



Conservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in formal curriculum of Hong Kong: from cultural space to learning space

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Hong Kong is a highly urbanized metropolitan, yet it still preserves many traditional Chinese cultural practices. Cantonese Opera is the first Hong Kong item to be inscribed in the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity. Four other traditional festive events and rituals were also inscribed in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China. Education is an important means to inherit and further develop intangible cultural heritages. The education reform of New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum offers new opportunities for integrating ICH into formal curriculum. It is a perfect timing for utilizing the cultural spaces of ICH into a learning space, and let students learn about the local arts and culture from different dimensions. Since 2006, HKU Cantonese Opera Education and Research Project worked together with partnership schools, to integrate Cantonese Opera into the secondary school curriculum and on related researches. Interdisciplinary and school based courses with ICH elements have been developed in different partnership schools. Under these curricular, students are guided to explore the cultural space of different ICH items, such as the significant Bamboo Sheds of Cantonese opera, to learn how to appreciate and treasure their own culture and traditional art form, to recognize these events and rituals as local intangible cultural heritages, and to fulfill their social responsibility as members of the global community to preserve their own cultural heritage by participating actively in promoting its sustainability. This paper will share the experience of the successful development in integrating ICH into formal curriculum, as well as discussing the possibility to promoting this mode of ICH curriculum development in more schools and in other countries.

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Introduction and context

Cantonese opera is a local traditional art in Hong Kong. On 30th September, 2009, Cantonese Opera was inscribed in the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity, which was the first Hong Kong ICH item to be inscribed. This raised the interest of Hong Kong people on local ICH items and awareness on the importance of safeguarding them.

Addressing this specific issue, the Hong Kong government suggested putting more resources to support the development and inheritance of Cantonese opera and other ICH items as valuable local cultural treasures of Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong government was aware of the importance of preserving and promoting Cantonese opera as an indigenous art form before the inscription, thus the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee (COAC) and the Cantonese Opera Development Fund (CODF) were set up by the Home Affairs Bureau in 2004 and 2005 respectively. Up to 2013, the CODF has already granted over \$50 million to support different programmes and events on the study, promotion, cultural exchange, education, professional training and the continuous development of Cantonese opera.

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter "the Convention"), adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in April 2006, China is one of the State Parties. In order to undertake necessary work in compliance with the Convention, an Intangible Heritage Unit was set up in 2006 under the establishment of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. (Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 2012). Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee was set up by the Home Affairs Bureau later in July 2008, to give advices and to monitor the conduct of a territory-wide survey on Hong Kong's ICH as well as the measures to safeguard ICH items of Hong Kong. With the effort of the committee and Intangible Heritage Unit, four local traditional festivals and practices, namely the Jiao-festival of Cheung Chau, Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade, Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance and Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community, were successfully inscribed onto the Third National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China in 2011. The inscription definitely aroused more public awareness in identifying and safeguarding local ICH items in Hong Kong.

In the Article 14 of the Convention, it states "each State Party shall endeavour, by all appropriate means, to ensure recognition of, respect for, and enhancement of the intangible cultural heritage in society, in particular through educational, awareness-raising and information programmes, aimed at the general public, in particular young people." (Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 14, a,i)

However, only a small number of young people appreciate or are interested in their own intangible cultural heritage. Taking Cantonese opera as an example, according to a survey in 2009, among all audiences of Cantonese opera in Hong Kong, only 2.9% of the total audience falls into the age group of 10-29. (Ng, Lam & Choi, 2010) Therefore it is important to work on the promotion and safeguarding of Cantonese opera and other ICH items through education, as it is an important means to inherit and further develop the intangible cultural heritages.

In September 2009, the New Academic Structure was implemented in Hong Kong. The New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, which aims at enhancing students' adaptability, creativity, independent thinking and life-long learning capabilities, provided a perfect breeding ground for embedding ICH elements into formal curriculum. It is a perfect timing for utilizing the cultural spaces of ICH into a learning space, and let students learn about the local arts and culture from different dimensions.

In the following parts of this paper, we will share the experience of the successful development in integrating ICH into formal curriculum in Hong Kong, as well as discussing the possibility to promoting this mode of ICH curriculum development in more schools and in other countries.

Interdisciplinary school-based approach model

Since 2006, HKU Cantonese Opera Education and Research Project worked together with partnership schools, to integrate Cantonese Opera into the secondary school curriculum and to develop related researches. Interdisciplinary and research-based curriculum with Cantonese opera and ICH elements has been developed in different partnership schools. There are five steps leading to the development of a school-based model with integration of ICH elements.

Analyzing and matching learning components with ICH and Cantonese opera components

Before designing the ICH elements integrated curriculum, we need to identify the matching components of ICH/ Cantonese opera and learning components.

There are various ways to start matching the learning components with the ICH components. The HKU Cantonese Opera Education and Research Project have successfully used the theory of Multiple Intelligence to match the components in the past years.

Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences classified "Intelligences" into 7 different categories, namely the 1. Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence, 2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, 3. Spatial Intelligence, 4. Musical Intelligence, 5. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, 6. Interpersonal Intelligence and 7. Intrapersonal Intelligence. The eighth intelligence of Naturalist Intelligence was added later, making a total of 8 categories. These classifications allows teachers to take care of students' diversity and individual discrepancies, which makes teaching more effective to achieve final learning goals.

The learning activities of ICH education can be matched with various multiple intelligence development of students. Taking Cantonese opera as an example, the analysis of script can help students to develop Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence and Naturalist Intelligence. (Ng &Yeung, 2011) For other ICH items, students can develop their verbal-linguistic intelligence by doing research on the background and history of ICH items; musical intelligence can be developed through the learning of traditional music and art forms; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence in martial arts, and by doing group and individual learning projects and assignments, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence can be built etc. (Ng, 2013).

In order to match with the aims of the NSS curriculum, the Curriculum Development Council has set up seven learning goals for the students under the new curriculum framework to achieve in their

studies, namely healthy lifestyle, breadth of knowledge, learning skills, language skills, habit of reading, national identity and responsibility. By achieving these goals, students will hopefully become all-rounded persons in the society.

The following table illustrates how the components can be matched with the seven learning goals.

Table 1. Cantonese opera and ICH components matched with NSS curriculum of Hong Kong.

NSS Learning Goals	Cantonese opera components	ICH components
Healthy Lifestyle	Develop an interest in and appreciation of aesthetic values in Cantonese opera	Develop an interest in local cultures
Breadth of Knowledge	Possess a breadth and foundation of knowledge about safeguarding and background of Cantonese opera and other ICH items	
Learning Skills	Develop high order and independent learning skills such as critical thinking and information technology through project studies and cultural space exploration	
Language Skills	Learn classical Chinese through lyrics, poetries, allusions and antithesis etc. in scripts	Develop language skills through reading information about ICH, writing reports, interview with ICH inheritors etc.
Habit of Reading	Read Cantonese opera scripts and lyrics	Make a habit of independent reading through researching and reading information about ICH
National Identity	Strengthen the sense of Chinese nationality through learning the moral ethics and traditional Chinese values embedded	
Responsibility	Recognise their roles and responsibilities as members in the society by safeguarding Cantonese opera and other local ICH items	

Curriculum design: a school-based approach

The curriculum reform in Hong Kong in 2009 provided a great chance for ICH to be integrated in formal curriculum. Under the new system, schools can design their own school-based curriculum for core and elective subjects that suit the interests and strength of students and teachers. This gives plentiful room for integrating ICH elements into the curriculum. There are a lot of components of Cantonese opera and ICH which can match with different learning components of different subjects and learning areas (Ng, 2012).

In school/ classroom

With the flexibility given by the new curriculum, there are many opportunities to embed Cantonese opera and ICH components into whole-school and cross-disciplinary curriculum. For example, in the core subject of Chinese Language and Culture, schools can design special topics for students to study the festive traditions or scripts of Cantonese opera, for Liberal Studies, students can study the current situations and inheritance of ICH etc.

ICH elements can also be integrated with learning components of different subjects. Under the new curriculum, apart from taking the core subjects of Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies, students need to choose 2 to 3 elective subjects. They can choose elective subjects from different Key Learning Areas, Applied Learning courses and/or other language courses. Applied learning subject can be developed by school according to the needs and strength of their students, which ICH topics and elements can be easily fit in.

A very successful example of such is the whole-school crossed disciplinary course on ICH in the Buddhist Wai Yan Memorial College on Cheung Chau island in Hong Kong. The school picked Jiao-festival (also known as the Bun Festival) as focus, since the festival is a unique event on Cheung Chau and was inscribed in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China in 2011. Examples of subjects and themes with ICH elements in this school are: Application of Probability: Fortune Telling and Fortune Stick Drawing in Mathematics, Making of Peace Bun (special festive food on Cheung Chau) in Home Economics and Tourist Route Design for the Bun Festival in Tourism and Hospitality subject etc.

In cultural spaces

According to the Convention by the UNESCO, state parties need to "promote education for the protection of natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is necessary for expressing the intangible cultural heritage" (Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 14 – Education, awareness-raising and capacity-building).

The exploration of bamboo-shed theatre is a very good example of formulating the framework and process of learning traditional culture in the modern world in the light of experiential learning theory and the phenomenographical approach to learning (Ng et. al., 2001; Kwan & Ng, 2002; Tsui et. al., 2004)

David Kolb (1984) argued that experiential learning encompass the totality of the human learning process, where experience forms the foundation for four-phase learning cycle. Based on this theory, there are also four phases in the cross cultural learning of bamboo theatre cultural exploration.

The following figure shows a complete cross-cultural learning cycle, using Cantonese opera learning as an example, in terms of experiential learning theory and Phenomenographical approach of learning.

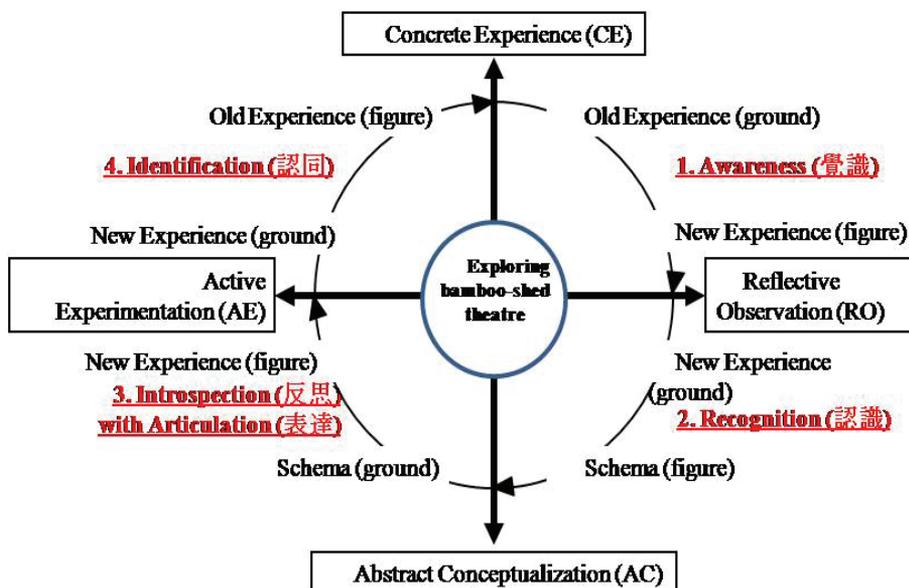


Figure 1. Cross-cultural learning cycle of Cantonese opera learning.

In Cyberspace

In the era of Web 2.0, web tools and other e-learning platforms are widely used to allow more effective learning of students. The multi-media interface and interactive cyberspace provide a common ground for learning which allows students to experience more learning possibilities which cannot be obtained through traditional learning methods.

Free web tools such as weblogs and other social media, can be used in designing the curriculum of ICH education. For example, multi-media video clips can be posted on weblogs to show students of specific festive activities of ICH items, or interactive discussions platforms of students can be developed on social media platforms such as Facebook groups.

Teacher training/ seminar and workshops

Local secondary school teachers might not be very familiar with Cantonese opera and other ICH items, therefore they might not have the confidence and might face problems when it comes to teaching such topics to students. Regarding this issue, teacher training and supports should be given to them in order to raise their professional ability in the aspect so that they eventually would feel confident in teaching the topics.

There are three stages of teacher training in ICH education, including 1. ICH knowledge enrichment programmes, 2. Joint-school lesson preparation and 3. Feedback and school-based support.

"Cantonese opera/ ICH knowledge enrichment programme" is provided to the teachers who are about to teach the related topics, in which, professionals in the field, such as Cantonese opera artists and ICH inheritors are invited as guest lecturers to introduce their specific items to the teachers through talks, workshops and showcase performances etc. After learning more about the ICH itself, teachers can then start to work on the school-based lesson plans that suit their schools and students most.

After initially designing their own school-based model, teachers are invited to gather together for a Joint-school lesson preparation session, that they can exchange their ideas and experiences in planning. Professional comments and assistance from education scholars are also given in the sessions so teachers can refine and polish their teaching plans before executing.

When teachers start teaching their self-designed school-based teaching plans in school, education scholars would visit their lessons and give feedback to them. School-based support for each school would also be provided if needed.

Teachers will eventually master the skills and knowledge in teaching ICH related topics as well as the essence of local culture after these teacher training activities. They will also be inspired on how to explore and utilize teaching resources so as to improve their teaching quality. And by reflecting on their own teaching process, getting feedbacks from professionals and exchanging experiences with fellow teachers, the atmosphere of knowledge exchange can be built among teachers of different schools, which can benefit the professional development of individual teachers and teaching materials and successful models can also be accumulated for future reference.

Implementation strategies

The HKU Cantonese Opera Education Research and Promotion project started the integration of Cantonese opera with formal curriculum in 2006. Starting from just integrating Cantonese opera elements into Chinese Language subject, the successful model got expanded and the integration was extended to different subjects such as Liberal Studies and Other Learning Experiences. Besides Cantonese opera, other ICH items were also used in interdisciplinary areas. School-based subjects and models were also designed and successfully run in partnership schools under the assistance and guidance given by the project scholars. The four layers of implementation strategies and experiences are as follows:

In classroom

Cantonese opera script bears very rich language, literature and cultural content, through the teaching of Cantonese opera scripts in the subject of Chinese Language, using different teaching approaches such as the pedagogy of story schema (Ng & Lam, 2009), students can develop different language skills required by the curriculum, including reading, writing, textual analytical skills etc. Other than the literature elements that can be directly related to the subject requirements, students can also learn other important elements such as traditional Chinese moralities through formal classes and the arts of traditional movements and dances in workshops conducted by Cantonese opera artists.

In school

The project brings kick-off performance of Cantonese opera to partnership schools, allowing students to have a first encounter with Cantonese opera, and giving them some brief ideas of how the art form is like. This kind of showcase can also be used by other ICH items, for example, ICH inheritors can be invited to schools to introduce their respective ICH items. Students therefore can get first-handed information and interactive experiences about the item instead of just reading information from books and other second-handed materials passively. It can also raise their respect and recognition of the items as local ICH and valuable cultural assets of Hong Kong.

In cultural space

Other Learning Experiences (OLE) is a new part in the NSS curriculum besides the original core and elective subjects. Through the participation in OLE, students can acquire learning experiences of moral and civic education, community services, physical and aesthetic education and career-related experiences etc. OLE aims at exposing students to a broader and balanced curriculum and nurturing whole-person development (Introduction: Other Learning Experience).

Bamboo theatre is one of the most significant icons of Cantonese Opera in Hong Kong. Cantonese opera is a folk art that is always performed in bamboo theatres. These bamboo theatres are intricately related to the local rituals and festivals thus is a significant cultural space in Hong Kong. For example, teachers can lead students to have field trips to such cultural spaces like bamboo sheds and temples as OLE activities or special topic project of Chinese Language and Culture subject. In such case, ICH education can act as a conductor, to link up the ICH cultural spaces with learning spaces, or even transforming the cultural spaces into learning spaces. And by doing so, students can be pulled out of their classrooms and schools, to learn and explore through various learning activities within these spaces. Schools can also choose cultural spaces for students to explore according to the religious, geographical or cultural background of the school or of the students (Ng et al., 2012).

In Cyberspace

The project used web tools on different levels along the teaching and learning process of Cantonese opera and ICH. The first level are weblogs which are used as project e-learning platforms, which are set up by the project team, examples are blogs to guide students in appreciating Cantonese opera and also webquest for pre-visit preparation for cultural spaces.

The second level of web learning is student writing weblogs as their learning outcome. By building their own weblogs, students can learn more about the subject by actively involved in research and collecting information, they can also acquire corresponding literacy such as information literacy and tool literacy etc. throughout the process (Ng et al., 2010).

The third level is using interactive functions of weblogs and social networking platforms for the exchange of knowledge. Students can give comments to different weblogs done by fellow classmates, so that they can exchange ideas and thus fostering collective learning among students. Social networking platforms such as facebook, can also be used as discussion platforms for students as they are mostly familiar with such web tools and can use them effectively, so the atmosphere of interactive and collaborative learning can be easily created.

Evaluation of curriculum and learning outcomes

Under an interdisciplinary curriculum, the effectiveness of teaching and learning is evaluated or assessed based on students' performances instead of only by outcome-based assessments such as examinations. These assessments can be done along the way during the teaching process on different levels.

In classroom/ school

Students are required to write self-assessments or reflections after taking the courses so that teachers can evaluate their learning outcomes. Feedbacks from student after taking integrated Cantonese opera classes showed they have changes in attitude and impression towards Cantonese opera. Following are some of the feedbacks from students:

"I used to have an impression that Cantonese opera is boring, but I later found out every bit of Cantonese opera, like movements and lyrics, are all very meaningful and are carefully structured."

"I was not familiar with Cantonese opera, and found it not interesting at all, but now I'm getting more interested in it. I think it's meaningful to develop a new interest." (Ng, Chung & Lam, 2008).

Some students present their learning outcomes in another way. Students from True Light Middle School wrote creative poetries based on their knowledge learnt from studying the famous Cantonese opera script the Reincarnation of Lady Plum Blossom (Ng & Yeung, 2010).

In cultural space

Under the different modes of assessments allowed in the new curriculum, students are no longer only assessed on written reports and examinations. For example, the Cheung Chau Buddhist Wai Yan Memorial College, encouraged students to take part in a student company programme named "Junior Achievement Hong Kong – Company Programme". The Form 4 students started a company called "Call Now Yeah" to promote Cantonese opera as local intangible cultural heritage. By selling self-designed goods and stationeries with Cantonese opera elements, students tried to introduce the art form to the public, and it was well received.

Students of the same school also showed their effective learning outcomes in actual cultural space of the Jiao Festival. The Form 5 students designed guiding brochure and touring routes for English speaking tourists in their English Language classes. After that, they participated in the Jiao-festival as tour ambassadors, using their self-designed materials, to introduce the tradition to the tourist on spot (Ng, 2013).

In Cyberspace

Students are required to scaffold their own weblogs as learning outcomes. It is more interesting for student to write on blogs then to write on paper, and they can also learn and exchange knowledge though the interactive process of getting feedbacks from other students online. This can arouse their learning interests and also can help them to acquire corresponding literacy by building the weblogs with other elements such as photos and weblog design.

The outcomes on cyberspaces were fruitful, that students did not only build the weblogs and pages as assignments, because a sustainable e-learning community is formed on the online platforms, which keeps accumulating learning outcomes and useful reference for future learners.

Conclusion

The successful experience of the project over the six years inspired other institutes/ schools to use similar models in the subjects of Applied Learning and Music, and also in the aspect of Other Learning Experiences. Education stakeholders in Hong Kong are now more confident in integrating Cantonese opera and ICH elements in formal and informal education. The Cantonese opera artists and ICH inheritors are also more willing to support similar education projects since they are now more popular and which makes them more familiar about the effect and importance of inheriting their cultural treasure to the next generation.

The influence even spread out to the tertiary education level, which more universities are willing to open courses and experiential learning programmes related to ICH for their students. The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts will be launching the first Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) Degree in Chinese Opera (Cantonese Opera Performance)/ (Cantonese Opera Music) in Hong Kong. This significant step forward shows the rapid development on preserving and inheriting the ICH in professional aspect.

The project outcomes also lead to a backwash effect to the society and government through advisory boards of related issues, making the government and the society more aware of the importance of and the effectiveness of preserving and promoting ICH through education. For example, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) launched "Let's Enjoy Cantonese Opera in Bamboo Theatre" to promote Cantonese opera, especially targeting children, through informal education in the cultural space of bamboo shed theatre.

The West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), directly financed by the government, aims at boosting cultural and entertainment establishments at Hong Kong, is the largest cultural project in the territory. The WKCD will feature a visual arts museum, theatres, concert halls and other performance venues under the management of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA).

Cantonese opera is one of the major art forms that the WKCD will emphasise. The first cultural venue of the WKCD will be the Xiqu (Chinese Opera) Centre, which will be in used in 2016. It will be equipped with performing spaces and arts education facilities, aiming to become the home base and the hub for the development and preservation of Chinese operas in the region. Before the hardware of the WKCD are finished, the WKCDA has already started to bring liveliness to the district by organizing various activities in the unconstructed area of the cultural district. One of the most successful events is the West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre in 2012 and 2013.

The WKCDA tried to bring this special cultural space to the site and introduce it to the general public before this cultural practice is about to distinct due to the modernization of villages. The events in the past two years were well received by the public and the WKCDA aims at turning it to be an important annual event in Hong Kong's cultural calendar.

The West Kowloon Bamboo theatre does not only act as a cultural space for the public to enjoy the art of Cantonese opera in its unique cultural atmosphere, it can also be transformed into a learning space for students to have experiential learning activities. The bamboo theatre in the international arts hub of WKCD, also brings the traditional art form onto the international stage and helps preserving this endangered ICH item on international level.

Let us conclude the paper using the following diagram:

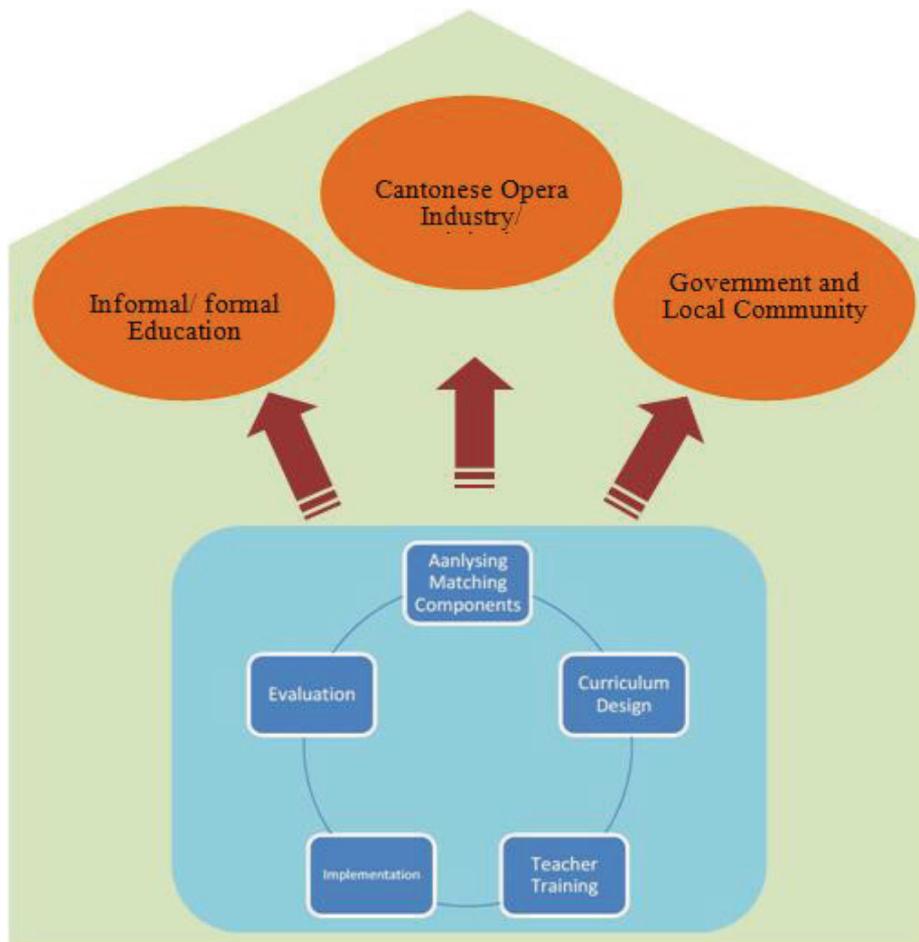


Figure 2. Integrating ICH in Education in Hong Kong.

The successful integration of ICH elements into curriculum in Hong Kong, influences the both formal and informal education sectors, Cantonese opera industry and also the government and local community, which pushes forward the development of promoting and preserving ICH in the territory. It is hope that the promotion of local ICH items is not only to the general public of Hong Kong, but also to the whole world, so that these valuable cultural treasures can be introduced to other countries.

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