working towards revitalizing Indigenous cultures and addressing the injustices they had been living through (Ministry of Education, 2011). The past 30 years have seen educational policies, standards and laws informed by the ideals of multiculturalism and inclusion cast as the remedy for the institutional barriers, inequalities and injustices that Indigenous groups have experienced (Nesterova, 2019b). To complement broad multicultural policies and practices, in 1998 the government implemented the Indigenous Education Act to strengthen the focus on the revival of Indigenous languages, history and cultures within mainstream education. Another key policy included provision of access for Indigenous children to high-quality state schooling (Cheng, 2004) and tertiary institutions.

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As much as mainstream education is of high quality as seen by policymakers, education professionals and in general by the outcomes of education for the dominant ethnic group, this does not necessarily reflect the views of Indigenous people. Nowadays, 70,000 Indigenous students attend schools with 58% in mainstream schools and 42% in schools in Indigenous areas that still encourage assimilation and tokenistic promotion of Indigenous cultures (Chen, 2016). Despite the changes that have taken place in Taiwan in the past three decades, of the Indigenous students in schools, only 38% complete secondary education and 19.5% have opportunities to complete higher education (Chen, 2016). This is increasingly seen as the fault of inclusion of Indigenous students into a mainstream system that presents them with synthetic, culturally insensitive, and contextually irrelevant education (see Chi, 2012; Hsieh, 2016; Masta, 2016; Wang, 2014).

Methodology

This research is part of a larger study conducted in four cities in Taiwan (Taitung, Taichung, Tainan, and Hualien) from 2016 to 2018. These areas were selected as they are traditional areas of Indigenous settlements, with large numbers of Indigenous groups and a large share of Indigenous people who are active in advocating and working for Indigenous education and development.

The findings reported on in this chapter rely on interviews with 24 Indigenous participants as well as observations of and engagement in Indigenous learning activities of

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various kinds (e.g., intergenerational learning, ceremonies, community and family events, school openings). In particular, the participants included:

Group 1: Ten Indigenous people who work as professors of Indigenous studies in Taiwan universities (referred to as #P in the later sections)

Group 2: Six Indigenous leaders who work for their communities in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in partnership with the government and/or its agencies (referred to as #IL in the later sections)

Group 3: Eight Indigenous educators working on new models of Indigenous education (referred to as #ED in the later sections)

The study used two types of interviews: in-depth semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. This allowed us to combine a standardized set of questions for all, specific questions to each group, and a more open-ended and informal open-space approach for the participants to reflect, discuss and share, and to shift control from the researcher to the participant. This ultimately allowed for greater breadth and depth of answers (Fontana & Frey, 1994), and created an environment with rapport and respect, as conversations were informal and resembled storytelling. Each interview lasted from 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours 30 minutes. The participants chose the venues, which included university offices of the professors, offices of Indigenous leaders and educators, cafés, homes, and libraries. We audio-recorded each interview

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after receiving participants' written consent. Research assistants transcribed the interviews verbatim in English, or where necessary in Chinese before translating them into English.

When these participants approved of the transcripts, I analyzed the data adopting cross-sectional and case study approaches to interview analysis. First, I merged participants' responses under common sub-themes and themes and compared and contrasted them (cross-sectional analysis). Then, I treated each participant as a separate case that could tell a distinct story related to the topics under discussion (case study analysis). The first step was to do cross-sectional content analysis. I coded the data according to pre-set themes, and themes that emerged during the interviews. Each theme had a label, a description, and criteria for inclusion. I analyzed the interviews question by question and used extracted quotes and perspectives under these different themes and sub-themes. I then synthesized responses across the contributors and identified commonalities and differences. After that, I treated each contributor's interview as a separate case with a distinct story. I read each interview as a coherent narrative to see additional themes and ideas as well as potential biases. I overcame biases by working closely with two critical friends and two research assistants from different Indigenous communities. The research assistants and the critical friends acted as 'culture guides' who helped to ensure that I observed the Indigenous ethical research protocol, that I interpreted and presented Indigenous views in a reliable and trustworthy manner, and that the conclusions I made were credible and valid (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After that, I compared and contrasted the cases and established patterns across cases to contribute to themes and sub-themes. The combination of these approaches allowed me to systematically code the emerging data, identify themes and patterns (Hsieh &

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Shannon, 2005), and explore meanings in each text (McTavish & Pirro, 1990), and relations between and across them.

Indigenous education and learning in urban areas

By now, around half of the Indigenous population have moved to urban areas in pursuit of better employment and educational opportunities. Indeed, urban education tends to be of higher quality and, overall, cities provide more educational and learning opportunities, including tutors who help prepare for high stakes examinations. Still, as the participants pointed out, Indigenous learners struggle in mainstream schools. As participant #P1 explained, “Indigenous children in cities still fail schools, drop out of schools, and can only find manual jobs like maybe to do construction work.” Due to Indigenous learners’ academic failure and subsequent transition to lower paid jobs, there is a large group of working-class Indigenous people in cities. As participants shared, when Indigenous people who fail school become parents, their children follow in their footsteps. Participant #P1 clarified this by saying that with no academic degrees, “they can only be laborers, their children see this, and they use the same concept for educat[ion], education for construction sites.” Even if these parents try to provide better opportunities, participant #P5 added that “it might be hard because parents cannot teach like help their kids with homework and might not have enough money to send kids to tutors, so the kids see one solution: give up education.” This cycle continues when, generation after generation, Indigenous people find it challenging to receive higher education and better employment opportunities. Despite the shared frustration over education, Indigenous parents and caregivers choose mainstream education for their children without giving it much thought. All participants

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suggested that Indigenous people regard mainstream schooling as necessary as it gives them an opportunity to get access to universities, and decent jobs and salaries.

Despite some favorable comments about the education system, be it in urban areas or Indigenous rural enclaves, all participants dismissed it as hollow and shallow when discussing the content students are exposed to. While in Indigenous rural areas the surroundings are Indigenous, allowing for regular exposure to the Indigenous world, in cities opportunities to maintain and transmit Indigeneity are limited. This becomes even more complicated as the overwhelming focus rests on schooling for high stakes examinations, and the content and structure are determined by the dominant Han culture at the neglect of Indigenous identity, languages, cultures and history. The disconnect between Indigenous and Han Chinese cultures, languages, values, identities, knowledges and ways of knowing was described as the main concern for the mainstream education Indigenous learners have access to. As participant #ED3 explained, there is “no proper Indigenous language teaching in schools, no access to traditional cultures, no hearing traditional languages, and no possibility for strong Indigenous belonging.” The participants suggested that this has created ‘lost generations’ of Indigenous people whose Indigenous identity and language skills are weak.

Although cities offer a variety of extracurricular activities beyond one’s culture, Indigenous people do not have opportunities, time or space to transmit their traditions, philosophies, knowledges and other aspects of Indigeneity. Participant #IL6 explained that the absence of Indigenous cultures in urban settings makes Indigenous people “double-blind: one

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blind for Indigenous knowledge, the other for Han culture.” For another participant (#ED7), education without references to Indigenous cultures led to feeling “empty, miserable.” This is not only about how Indigenous people *feel*. As studies show, schooling in culturally unsuitable environments leads to a number of detrimental consequences. They include the feeling of alienation from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (Graham & van Zyl-Chavarro, 2016), distrust and disconnect between schools and Indigenous families (De Plevitz, 2007), and unsatisfactory academic outcomes among Indigenous learners (Kearney et al., 2014) who find it hard to adjust to non-Indigenous environments and approaches, among other issues. In fact, studies in Taiwan showed that developing a bicultural identity in Indigenous learners leads to high academic achievements (Chen et al., 2012) while culturally responsive pedagogy (Chiu, 2015) increases students’ self-confidence, improves the students’ relationships with others, and makes education more meaningful.

What the participants believe is urgently needed is the creation of opportunities and venues to solidify Indigenous identities, to foster belonging for Indigenous people of all generations, to practice Indigenous languages, and to re-learn what was lost. These opportunities and venues can be designed in a variety of forms, depending on the needs of particular Indigenous groups and the context they reside in. For many participants, an ideal way forward would involve developing a comprehensive Indigenous education system parallel to the mainstream education system. As they explained, this includes adopting a holistic approach to Indigenous education and designing both formal and informal educational institutions and centers to support Indigenous learners, their families, and their communities. The participants

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believed that such a system could meet current and future needs of Indigenous communities, including educating them to be active citizens of both Indigenous and Taiwanese worlds much better than the mainstream system. Comprehensive changes need to also take place in the mainstream education system to support Indigenous learners who opt to attend mainstream schools and non-Indigenous learners who need to learn from and about the diverse Indigenous groups. The participants agreed that some such changes in mainstream education have made schools more inclusive of Indigenous learners. Still, as they acknowledged, their work proved that focusing on changes in the mainstream education system is not enough to support the revival of Indigenous cultural capital and resources and/or the redress of injustices. They thus emphasized that officials and school-level staff should support, finance, and scale up the programs that Indigenous communities have been establishing. Those include, among others, the Indigenous community colleges and Indigenous experimental schools described in the next section.

Indigenous educational initiatives

This section provides two examples of community-driven educational initiatives Taiwan's Indigenous people have been working on to support their own people, Indigenous learners, and their families. One of them is a non-formal, inter-generational program; the other is a formal, experimental school.

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Community-based and -led learning programs

To support Indigenous communities, the government established 14 Tribal Colleges (referred to as “tribal community education” in official documents) across Taiwan to serve different Indigenous groups. Their key goal is to become a lifelong non-formal learning initiative that connects Indigenous people across generations, and to support the revival of Indigenous languages and cultures. Participant #ED5 explained them as “trying to develop a channel for Indigenous people to learn and never forget their roots, their culture when living in cities.” As such, Indigenous people view them as an essential educational venue for their people who are away from Indigenous traditional spaces and cultural traditions in rural areas. Four participants considered these colleges ‘useless’ and ‘unsuccessful’ as they focus on teaching performative arts and have the same repetitive curriculum that needs to be approved by the government. Nevertheless, they still view them as a good cultural pastime that can foster belonging in cities where Indigenous people may not have a strong support system. Also, unlike the rigid system of formal education that primarily focuses on textual literacy and testing, the colleges pursue the goal of restoring Indigeneity of the island through the use of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing in teaching and learning. As participants described them, “they are unstructured unlike Chinese schools to provide more flexibility Indigenous people prefer” (#ED5) and they are very informal because “strict time and formal hierarchy is weird for Indigenous people” (#ED1).

One such college that is considered as more innovative and successful is the Bunun Indigenous College (henceforth BIC or College) located in Taichung city. It is praised for offering varied programs and maintaining high enrolment and retention rates (see Nesterova and

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Jackson, 2019). Participant #ED6 explained that while the Bunun people design and administer BIC, it “welcomes all Indigenous immigrants from villages who work as laborers and local city Indigenous people from many tribes.” This participant also added that there is “no need to be Indigenous even, everyone is welcome.” The only prerequisite for them is to want a chance to use a lifelong learning opportunity to come together and raise awareness about Indigenous issues, languages and cultures, and develop skills for the modern society. Indigenous people lead the College but benefit from occasional technical support by non-Indigenous educational experts. Such support involves, for example, curriculum development, development of pedagogy, and other aspects of teaching and learning.

BIC provides a number of courses that contribute to the revival of Indigenous cultures, languages, knowledge systems and values; awareness about Indigenous cultural and socio-environmental rights and their protection; as well as the strengthening of Indigenous identities and groups by helping them find their own place in the community, society and the world. An Indigenous person designs a curriculum for a course and then leads that course with the support of certified Indigenous educators. The College does not use any formal assessment such as tests or examinations to evaluate the courses, and does not provide any certificates to its students. Instead, they value the process of developing an understanding through dialogue with others and with nature, building relationships that emphasize the value of obligation to the living and non-living world.

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As one of the key people at BIC (#ED6) shared, they “are developing, creating new, different courses to change the Indigenous society without government’s interference.” As she further explained,

The classes go beyond crafts to include more active learning with female empowerment, Indigenous rights, Indigenous public, economic, and political agenda, social life of Indigenous peoples, practical knowledge like traditional medicine and hunting, vocational skills based on Indigenous knowledge. We bring our deeper cultural elements and usage of Indigenous languages into the courses. And it’s working, people are interested.

Participant #ED8 provided an example of a combination of skills and Indigenous knowledge. She stated that it is essential for them to “develop skills, especially technology skills, that can help [them] to survive by learning a trade with an Indigenous twist.” She continued, “let’s say you design your traditional clothes, we will teach you how to sew, how to use traditional materials such as leaves and fibers, how to embroider, how to make it for the modern society.” The same method was applied to teach making furniture with Indigenous colors, patterns and techniques, as well as traditional architecture with simple materials and wood carvings, and other similar artistic courses. Another example included providing an open forum to discuss political issues. Participant #ED6 shared that “people come and talk about any kinds of Indigenous rights and political structure, and whether it’s helping us or not” (#ED6). The participants concluded that the courses provided by this College motivate and attract a lot of Indigenous people from all groups who consistently attend them, do not drop out, and bring more people such as their friends, neighbors and family.

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Another course BIC provides is called “Facing the Mountain Education” (Nesterova, 2020). It was designed by an Indigenous man with the support of trained Indigenous teachers and curriculum developers. The course is built around the intersection of the Indigenous people’s cultural, social and environmental responsibilities, rights and identities. As with other courses, meetings take place in the homes of Indigenous people, followed by activities outside in nature every weekend. They rely on what Korteweg and Root call ‘intergenerational cultural strength’ (2016, p. 189): Indigenous people of all ages, from children to elders, engage in collaborative experiential learning and meaning making in order to work together for and make collective decisions to protect their identities, land and lifestyles. Depending on the day and time, it is attended by 20-30 people coming from all walks of life and different Indigenous groups. Through collaborative experiential learning and meaning making, Indigenous people of all ages – from children to elders – collectively discuss and remember the knowledge they received from their elders, ancestors and grandparents and learn from their diverse past and present experiences. At the same time as they learn, they also engage in social and community-building activities such as cooking and sharing meals, caring for children and grandparents present, or being outside in the mountains.

The objective of the course is the restoration of living sustainably as an ‘Indigenous person’. Everything starts, as one Indigenous contributor noted, with the fact that “you need to know you are Indigenous.” As the course teaches, an Indigenous sustainable lifestyle can be achieved through developing a comprehensive awareness of oneself. This course involves

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learning about one's roots, past, present and future; about one's duties to their community, the environment, and the world; and about their reliance on what they already have to feed themselves and navigate their life. Such awareness and ability were discounted and lost during the times of assimilation and destruction of Indigenous traditional spaces and knowledge bases. Nowadays, the Indigenous people see the need in re-building skills and local knowledge about the Earth they inhabit in order to survive and undertake traditional activities in their ancestral environment and spaces: the mountains. For this, the decolonization of Indigenous knowledges and thought should follow.

However, learning and teaching technical skills and knowledge to grow one's food and hunt in the mountains are not sufficient for a sustainable life in the modern society. The course thus focuses on the importance of defining and connecting one's cultural identity as an Indigenous person with the environment, establishing one strong identity grounded in the culture and environment a person comes from, and an obligation to both. For this, along with group activities in and outside Indigenous homes, the educator guides the participants to communicate with the environment on their own to face themselves ("face the mountain"), their shattered identity, past and fears, and to reflect on their relationships and connection between themselves and the Earth. It is only by developing a strong connection between the two identities they believe they can restore and reignite the moral responsibility to protect, respect and relate to everyone and everything around them.

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Experimental schools

Experimental schools that are established and led by Indigenous groups are another type of educational provision that has been emerging in recent years to support Indigenous peoples as a whole, and Indigenous learners in particular. They have two primary goals. One is to re-establish Indigenous spaces where Indigenous people can revitalize Indigenous cultures, languages and knowledge systems. The other is to enhance learning environments and processes to improve academic achievements and retention rates. The participants believe that once Indigenous learners receive culturally sensitive education in a safe, inclusive environment, they will be able to work on redressing injustices and inequities they face, and develop sustainable communities.

As a way to improve Indigenous education, the participants emphasized a need for a whole-community approach. They argued that because Indigenous culture is a collective culture, even children should be involved in making various decisions and be resources in learning. Creating what participant #P9 called “nations of learning” should engage community members such as elders, parents, guardians and children in developing content, teaching, participating in events and classes, and looking after children, among other activities. The participants explained that schools need to include older and younger generations to work together with experts to make decisions and develop a curriculum and a system based on Indigenous knowledges and values. Once Indigenous people build it on their terms and work together with members of their group and other experts, they can build something that will be of value to them. As participant #ED5 clarified:

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The community is needed to discuss what education should be, what the school should be, their ideas about the school, its characteristics, what it represents, what it stands for, and what should be done with the school, and how to evaluate the system.

Systematic and meaningful inclusion of Indigenous communities into education serves other objectives. First, inviting parents and elders helps to improve collaboration between communities and schools, and link community life with formal education. Opening up the curriculum to community discussion and participation benefits Indigenous learners, as communities then become part of and can be in (at least) partial control of education to help it become more grounded in and relevant to Indigenous lives. The participants also argued that language, culture and identity cannot be discussed usefully without Indigenous people of different generations being active and present in schools. For example, Indigenous adults and elders can support teaching by talking about Indigenous traditions, singing, chanting, weaving and introducing other traditional activities. Participant #ED8 described it as follows:

Every morning, every class has a meeting to hear a story and to have a conversation from parents, from communities or elders. Stories for our students are Indigenous stories because Indigenous cultures have so many rich stories and life experiences are also stories that need to be told and talked about. How to survive, how to live, how to respect their cultures and elders.

The participants also stressed that it is important to have a strong community involvement in pre-school education when children need to have support to build a strong

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foundation for identity and language. Indigenous people of all ages can benefit from this experience, especially parents and caretakers as they can adopt best practices to later implement at home.

Second, educators warned that many Indigenous children do not respect their elders and parents because they do not believe older generations are knowledgeable or aware of the current reality. Participants explained it as youngsters seeing the elders as “outdated” (#ED4) and “irrelevant” (#ED7). Therefore, apart from including Indigenous parents and elders in knowledge sharing and teaching Indigenous students, there is a need for Indigenous children and youth to learn respect for their elders. Participant #ED7 noted that when they work closely together, “students will learn to see elders in their communities as teachers, as experts, as source[s] of knowledge about identity, about food, science, legends, myths, etcetera.”

The participants pointed out that schools can do this only when they have strong communities with very committed and dedicated members. They stressed that, while the government plays an important role, it is Indigenous people who should be more proactive in developing and reviving their education and culture. The participants also noted that it is not easy for Indigenous people to recreate and strengthen their own communities. Firstly, communities may not be as tight as they used to be; secondly, they are concerned with many other pressing issues. Participant #P9 explained it in detail:

I fear it depends on the community, if they are collectively strong enough or not. For those who have strong collective will, they are already [educating their children] their own way.

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But for those who don't have good organization, then it's very easy for them as a community to lose themselves and have only the name of the community as a place name, but not as a tight-knit community. I think that's the most sorrowful problem. And I think many places have already become like that.

Various aspects of teaching and learning also require the support of Indigenous communities and families. First, educational content, structure and pedagogies should be altered so that they are grounded in Indigenous intellectual traditions. These traditions include Indigenous thought and ways of thinking, knowledges and ways of knowing, as well as Indigenous ways of being, behaving, relating and looking at and categorizing the world. As participant #IL5 noted, in developing education appropriate for the Indigenous peoples, they need to start by "thinking in terms of the benefit and needs of an entire Indigenous nation tied to their environment and develop curriculum from their knowledge system and value-based system." Older generations of Indigenous people are particularly critical for incorporating Indigeneity in every aspect of learning and schooling.

Second is the incorporation of Indigenous languages as a language of instruction and as a separate subject, depending on decisions made by each group and family members. The participants viewed Indigenous languages as critical to the survival of Indigenous knowledges and identity. As participant #P5 put it, language "is the core element of the Indigenous culture, knowledge, and value systems." Yet, despite relevant policies and government initiatives to reverse the loss of languages, the languages are dying. As one educator (#ED1) explained,

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therefore, the “first thing [he] think[s] about in developing this new school” is the languages they need to include in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Immersive language nests based at schools that include all generations of Indigenous people is one of the answers to language loss. One successful example of such language nests is Aotearoa New Zealand where several hundred language nests (Kōhanga reo), or Māori-medium pre-schools, have been established since [1986](#) (Benton, 2015). As Benton (2015) describes, language nests led to an exponential increase in the number of Indigenous people able to speak Māori and an increased presence of the Māori language in the country. Intergenerational language learning will thus help to revitalize languages and will also change the negative attitudes Indigenous adults have towards Indigenous languages, as the participants noted.

Concluding remarks

Drawing on in-depth interviews with diverse Indigenous stakeholders in Taiwan, this chapter discussed the negative impact urban education has on Indigenous learning experiences and outcomes, as well as their cultures and identities. It then presented two Indigenous-led educational initiatives Indigenous people have established to meet the needs of their communities and learners. It was shown that, as in other countries with an Indigenous population, Taiwan’s state-provided education does not serve the country’s Indigenous learners who continue to lose their distinct cultures, find it hard to recover from the traumas caused by colonialism and its legacies, suffer from discrimination in educational institutions, and tend to have low academic achievement and high drop-out rates. While the policies and laws developed in the past few decades have led to certain positive changes in education, not much improvement

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in Indigenous students' academic success has been achieved. As participant #ED4 emphasized, government initiatives are seen as “throwing a bone to Indigenes” at the neglect of supporting Indigenous initiatives that can offer opportunities for considerable and substantial shifts in education, learning and community development.

Studies conducted across the world propose varied options to improve the learning environment for and academic outcomes of Indigenous learners. They include, for example, introducing Indigenous pedagogies (Fenelon & LeBeau, 2006), languages (Morcom, 2017), knowledge systems and values (Langdon, 2009) as well as transforming the existing mono-epistemic educational structures (Ma Rhea, 2015) and establishing separate Indigenous educational institutions (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2008). There are also examples of community-driven learning in diverse settings that lead to better outcomes for Indigenous students and communities (Moore & Nesterova, 2020). Building on this work, this study argues that utilizing a whole community and intergenerational approaches are essential to revive Indigenous cultures and enhance the social and cultural capital of Indigenous communities. As they rely on the participation, capacity strengthening and centering of Indigenous communities, these approaches will also allow the ethical integration of Indigenous languages, cultures, and knowledges into the education system and bridge the divide between the dominant culture of schooling and Indigenous expectations and needs.

The following are some specific strategies policymakers and practitioners can focus on to support urban Indigenous communities:

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First is to address the need to strengthen Indigenous peoples' identities by re-building their respective cultures, traditions and rituals, as well as their connection to the natural environment, especially their ancestral land. As noted earlier, once a deeper and more holistic understanding and strengthening of the connection between their socio-cultural identity and environmental identity takes place, the healing of traumas caused by past oppression, destitution and disengagement from Indigenous community life and ancestral land can follow. With a secured and healthy identity and understanding of themselves and their place in the local, national and global context, the Indigenous people can then feel more empowered and in control. It is only then they can protect their collective rights, develop their communities, and design education that transmits the necessary knowledge and values for a sustainable life. This process requires changes in content and pedagogies in formal education, as well as incorporation of and support for continuous informal activities designed and led by Indigenous people.

Connected to the above, the second strategy is to support Indigenous-led and -controlled spaces that draw on the strengths of each member of the community. Such spaces should be safe, encouraging, and nurturing for Indigenous people of all generations and focus on developing skills and knowledge relevant and required by local Indigenous communities, as well as on strengthening a sense of belonging to a community and a support system around Indigenous people. This strategy will allow for a gradual re-building of the capital and capabilities of Indigenous people and, as a result, of their communities. Such spaces can also act as language

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nesses and rely on intergenerational language learning, which will help improve the proficiency of members of all ages and levels.

The third strategy is to change who teaches in and leads Indigenous schools (i.e., school-level staff). This recommendation prompts us to rethink how these professionals are educated about Indigenous issues, how they engage with and include Indigenous communities in their operations, what they know about and how they teach the history of Indigeneity on the island, and other related matters. Whether they are Indigenous or not, these professionals need to have specialized training that would support them in helping Indigenous learners, their families and communities. This includes, among other competencies, designing and learning 1) the curriculum that reflects the new, Indigenous content, 2) methods to create school and classroom environments that are friendly to Indigenous students, 3) culturally responsive ways to work with Indigenous students and communities, and 4) tools to create a more meaningful educational experience for Indigenous students.

The fourth strategy is to incorporate Indigenous parents, families and communities as partners in improving teaching and learning in schools that have Indigenous learners. Co-teaching and co-constructing the curriculum, for example, can support school-level staff in their engagement with Indigenous learners, help to redesign content and pedagogies used in schools to incorporate the diversity of Indigenous cultures, and create a safe and enabling environment for Indigenous learners. Engagement of the elders in particular, and other community members who are fluent speakers of Indigenous languages, can help to introduce Indigenous languages and

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related knowledge into formal education to enhance the language proficiency of Indigenous learners.

While the initiatives showcased in this chapter are small in scale and outreach, if supported and formalized, they, as well as the principles they are built upon, can aid the development of Indigenous communities and of inclusive education and learning that benefit Indigenous learners, communities, and the society as a whole. In addition to the changes in practice and relevant policies, further research (including action research) needs to be conducted on such issues as 1) what inclusive education should look like in contexts with diverse Indigenous groups at different levels of cultural revitalization and 2) how effective partnerships can be built between Indigenous families, communities and schools to support learners in their academic and personal development.

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