

## **Research Assessment Exercise 2020**

### **Impact Case Study**

**University:** Hong Kong Baptist University

**Unit of Assessment:** 38 visual arts, design, creative media, other creative arts and creative writing

**Title of Case Study:** Understanding Self and Society through Photography: Influencing Visual Arts Pedagogical Practices and Education Policy in Hong Kong.

#### **Summary of the impact**

The 5-year ‘Through Our Eyes’ (TOE) programme had a critical influence on visual arts pedagogical practices and education policy in Hong Kong. Established by the Centre for Research and Development in Visual Arts (CRDVA) in 2014, the artist-led pedagogy improved the quality of teaching and learning of visual arts in secondary schools. Funded by The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation (HKD 26,650,000), more than 10,000 people participated in the TOE programme’s public events and training activities. Over 1,100 students aged 12 to 19 from diverse social backgrounds were involved in the project and subsequently students’ engagement in art activities increased.

#### **Underpinning research**

**Mak** conducted underpinning research funded by an HKD 275,000 grant from the Hong Kong Research Grants Committee. As a result, a 300-page bilingual book entitled *From the Factories* (**Mak**, 2014) and a web-based platform were produced by CRDVA researchers and photographers in collaboration with secondary school students. The accumulated photographs and writings chart the development and precarious circumstances of creative communities in the Kwun Tong area. A thousand copies of the book were distributed to artist studios, non-governmental organisations, secondary schools, public and university libraries, cafes and bookstores in Kwun Tong and neighbouring areas. Using photography as a tool to research and analyse the problems resulting from gentrification and the redevelopment of the industrial spaces in Hong Kong became the basis for the TOE programme, which combined artistic research with experience-based pedagogy. Over the course of the project, 15 CRDVA researchers and 50 teachers from 50 secondary schools participated in the TOE programme. Three articles were also written by CRDVA researchers to provide further context and advocate for a cultural policy led approach to the development and repurposing of industrial buildings. The TOE programme also addressed the needs of marginalised communities through the development of a corresponding curriculum that allowed secondary school students to participate in the research process.

**Wong** published a subsequent book, *A Living Space: The Homes of Pak Sha O*, in 2015. Conceived as part of the TOE programme, this book was the product of a 2-year ethnographic research project that explored the natural living environment of Pak Sha O (a well-preserved Hakka village) and examined the history and struggles of the indigenous inhabitants through oral history, photography and archival records. Through the research and development for *A Living Space: The Homes of Pak Sha O*, artists, researchers and secondary school students participated in the co-creation of artworks responding to social issues. They raised questions concerning the essential need for a place to be considered ‘home’ and how one’s ‘living space’ can be created based on the stories of indigenous villagers and foreign tenants who experienced the early decline and recent revival of the village.

These publications provided new perspectives that broadened the understanding of socio-cultural

issues in Hong Kong and explored how culture, politics, history and the environment intersect in the identity creation of young people in Hong Kong. The TOE programme introduced new arts education practices and approaches that drew public attention to relevant social and cultural issues. This research shaped teaching practices and inspired young people to explore their self, family and community identities and revealed how cultural and social issues can be highlighted through photography.

Please click [here](#) for a video overview of the Impact Case Studies.

### **References to the research**

1. Lee, W. K., & Tam, H. N. (2018, December). Photography, partnership and public education: A comparative case study of Through Our Eyes (TOE) Photography Education Programme and 'Porcelain Photo in Hong Kong' knowledge transfer project. Paper presented at the 2018 InSEA Asia Regional Congress and 7<sup>th</sup> World Chinese Art Education Symposium, Hong Kong.
2. Mak, H. S. A. (Ed.). (2014). *From the factories*. Hong Kong: Centre for Research and Development in Visual Arts, Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University.
3. Mak, H. S. A. (2014). Hong Kong needs factory building. In H. S. A. Mak (Ed.), *From the factories* (pp. 144–154). Hong Kong: Centre for Research and Development in Visual Arts, Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University.
4. Wong, S. K. (Ed.). (2015). *A living space: The homes of Pak Sha O*. Hong Kong: Centre for Research and Development in Visual Arts, Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University.

### **Details of the impact**

Hong Kong's education system has long been criticised for being excessively examination oriented and over-emphasising grades and assessments. The implementation of a new secondary school curriculum in the 2009/2010 academic year burdened schools, as many of them lacked the manpower and resources to cope with the required changes. The new visual arts curriculum introduced to senior secondary school students required teachers to adopt a broader syllabus and demanded that artistic practice be matched with the critical analysis of creative work. The new curriculum also created challenges for students. The TOE programme addressed these concerns directly by creating an encouraging and engaging learning environment that nurtured student curiosity and introduced theoretical and contextual concerns through the practice of photography.

The impacts of the TOE programme were delivered via the three key approaches outlined below.

#### **(a) Strengthening the university-school partnership**

In response to the challenges of the new curriculum, the TOE programme partnered with more than 50 secondary schools in 12 districts of Hong Kong to conduct workshops on lens-based arts and relevant theoretical concepts for secondary school students. The majority of the students involved in the TOE programme were 16 to 19 years old (49%), followed by 12 to 15 year olds (34%; source 1). Through the university-secondary school partnership, the TOE programme formulated a model of pedagogical development that encouraged artist-educators to expand teaching practices and address pressing social concerns, such as the housing crisis and environmental degradation, through creative assignments. The artist-educators that the TOE programme brought to the classroom facilitated observation, reflection and discussion among the students (source 2). The teachers commented that the TOE programme provided an environment in which students could

develop their confidence and enhance their communication skills in a ‘safe’ environment (source 3).

The CRDVA carried out an extensive study to collect feedback from participating teachers and students. The research questions inquired into the extent to which the programme had a positive impact on learning and provided a desirable educational environment for the visual arts. A large majority (72%) of the secondary school students responded that the programme had positively affected their artwork and photography skills (source 5). They also reported greater confidence in expressing their views and a stronger sense that their ideas and actions were valued (source 4). The study also focused on teachers’ perceptions of photographic approaches, their own classroom practices and student responses. One participating teacher stated, ‘TOE can lead students to explore the creative side of photography, to break down their stereotypical beliefs about it, and to inspire them to create ideas for artwork making’ (source 3). Over the years, the TOE programme created a community of like-minded stakeholders, including current teachers, new teachers, artist-teachers, students and recent graduates seeking to gain practical experience in the field of arts education. The TOE programme offered co-learning spaces in which these individuals could learn collaboratively and provide further guidance for the development of the programme (source 5).

#### (b) Providing new open-source teaching resources for secondary schools

To support teaching and knowledge sharing, the TOE programme developed an online platform providing teaching resources in visual arts education (<http://kaitak.hkbu.edu.hk/teaching-materials>). Sixty exercises sortable by artist name and content were available. The platform was designed to illustrate best practice in photography teaching and learning. Class exercises, lesson plans and links were also provided to meet the different needs of visual arts teachers. The website was used by an expanding group of increasingly engaged teachers. Through this platform, the TOE programme inspired teachers to take part in creative lesson planning and influenced their pedagogical practices. Knowledge sharing events targeting teachers and artist-teachers who wanted to explore creative ways of teaching and learning were also organised for sharing innovative pedagogy among the teachers (source 3).

#### (c) Informing education policy and research

The success of the TOE programme is further demonstrated by its contribution to public policy research in arts development and arts education in Hong Kong. The programme provided useful quantitative data for a public policy initiative named ‘Arts Development and Education in Facilitating the Role of Hong Kong as a Cultural Hub of the Region’, commissioned by the Central Policy Unit of the Government of the HKSAR (source 6).

TOE programme data show that students’ engagement in art activities increased as their learning and well-being improved. The public profile of the programme also raised awareness and appreciation of practice-based learning in the visual arts at the secondary school level in Hong Kong. With more than 200 media reports in newspapers, on television and in radio broadcasts, the TOE programme was able to successfully promote the benefits of visual arts in education and student development (source 7).

### **Sources to corroborate the impact**

1. Hong Kong Baptist University Academy of Visual Arts (2018). Figures on the number of programme participants in the last 5 years.
2. Winckler, J. (2018, March 31). [Testimonial from the Senior Lecturer in Photography, Faculty of Arts, University of Brighton].
3. Hong Kong Baptist University Academy of Visual Arts (2018). Feedback from teachers who have used the online teaching resources.

4. Hong Kong Baptist University Academy of Visual Arts (2018). Feedback collected from participating students, teachers and stakeholders.
5. Hong Kong Baptist University Academy of Visual Arts (2018). TOE programme report.
6. Siu, Y. M. N. (2016). *Shaping arts development and education in facilitating the role of Hong Kong as a cultural hub of the region*. Retrieved from [https://www.pico.gov.hk/doc/en/research\\_report\(PDF\)/2014\\_A2\\_003\\_15A\\_Final\\_Report\\_Dr\\_Siu.pdf](https://www.pico.gov.hk/doc/en/research_report(PDF)/2014_A2_003_15A_Final_Report_Dr_Siu.pdf)
7. Hong Kong Baptist University Academy of Visual Arts (2018). Through Our Eyes Photography Education Programme. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://toe.org.hk/clippings-and-articles/>