

## Sustainable Competency Education Continues – Dialogue and Consensus

Campus focus

### Preface

As part of a 2-year plan, our school's "Competency-based Higher Education Learning Innovation Program" has completed its midterm report and received high praise from the MOE, building on the progress made last year. The program is led by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development and Social Innovation, Dr. Hui-Huang Hsu, and 2 co-principal investigators, Dean of the College of International Affairs, Dr. Cheng-Hao Pao, and Dean of Academic Affairs, Dr. Tsung-Ru Tsai, all of whom recognize the efforts of the teaching faculty and administrative colleagues. The team is now working on writing the next phase of the project. As the program continues to move forward, a three-day exhibition of learning innovations was held in the Black Swan Exhibition Room starting March 1st. The exhibition showcased the achievements of the sustainability course for freshmen and the outcomes of the competency-based curriculum. Teachers from various departments shared their experiences, presenting the school's progress, achievements, and challenges in sustainability Competency education. In addition, the Center for Sustainability also invited teachers from our school and local partners to collaborate on the "Tamsui-Tamkang Guidebook" to further explore, develop and implement it as a guide for sustainable literacy education. This special report aims to briefly cover teachers' views on the implementation of sustainability curriculum over one semester, and record the dialogue and consensus between the faculty and staff of our school and the partners in Tamsui on Tamsui and Tamkang's sustainable actions.

"Exploring Sustainability" as a Required Course for Freshmen, with Different Departments Competing for Excellence in Their Respective Fields.

When the faculty members of each college hastily established this mandatory 1-credit course "Exploring Sustainability" for freshmen, they were all entrusted with the mission of "professional" guidance for this brand-new course theme. Therefore, in the same sustainability course, the teachers showcased different professionalism on the topic of sustainability. In the presentation of the course on the second day, the teachers from each department provided their experience in "Exploring Sustainability" course and engaged in dialogue, presenting the diversity and the continuous efforts of Tamkang in promoting the advancement of "Explore Sustainability" courses.

Associate Professor Song-Ling Chyi from the Department of English of the College of Foreign Languages and Literatures incorporates travel literature and anthropology into sustainable thinking, teaching students to use anthropological observation methods to conduct field investigations. In her sustainability class, final projects can be drama performances, travelogues, or new poetry. Some students performed a story from Jimmy Liao's picture book near the Yilan train station, pondering whether Jimmy Liao Park will still exist 50 years later. Students can also choose a topic they care about to complete their project, such as one student who couldn't find the "Literary Cafe" in Tamsui. One group visited the Tamsui River and compared the differences between community colleges and Tamkang University. Another group of students observed a small temple by the river in the old street and discovered that both sides of the dilapidated temple entrance were rented to vendors, which raised their awareness of the relevance to SDG 17. Some observed Fort San Domingo or visited the historical displays of old stores at Sanxiencheng or Shinjiencheng, caring about the issues of "sustainable cities and communities" in this way.

Professor Chih-Te Yang's course in the Department of Business Management focuses on exploring how businesses or organizations implement certain SDGs in their product design, business operations, or actual practices. Students' exploration topics include the Indian government's "Garbage Cafe", TSMC's GRI guidelines, China Steel's "Happy Workplace" planning, Carrefour's "Food Preservation Program", IKEA's "Low-carbon Product

Catalog", and Beitou Elementary School's "Sponge Campus".

The Department of Physics stimulates first-year students to think about the optimal solution for Taiwan's energy through teaching design. The Department of Mass Communication uses documentary films to uncover more microscopic, specific events and less noticeable correlations. Through "micro-projects," students propose a sustainable goal for campus advocacy and seek solutions through design thinking. Assistant Professor Kaiti Wang from the Department of Aerospace Engineering links the course with SDGs 7, 9, and 13. Students explore sustainable topics related to aerospace through group reports and mutual voting. The teacher praised the students' reports: "These are not what I taught them. They did better than I imagined."

Welcoming the New Students under the 108 Curriculum Guidelines with both Excitement and Fear of Potential Harm

"What is the appearance of our new students? What does their learning look like? What is their learning attitude? How do they view life? What can we give them? Can they receive what the teachers give them?" With high expectations for students under the 108 Curriculum Guidelines, Teacher Chang-Chieh Lee, the project teacher of the Competency Project, asked a series of questions that reflect the common concerns of teachers.

Associate Professor Hui-Ru Li from the Department of Chinese Literature launched the "Introduction to Chinese Classics" course. Through exploring the "XPlorer Project" of various universities, she realized that the goal of competency-oriented cultivation was to develop "the ability to solve problems in uncertain situations". She carefully considered how to teach students such abstract abilities. She simulated the "Million Dollars Primary School" knowledge quiz TV program and used online learning platforms such as "kahoot!" and digital learning tools like VoiceThread to allow students to write questions online. She designed an information-based environment and demonstrated the "Flipped Thinking" of class management. However, during the process, she discovered that first-year students from Chinese department under the 108 curriculum were not very

familiar with learning through computers or paperless methods. Some students even expressed concerns and asked if there was any way to receive remedial lessons, which forced her to rethink and revise her approach. "It's totally fine if the students think imperfectly, as long as they are thinking. Our goal is to train them." Kuan-Lun Su, a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, emphasizes the cultivation of students' abilities to collect and organize information. Dr. Shun-Jie Ji, associate professor of the Department of Education and Futures Design, hopes that after completing the course "Exploring Sustainability", students can connect the concepts and spirit of sustainable development to their own lives and return to their own sustainable life paths."

"High school students coming to university, we have a responsibility to cultivate students' abilities to take with them," said Dr. Rui-Mao Huang. The concept of the 108 curriculum is to help students become "lifelong learners". The next step for the Ministry of Education is to hope that universities can establish a sustainable departmental map, which requires step-by-step implementation. In addition, under the existing counseling mechanism, our school will also "design forward" and set up "sustainable mentors". Rui-Mao Huang said, "Today's achievement exhibition is to bring out these issues through discussion."

Competency-based Curriculum Going through the Process of Teaching and Learning Adaptation.

To welcome the new generation of the new curriculum guidelines, the "competency-based curriculum" has been developed with each college's professional competence as a path, offering 14 common courses for all departments and two general education courses. On the third day of the exhibition, the teaching faculty, including Associate Professor Pai-Hua Chueh from the Department of Japanese, Associate Professor Hui-Ru Li from the Department of Chinese, Assistant Professor Chih-Hung Chung from the Department of Education Technology, and Assistant Professor Chun-Ta Chiu from the Department of Educational Design, attended to share their course designs and student feedback, as well as express their expectations and

directions for improvement in the coming year.

The "First-Year Conversation " course offered by Dr. Pai-Hua Chueh aims to cultivate students' cross-cultural and sustainable development literacy through participation in transnational sustainable activities, Taiwan-Japan online classes, and digital learning. Within six months, the course has organized the "Onigiri Action" and the "World Dream – Calligraphy Competition," creating highlights of sustainable courses and international connections. For example, the "World Dream" is a transnational calligraphy competition in which hundreds of students from Japan, Taiwan, and Cambodia participated. Through the advantage of closer international connections and mutual communication, they were able to see each other's works. Such opportunities allow many students in the department who aspire to become teaching professionals to feel and practice cultural promotion in the classroom earlier in their education, and also promote the reputation of Tamkang University. Dr. Pai-Hua Chueh said that although 14 sessions have been held before, it was only through the support of the project this year that they had calligraphy master Ben-Hang Chang's participation. She also admitted that funding is essential for organizing significant events.

The College of Education has 2 departments, the Department of Educational Technology and the Department of Education and Futures Design, which have combined technology introduction and action research to offer "Future Learning and AI," one of the few practical courses in the curriculum. Taught by 2 teachers, the course leads students to explore "the most important topic "X" in future learning", said Dr. Chun-Ta Chiu, "the "X" that the students fill in themselves." During the "End-of-Term Creative Proposal Exhibition" competition, each group of students is given a table and a poster space, and with the guidance of skills in critical thinking, induction and integration, and problem-solving, they begin to search and reflect on future research directions in their first semester of school, and have the wings of mutual understanding and achievement with others. Assistant Professor Chun-Ta Chiu recalled that students' communication in creativity could not avoid some friction, but they learned how to logically and systematically discuss with others, try to accept

others' opinions, and find a balance between creativity and feasibility. The process gave the students a greater burden and a lot of time, but their feedback and additionally designed forms showed that the students gained a lot of growth during the course.

However, after the course ended, the teaching evaluation results received by the teacher showed a "slight sadness." Dr. Chun-Ta Chiu described this feeling as "pseudo-shared teaching + insufficient professionalism + practical exercises = ∞ of pain." Although the course was arranged with shared teaching, in practice, almost all of it was taught by both teachers together. In the case of insufficient professionalism, the freshmen students conducted practical exercises, and their discomfort was directly reflected in the teaching evaluations of the two instructors. Dr. Chih-Hung Chung also stated that he personally had "never had such a poor teaching evaluation record." He has proposed modifying the teaching evaluation questionnaire for the practical course through the appropriate channels. Rui-Mao Huang provided feedback that through the promotion of the "competence-based innovation project," there will be more resources and inter-school assistance in the future. Competence education is the benchmark for the next generation, and innovative learning programs require cultivation, accumulation, and inheritance, with the need for students' skills and curiosity, teachers' expertise and instructional design, and schools' support and flexible resources. He also stated that there may be different opinions on the definition of SDGs, but when sustainability is advocated, many actions will be implemented as a result. Just as we need to match many activities and courses with the 17 SDGs and label them to take stock of our achievements. Facing diverse opinions, he welcomes them all, because "we need to further examine our footsteps."

Communication and Dialogue, Co-edited the "Tamkang-Tamsui Guidebook" Beyond taking stock of the current situation, the achievement exhibition also looks ahead – the preparatory activity for the "Agenda Tamsui 2030" democratic deliberation conference, which combines the USR project and the

dimension 2 of the Higher Education SPROUT project. Dr. Rui-Mao Huang, the head of the Social Practice Section, defined the activity as "a realistic discussion that links to the actions of various colleges in the future. For our field partners, this is an occasion to take stock of the real urban life." After preliminary discussions among faculty members of the university, retired teacher of the Department of Spanish and the organizer of Formosa Poetry Festival in Tamsui, Dr. Sheng-Bin Lin, Bo-Jen Wei of the Anti-Danbei Road Alliance, Jing-Xiang Hung, planning officer of the Tamsui Culture Foundation, and Min-Hua Chiang, a teacher at the Tamsui Community College, and other partners from Tamsui were invited to campus to examine the 17 goals and 169 indicators listed in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and complete the "Tamsui × Taipei Guidebook" together. In addition to sharing their efforts in various fields, 50 items will be selected as operational targets from the record of this event. The aim is to find common goals for joint efforts at this stage and to plan a more specific blueprint for the sustainable development of Tamkang, to continue to promote sustainability competency.



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