

**Abstract of thesis entitled:** The development of a framework for the evaluation of a self-access language learning centre

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**Abstract:**

The study aims to bring together theory, methodology and practice from the fields of programme evaluation, educational evaluation, English language learning and teaching, learner independence and self-access learning. These, together with research findings from the data collected in the study, have been used to develop a framework for the evaluation of self-access language learning centres.

Such a framework is needed for the following reason. Evaluation is recognised as a central element in the development of any educational entity and there is at present no research-based construct designed for the evaluation of self-access language learning centres. This framework has been developed for the evaluation of Hong Kong self-access centres but it is intended that its construct should be sufficiently generative to be applied to other self-access language learning contexts, and sufficiently dynamic to develop in the light of on-going changes within the field.

**Research objectives & research questions**

The study has five main objectives. These are to:

- i) identify the defining pedagogical and systemic characteristics of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre;
- ii) identify potential rationale, content and methodology for the evaluation of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre;
- iii) examine existing evaluation constructs for elements that could contribute to the development of self-access language learning centre evaluation;
- iv) propose a framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre;
- v) suggest areas for further research to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the evaluation of self-access language learning centres.

## **Research approach & methodology**

The main emphasis is on qualitative research methodology based on naturalistic enquiry. *Grounded Theory* is the underpinning methodology. Grounded Theory is defined as “an initial, systematic discovery of the theory from the data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 3) which “emerges from the bottom up...from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are inter-connected” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:3).

## **Data collection**

The sixteen study participants were selected as fulfilling the roles of various types of Hong Kong self-access language learning centre stakeholders. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and post-interview e-mail questionnaires.

## **Results**

As a result of the study findings, and derived from the data obtained from the data collection process introduced above, I have developed two theoretical constructs: a self-access language learning centre "mapping" and an evaluation framework.

In the light of the lack of a theoretically-informed description of what actually constitutes a self-access language learning centre, I identify the need for a descriptive construct that I refer to using the metaphor "mapping". It is intended that a mapping of a particular centre then provides the focus upon which an evaluation can be based.

The second construct is a multi-level evaluation framework which has three foci: decisions to be made, actions to be taken and issues specific to the evaluation context. Central to the evaluation framework is the four-stage evaluation process which consists of : mapping the target centre, planning the evaluation itself, conducting the evaluation and then conducting a meta-evaluation.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). Qualitative Research for Education. MA, USA: Allyn & Bacon

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. New York: Aldine Publishing.