

# Evolving Creative Mindsets

## *Thinking Through the Arts*

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# Preface

The genesis of *Evolving Creative Mindsets: Thinking Through the Arts* originated from the preparation for AFTEC's fifteenth anniversary celebrations in 2022–2023 as a collection of thinking notes for internal record. After the process began, by coincidence an AFTEC board member was seated next to the publisher, who exclaimed the dearth of writing in arts education in Hong Kong. The rest is history.

Every book has a backstory. After a stint in London pursuing an MPhil scholarship, I realised that I never truly felt at home in any of my varied professional roles despite my initial belief in an academic life. Then I jumped off the cliff, transforming a lifelong passion for the arts into a career that has been a source of exhilaration and fulfilment for decades.

Friends thought it was absolute folly to surrender status and perks for the arts where there is little materialistic reward and where few would understand the nature of the work beyond being entertained. This is issue one for this book: the arts are not really recognised in Hong Kong beyond performances and exhibitions. At best, they are for academic portfolios in schools, or economic and glamour windows to the world. I was intrigued by what else the arts could be.

Nothing has been more uplifting (and dampening) and gratifying (and frustrating) than the arts. Nevertheless, one feels so alive physically (energised yet exhausted), mentally (multimodal yet singular), and emotionally (inspiring yet drained). Perhaps in reading this book, you too can partake in some of the positive feelings, for what is the aim of writing but to connect experiences and deep feelings in the silence of reading. In a world of much artificiality and technology, it is good to be human.

In the years after the deep dive, I am still invigorated by the possibilities of being in as diverse roles as an arts practitioner: as an explorer (continuous), as an educator (armed with some formal knowledge), as an occasional performer (now ceased), as an administrator (out of necessity), and always as an active member of the audience, absorbing, analysing, and experimenting.

I have gained multiple hypothetical perspectives of how the arts can gain a larger audience, how artists can become more involved with the public, why the arts should be integral to all our lives, and how schools can nurture creative mindsets to further embrace the arts beyond practical skills-based learning. These are also issues in the book which, in retrospect, all stem from the bubbling disquietude of two words.

'Arts appreciation', a much-banded phrase, is a fuzzy concept with insufficient clarity, applied liberally and with the box ticked too easily. What is it? What can it be? A burning question has always been how it is feasible for one to relate to an artwork via factual knowledge alone with minimal engagement, often passive. This has spurred me to investigate the concept of building a pathway to the arts for the purpose of learning through diverse ways of engagement.

The interest in teaching and learning appeared at a later stage, quite by accident. The occasions when I could review the homework of my nieces, Sian and Maya, in a local primary school set off alarm bells. That was a good answer, I thought. Why was it circled in red with marks deducted? What was wrong? An interest was piqued as to what learning is and hence a plunge into understanding primary school education first-hand. By the time I surfaced, it was clear that learning needs to be redefined and the system needs to be reviewed.

This is another concern in the book. In this twenty-first century of VUCA<sup>1</sup> (vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity), doling out information only does not work. Our IoTs (Internet of Things) provide more than enough facts to enrich and drown us daily. How can schools hope to impart knowledge and teach related skills yet exclude the development of capacities and capabilities? Knowing how to fish is surely more fundamental than being fed fish as a matter of routine.

Gradually, I became increasingly preoccupied with the connection between the arts, and teaching and learning, how the two could meet, be mutually beneficial, and how there might be possibilities for complementary nourishment and contribution.

On this front, opportunities are many. What will make sense within the bounds of AFTEC's limited knowledge? What is achievable given a charity's limited energy and financial resources, and in a field which is peripheral even in the arts? Above all, how can the education and arts communities sit side by side? After all, two heads are better than one. Or are they?

This book touches upon certain ideas that have surfaced from AFTEC's philosophy and programming that link the two fields. I have tried to present and tease out some of the answers here, using the organisation's experiences, achievements,

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1. 'Where Does the Term VUCA Come From? Role of Nanus and Bennis', *VUCA-World*, 18 August 2023, <https://www.vuca-world.org/roles-of-nanus-and-bennis/>.

and mis-steps to illustrate the wider adventures and putting forward notions that may kindle dialogues among peers. Most of the time, questions overwhelm answers.

Looking down the road are three thoughts. One, for universities to develop undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in creative teaching and learning through the arts, because this is where the bottleneck is ultimately. Two, that a creative learning fellowship can be inaugurated to nourish future leaders in creative learning spanning the arts, education, and elsewhere. Finally, the idea of a network, one in which regional and international collaborators excite each other and extend their practices to meet challenges creatively.

# Introduction

## Setting the Scene

Imagine three pieces of data are given to you. How will you make sense of them?

1. Cultural and creative exports totalled HK\$618 billion (US\$79.4 billion) in 2018, accounting for 15% of Hong Kong's total exports. The largest component was audiovisual and interactive media (HK\$442 billion/US\$56.8 billion), followed by performing arts (HK\$82 billion/US\$10.5 billion), and then visual arts and design goods (HK\$72 billion/US\$9.3 billion).<sup>1</sup>
2. 'In my regular classes, when the teacher calls on me, I often shy away and avoid answering. But in AFTEC's classes, I raise my hand without hesitation. Whether I get it right or wrong, I feel a sense of accomplishment just from putting myself out there and trying.'<sup>2</sup>
3. 'As a teacher in a creative classroom, I allow students to firstly observe, encourage them to ask more questions and express themselves more. The classroom is not solely led by the teacher inculcating knowledge and skills. It is one in which students are able to discover for themselves, after which I facilitate learning through their findings.'<sup>3</sup>

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1. 'The Cultural and Creative Industries in Hong Kong', Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, accessed 17 June 2024, [https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat\\_report/product/FA100120/att/B72406FA2024XXXXXB0100.pdf](https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/FA100120/att/B72406FA2024XXXXXB0100.pdf).
  2. Lai Tsz Yu, interview by AFTEC project team, *Spotlight on Students 2023–24*, YouTube, [https://youtu.be/x5LJV\\_HK8jE?si=zT6uKewVqU-ORdeD](https://youtu.be/x5LJV_HK8jE?si=zT6uKewVqU-ORdeD).
  3. May Wong, *Jockey Club Arts-Based Cross Curriculum Creative Learning Project* teacher focus group interview by GeoDimension InfoSolutions Limited, 2024.

Item 1 is quantitative facts and easily understood. Item 2, from a student, suggests a frame of mind from a child. Item 3 is taken from the perspective of a professional educator who has taken on the mission of incorporating creative teaching approaches through the arts into traditional classrooms. The latter two quotes are less palpable than hard facts are, but they furnish a qualitative side to how human beings are nurtured. While item 1 is undoubtedly important, the other two values are equally significant.

The powers of the arts often seem more immediately accessible through numbers. However, qualitative data provides in-depth, contextual information that can complement and enrich the understanding gained from quantitative data. The extraordinary capacities of the arts are diverse and provide richer pictures than metrics alone.

In our experiences, the arts have twelve innate powers:<sup>4</sup>

1. Kindle the imagination
2. Empower creative thinking and expressions
3. Make connections
4. Promote interactivity
5. Ignite feelings
6. Foster introspection
7. Probe ideas
8. Tell stories
9. Communicate
10. Offer perspective and further understanding
11. Affect the broader environment
12. Be transformative

The wealth of knowledge flowing from the arts is unfathomable. How much attention do we pay to its abundant harvest? This is what *Evolving Creative Mindsets: Thinking Through the Arts* aspires to do.

## Qualities

This book hopes to convey a range and variety of thoughts from direct experience grown with colleagues in the past sixteen years at The Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection, or AFTEC. This is one case study seeded during the early days of this century.

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4. If we compare these twelve powers to the generic skills promoted by the Education Bureau, clear overlaps can be seen.



The frontline experience draws together two disciplines – the arts and education. The arts are roughly divided into the performing and visual arts. Performing arts refer to dance, drama/theatre, music, and any art form that occurs on stage and/or in front of an audience, live or online. The visual arts include 2D renditions (drawing, painting, photography, graphics, etc.) and those in 3D (sculptures, installations, ceramics, printmaking, craft). Nowadays, the digital realm is also included.

Education is taken in its usual form, teaching and learning within structured parameters. In this publication, the focus is on formal education and non-formal education in the school system.

The arts and education are often perceived as quite disparate unless understood as ‘arts education’. Arts education is defined here as the *intrinsic* purpose of teaching skills and imparting knowledge, to understand art forms. In this city, teaching students how to play the piano for that sole purpose is considered arts education. Being taught how to look at a painting though its lines, patterns, and shapes is another example. We had a signature project in acting coupled with life skills. That was in arts education, a segment of the total arts equation.

We work in the ‘arts-in-education’ in the main. This is where the properties and nature of the arts are mobilised to support teaching and learning. It also refers to the characteristics of the arts (the twelve powers) being deployed for the *extrinsic* purpose of teaching and learning and not for their own sake as in arts education. Through looking at a painting on a moment in history, students are guided to think critically, enabling them to compose better essays, for example. This is the arts-in-education. The outcomes are not to improve drawing skills or to astound with remembered facts. They are for developing a reflective habit of mind.

There is confusion, nevertheless, that participating in the arts will make anyone creative, creativity often being interpreted as the ability to conceive of and create, express, and make something which was previously absent.<sup>5</sup> This may occasionally happen although the awareness may not be direct.

## Definitions

For the purpose of this book and its discussion, creative learning is identified as ‘the ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem solve, communicate, collaborate and to reflect critically, the skills young people will need if they are to take responsibility for their own learning’.<sup>6</sup>

5. ‘Durham Commission on Creativity and Education’, Durham Commission on Creativity and Education, accessed 4 November 2019, [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Durham\\_Commission\\_on\\_Creativity\\_04112019\\_0.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Durham_Commission_on_Creativity_04112019_0.pdf).

6. Creative Partnerships (2002–2011) is now known as Creativity, Culture & Education, <https://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/>.

These are, undoubtedly, inherent qualities of the arts, both visual and performing. We believe that creative learning and teaching in schools are able to empower creative thinkers. And by exploring and putting forward the attributes of such a thinker, we have immense opportunities to cultivate and expand creative mindsets.

Creative thinkers are those who can come up with ideas, who explore possibilities through asking questions. In the process, they extend their thinking, connect their own and others' ideas and experiences in inventive ways, locate alternative solutions, follow ideas through, and adapt ideas as circumstances change.<sup>7</sup> Like children and young people, adults can become creative thinkers as well if the 5Cs – creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and contribution – generic skills commonly found in Hong Kong's official curriculum guides, underpin school as well as lifelong learning.

The nurturing of creative thinkers is grounded on the ability to *teach creatively* through a diverse range of ways and approaches instead of top-down prescriptive teaching. It also means uncovering *teaching for creativity* at the same time, explicitly using pedagogies and practices that cultivate creativity in young people.<sup>8</sup>

Much of the time, our work is dependent on the dedication and commitment of professionals. These are teachers and those whose practice is arts- or culture-based. Normally, and broadly speaking, this second group, that has an educational interest, is referred to as arts educators (the British term) or teaching artists (the American term). They are referred to by either name in the publication.

We have opted for a third reference, creative practitioners, to portray a wider definition. They include arts educators or teaching artists and any professionals who exhibit and use creative behaviour and those who work in the creative field. At its broadest, this can even encompass architects, designers, scientists, journalists, and hybrids from a range of professionals.<sup>9</sup> In our pilot creative learning project from 2021 to 2024, one school collaborated with an architect and another with two artists who are designers and paper engineers.

## A Pressing Concern

A lot of great work is happening in the arts sector in performances and exhibitions in Hong Kong, as there is much to celebrate in education institutions. We have met and

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7. Adapted from the definition from 'A Framework of Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills 11–19 in England', Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, Department for Education, the UK, [https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/7268/3/PLTS\\_framework\\_v2\\_tcm8-936-1.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/7268/3/PLTS_framework_v2_tcm8-936-1.pdf).

8. 'Durham Commission on Creativity and Education'.

9. 'Lead Creative Schools Prospectus for Creative Agents', Arts Council of Wales, accessed January 2017, <https://creativelearning.arts.wales/sites/default/files/2022-07/Prospectus-for-Creative-Agents.pdf>.

# Cracking the Creativity Code

## The Future Starts Now

### Summary

Chapter 1 offers a sweeping overview of the intersection between arts and education since 2000, focusing on formal school learning. It navigates various levels of discourse from researchers, prompting the reader to reflect on the vital role of creativity through the arts in our future growth and development. This lays the groundwork for the subsequent chapters, which will delve deeper into the rationale behind a creative learning project's initiatives and the essential role of arts and culture in shaping the future of this city.

Part I explores the past from the education reform in the early twenty-first century according to the macro education policy and for arts education. Part II reviews reform achievements and the challenges faced along the way, with analysis on disparities between the arts and school learning. Part III looks at reasons for a status quo two decades later. Part IV takes an economic perspective on jobs, automation, and future trends. Part V emphasises the importance of creativity and its related constructs for future learning and jobs, highlighting how key characteristics of the arts drive this change.

### Part I

What did the year 2000 mean to you? Irrespective of backgrounds, the turn of the millennium was undeniably a massive milestone, humankind celebrating the completion of a century and welcoming the next. On a more fathomable scale, one momentous change that was anticipated was how education needed to anticipate the needs of the twenty-first century.

Globally and locally, the educational future was planned meticulously. Hong Kong was no exception. In 2000, the Education Commission<sup>1</sup> gave macro rationales for sweeping changes given unprecedented worldwide shifts, the return of sovereignty to China in 1997, and the rapid development of information technology that will affect the city economically and socially, opening up new domains in all aspects of lives, creating new challenges along the way.

The commission's education blueprint highlighted key tools for addressing the challenges of a changing world. Notably, the term 'creativity' appeared early and frequently throughout the document – a rare emphasis at the time – which signified strong support for innovation and change.

The main goals of education were clear: to help everyone develop in the five core Chinese concepts of ethics, intellect, physical fitness, social skills, and the arts,<sup>2</sup> based on their individual strengths. This way, they could become lifelong learners, think critically, adapt to change, be confident team players, and work for the betterment of society and the world. Learning, as such, should be enjoyable for our students as they improved their communication skills and fostered their creativity and commitment.

In the arts, music and the visual arts were, and still are, minor subjects in formal education from primary to secondary school. For the first time, however, in the reform, policymakers stated unequivocally that the arts are intrinsic to education and are thus embedded in the five core Chinese concepts. Arts education was no longer external to core subjects but coaxed into the fold as one of eight Key Learning Areas<sup>3</sup> through the *Arts Education Key* curriculum guide<sup>4</sup> and complementary documents that first appeared in 2002.

As with twenty years ago, when arts education made its debut as a principal actor on stage, the updated versions until the current one in 2017 (at the time of writing) portray four curriculum aims. They include the fostering of creativity, critical thinking, and aesthetic sensitivity; building skills, knowledge, and positive values in the arts; enjoying participation in arts-making activities; and cultivating a lifelong interest in the arts.

The arts were called into action by policymakers as having a crucial role to play, because it is through the process of integrative learning that students are able

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1. 'Learning for Life, Learning through Life: Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong', Education Commission, Hong Kong, September 2000, [https://www.e-c.edu.hk/wp-content/uploads/2000/09/Proposal\\_Edu\\_Reform\\_2000.pdf](https://www.e-c.edu.hk/wp-content/uploads/2000/09/Proposal_Edu_Reform_2000.pdf).
  2. In Chinese, 德智體群美.
  3. The others are Chinese language education, English language education, mathematics, science, technology, personal social and humanities education, and physical education.
  4. The Education Bureau speaks of the arts-in-education within the concept of arts education.

to acquire a holistic understanding and deeper insights into what is being learnt.<sup>5</sup> Out of the nine prescribed generic skills, we have teased out four as foundational: creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. We added a fifth, contribution, as the belief to plough back to society is a fundamental value to us.

Policy formulation is challenging, but implementation is even more daunting when theory meets practice. A key result of education reform is the introduction of school-based management, decentralising decision-making to principals and teachers. Due to diverse school backgrounds, cultures, student abilities, and teaching styles, interpretations of the policy document will vary, even as they align with the education master plan. As global shifts affect city dynamics, schools will also experience changing environments that influence their outlooks.

How have we fared to date in arts education and the arts-in-education? What have we missed? One can consider answering the questions from a few perspectives: formal education (structured, sequential learning with timetables for young children to higher education), non-formal (structured activities outside the formal school system), and informal learning (not organised, no structure, and unintended education).

However, one chapter will not do justice to the realm of the arts and the multiple layers. The decision is therefore to take a bird's-eye view of arts education and the arts-in-education in formal learning settings in schools from the start of the reforms. In the hope of enabling amelioration and future possibilities, the investigation will then move into present necessities in the light of living in tumultuous times arising from worsening global impacts as we live in the fourth Industrial Revolution – climate change, mass migration, socio-political upheavals – and most recently, COVID.

## Part II

### *Probabilities and Possibilities*

#### Four Perspectives

Four key documents shape our understanding of the past in arts education. These papers are interlinked, revealing similar concerns across different areas. They will be referenced in the chapter.

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5. 'Learning to Learn – Life-long Learning and Whole-person Development', Curriculum Development Council, Hong Kong, June 2001, [https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/cs-curriculum-doc-report/wf-in-cur/CDC\\_LtL\\_Report\\_2001\(web\)\\_e.pdf](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/cs-curriculum-doc-report/wf-in-cur/CDC_LtL_Report_2001(web)_e.pdf) 2002b: 61.

# Appendix

The appendix lists projects in chronological order as they are implemented. Only projects that are discussed in this publication have been included here. Other projects can be viewed at [www.aftec.hk](http://www.aftec.hk).

1. Title: *From Page to Stage*

Year: 2009–ongoing

Target Group: Secondary students and teachers (main) + general public

Overview:

*From Page to Stage* Programme is a comprehensive Learning & Participation theatre education platform in English. Presented since 2009, this is probably the longest-running theatre-in-education production in the city that has reached to nearly 120,000 audience members. Six productions were produced under The Jockey Club from Page to Stage® Programme from 2012 to 2018. It was also one of the English Alliance programmes under the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) from 2018 to 2021. Tailor-made for local secondary school students, the programme is a fresh and unique educational adventure. Through high-quality drama performances and in-school pre- and post-performance workshops, we aim to nurture students' interest in literary classics and appreciation of the arts.

Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/from-page-to-stage-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/from-page-to-stage/> (English)

2. Title: *Sm-ART Youth*

Year: 2012–2020

Target Group: Primary 4–6 (9–11-year-olds)

Overview:

Beginning in 2012, *Sm-ART Youth* is designed to nurture creative learning for underprivileged primary students and aims to demonstrate arts for transformative educational change. Programmes include constant year-round exposure to diverse arts disciplines in and outside of the classroom, such as Cultural Days. The project is based on intergenerational teaching and learning. Participants of different age groups benefit from volunteer training and cultural outing participation. Practical opportunities were offered for interns from the University of Hong Kong's MA in Expressive Arts Therapy in the middle years.

The 2018–2020 cohort marked the end of the project. *Sm-ART Youth* has enabled in total 155 underprivileged primary students to nurture a questioning habit of mind, to understand the self and beyond, and to locate meaning in their young lives.

Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/sm-art-youth-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/sm-art-youth/> (English)

<https://www.aftec.hk/smart/index.html> (Main site)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkEm7rC-5Jv6A5o7bWs3qLRigtq0jpRI>

3. Title: *Medical Humanities (Performance Arts Module)*

Year: 2012–ongoing

Target Group: Medical undergraduates Years 1 and 2

Overview:

AFTEC is a community partner in The University of Hong Kong Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine Medical Humanities Programme, which is a credit-bearing part of the medical curriculum. Through an imaginative encounter with the arts, medical students can explore the human aspect of medical science through engaging in drama and music in the early years and then movement and drama in recent years.

Links:

<https://15.aftec.hk/zh/exhibition-vista-2b-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://15.aftec.hk/exhibition-vista-2b/> (English)

4. Title: *Bravo! Hong Kong Youth Theatre Awards*

Year: 2013–2020

Target Group: 13–19-year-olds

Overview:

Conceptualised in late 2011 for a 2013 launch, *Bravo!* is a bilingual acting and life-skills programme for full-time Hong Kong students aged 13 to 19 who are passionate about theatre. The project is eighteen months long with a *Bravo! Hong Kong* segment that includes workshops, theatre productions, and community services. A final selection is made after one year for further and higher-level training with AFTEC Learning Partners, the Cloud Gate Dance School in Taipei, and The London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art (LAMDA) in London as the *Bravo! Asia* and *Bravo! International* legs respectively. This project gives priority to underprivileged youth.

Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/bravo-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/bravo/> (English)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkEm7rC-5Jv44L1Oirz9egnZJPJd-B6FS7>

<https://www.aftec.hk/beyond-bravo/>

5. Title: *Classics for Juniors*

Year: 2014–2021

Target Group: Primary school students and teachers (main) + general public

Overview:

*Classics for Juniors* is a tailor-made theatre and language learning programme for primary and junior secondary school students since 2014. This comprehensive educational programme comprises pre-show workshops, education materials, an interactive English theatre performance with a professional cast, and drama classes called the Creative Box. All the components create effective and meaningful learning experiences in a professional theatre setting for children. Public performances are also held for the public and families to be part of the experience.

Under the same banner, AFTEC brings the very special Relaxed Theatre. Through this groundbreaking programme, AFTEC hopes to explore theatre and its potential to support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and learning difficulties and raise awareness of their needs.

Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/classics-for-juniors-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/classics-for-juniors/> (English)



6. Title: *Plays for Young People*

Year: 2016, 2018, 2021

Target Group: International playwrights; emerging translators

## Overview:

*Plays for Young People* is a project very close to AFTEC's heart. As a bilingual Learning Theatre for young people, AFTEC believes in widening the vision of young people to perceive other cultures.

Since 2016, aiming at nurturing local talent creating quality translated or original plays for young people, AFTEC has organised numerous symposiums and workshops to connect emerging translators with overseas playwrights and dramaturges, veteran translators, and local directors.

Through the *Young Theatre Makers* and other programmes, AFTEC hopes these outstanding plays from Europe and Asia, in original or translated versions, will be offered to schools, youth centres, and tertiary institutions for staging and meaningful discussions.

## Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/plays-for-the-young-people-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/plays-for-the-young-people/> (English)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkEm7rC-SJvS330DmWmbFrWH7TbB12aEE>

7. Title: *Young Theatre Makers*

Year: 2016–ongoing

Target Group: Secondary students and youth colleges

## Overview:

*Young Theatre Makers* is a bilingual drama training programme that focuses primarily on analysing and understanding a play. Intended for secondary school students, the cross-curriculum scheme uses play scripts as a framework for discussion to develop students' critical thinking.

Schools can choose from fifteen original plays by playwrights from around the world. The plays deal with coming-of-age themes that resonate with young participants, and aim to stimulate interesting debate and dialogue. By combining showcase and discussion, the programme uncovers just how much the arts can help us understand life.

## Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/school-young-theatre-makers-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/school-young-theatre-makers/> (English)

8. Title: *Jockey Club Arts for Change Project*

Years: 2017–2021

Target Group: Children and youth; professional social and outreach workers; artists

Overview:

This project has the ultimate goal of empowering social workers, young people, and youth organisations to become effective change-makers through the power of the arts. Led by AFTEC, a diverse range of local professional artists co-designed and co-created with social workers and young people from three NGOs. This three-year pilot programme focused on creating nine meaningful and effective community projects. This project came to an end with the show-cases on 13 and 14 March 2021.

Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/jcac-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/jcac/> (English)

9. Title: *Jockey Club Arts & Action Project*

Years: 2019–2022

Target Group: Primary and secondary students and teachers

Overview:

This is a forty-four-month project focusing on developing an arts-based curriculum in conversation with teachers, social workers, and students from schools for Social Development from 2019 to 2022. As part of the Special Education Needs system, AFTEC created a diverse educational space for teachers, social workers, and students at two schools, Tung Wan Mok Law Shui Wah School and Caritas Mother Teresa School, as well as to assist the former in developing the Jockey Club Black Box Theatre.

This project broadens the artistic horizon for teachers and students through Cultural Days, Continuing Professional Development workshops for teachers, and AFTEC Lab. The arts for change concept was adopted as an alternative approach, to facilitate students' self-understanding and the development of their individual potential through applying the power of the arts to foster layered and nuanced emotional connections.

The final showcase depicted a three-year journey of arts exploration by students from these two schools. Every project has an end, but in life, every ending is just a new beginning.

## Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/arts-for-empowerment-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/arts-for-empowerment/> (English)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pb9\\_Cr3mmbo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pb9_Cr3mmbo) (Highlights)

10. Title: *Jockey Club Arts-Based Cross Curriculum Creative Learning Project*

Years: 2021–2024

Target Group: Primary 4–6 students (9–11-year-olds); teachers; creative practitioners

## Overview:

Funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the project is a three-year-long endeavour designed to complement the Hong Kong school curriculum to foster whole person development and life-wide learning in students from Key Stage 2 (Primary 4–6).

The project focuses on a thematic, cross-curriculum project learning approach to nurture self-directed learning capabilities in students through the integration of

- fundamental subject knowledge based on Key Learning Areas;
- generic skills such as basic skills, thinking skills, and personal and social skills; and
- underpinned by a strong foundation of positive values and attitudes.

This student-centred creative partnership project aims to prepare young people for the challenges of the twenty-first century by developing their creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration skills for contribution to social capital ('5Cs'), bringing about an increase in creative practices in schools through the training of teachers in collaboration with Creative Practitioners (CPs).

## Links:

<https://www.aftec.hk/zh/arts-based-cross-curriculum-creative-learning-project-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://www.aftec.hk/arts-based-cross-curriculum-creative-learning-project/> (English)

11. Title: *AFTEC Jockey Club Creative Futures Project*

Years: 2024–2028

Target Group: Mainly primary 3–5 students (8–11-year-olds); teachers; creative practitioners

Overview:

An expansion to the *Jockey Club Arts-Based Cross Curriculum Creative Learning Project*, this project extends creative teaching and learning to a multi-layer four-year-long extension that includes a higher level with tertiary institutions as Partners or Collaborators. Here postgraduates and undergraduates are offered workshops of different durations. On the other side of the spectrum, at entry point level, are the Associate Creative Schools in which continuous professional development sessions are provided to teachers from primary to junior secondary schools annually.

The original creative learning schools who wish to advance are able to continue and 12 new creative schools will be recruited.

Links:

<https://creativefutures.aftec.hk/home-zh/> (Chinese)

<https://creativefutures.aftec.hk/home-en/> (English)

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- World Economic Forum: *The Future of Jobs* report (of 2023), 25, 26, 27 fig. 1.1, 225, 226 fig. 9.2, 262
- Young Theatre Makers, 54–55, 55 fig. 3.3, 88

# EVOLVING CREATIVE MINDSETS

## Thinking Through the Arts

‘Our schools and professional communities increasingly need creatively vibrant learners to succeed. *Evolving Creative Mindsets* hits the bull’s-eye exactly, showing creative practitioners how the AFTEC approach, proven by research and by similar best practices around the world, effectively develops the innovative learners and active creators we want and need. Bravo.’

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‘*Evolving Creative Mindsets* is an eloquent, evidence-rich treasure. Lynn Yau weaves Hong Kong’s vivid case studies with universal insights – uniting policy, assessment, well-being, and creative thinking in one compelling narrative. A practical handbook and visionary manifesto, it will inspire educators, policymakers, and artists striving for sustainable, globally resonant arts learning.’

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Although the arts have been firmly planted in the Hong Kong school system since the 1950s, they are often sacrificed in place of core subjects and preparation for examinations. Drawing on over fourteen years of exploration and experience, Yau makes the case that arts are critical to cultivating creative mindsets, which are our best resource for innovating and responding to challenges in this complex world of sudden changes. Through case studies and conversations with practising artists and educators, this book demonstrates why arts and education, two normally discrete disciplines, should be broadly integrated into the local Hong Kong curriculum, and how this can be – and has been – achieved.

This book is intended for policymakers, educators, arts heads, and artists. The volume will also appeal to readers curious about how and why the arts should be foundational to education and capacity building in the twenty-first century.



**Lynn F. C. Yau** is CEO of the Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection (AFTEC), which is a registered charity in Hong Kong that develops and implements programmes that integrate theatre and other creative arts into various Hong Kong educational contexts.

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