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Applied Cultural Studies: Why Now?"

At the Kwan Fong Cultural Research and Development (KFCRD) Programme, the designated focus area in Applied Cultural Studies research has in-built capacity for long-term growth as locally significant cultural imperatives change for communities, policymakers, and scholars alike in Hong Kong. Associated with the Department of Cultural Studies at Lingnan University, we have focused on education in culture and creativity in our collective attempt to map and rebuild *cultural and creative communities*, set as our strategic target conceived within the regional context in dialogue with other Asian imperatives. Specifically we are concerned with the applied, contextually pragmatic work in contemporary projects that aim to: (1) investigate the conditions for enhancing broad community participation in cultural and creative life, with special reference to education and training; and (2) collaborate with cultural and creative groups (especially, but not only artists) in order to promote the sustainability of their efforts, the enrichment of the wider social networks in which they participate, and, finally, the creation of community-based solutions to cultural policy and educational problems. In this paper, I shall draw on KFCRD's current work with schools and arts organizations to show how applied research of this kind may have the added benefit to the academic and local community alike of identifying key issues for future cultural research. I shall also discuss (i) the condition for registering new knowledge of cultural practices in Hong Kong, China and the region, and (ii) the critical evaluations of, and emergent models for, the disciplinary development of cultural studies thus conceived. With such an emphasis, it is expected that our work would shed light on research training, theoretical debate, and policy discussion for the growth of the discipline.