

Executive Summary: Hong Kong



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This report forms part of the *Asian Conceptions of Creative Thinking* study, examining how Creative Thinking is understood, developed and applied within the Hong Kong context.

The concept was developed in 2025 through discussions between Prof Anne Bamford, Director of the International Research Agency and Lynn Yau, CEO of AFTEC in Hong Kong in 2025. Both recognised that the dominance of Western literature in research had resulted in a limited understanding of what constitutes creativity and creative thinking within an Asian context.

Funded by the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau's Art Development Matching Grants Scheme, Hong Kong became the first Asian city to undertake focus groups and surveys from 2025-26. The full Hong Kong City Report, written by Prof Bamford and administered by AFTEC, will be published in 2026.

The findings present a nuanced picture of a system that recognises the importance of Creative Thinking, yet continues to grapple with structural, cultural and practical challenges in embedding it consistently across sectors.

Overall, stakeholders strongly associate Creative Thinking with problem-solving, innovation, and adaptability. Definitions align broadly with international frameworks, particularly in emphasising originality, “thinking out of the box,” and value creation. However, local conceptions tend to prioritise practical application over artistic expression. Evaluation or critical judgement, which is commonly highlighted in Western literature, is less explicitly recognised. Creative Thinking is therefore often understood as a functional and outcome-oriented capability, rather than a holistic cognitive and expressive process.

The study identifies a clear gap between aspiration and implementation. While policy and discourse increasingly promote creativity, many respondents reported that it is “not actively developed or implemented,” or only present in limited contexts. Where it does exist, Creative Thinking is most commonly embedded within education, structured problem-solving processes, and innovation-related activities. However, it remains fragmented, often dependent on individual initiative rather than supported through coherent, system-wide strategies.

Education is both a key enabler and a constraint. Although reforms and initiatives are introducing interdisciplinary and creative approaches, the system remains heavily influenced by examination-driven practices, rigid curricula, and Confucian cultural values that emphasise hierarchy and conformity. These factors may discourage questioning, risk-taking, and independent thinking. At the same time, creativity is often more visible in grassroots, entrepreneurial and cultural sectors, highlighting a disconnect between institutional frameworks and the dynamic creativity present in the wider community.

The findings point to significant opportunities for Hong Kong to strengthen its Creative Thinking ecosystem. Key recommendations include:

- **System-wide integration:** Embed Creative Thinking as a core capability across education, policy, and industry, moving beyond isolated initiatives.
- **Education reform:** Shift towards more flexible, student-centred learning models that prioritise inquiry, exploration, and interdisciplinary practice.
- **Teacher development:** Invest in training to support creative pedagogies and build confidence in facilitating open-ended learning.
- **Cultural shift:** Promote greater acceptance of risk-taking, experimentation and diverse forms of creativity across society.
- **Cross-sector collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships between education, business and the creative and cultural industries to align learning with real-world applications.
- **Policy and funding support:** Increase sustained investment and strategic coordination to support long-term development.

In conclusion, Hong Kong demonstrates excellence in innovation, and both strong potential and clear constraints in Creative Thinking. By aligning policy, practice, and cultural attitudes, the city is well positioned to develop a model of Creative Thinking that is both locally grounded and globally influential.

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