

Research Paper

Investigating the Evaluations of England's Creative Partnerships and Taiwan's Local Creative Educational Programme

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Abstract: *This research aims to analyse the evaluations of two large-scale national educational programmes for promoting creativity, which are Creative Partnerships (CP) in England and the Local Creative Education Programme (LCEP) in Taiwan. By using documentary analysis, it is revealed that while there are various kinds of evaluations of CP conducted in England, fewer researchers investigated the impact or effectiveness of LCEP in Taiwan. Much evidence also showed that evaluations in England toward CP investigated from various kinds of participants' perspectives through peer-reviewed processes, while most Taiwanese studies only focused on educators' perspectives and only conducted as master-theses without rigorous reviews for ensuring quality. The findings suggest that the utilisation of systematic evaluation techniques is needed, and creativity research theories should also be employed for any future evaluations.*

Introduction: Objective and Purpose

The aim of this investigation is to analyse and criticise the evaluations of two large-scale national educational programmes for promoting creativity chosen in this research, which are *Creative Partnerships* (CP) in England and the *Local Creative Education Programme* (LCEP) in Taiwan.

Generally speaking, CP has successfully commissioned various independent organisations to conduct long-term evaluations, some government institutions such as England's Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (2006) initiated their evaluations of the programme from various aspects of the practice. In contrast, in Taiwan, although the Ministry of Education (MOE) and National Science Council (NSC) both understand the importance of establishing a systematic approach for evaluation (MOE, 2006; Kuo, 2008a; 2008b; 2009), after implementing related programmes for more than eight years, it still lacks a unified system for evaluation. Some scholars who work with Taiwan's Ministry of Education are currently planning to establish a systematic evaluation approach for the upcoming creative learning programme - the Programme of Creativity and Imagining the Future, which will launch from the academic year of 2011. Therefore there is a practical significance for conducting my research, as it can provide a map of the existing evaluations in England and Taiwan, and through the conceptualisations and comparisons of the evaluations, this paper can highlight some key findings, and therefore provide some recommendations for future evaluation.

Creativity Research

Literatures suggest that there are three major lines of research: *Personality, cognition and stimulation for creativity* (Ryhammar and Brolin, 1999; Craft, 2001). Creativity research in personality includes various aspects, such as personality assessment, personal traits and personal motivation. Compared with personality line's interests in personal characteristics, the cognition line, nonetheless, paid attention to the cognition process, such as intelligence, unconscious, and mental process. After realising the urgent priority of promoting creativity, researchers have started to ask two kinds of questions: *Can creativity be trained?*; and *How can we stimulate people's creativity?* And the stimulation for creativity line thus prospered.

More recently, some investigators such as Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 1998; 2000), Amabile (1983; 1996), and Sternberg and Lubart (1991; 1995) advocate the study of creativity in its social context, because according to them, regardless of whether creativity is considered a process or an outcome, it ultimately linked to social processes and contexts. Csikszentmihalyi (1999) asserts that creativity can be best understood with linking to social processes and contexts. In Csikszentmihalyi's *System Model of Creativity*, creativity is a product of the dynamic interaction among three dimensions: the *individual*, the *domain*, and the *field* (see Figure 1).

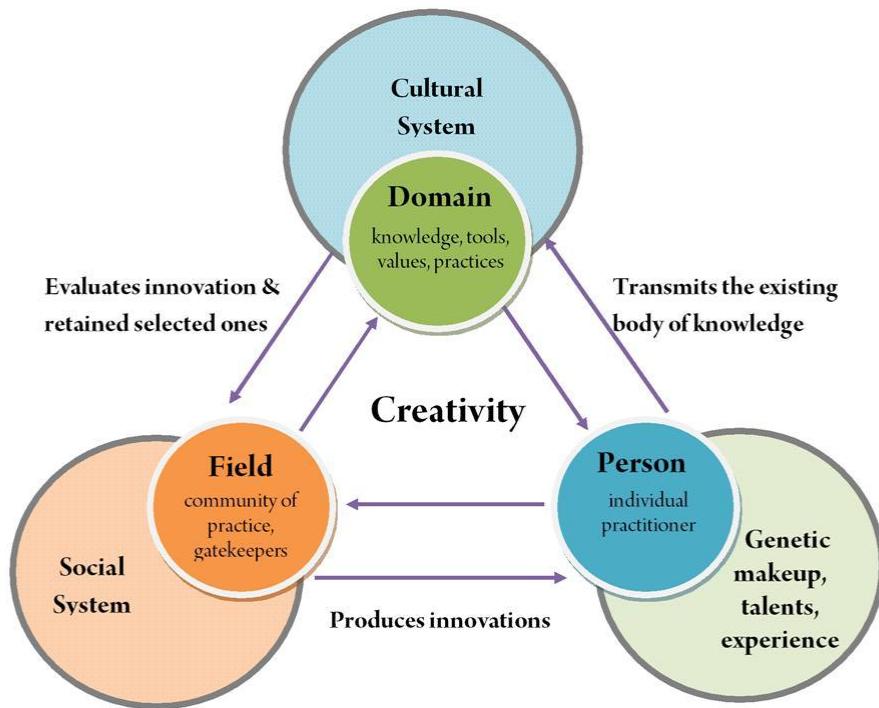


Figure 1. Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) System Model of Creativity

In education, Csikszentmihalyi and Wolfe (2000) advocate the utilisation of the system model for creativity in education. In schooling, the three dimensions are student (an *individual*), material or curriculum (the *domain*), and teacher (the *field*), and their interplay influence the production of creativity (see Figure 2). In the following paper I will thus use their theory as the analysis framework.

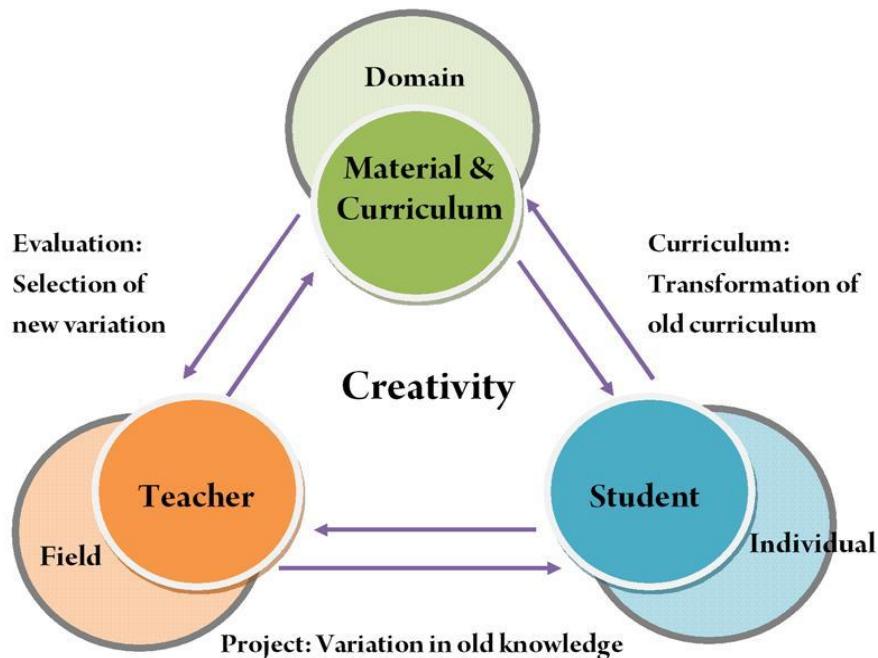


Figure 2. Csikszentmihalyi and Wolfe's (2000) Systems Perspective for Creativity in Education

Methodology

The main research method used in this research is documentary analysis. In total, 35 articles are selected from databases such as EBSCO, APA PsycNet, Google Scholar, as well as from the CP website (<http://www.creative-partnerships.com/>) based on searching for articles that have *evaluation*, *effectiveness*, *impact*, and *CP* or *LCEP* in their titles. The articles or documents all stated clearly about their purpose, utilisation of methodology, and their assessment or criteria for evaluating the impact / effectiveness of creative learning programmes. Among all the chosen articles, 24 articles were reviewed, 18 were on CP, and 6 were on LCEP.

Evaluations of CP

The evaluations of CP are selected from online resources, including EBSCO, APA PsycNet, Google Scholar, as well as the CP website. Subsequently this study analyses the evidence or documents through rigorous reviews and are summarised under the respective categories; altogether, 16 studies and 2 current evaluations are considered as existing evidence.

It is revealed that in education, the utilisation of a *systematic approach* for evaluating is crucial (Scheerens, Glas and Thomas, 2003). Ofsted (2006) clearly recommends CP to develop a systematic approach to monitoring its implementation. Until today, no evaluation of CP has used the systematic approach that I have outlined above, which relies on multiple sources of information, the accountability of evidence, and mostly, an input through output model is commended (*ibid*, 2003). Furthermore, although recent studies of creativity have focused on systems approaches, which explore creativity in a social environment, most researchers tend to focus on person and process rather than the social context (Craft, 2001). Most evaluation investigations do not adopt creativity research theories for evaluation and none of the studies attempted to use a systematic approach.

Secondly, although it is recognised among evaluators that there is a need for “a common language and set of indicators” that would serve to accurately define CP’s impact (Sefton-Green, 2007, p 2-6; Parker, 2007, p 1; Ofsted, 2006, p 18-19), only NFER (2006) and Holland (2009) had attempted to establish education indicators. There are some weaknesses of these two projects, such as their indicators merely come from the political expectation, it lacks of a systematic creativity theory support.

Thirdly, it has been noted that an assessment for creative learning will help students enhance the quality of their learning (Ferrari, Cachia and Punie, 2009). For example, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999) asserted that if we support the teaching of creativity, we shall also assess it. Teaching and learning are often shaped around what is required from examinations. The House of Commons (2008) also claimed, “Developing new methods of assessing incremental progress is an urgent priority, but currently no-one appears to be taking this forward”. Although Pringle and Harland (2008) have examined the creative learning process, there is no formal assessment for creative learning which has been developed in that research.

Fourthly, Abma and Schwandt (2005) assert that the relationship between evaluation and politics is always contested. A common assumption is that politics is about power, and the power always lets evaluation practice and its results be implicated in the political arena of bargaining, negotiating, and deal making. Nathan (2008) also claims that much policy research—especially that related to evaluating the impacts of public programmes—is conducted on a contractual basis for government. In this circumstance, the researcher’s status as “employee” of the research organisation may affect the reliability of the results. Nonetheless, we find that governments sponsored most of the evaluations for CP. Some of the studies would be influenced by undesirable or unconscious politics intention.

With regard to the methodological aspects of CP evaluations, these studies investigated from different perspectives, including teachers, students, creative practitioners and creative industries. Large-scale evaluations give us a very broad view of CP impact of different factors. NFER (2006; 2008b) surveyed more than 4000 students in order to invest the changes of pupils’ academic achievements and mental status, including their GCSE / GNQV achievements, their attitudes, their confidence and self-esteem. NFER (2008a) provided the statistical analyses of the changes of students’ attendance and exclusion rates. Bruns Owen Partnerships (BOP) work in 2006 led us to understand the relationships between CP, creative practitioners’ income, business, and local economy.

In small scale studies which tracked progression in creative learning, we see a variety of interests among different researchers. For example, Craft, Cremin, Burnard and Chappell (2007) focus on specific subjects’ capacities (music and writing) and use the objectives stated in the NACCCE report to inform the analytical framework. The research investigates pupils’ capacities for imaginative activities and utilised originality and value to evaluate pupils’ musical and writing compositions. It is surprising that among all of the studies, this is the only investigation that regarded creativity as a domain-specific capacity. Others, on the other hand, always considered creativity as domain-general ability, thus rather than paying attention to a specific subject, they preferred to look at the changes of school culture or educational pedagogies, and some even tried to categorise different models of practice (eg, Pringle and Harland, 2008).

Evaluations of LCEP

This study attempted to search evaluation articles on LCEP from online resources, including EBSCO, APA PsycNet and Google Scholar. However, I did not find any results. Therefore, in order to find any evaluation related articles of LCEP, I searched for articles in the Electronic

Theses and Dissertation System in National Central Library of Taiwan. In total, 5 master's theses were found. One evaluation checklist for LCEP in 2006 provided by Taiwan's MOE is also discussed.

Reviewing the existing studies, the first concern is on the quality of the studies. It is surprising to note that all of the studies were master's theses, and have not been peer-reviewed. Thus the qualities of the investigations are doubtful. This might be because all of the studies were written in Chinese, and therefore that there are fewer opportunities for these studies to be refereed by international scholars.

Secondly, it is evident that in education, the utilisation of systematic approach for evaluating is crucial. Only Kuo's (2007) study utilised systematic approach to conduct a large-scale evaluation. Kuo adapted from CIPP (Context, Input, Process and Product) framework to create an AIPO (Awareness, Input, Process and Outcome) model with indicators for the evaluation. However, although this research provides a systematic evaluation framework with accountable indicators / variables, Kuo did not provide clear definition and classification of the four categories of indicators. Hence, some indicators could be classified into more than one category.

Thirdly, in the evaluation checklist provided by the MOE for LCEP in 2006, it was found that the government put heavy pressure on the counties / cities, as well as schools to produce 'creative outcomes'. For example, in the checklist, there were some key evaluation questions, including: *How many counties / cities involved in the programme? How many directors of the educational bureaus participated in? How much money provided by the government? How much money subsidised by counties / cities themselves? How many teachers and students involved in the programme?*

Other interesting findings are: Taiwanese investigators preferred to adopt scholars' creativity theories to conduct research and to identify the relationships between several variables. However, the investigations focus only on the examination of theories, but not real evaluation of the implementation of LCEP. Another issue is that the nurturing of creativity in education is not only the responsibility of teachers, it relies on the collaborations of different stakeholders, including teachers, parents, partners, creative practitioners, and students. However, all studies only took teachers or educators' perspectives into consideration. Therefore, these studies could not contribute to draw a comprehensive picture of the implementation from various perspectives.

In England, there are various existing and ongoing evaluations, and the evaluations lead us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of CP. Most important of all, these studies investigated from different perspectives, including teachers, students, creative practitioners, creative industries, and economies. All the Taiwanese studies focused on only teachers or educators.

In England, a lack of systematic evaluation is apparent from the studies, and no study utilised a more current framework from creativity research, such as theories of Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 1998; 2000) or Amabile (1983; 1996), to investigate the impacts from social context. Moreover, most studies were sponsored by the government, thus the objectivity of the studies could be in doubt. Furthermore, a development of indicators, which is supported by theoretical research and policy aims, is lacking.

The Taiwanese studies also have some drawbacks, primarily related to the fact that they are almost all master's theses, and therefore not subject to peer-review. The quality may thus be doubtful. And an evaluation method that is supported by both creativity research background and educational evaluation framework is needed.

Conclusion

Creativity has received increased attention and this has resulted in several education programmes aiming to promote creativity. With regard to the evaluations of CP and LCEP, while CP's evaluations investigated from different perspectives through peer-reviewed processes, most evaluations of LCEP were conducted as master-theses without rigorous reviews, and all studies merely focused on educators' perspectives.

Much evidence revealed that the utilisation of systematic evaluation is recommended, nonetheless, related studies are scant. Even though it is also important to utilise creativity research frameworks for evaluating the impacts, it is difficult to see any strong theoretical supported evaluation in England and Taiwan.

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