

## Focus Research Area in Cultural Research and Development

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### Relation to Lingnan's Role

The liberal arts mission of “preparation for life” today means *educating students for creativity and innovation* in their professional as well as personal lives, and therefore staying in touch with community and industry needs on the “cultural” fronts. In line with its emphasis on liberal education and community service, Lingnan University created a unique research programme in 2002 (now titled Kwan Fong Cultural Research and Development, or KFCRD) to address such needs in the local context. Building a model of “public humanities research”, Cultural Research and Development (CRD) explores, identifies, and puts to work effective ways of *investing locally in heritage, creativity, and cultural education* to meet the needs of the Hong Kong community in the 21st century.

Thus, the CRD area is conceived as a Liberal Arts project that aims:

- to build capacity for Hong Kong by training cultural researchers and students capable of working for various cultural institutions, industries and communities;
- to build partnerships between community, cultural organizations, and individual cultural workers through innovative collaborative projects; and
- to enhance the creative capacity of such partners by developing and integrating educational resources for their use.

### Niche

With a dynamic role in contemporary societies, *culture today is a business of global importance, a site of social hope, and a focus for policymakers worldwide*. As the “knowledge economy” takes hold, culture and education have become major forces of economic and social change. Corporate players, local communities, and policymakers all begin to recognize the significant role played by *the “creative” industries* (cinema, new media, the visual and performing arts) and *the heritage complex* (cultural tourism, museums, libraries, galleries) as key factors in urban development. Using a collaboration-based approach to cross-disciplinary research, CRD projects seek to *take unique Hong Kong methods, problems and solutions* in the contemporary context to a regional and international marketplace of cultural ideas, in order to: (i) support innovative Hong Kong-based cultural research projects of regional and international as well as local importance; and (ii) bring creative cultural research to bear on the needs of business, cultural policy-makers and community groups in the region.

Innovation and creativity are the lifeblood of cultural industries. *Cultural research* provides such industries with the new ideas and dynamic content they need in order to thrive. *Cultural policy* helps government to foster both cultural development and community participation, and *education* is the foundation of any cultural policy. The recent emergence of *new practices of cultural community* calls for projects that are interdisciplinary and transnational in its thrust, with researchers concerned with cultural development at the community level focusing on the very nature and role of *cultural institutions and education*. *CRD is the consolidated answer to these emergent needs*.

### Present Strength

Lingnan's **Department of Cultural Studies** is unique in Hong Kong and the first in the Chinese-speaking world to offer a *BA (Hons) in Cultural Studies* (BACS, 1999- ). Since its inception, our work has received growing recognition locally, regionally and internationally from peers in the field, while successfully reaching out to the communities,

schools, arts groups, and other cultural sectors. Funded from 2003 by a donation from the Kwan Fong Charitable Foundation, the **KFCRD** adopts a collaborative, often cross-institutional, approach to “applied” Cultural Studies research. It works to make cultural research available as a resource for educators and community groups; and to develop new approaches to cultural education and engaged cultural work.

From **2006-07 to 2008-09**, a total of 14 research grants were received through external funding and 17 grants through internal funding for projects in the area of CRD. The total funds obtained in the focus area amount to **\$4,514,171**, with \$3,725,527 from external sources (including but not limited to RGC) and \$788,644 from internal sources, involving altogether 11 Lingnan faculty members associated with the KFCRD under IHSS.

Moreover, during the current year of **2009–10**, Lingnan faculty working in the area have received to date \$1,550,875 in external grants for 3 research projects, including one won through the Public Policy Research (PPR) scheme of RGC (involving 1 PI and 4 CIs from Lingnan), one from the Quality Education Fund (under Education Bureau), and one from the Cantonese Opera Development Fund (under Home Affairs Bureau); as well as \$95,000 in internal grant for a project supported by the University, totaling **\$1,645,875**. The total number of funded projects under the area is **35**, while the amount of external and internal grants received since July 2006 is **\$6,160,046**. (See Appendix I for details)

### **Relationship Between Teaching and Research**

Always a prime concern for Cultural *R&D* work, the interface between research and teaching is crucial for Lingnan. We have attracted some of the world’s best-known cultural researchers to its international project networks in the area of CRD. These networks enable locally-based scholars to set up an international agenda, just as they mobilise expertise across the world to address cultural policy and development issues vital to the Asian Pacific region (e.g., at the Crossroads 2010 to take place soon at LU). As a result, CRD produces new approaches to research and education in the area of culture, identity, heritage, education, media and creativity. Its articulation with the projected curriculum under the 3-3-4 structure lies in the new research interfaces and applications developed, on key themes such as creative industry and enterprise, community cultural development and the new civil society. Since a good part of the CRD's work is on pedagogy, intellectual and applied, there is a strong organic link between the research focus and pedagogical practices in the education we do at all levels.

### **Areas for Focused Research in 2009-12**

Through the coordination of KFCRD, our research strengths are organized in two related project clusters of ongoing importance: **Cultural Education and Policy**, and **Urban Creativity and Media Culture**. Overall, the *research objectives* are to examine how developments in (i) community cultures, (ii) public educational programmes, and (iii) cultural policy strategies and schemes affect the environment for creative communities in the HKSAR, and thus their national and regional potential. (See Appendix II for a list of forthcoming publications and ongoing research in the area.) For the next phase of our work, we shall study the effective ways to enhance public participation and involvement in cultural development. Expertise-based as we are in the study of the *contexts* that foster creativity in a shared cultural life, our work in CRD has the capacity to provide research-based analysis and other intellectual resources to serve the specific needs of culturally-oriented groups and agencies active in Hong Kong. Our work on education and the Peace-Women shows that this can be done, and we will collaborate further with professional as well as community bodies concerned with cultural enterprise, heritage (in particular, “intangible” heritage, such as performing and everyday life culture), cultural pedagogy, as well as local resources for creativity and innovation.