

The Practice in Democracy in Games and Sports: An Example of Participatory Budgeting in Xindian District Featured Park

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Abstract

Communitarianism plays an important role in the establishment and operation of democracy. On one hand, civic groups can serve as a tool with which civil society can resist the intervention of state power; on the other hand, it also serves as a field in which people learn civic skills and cultivate social bonds. This study investigates the practice of democracy by local children in games and sports by looking at participatory budgeting designed to provide guidance for local government in making sport expenditures. This study employs in-depth interviews with the New Taipei City government, the New Taipei City Councilors, the administration staff of the District Office, the proposer of the participatory budget, the local headman, and the accompanying team. The study finds that communities in the experimental stage of participatory budgeting are more likely to successfully acquire the habit of participation and decision-making because local elites are unfamiliar with participatory budgeting and do not wish to face the difficulty of maintaining the practice in the community. While the traditional park design considers only the safety of games, in the planning and design of a participatory budget, the design of sports facilities in the park leads to consideration of the training of children's concentration, balance, muscular endurance, and physical coordination in games and sports. Citizens' participation further changes the presentation of government budgets. This study concludes that participatory budgeting led by non-elites is more compatible with the spirit of citizen participation, and local governments are less dominant in budgeting processes, giving community members more opportunities to speak and make decisions.

Keywords: Communitarianism, Public Participation, Government Budget, Sport Facilities in Parks

I. Introduction

After about two hundred years of development, the liberal democratic system, which consists of a representative legislature and an executive composed of technocrats, has encountered many problems in the contemporary era. Democracy appears to have narrowed its purview to competitive elections for the political leadership of the legislative and administrative agencies, and it departed from the core values of democracy, such as active participation of citizens in political activities, dialogue among citizens to form consensus, planning and implementation of policies that are beneficial to the society and economy, and more equitable distribution of resources (Fung and Wright, 2003). One of the positive methods by which contemporary politicians and political scientists might solve this kind of democratic deficit is to strengthen the empowering participation mechanism and attempt to improve the distribution justice of public resource allocation through citizen participation in the spirit of direct democracy.

This study focuses on the process and results of the promotion of public empowerment through participatory budgeting by local governments in Taiwan. In the past, authorities in Taiwan paid too much attention to the safety of the playground, resulting in a lack of challenge and a failure to respond to the needs of children's growth. Beginning in 2015, an initiative was taken by a group of mothers to call on the government to give attention to children's right to play, proposing to reject excessively safe and unchallenging play equipment. The New Taipei City Councilors responded to the demands of mothers in Xindian District, taking advantage of their own experience in implementing participatory budgeting, and used funds to improve the play equipment in the park, an action resulting in many positive responses. Advocacy groups interested in children's right to play emphasize the need to focus on planning and design that considers the characteristics of children rather than designing playgrounds from the perspective of adults: children's real game and sports needs must be paramount.

From the current research perspective, design should be based on consideration for the child's needs, and it is essential to redistribute the government's sports budget through the participatory budgeting proposal process. This study records the details of children's games and creative processes as well as the government's use of the budget to respond to the needs of the people. After the workshop for this study was complete, the Councilor team, the chiefs of village, and the local mothers continued to provide feedback, discussion, and follow-up. The featured park of Xindian District in Taiwan, which was taken as the experimental field for the current study, created a new precedent for sports design centered around the characteristics of children as the primary playground in New Taipei City.

With an emphasis on the discussion of participatory budgeting, games, physical movement, and movement development, the park renovation was centered around sports games, and innovative sports game methods and means. An important means of public participation in government, participatory budgeting gained prominence in the late 1980s and continued its prevalence in the early 21st century; it is still considered a model for civic innovation in Taiwan. While the meaning and goals of participatory budgeting may be unclear or ambiguous, this ambiguity has the potential to accommodate the interests and imaginations of different actors and allow them to practice the values they embrace (Su, 2017). Participatory budgeting includes both citizens and government actors. For citizen actors, participatory budgeting is a decision-making tool with which residents can allocate public budgets and determine the priorities for policy (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2014). From the perspective of government actors, participatory budgeting is a democratic policy-making process in which the government invites citizens to participate in the budget process and acknowledges that citizens should influence budget allocation (Zhang and Yang, 2009). The reasons contemporary governments promote participatory budgeting include their wish to increase the political involvement of residents, promote accountability and transparency, reduce the risk of corruption, and even improve government efficiency (Fugini, et al., 2016). In addition, participatory budgeting has the pro-social justice function of educating citizens, government staff, and community residents; meeting community needs; and encouraging traditionally underrepresented disadvantaged groups to participate in resource allocation (Lerner, 2011).

Within Taiwanese society, local governments have actively promoted participatory budgeting since 2015. For example, every bureau in New Taipei City has implemented it, and the New Taipei City councilors have conducted a nationwide pilot program using the councilors' cooperation funds. This program is the first to focus on participatory budgeting for councilors focusing on this area. Sports games are activities with sports as their primary categorization, games as the method, and civic training as the basis; they aim at cultivating basic ability for children's physical and mental development.

A social analysis of the issue of empowerment shows that any bureaucracy must undergo large-scale changes in terms of systems, personnel, and even goals in order to truly promote participatory budgeting and implement its principles. The theoretical discussion and empirical research on participatory budgeting in western academia, provide a feasible research direction for this study. This study further reflects on the short-term experience of the promotion of participatory budgeting in Taiwan and then proposes future research directions and questions.

II. Literature Review

The Origin of the Value of Democracy

In the era of the polis in ancient Greece, the Athenian polis was a citizen assembly attended by all citizens, who made final decisions through direct discussion and voting. Democracy is a social management system in which members of the system can directly or indirectly participate in decision-making about issues of interest to all members. Participation plays a key role, and thus the quality of a democracy can be assessed by clarifying the scope, content, and process of participation.

Generally speaking, this paper argues that democracy in public life can be divided into autonomous democracy in civil society, participatory democracy in the public sphere, and representative democracy in political forms. The public sphere is the space between the private and state power spheres of everyday life in civil society, in which citizens organize together to discuss public affairs, reach near-unanimous opinions, and communicate with the state power to safeguard social interests and public welfare.

Aristotle emphasized the importance of participation in public and political life. In ancient Greece, all citizens had the right to participate in and counsel on decision-making activities. Participation was not only a right but also an active political performance of citizens. Aristotle saw that extremism in citizens' opinions would lead to the tyranny of the majority, but he did not think this problem could not be solved, as long as the potential tyranny of the majority was regulated through the rule of law. Aristotle affirmed that participation is at the core of democratic politics. Participation must be integral to the decision-making power over major affairs, and the concept of participation must be based on universal and equal citizenship.

As a value ideal of direct democracy, participation has been opposed by some thinkers, such as Machiavelli in his preference for the monarchy, or Thomas Hobbes in his advocacy of the mixed regime modeled on the Roman Empire. In the 17th and 18th centuries, liberals including Montesquieu, Locke, and Voltaire saw democracy as a guarantee of liberty and property rights, but they argued that direct democracy was not suitable for countries with large populations. There are two arguments as follows

1. The claim of sovereignty is not transferable

When most liberal scholars were turning their attention to the operation of representative politics, Rousseau expressed the belief that sovereignty is not transferable because sovereignty consists of justice, and the will cannot be represented. Like Rousseau, Tocqueville showed a high degree of affinity for the self-government of New England towns and villages in the United States in the 19th century. The example closest to direct democracy in modern times was the Paris Commune in France.

In the 20th century, liberal democracy still dominated democratic theory, and advocates of representative democracy regarded elections as the core requirement for representative democracy. The term participatory democracy originated in Kaufman's proposal for participatory politics, which refers to a specific democratic theory.

2. The Emergence of a Crisis of Capitalist Legitimacy

With the current crisis of the legitimacy of capitalism, the people's enthusiasm for autonomy and political participation has been rekindled. In the 1960s, student movements and civil rights movements took place in France and the United States. The bottom-up demands for citizens to participate in political activities and reform political life were based on the idea of the return of people's power; the most famous such demand is the Port Huron Statement of 1962.

What the Port Huron Statement left behind was to rediscover an overly technocratic domination. The confidence of ordinary people to use their own knowledge and moral judgment in their daily life and in the pursuit of their own interests. . Certain core values of these new left-wing movements were applied, particularly the idea that individuals should control and directly affect their own lives.

Based on the discussion of the scholars mentioned above, the current research assumes that the core value of democracy is emphasis on the importance of participation. The primary viewpoints include the basic idea of personal self-control, rejecting the division between ruler and ruled. Other core ideas are that people have the right to be given the opportunity to make real decisions about matters that concern them or affect their lives; participation in all institutions and decision-making processes is free and equal; democracy is not merely voting; participation breaks political apathy and civic negative behavior; participation leads to consensus, social responsibility, and strong democracy; participatory democracy is real; it has its own tools; participation is not limited to local or community; and new technologies will bring new approaches globally.

III. Methodology

In light of the motivation, purpose, literature review, and research field of this study as discussed above, the current focus of research is as follows. First, the New Taipei City Government and the New Taipei City Council convened a participatory budgeting democracy workshop in 2016, kicking off the initial stage of public empowerment. Subsequently, under the active promotion of the leadership, the administrative agency encouraged the city's citizens to participate in the budget decision-making in relation to specific policy issues and then designated the administrative agency that would handle participatory budgeting, allocate the amounts of participatory budgeting, propose multiple participatory budgeting training plans, and provide various conditions for the participatory budget at the communication level, and further implement the budget preparation. With the support of the New Taipei City Council, the New Taipei City Government established a basic communication platform for promoting participatory budgeting, which provided a pattern for New Taipei City citizens to interact with each other and make budget decisions. Ideally, however, the objective should be to solve local problems through participatory budgeting and achieve desired policy goals; that is, the key development is progression from formal empowerment to substantive empowerment.

This study proposes two stages for the observation and study the public empowerment in participatory budgeting. The first is to enhance the participation of citizens and civil servants through the operation of the empowerment process so that the government budget can be used by the people; the second is to develop the responsiveness of the executive and of civil servants through the empowerment implementation, that is, to develop the ways in which citizens supervise the budget through participation. I argue that the formal empowerment of participatory budgeting in New Taipei City depends on positive development in the four empowerment dimensions of environment, agency, mechanism, and participants that interact with each other in the empowerment process stage and the empowerment result stage so that the city can progress through the process of substantial empowerment. In other words, the administrative agency should implement participatory budgeting resolutions to achieve the desired policy outcomes.

In the design of the participatory budgeting system, the New Taipei City councilors proposed thematic participatory budgeting. They believed that sports games were very suitable as teaching materials for children's physical and mental growth. The development of children's perception abilities can be integrated through sports games. Consequently, the renovation of the park was designed to incorporate the development of children's subject consciousness through the games, in consideration of the relationship between the individual and the surroundings.

This current study integrates the functions of the empowerment process and the results of empowerment. Buckwalter (2014) develops the four empowerment dimensions discussed in the following paragraphs. Through in-depth interviews, this study revises and proposes major research questions in each dimension, seeking to understand how citizens influence government funding through participatory budgeting to provide guidance for subsequent empirical research.

Environmental Empowerment

The leadership of the participatory budgeting process in New Taipei City includes the mayor and the main staff, the councils, city councilors, bureaucrats and district executives, etc., along with their perceptions, intentions, and preferences for participatory budgeting. The specific research questions are the following. What are the reasons for leadership to support or oppose the promotion of participatory budgeting? Does the implementation of participatory budgeting crowd out other government services? Which policy issues are most suitable for participatory budgeting? What factors influence the leadership's sustained support for participatory budgeting?

Authority Empowerment

This dimension involves the perceptions, intentions, and preferences of the members of the administrative agency responsible for participatory budgeting, the flexibility of the budgeting process, and the design of the hierarchical system of the administrative agency. The research questions are the following. What are the reasons for the members of executive agencies to support or oppose the promotion of participatory budgeting? In which budgeting process would the executive be more instrumental in implementing the resolution by engaging in participatory budgeting? How would the executive and legislature determine the degree to which they would promote participatory budgeting? What is the legal basis for participatory budgeting? What are the administrative agencies' reasons for their stance on the implementation of participatory budgeting? How can it be ensured that the administrative agency that promotes participatory budgeting will be held accountable? How can indicators be developed to measure the effectiveness of executive agencies in implementing participatory budgeting resolutions? How can the short-term and long-term impacts of participatory budgeting be assessed? What are the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the self-cultivation model for promoting participatory budgeting in New Taipei City? How can coordination among executive agencies for participatory budgeting proposals be achieved? How should conflict management be carried out?

Mechanism Empowerment

This dimension involves the establishment of exclusive institutional structures such as the establishment of participatory budgeting units, the establishment of participatory budgeting committees, the design of participatory budgeting rules of procedure, and the requisition of exclusive staff for participatory budgeting. The specific research questions are the following. What are the leadership's reasons for supporting or opposing the establishment of a dedicated participatory budgeting unit? What are the reasons for the leadership's supporting or opposing the requisition of dedicated participatory budgeting executive staffs? How should the rules of procedure for participatory budgeting be designed, and what is the designated unit? Is there funding for sustainable promotion of participatory budgeting? How can the return rate of the funds invested in participatory budgeting be evaluated? If participatory budgeting comes to an end, what are possible ways to keep promoting civic engagement? Does New Taipei City need to develop standard operating procedures to promote participatory budgeting?

Participant Empowerment

This dimension concerns the practice of cultivating the ability of citizens and public officials to participate in participatory budgeting, the timing of citizens' engagement in participatory budgeting, and the perceptions, intentions, and preferences of participating citizens and public officials. The specific research questions are the following. Who are the beneficiaries of participatory budgeting? How can we ensure that citizens who invest in participatory budgeting have access to abundant budget information? How can participatory budgeting be combined with current community proposals? What are the reasons for which groups of citizens support or oppose participatory budgeting? Is participatory budgeting well-suited with the current strategy of citizen groups? Are civic groups willing to work with administrative agencies to implement participatory budgeting resolutions? Are citizens enthusiastic about other forms of participatory democracy?

IV. Case Study: Featured Park Renovation

Compared with other patterns of citizen participation, the policy of participatory budgeting would have a decisive and substantial influence on policy, so the New Taipei City Council has been careful in its promotion of participatory budgeting. Since the promotion procedures of participatory budgeting vary from county to county, they must reflect the

local social values and customs and traditions and have the ability to adapt to local conditions. This condition is evident in Taiwan. Different county and city governments plan and promote participatory budgeting procedures with local features according to the customs and traditions within their jurisdiction and in line with the executive energy of executive agencies (Lan, 2018).

Unlike previous non-themed forms of participatory budgeting, the participatory budgeting promoted by New Taipei City Councilors, regarding the size or type of budgeting, is issue-based budgeting for specific purposes. In other words, the existing specific-purpose budgeting of administrative agencies is regarded as a target of citizen participation, and the administrative agency with the authority to do so joins in this issue-based participatory budgeting. As far as the main thrust of promotion is concerned, the New Taipei City Councilors have adopted a so-called training mode; that is, New Taipei City Councilors lead, accompany the implementation of the participatory budgeting training activities throughout the process, and invite experts from colleges and universities to assist in training matters. Since 2016, New Taipei City Councilors have been considered the action unit, in the hope to attract young people to participate in the participatory budgeting and to become a social force that continues to be engaged in public affairs. The training mode will be implemented gradually and is divided into the following stages.

Preparatory Stage

The Participatory Democracy Training Camp

In 2016, the New Taipei City Council, in cooperation with the New Taipei City Government, began to hold local affairs forums. In 2017, a participatory democracy training course was organized, and young people as well as mothers and women who were enrolled in school or employed and who were registered in Daxindian were invited to complete a session of training in participatory democracy. In this course, the concept and operational methods of participatory democracy, trained reasoning, and procedures for making proposals were introduced; enrollees were viewed as human resources who would become the talent pool for participatory budgeting activities in the future.

For the purpose of improving enrollees' understanding of the subject, the workshop included training content designed around the learning of basic knowledge. The training content included further integrating cognition into children's physical sport games and focused on the transformation of the park environment to create a fun situation to attract children's interest in sports. Specifically, the activation of agility, coordination, and balance was the design goal of the participatory budgeting. However, the question is, how could the gamification of children's sports and the renovation of the park be innovatively structured to promote children's physical development?

Organizing the Steering Committees and Pilot Drills

Since 2016, New Taipei City Councilors have invited experts, scholars, and teachers who have implemented participatory budgeting policies in the past to organize a Steering Committee for consultation. The task of the Steering Committee is to gradually guide the participation of local youth through the use of workshops. Participatory budgeting in Dakuan Village is a pilot program for participatory budgeting. Through this pilot program, participating citizens can understand the discussion mode, the operation mode, and the possible results of participatory budgeting and thus achieve the desired effect of policy marketing and communication.

Holding Themed Workshops

In 2017, the New Taipei City Council made efforts aimed in different development directions: Dakuan Village in Xindian District, our community development program, the Da Xindian youth public affairs training program, and the Da Xindian community women's public affairs training program held numerous workshops and invited youth from colleges and universities, social youth organizations, and other youth groups to have in-depth discussions aimed at producing specific feasible solutions. In these workshops, conversation skills were employed to create an atmosphere of equality in conversational involvement that was enjoyed by the participants. In flexible small-group discussions, they conducted sincere conversations, reflected on problems, shared common knowledge, and even found new opportunities for action. To enable participating citizens to accurately put forward proposals that conformed to the principles of budgeting, the New Taipei City Councilor Service Team also participated on the spot and offered supplemental explanations of the principles of budgeting. At the end of the activity, discussions and votes were held for each group of proposals.

The training program of the New Taipei City Councilors and citizens was conducted as follows. The Department of Information in New Taipei City invited experts from the Taipei University of Marine Technology to conduct a series of Community Participatory Budgeting activities. The three-stage activities were planned conforming to three guidelines. The first dimension was that participatory budgeting should be transformed from a concept to an operational policy

tool. The second one was that participatory budgeting should have basic standards for participation. Finally, participatory budgeting should empower administrative departments.

Although the meaning and objectives of participatory budgeting are ambiguous, and although local governments can adopt different forms according to local conditions, participatory budgeting should comply with the following requirements. First, citizens can access information on the cost, operation, and impact of various government programs on specific occasions. Second, citizens can communicate their budget needs on specific occasions. Third, citizens can interact directly with government staff to make budget proposals. Fourth, citizens can vote on budget proposals (Gilman, 2016).

The Operationalization Stage

Taipei Xiaocheng Community, located on the edge of Ankeng hill in Xindian District, New Taipei City, is a collective residence developed in the 1970s. Different from the general urban community, where residents live in strata, most of the Taipei Xiaocheng communities are composed of single-family households. Because of its proximity to the mountains, the surrounding environment is full of greenery and possesses many precious natural ecological resources. Night herons, frogs, fireflies, and blue magpies are often seen in the community, evidence of the community's unique natural ecological environment. Many residents chose to move their families to the community because of the beautiful living environment there.

Recently, due to the erosion of rain for many years, the problems of landslides, cracked houses, and aging public facilities have occurred. At the same time, the community is also faced with the issue of land disputes between the community and builders developing the hillside land. The public facilities in the community have been closed by builders, which has led to the community residents' uniting to care for and speak out for the community.

The design area of the park is approximately 450 square meters. According to the documents compiled by the local children's game workshop, a playground that is conducive to climbing and swinging is planned to measure up to the imagination of local children. At the same time, the construction will also improve the pedestrian paths and surfacing around the park area.

Inviting Community Mothers to Come Out in Support of Participatory Budgeting

After the nine-in-one election in 2018 in Taiwan, preparation of the participatory budgeting of featured park for the village in Xindian District was started, beginning in April 2019. On June 30, 2019, a playground workshop was held by village. Children prepared for and played street games, such as hopscotch, skipping rope, solitaire, traffic lights, and other simple games to inspire an understanding of children's imagination of space usage. These ways of creation and play can allow children to have a variety of feelings, and their behaviors can be carefully observed in these activities.

The workshop on the playground in village depended on allowing children to play. Through the process of children's free creation of games and the playing of games among children with a variety of physical conditions, we observed design possibilities that are usually ignored, and we also saw the children's imagination and desire to play games. After two workshops, the design discussions began. In the third workshop, children were invited to be creative and were told that the work was about to be done in the playground; the children were consequently very attentive and conscientious in creating their own designs. In the follow-up process, it was arranged for the children to go to the construction site, put on hard hats, become little engineers, and display their own designs. We found that looking at the children's earnest expressions, the workers who participated in the construction were infected by their spirit and paid careful attention to the children. After the children left, the workers dedicated themselves to the work of completing the designs.

The Integration of Local Culture and History into the Imagination Concerning Games

After listening to, understanding, and translating the children's imagination; considering the local culture, history, and environment; and discovering the memories of the village, the training team used the model of the Bitan Bridge to create the games' towers and slides, corresponding to features of the Bitan Bridge. The unique cultural and historical aspects of the park and the wide lawn were integrated into the overall play experience and design so that children would be able to experience a rich situational imagination, allowing for the perception of local cultural history.

From the observation of the workshop to the translation of designs, the accompanying team personally participated in the workshop process, resulting in many positive effects. Through personal observation and discussion of the process of convergent design, in addition to a more comprehensive reflection of the various perspectives and viewpoints of the playground design, the further step of empathy with users became possible.

For example, in the second workshop, we saw that primary school children chose to play in the undeveloped area of the park, using ropes and paper rolls to build structures and climb up the trees and making rules for swinging from the first tree to the second tree. At the same time, in order to increase the difficulty of a game, for example, after going through a hole, the children had close their eyes and touch a red rope in order to move forward. It was clear that the primary school children were interested in the multiple games experience, which increased the opportunities for them to interact socially with each other. When the workshop was over, everyone was still unsatisfied and wanted to continue playing. Through observing this collective construction and creation process, participants explored the possible ideas and needs hidden within the primary school children, and they wanted to design a game space that would meet their needs.

This park renovation was also integrated into a course that was taught about the landscape. In the course, participants not only learned a great deal of knowledge; they also actually transformed a park full of weeds and black mosquitoes into a beautiful park with trails and plants. Now the neighbors often come to walk and actively help to maintain the park and its plantings.

From Speaking to Reasoning

The group of mothers who took the course did not have a deep relationship with the village. Since the community consisted of single-family households, many outsiders had become part of it. Compared with other communities in Xindian, the village gave the impression of being a relatively weak community. There were several reasons for this impression. First, participatory budgeting had only recently been engaged in by the village. A community volunteer said that the village had never been a site of overall community building. In addition, there was no presentable activity center there. The chief of village also acknowledged that there was no presentable activity center; thus, it was inconvenient to organize activities. It was not convenient to set up a care center, a senior citizen learning center, or any other activity during the Moon Festival. Finally, the staff of the community development association did not have much experience or ability to apply for programs; one individual had to ask her daughter to help or borrow a template from the district office for reference. Under such weak foundational conditions, many members were somewhat worried about the operation of participatory budgeting in the village community.

Collective Identity and Political Culture

Since the village had been involved in participatory budgeting only during the past two years, the chief of village had his own blueprint for the future of the community. His idea was only to propose participatory budgeting. The councilors had no involvement, and community members were invited to make proposals. In their leadership style, chiefs of villages tend to be inclusive and egalitarian. Although the chief of village was very modest and had little knowledge about participatory budgeting, he was proud of his popularity: whenever he summoned them, people came, and the activities were always very lively.

The mothers in the village did not think relying on a wise village chief was the best means of community governance. On the contrary, they believed that the participation of community members was very important. The chief was very popular owing to his friendliness and enthusiasm, but the mothers did not believe everything should be determined by him. One of mother in the village said that even if chief of the chief of the village thought something was good, it might not correspond to the needs of everyone, and it certainly could not be said that his opinion could represent everyone's beliefs. Another individual, a community director and volunteer, believed public participation was necessary. In the era of democracy, everything is to be determined by the people, and this will lead to more effective promotion of policies. If a policy is determined by the chief of the village, the people may not agree with it, and it will not be popular. An effort toward promotion will be useless if the policy is against everyone's will. Although community members believed that funding was very important, it was essential to allow the people in the community to come out in favor of it, thus turning the community into a living circle. Everyone lives in the community, and all activities are held there. Everyone knows each other, can communicate with each other, and can talk about important issues. Invisibly, the level of community support was improving. That is, community members not only regarded allowing more people to participate as an important goal of community construction; they also regarded it as a necessary way for the community to operate smoothly. The councilors' invitation made the chief of village and community members believe that these goals could be achieved through participatory budgeting.

The Potential of Participatory Budgeting to Motivate Community Members to Come Out in Support of It

The community in the village has been exposed to comprehensive propagation of information about participatory budgeting. Not only does the chief of village disseminate the news through his own network, but also the councilors go to neighboring communities to promote the policy. In addition, since there is no decent activity center in the village, discussions regarding participatory budgeting are held in a temple some distance away from the community office.

Although this is inconvenient and involves hard work, it reduces the barriers between communities. While the activity center is owned by only one community, the temple is a center of faith practice for people from different communities, and people from different communities are more willing to participate in discussions there. Therefore, a large number of people participated, and the discussion was very lively. One mother recalled that everyone had opinions, and the discussion was enthusiastically engaged in. A volunteer also said that there were many people in front of the temple on that day. Many observers agreed the activities and discussions were lively.

In making proposals, the community members have a high degree of autonomy. Without external intervention, anyone can propose the best plan in their opinion and in discussion with other members. In general, the members of the experimental community evaluated participatory budgeting very highly. One member of community said that getting funding was an incentive, but not entirely because he wanted to get funding. The government provides the money, and then the community members discuss the proposal and decide what to do. The members can share their ideas, and if the vote is passed, the members will have a sense of achievement.

In other words, the design of participatory budgeting will increase the motivation of community members to come out in support of projects, which is an important goal defined by the political culture of the experimental community. In addition, community members also believe that discussing proposals together can enhance the cohesion of the community and create a sense of overall community. One community participant said that the atmosphere is very positive, it seems that everyone is very cohesive, community members plan what they want, decide what they want to do, and propose it. They are very happy when their plan is unexpectedly selected. The participants responsible for the selected plan are of course more likely to have a positive view of participatory budgeting. However, even if a plan is not supported by the participatory budgeting funding project of parliamentarians and is not implemented, the proposer still affirms the spirit of participatory budgeting and the goal of involving everyone. The New Taipei City government and the members of the community can also understand each other better through the process of explaining obstacles and difficulties of proposals.

Through this discussion, community members become more able to understand what the community is currently doing, what is worthwhile for the community to implement, how the integration of the community can be increased, and how the community's engagement can be revived. Proponents of proposals that are not approved when they are evaluated in the participatory budgeting can focus on everyone's participation, rather than on the failure of their own proposals.

Creating a Game Landscape Environment with Sports Aesthetics

For children, play is learning; indeed, the primary form of movement in children's life is play. Children learn through play, and young children learn how to live by playing. Therefore, the purpose of game design in park sports is to integrate games into learning interaction and to gamify sports courses so that children can cultivate independence, mutual cooperation, and whole-person education that adapts to the environment and society through engagement in sports games.

One difference between past and present designs is that the government has attached great importance to the safety of children's playgrounds over the past 20 years. In order to comply with CNS specifications, the design mode is based on communication among the designer, the owner, and the community representative, often taking place from the perspective of difficulty in maintenance and management, and balancing safety and risk; less attention is paid to the physical and mental development and needs of children. When the initiative lies with citizen groups, the current playground design has many possibilities and is also moving towards customization.

The design of the game environment breaks away from the arrangement of cookie-cutter playground equipment by retaining the original trees, planting new trees, and changing the terrain to create a landscape with a hillside and green trees. In addition to allowing children to enjoy designs that meet various physical and mental development needs, the game environment also provides children with a game experience that integrates nature and local characteristics, allowing children to touch the blooming flowers in the treetops and make direct contact with nature—experiences they can rarely have in the city. The turf and green grass in the park are deliberately “blank” areas in the playground, where children can play freely and enjoy more diverse games. The current appearance of the playground is based on ideas drawn by the accompanying team and the children. In addition to allowing children to have a design that meets various physical and mental development needs, the playground provides them with a perception of the environment, including five-sense experiences and physical and mental perceptual experiences. An accompanying team takes the children to explore the natural and local characteristics, lets the children play naturally, using natural unstructured materials, and lets the children touch and play with their own hands, imagine, feel, laugh, and experience the environment that is rare in the city. The game values required by children with the aesthetic style incorporating local history and culture, along with the cultivation of a landscape with a friendly game atmosphere, are the nutrients for children's growth.

The Budgeting Implementation Stage

It seems easy to talk about the participation of children on paper, but in truth it is difficult for the public sector to operate successfully. Indeed, the field operation and the post-translation stages of the workshop have been extremely challenging. The most important issue is how to design the details of the implementation so that it will not be limited by adult management thinking. In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to the reversal and return of rights of the children's subjects in the workshop, reduce the interventions, norms, and restrictions based on adult perspectives and let the society jointly use government budget resources to nourish children and encourage their whole-person development.

In conclusion, it is clear that a political culture in which everyone participates in decision-making will have a deep impact on the operation of participatory budgeting. In this culture, participatory budgeting would be interpreted as a way to enliven the community. Community leaders will not often intervene, allowing community members to freely discuss and propose. No matter whether a member's proposal is approved or not, the most important result is that everyone comes out and participates happily together.

V. Conclusion

Building on a review of the background and process of participatory budgeting, this study argues that the key factor determining whether participatory budgeting can continue to be promoted lies in the responsiveness of administrative agencies and civil servants to participatory budgeting decisions. That is, the resolutions must not only be included in the budget but also be implemented in order to inspire the public to join in the participatory budgeting for the long term.

Accordingly, the focus of promoting participatory budgeting is on the dimension of empowerment, and empowerment depends on an understanding of the attitude and willingness of administrative agencies and civil servants regarding participatory budgeting, along with the degree of trust they have in citizens' participation in budget planning. In particular, civil servants' professional knowledge of the meaning, value, operation, limitations, and procedures of participatory budgeting is at the crux of this issue. Therefore, the promotion of participatory budgeting should start with the empowerment of the public service system and the training of outstanding public servants; then the relevant knowledge of participatory budgeting and the overall civil service system should be expanded. Finally, civil servants guide citizens as the two groups jointly promote participatory budgeting.

The administrative agencies must also determine which public issues are suitable for participatory budgeting. For example, conditions such as a lower level of professionalism, the nature of a smaller community, a smaller amount of available budgeting, the promotion of equality, and multiculturalism may initially be the driving forces behind participatory budgeting.

The findings of this study show that since 2016, New Taipei City councilors have used participatory budgeting to deploy the administrative agencies' specific-purpose budget and have adopted a self-training model to promote the process in cooperation with universities. In the empowerment process, the New Taipei City Council conducted systematic training courses for young people, citizens, and civil servants to improve their abilities in communication, deliberation, program planning, and voting. In regard to empowerment, it was found that most budget proposals already correspond to the elements of participatory budgeting, at least showing participatory planning. Therefore, the public empowerment from New Taipei City's promotion of participatory budgeting has achieved preliminary results. The transformation of formal empowerment into substantive empowerment depends primarily on the attitude, willingness, capacity development, and system design of the chief executive, administrative agencies, and public servants.

This study also collected the following reflections from the experience of New Taipei City Councilors in promoting participatory budgeting in recent years. First, the final output of the participatory budget in the communication dimension is voting, but voting completes only the phased tasks of participatory budgeting, and then the work division of the city government bureau must focus on implementing the voting resolution. Therefore, the key to the success or failure of participatory budgeting is determined by empowerment. Citizens will not care about the division of work by the bureau but will recognize only whether the overall results of the city team's activities actually implement the voting resolution.

Second, participatory budgeting provides the opportunity for civil servants in local administrations to have real, in-person contact with the people. In the process of discussion of the plan between the two parties, the empathy of civil servants regarding issues of concern to the public will be significantly improved.

Third, participatory budgeting may affect the original resource allocation structure and result in a backlash. Taiwanese grass-roots elections depend on results from large-sized districts, and stakeholders with vested interests may put pressure on administrative agencies that promote participatory budgeting through the council, inhibiting the promotion of participatory budgeting by cutting the budget of the administrative agencies.

Fourth, New Taipei City selected the young generation as the first choice for promoting participatory budgeting because members of that generation have a high degree of acceptance of emerging concepts or system operations such as participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. They then selected themes in which the younger generation is interested, such as community park transformation to cultivate capacity, and promoted the younger generation as a seed for the promotion of participatory budgeting. However, while most of the advocates of participatory budgeting are young people, without sufficient financial and spiritual incentives, they may leave the field on which participatory budgeting is implemented when the enthusiasm for promoting it gradually fades away.

Finally, the participatory budgeting of the New Taipei City Council, from the no-theme operation method to the issue-based plan, requires more funds, a longer implementation period, and larger-scale cross-department cooperation. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a more active management system. This represents a considerable challenge for the New Taipei City government.