

Institution: University of Greenwich
Unit of Assessment: (UoA 29) – English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Shakespeare in Hong Kong
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>In collaboration with the HK Education Bureau, the British Council, theatre practitioners, teachers and school pupils and answering to their needs, <i>Shakespeare in Hong Kong</i> examined the current role and reception of the world's most studied author in order to reconfigure his work as a site for the debate of issues facing the people of Hong Kong today, thereby opening it to intercultural dialogue. The project induced policy change in the British Council's Shakespeare World Wide Classroom project as well as with the Hong Kong Education Bureau, influencing curriculum and informing cultural content regarding race, gender, sexuality, class and colonialism.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research of Adele Lee, Lecturer in English at the University of Greenwich since 2010, has looked at how people in Hong Kong encounter Shakespeare, whether perceptions of him have changed since 1997 and how the colonial legacy affects the relevance of Shakespeare to people today. Lee's research had previously shown the continued allegiance of elite Hong Kong communities to a traditional "English" version of canonical literary figures which side-lines alternative interpretations.</p> <p>As in many former British colonies, Shakespeare constituted an important component in the colonial education system in Hong Kong; knowledge of his work was compulsory for those seeking to advance to higher education, including the education of the government elite. Even after the 1997 'handover' – which resulted in significant political, social and economic changes in the territory – Shakespeare continues to play a significant role in secondary and higher education without the revision of canonical ideas about his greatness (Lee 2009; 2011). This is indicative of the wider issues involved in the so-called 'decolonisation' of the Hong Kong Chinese education system. All the research in this area highlights the need for adjustment in how Shakespeare is viewed and approached, and the uses to which his works are put in the classroom and on the stage. Lee found that the teaching of Shakespeare has not kept pace with the reforms of the Hong Kong Education Bureau since 1997 and is not meeting the Bureau's stated learning outcomes.</p> <p>Using the publications, knowledge and expertise of Lee as a starting point, this project investigated and, initially through the investigation process itself, sought to influence current attitudes to Shakespeare in Hong Kong. In January 2013, Lee visited Hong Kong to meet the Education Bureau, the British Council, theatre practitioners, and teachers and students in four schools and two universities. Through workshops, interviews, questionnaires, and classroom and theatre practice observation, attitudes were gauged and significant issues identified, including the need for new pedagogic materials appropriate for students and, crucially, teachers.</p> <p>The findings of the survey, which involved the participation of 172 students from five different institutions, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main reason for studying Shakespeare is English language acquisition • Most young people have been introduced to Shakespeare at school but only students in English-medium Band 1 (for the most academically achieving) and international schools have

Impact case study (REF3b)

Shakespeare as a compulsory, assessed element

- The main conduit for knowledge about Shakespeare is the classroom, not mainstream culture
- 87% admitted to possessing little or no sense of what the study of Shakespeare can tell them about their own society
- 70% admitted Shakespeare makes them (to varying degrees) feel 'bad', while 61% claimed Shakespeare gives them either little or no confidence to 'be who they are'.
- At university, however, most students who chose to study Shakespeare are not English Literature majors, with many coming from state schools.

3. References to the research (REF1 submitted staff in **bold**, **REF2 Output)

- 3.1 **Lee, A.** (2009). *One Husband Too Many* and the Problem of Postcolonial Hong Kong. In A. C. Y. Huang & C. S. Ross (Eds.), *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace* (pp. 195–204). Purdue University Press: West Lafayette.

Reviewed:

- a. in *ATLANTIS. Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies*. 33.2 (December 2011): 181–185
- b. by Elfman, Rose, March 2011, *Asian Theatre Journal*. 28.1 (Spring 2011): 267
- c. cited in Mark Thornton Burnett, *Shakespeare and World Cinema* (Cambridge UP, 2012).

- 3.2 **Lee, A.** (2010). "Chop-Socky Shakespeare?!": The Bard Onscreen in Hong Kong. *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 28(4), 459–480. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/shb.2010.0031>

- a. essays in this journal are double-blind peer-reviewed.

- 3.3 Website <http://blogs.gre.ac.uk/shakespeareinhongkong/> comprising Interviews, Data Analysis, Subject Discussion and Learning Sheets/Activities

4. Details of the impact

Opening out Shakespeare to the wider community

Lee's previous research had shown that Shakespeare was taught in Hong Kong as a repository of colonial tradition and appealed primarily to a small minority of elite students. This project, although new in January 2013, has generated a strong desire by local individuals and institutions to change the status quo and to open out Shakespeare as a site for cross-cultural dialogue relevant to the wider community. In particular, the HK Education Bureau has agreed to 'promote the use of materials generated by Lee in schools to meet the broad learning outcomes of our curriculum'.

Using Shakespeare as a site to debate contemporary issues

The research specific to this project has been used to raise consciousness of race, gender, sexuality, class and colonial issues. To give an example of how Shakespeare is being used to explore racism, students are asked to examine Act 3, Scene 2 of *Othello*. They are told: "Imagine this play is set in twenty-first century Hong Kong. Instead of being a 'Moor', the hero is perhaps Filipino or Pakistani. How would a native-born Hong Kong Iago, and 'gentlemen', behave around him? What would their body language and facial expressions be like? ...In other words, consider how outsiders can be treated even when they have positions of authority like Othello's."

New materials and activities

Pedagogical materials have been developed out of this research with the support of the HK

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Education Bureau and the British Council that schools, BC projects and theatre directors will use in the academic year 2013-14. They can be adjusted to meet the needs of 12-16 year olds, 16-18s and adults in Higher Education. Lee paid particular attention to low-cost, flexible activities which appeal to both non-elite and elite pupils and teachers both in schools and in theatres, to ensure multi-level engagement that will sustainably resonate beyond the classroom. *Shakespeare in Hong Kong* has therefore already influenced Honk Kong's policy on curriculum design and content and will deliver further impact when the materials are used in the academic year 2013-14.

Five themed learning sheets have been developed, primarily to help teachers answer to the recognised need in the Hong Kong classroom for:

- a more active approach to Shakespeare
- an approach anchored in local culture
- an increased openness to 'oppositional reading'

Specifically, in accord with the HK Education Bureau aims, the activities will create an inspiring learning environment and develop an education system that is rich in tradition, cosmopolitan and culturally diverse.

The impact works through three collaborative partners:

1. The Chief Curriculum Development Office for English at the Hong Kong Education Bureau

The team at the office has shared its knowledge and expertise and agrees on the need for change. It will oversee the dissemination of Lee's new materials in 2013/14. It attests to the benefits of the project in influencing the curriculum and informing cultural content.

2. The British Council (BC)

Since 2010 the BC has been running "Shakespeare: A Worldwide Classroom," a project which originated in a partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company and local theatrical company Theatre Noir. While in Hong Kong, Lee contributed to this project as part of the British Council's request that she investigate how their project could be extended. Based on the insights provided by the project, Lee produced teaching materials which the BC has agreed to adopt.

3. Theatre directors

Theatre directors in Hong Kong have tended to avoid producing Shakespeare. Already keen to address the issues highlighted by Lee's research, theatre directors involved in the BC's Shakespeare project are using Lee's materials to make the changes in attitude and strategy needed for Shakespeare to be used more effectively in Hong Kong.

Shakespeare in Hong Kong has developed a model for change which engages key partners, involves place-specific research and produces low-cost materials for sustainable dissemination. It is forming the basis of a longer term project that tests methods and methodologies for expansion to other countries and to other canonical figures beyond Shakespeare.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data concerning attitude change, as well as the data itself and the teaching materials, are available online at <http://blogs.gre.ac.uk/shakespeareinhongkong/>

- Chief Curriculum Development Officer (English), Hong Kong Education Bureau
- Assistant Manager, Education Programme, British Council
- Founder & Artistic Director, Theatre Noir Foundation
- Tang Shu-Wing, Artistic Director of Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio