

## Research Assessment Exercise 2020

### Impact Case Study

**University:** [The Education University of Hong Kong |

**Unit of Assessment (UoA):** [39 Music and performing arts |

**Title of case study:** [Cantonese Opera: Preserving cultural heritage and opening up new audiences |

#### (1) Summary of the impact

[Listed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2009, Cantonese opera is a representative traditional art form in Hong Kong, integrating local and Chinese cultures. Prof LEUNG Bo Wah's research focuses on promoting transmission of Cantonese opera to different stakeholders, with significant impacts on culture, creativity and society through the preservation of the art form, education and artistic practitioners. School teachers and students have developed a momentum to learn the genre through curriculum and pedagogical development, while professional and community teachers and learners have been benefited by the newly developed software, publications, public talks, and a bilingual website.]

#### (2) Underpinning research

[Leung conducts research on transmission of Cantonese opera, focusing on education in schools, community and professional training in Hong Kong and China. This has developed important knowledge on how this tradition can be passed to new generations. Since Hong Kong music teachers had a limited background in Chinese music, a teacher-artist partnership project was implemented from 2009-12 in which teachers learnt from practitioners in collaborative teaching. A study on transformation of students' learning motivation indicated that primary students were more open than secondary students in receiving and learning Cantonese opera [See Section 3, R1]. A longitudinal study involving four music teachers examined how and why teachers transform, in attitudes and practice, in three years in learning and teaching Cantonese opera with a teacher-artist partnership [R2]. Both studies revealed that students may be more interested in learning the genre with appropriate pedagogy, while teachers could become more confident and committed to teach the art form when they had learnt relevant knowledge and time for reflection was present.]

Leung has also conducted research on professional students' learning of Cantonese opera in different contexts including apprenticeship and conservatories. As the first ever study documenting the apprenticeship model, interviews with five artists who had been apprentices revealed how the genre had been preserved and transmitted [R3]. The master and the apprentice developed a parent-and-child-like relationship while the aim of transmission was mainly inheriting personal style and artistry rather than a monetary relationship. The next study involved understanding and informing contemporary approaches to nurturing artists. This included a case study on the transmission approaches of two institutions in Hong Kong and Guangdong Province [R4]. Findings reveal that transmission has been transformed with formal learning as the core approach, while informal and non-formal learning were abandoned. The new standardized training mode was found to nurture artists with similar artistry, but not develop personal style. Leung suggested that both informal and non-formal learning should be employed in the curriculum so that unique and personal styles might be nurtured. Leung proposed a new model of transmission in Hong Kong, based on the previous studies [R5]. The model suggests that apart from the formal curriculum, students should have a close relationship with a specific tutor as mentor for developing personal style, to value and strengthen internship before graduation, to encourage teachers to continue performing professionally, and encourage informal and non-formal learning.

Further research involved developing the Computerised Kinetic Chain Assessment and Learning System for assessing Cantonese opera movement [R6], launched in 2017 with Magdalena Mok, Department of Psychology, EdUHK, and a professor from National Taichung Normal University, Taiwan. Leung developed software with six movements for piloting in schools. Since the demise of apprenticeships, students have to practise alone, without immediate feedback. Inaccurate practice may result in bad habits. The System generates immediate feedback and formative assessment, and is considered innovative in teaching the traditional art form. Leung's work is being further developed and disseminated through the Research Centre for Transmission of Cantonese Opera [RCTCO], which he established at EdUHK in May 2018. |

### (3) References to the research

[R1] Leung, BW, & Leung, E. C. K. (2010). Teacher-artist partnership in teaching Cantonese opera in Hong Kong schools: Student transformation. *Int'l Journal of Education & the Arts*, 11(5).

[R2] Leung BW (2014). Teachers' transformation as learning: Teaching Cantonese opera in Hong Kong schools with a teacher-artist partnership. *Int'l Journal of Music Education*, 32(1), 119-131.

[R3] Leung BW (2015). Utopia in arts education: Transmission of Cantonese opera under the oral tradition in Hong Kong. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 23(1), 133-152.

[R4] Leung BW (2015). Transmission of Cantonese opera in the conservatory tradition: Two case studies in South China and Hong Kong. *Music Education Research*, 17(4), 480-498.

[R5] Leung BW (Aug. 2018). A proposed model of transmission of Cantonese opera in Hong Kong higher education: From oral tradition to conservatoire. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, online first, 1-23.

[R6] Leung BW, Mok MMC, Kuo B-C, Liu Z-Y, Lam SM, Ng CW, Cheng L, Ma KKH & Choi TW. (2018). An Assessment of Learning Cantonese Opera Movement in Hong Kong: Application of the Computerised Kinetic Chain Assessment and Learning System. In KJ Kennedy & JCK Lee (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook on Schools and Schooling in Asia* (pp. 220-233). New York: Routledge.

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### (4) Details of the impact

Leung's research has had impact on school education by increasing access to and engagement with Cantonese opera among students and teachers. He established the first courses for teaching Cantonese opera in schools, and also taught teachers how to teach Cantonese Opera. A set of CDROMs [See Section 5, C1] with teaching plans and video clips was generated and disseminated to all 1200 schools in Hong Kong, the first such teaching materials in Hong Kong. The materials were also uploaded to the RCTCO website, along with his subsequent resources [C2]. One of the participating teachers started to learn about the genre, and had become more confident and interested in teaching Cantonese opera in music classes [R1]. In her testimonial, she expressed that "he [Prof Leung] has sparked the interest of Cantonese Opera in students and teachers, and should be credited for the nurturing young Cantonese Opera performers in school and flourishing of this art form in the local scene" [C3]. The longer term impact on teaching and learning of this new interest and confidence was reflected in a 2017 feature in South China Morning Post, "Cantonese opera inspires next generation: art form

flourishes in Hong Kong's schools" [C4]. Based on his research, Leung has also delivered numerous seminars for school teachers in China on teaching Cantonese opera. An exemplary seminar was held in 2018 in Changsha hosted by the Hunan Normal University with more than 600 in-service music teachers from across the country. The organiser, Prof Guo Shengjian, affirmed the teachers appreciated the exemplary teaching plan and would use it as a reference. He received two letters from music teachers on the teaching of traditional music. One teacher affirmed she was "inspired by the authentic pedagogy of Cantonese opera, i.e., learning by listening and memory, which could also be adopted in teaching other kinds of Chinese opera" [C5].

Leung's study on the transmission model in higher education has guided the curriculum development of the School of Chinese Opera at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA). In 2013, the first cohort of the 4-year BFA (Chinese Opera) programme was admitted to the Academy, while the re-validation exercise of the programme was undertaken in January 2018. According to the School's Dean, Mr. Martin Lau, the revalidated programme has adopted some suggestions from Leung's article on his model [R5], including: recruiting new teaching staff with connection to the profession, and developing a Pathway Programme to provide training for potential students [C6].

Leung's research has had societal impact on changing cultural perceptions by increasing knowledge and appreciation of Cantonese opera in and beyond Hong Kong through public presentations, interviews with international and local media, websites, and publications. Leung promoted appreciation in the genre and interest in singing through the three seminars he presented during Cantonese Opera Day in 2017, 2018 and 2019, at the invitation of the Cantonese Opera Advancement Association. According to the organizer, more than 300 people attended the third seminar, while positive feedback is reflected by a questionnaire survey. Audiences affirmed that the seminar "has improved my understanding of Cantonese opera" (M=4.30), and "has uplifted my interest in Cantonese opera" (M=4.36) with a 5-point scale [C7].

Leung developed a bilingual website "Cantonese opera in Hong Kong" [C8], which has promoted the genre to local and international audiences and provided information for in-depth understanding and appreciation. Since its launch in July 2015, more than 150,000 hit counts have been recorded. He also developed the website for the RCTCO [C9] where his resources have been uploaded.

Leung's research achieved significant impact on the teaching of Cantonese opera, by developing new pedagogy. His series of new teaching tools focused on the movements, including the first book documenting most of the movements [C9]. Since July 2017, more than 1,000 copies have been sold. His innovative Computerised Kinetic Chain Assessment and Learning System is being piloted by students to correctly practice the movements and being validated at a secondary school as part of its co-curricular activities. A YouTube video clip uploaded in February 2018 illustrates the rationale, practice and feedback from schools, in which one student appreciated "the new technology is used in teaching the traditional art form, which has changed my previous perception of Cantonese opera as an old-fashioned and rigid practice". With the System, a participating teacher reported that "they [the students] have raised their standard of self-assessment with this system" [C10]. It also attracted media coverage, enriching public understanding of the art form [C4].

## **(5) Sources to corroborate the impact**

[C1] Hong Kong Institute of Education (2013) : 《中小學粵劇教學協作計劃：教材光碟 2010-2012》 [Partnership Project on Teaching and Learning of Cantonese Opera in Schools: Teaching Package DVD 2010-12] , 香港 , 香港教育學院文化與創意藝術學系 [Hong Kong: CCA Department, HKIEd].

- [C2] Research Centre for Transmission of Cantonese Opera: <https://www.eduhk.hk/rctco/index.php>
- [C3] Testimonial, Eva Kam, Music Teacher and Vice Principal, Ho Tung Secondary School.
- [C4] South China Morning Post, (8 December, 2017 & 13 May, 2018)
- [C5] Letter from organiser, China-Taiwan-Hong Kong-Macau School Music Education Demonstration and Seminar, Changsha, China
- [C6] Testimonial from Mr. Martin Lau, Dean, School of Chinese Opera, The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts
- [C7] Testimonial from the Cantonese Opera Advancement Association
- [C8] Website: “Cantonese Opera in Hong Kong”  
<http://www.ied.edu.hk/ccaproject/yueju/ch/transfer.php>
- [C9] 阮兆輝著；梁寶華編 [Yuen, S. F.; Leung, B. W. (Ed.)] (2017)：《生生不息薪火傳：粵劇生行基礎知識》 [Foundations of Male Role in Cantonese Opera]，香港，天地圖書 [Hong Kong: Cosmos Books]。
- [C10] 3D Computerised Kinetic Chain Assessment and Learning System. Video clip.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zO-eiSRUwH8>