



# Content Selection and Organization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: The development of 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies

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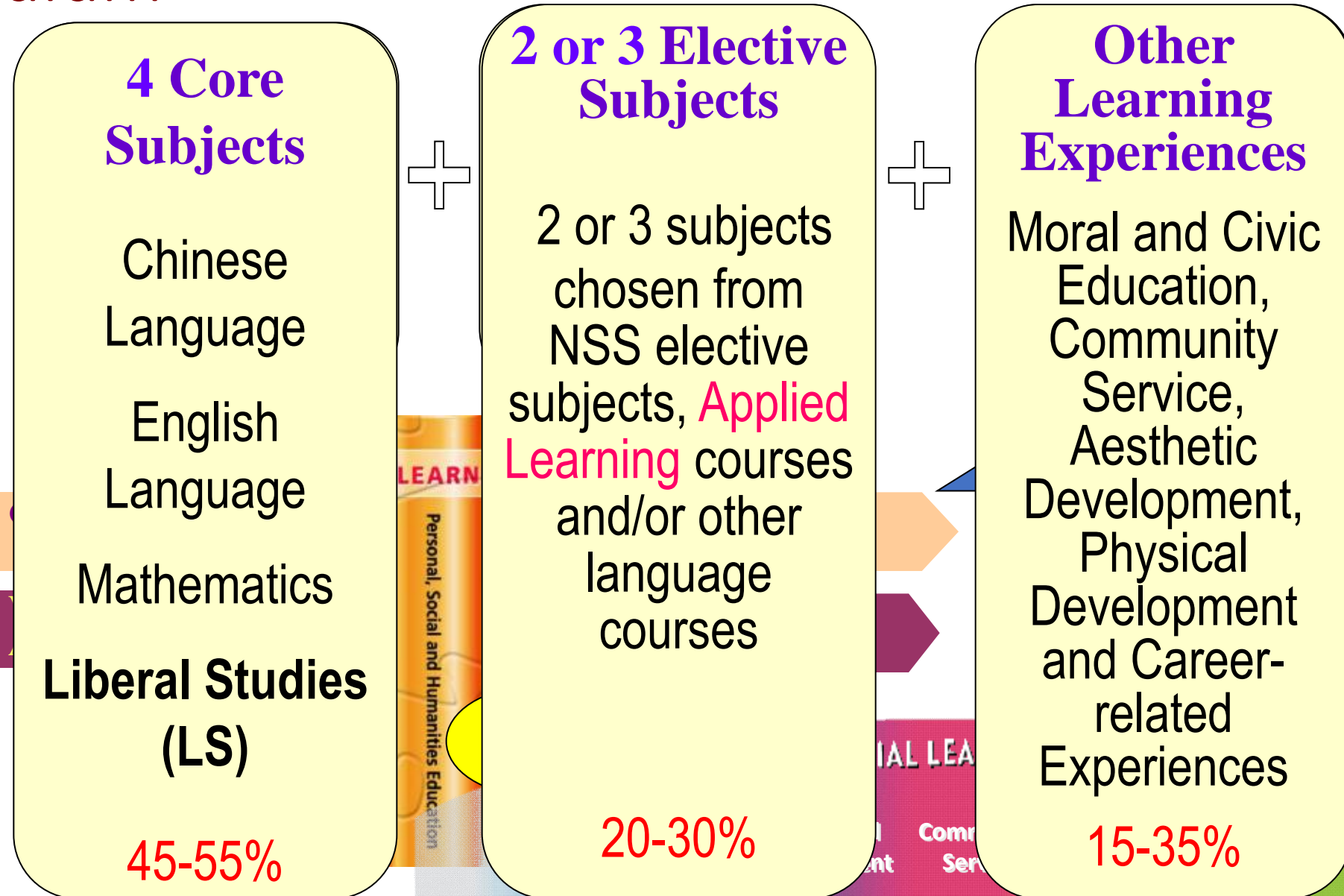
# Global trends in curriculum policy and practice

- A shift in curriculum policy from a concern with knowledge content taught in school to a preoccupation with 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies
- A move to bypass formalized curriculum planning – centring on knowledge selection and organization for teaching and learning in school – in favour of developing competency frameworks
- The rhetoric of the knowledge society and digital transformation that eschews knowledge in favour of generic competencies
- ‘Learnification’ the global shift towards talking about learning rather than education—in which questions about the purposes and content of school education virtually disappear (Biesta, 2012)

## 21<sup>st</sup> century design (curriculum integration) – themes/issues-based content selection and organization of a school subject

- The central purpose of a school subject is the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies such as critical thinking, adaptability and creativity, innovation and learning to learn.
- Future oriented issues or themes (sustainability, citizenship, globalization) provide the essential starting point and frame of reference for selecting and organizing content.
- Content is drawn from multiple subjects and a variety of sources. (The traditional subject boundaries are completely dissolved.)
- Support experiential learning, inquiry learning, constructivist teaching and learning, etc.

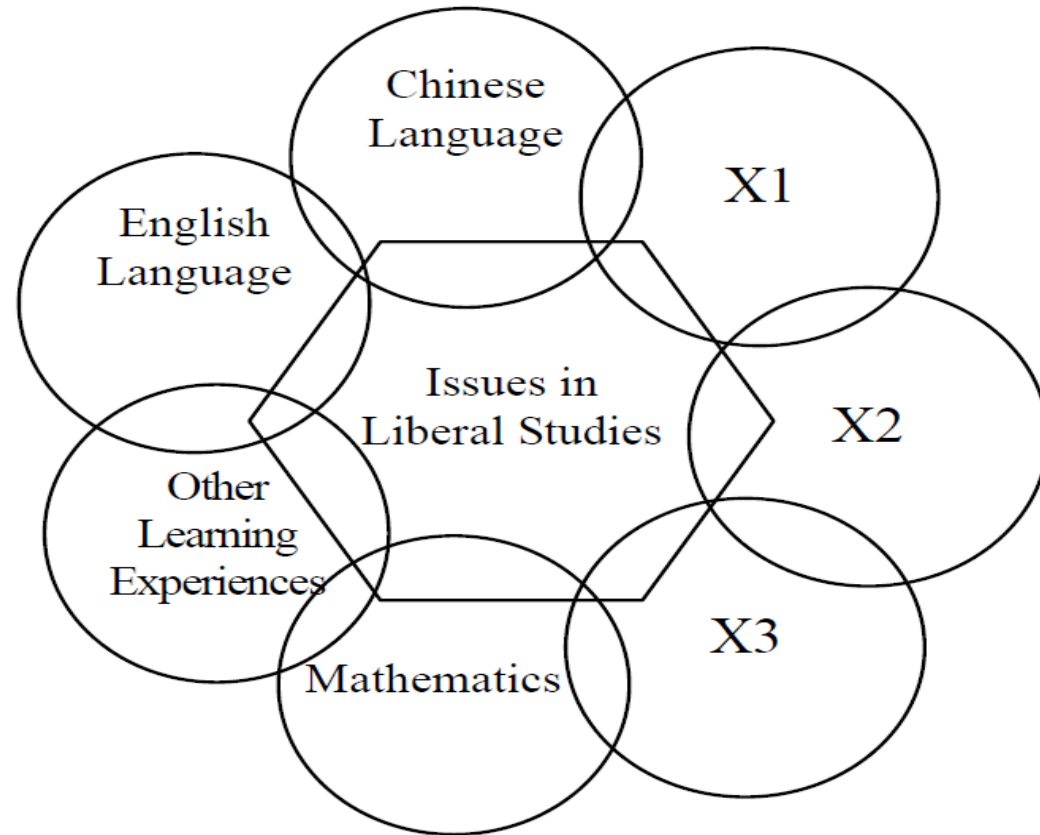
# Liberal Studies and the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum



# Liberal Studies (LS) as an integrated subject

Liberal Studies uses knowledge and perspectives from other subjects to study contemporary issues so that students have the opportunity to:

- connect knowledge and concepts across different disciplines
- expand their perspectives beyond single disciplines
- study contemporary events not covered in single disciplines



## Liberal Studies (LS) as an integrated subject: themes/issues-based content selection and organization

- The central purpose of LS to broaden knowledge bases, enhance social awareness, and develop critical thinking, adaptability, and lifelong learning capacities—21<sup>st</sup> century competencies
- Content is organized around future oriented themes and issues
  - Six modules (1) personal development and interpersonal relationships; (2) contemporary Hong Kong society; (3) modern China; (4) globalization; (5) public health; and (6) energy technology and the environment
  - Each module is organized around themes, each of which is framed in terms of key issues and related issues for inquiry.
- Content is drawn from other school subjects and students' learning experiences.
- Progressive pedagogies: issue-based inquiry, cross-curricular approaches, independent enquiry study (IES)



Table 1: Content selection, organization, and framing in the module *Public Health*

<b>Theme 1: Understanding of public health</b>	
<b>Key issue</b>	How is people's understanding of disease and public health affected by different factors?
<b>Related issues</b>	How did people understand the causes of diseases in the past? Was their understanding scientific? How is people's understanding of health affected by economic, social and other factors? How is people's understanding of public health affected by the development of science and technology? In what ways is people's understanding of public health affected by health information, social expectations, personal values and beliefs in different cultures?

# 21<sup>st</sup> century design (content selection and organization): issues and problems

- Ignore the development of intellectual and moral powers (capacities, ways of thinking, understanding worlds), self-awareness, liberty and freedom, sensibilities, etc.
- Downplay the task of transmitting disciplinary knowledge.
- Fail to see the educational 'power' or potential of disciplinary knowledge in the development of human powers and human flourishing.



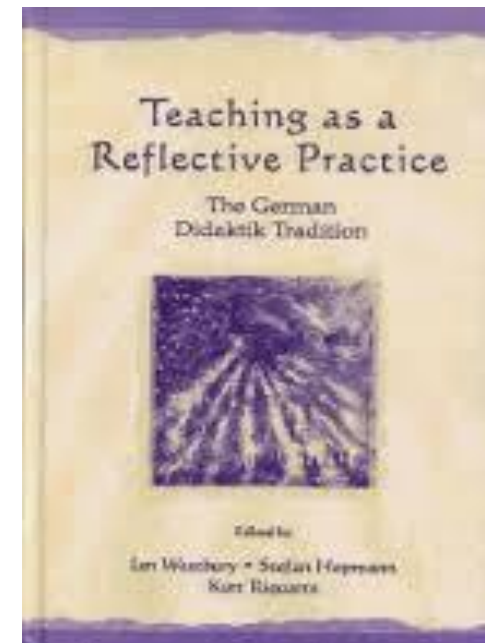
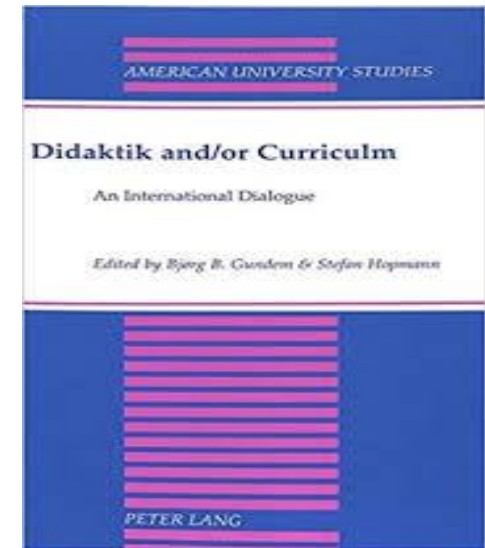
# 'Powers' of disciplinary knowledge (Young, 2013; Young and Muller, 2013)

- Disciplinary knowledge is 'powerful knowledge' because the acquisition of this knowledge allows students to move beyond their particular experience, envisage alternatives, imagine the unimaginable, and participate in social and political debates...
- Access to powerful knowledge is an entitlement for *all* students—and a social justice issue
- The central purpose of schooling is to pass on a body of disciplinary knowledge that students cannot acquire at home
  - A task that is vital for 'reproducing human societies' and 'providing the conditions which enable them to innovate and change' (Young, 2009b: 10).



# *Bildung*-centred *Didaktik* as a viable alternative to 21<sup>st</sup> century design

- A tradition or way of thinking about curriculum, teaching and learning that is 'virtually unknown' in the English-speaking or Anglo-Saxon curriculum tradition (Westbury, 2000).
- *Didaktik* can go far back to ancient times (Plato: Meno), and was formally established around 1800 in Germany, strongly influenced by Comenius, Herbart, Schleiermacher, and many others
- *Bildung*-centred *Didaktik* as the core of German *Didaktik*, with three basic canons
  - The concept of *Bildung* and its attendant theory of knowledge
  - A theory of content
  - Teaching as a student-content meeting



# What is *Bildung*?

- The central purpose of education as self-formation, the development of intellectual and moral powers, the cultivation of sensibility, self-awareness, liberty and freedom, and dignity of the individual (Hopmann, 2007; Von Humboldt, 2000).
- To achieve *Bildung*, the individual seeks to 'grasp as much [the] world as possible' and to make contribution to the humankind through developing his or her own unique self, intellectual and moral powers. (Von Humboldt, 2000)



Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 – 1835)

# A theory of knowledge for *Bildung*

- The world is processed by human thought (humanities and sciences) and actions (Lüth, 2000).
- There are several forms of knowledge – historical, social, linguistic, aesthetic, mathematical, physical – each of which gives us access to a particular aspect of reality, the encounter with each of which can lead to the cultivation of a particular kind of human powers.
- Disciplinary knowledge is an indispensable resource for *Bildung*. The role of knowledge includes:
  - a means of expressing, exercising and intuiting powers;
  - a potential stimulus for human development;
  - a counterpart to mark out the boundaries of the individual; and
  - a means of objectivizing ideas and powers' (Lüth, 2000, p. 77).

# Content selection and organization: a theory of content *Bildung*

- Contents of education (*Bildungsinhalt*) result from a deliberative process of selection of the wealth of academic knowledge, experience and wisdom for *Bildung* – or in terms of educational potential
- Educational substance (*Bildungsgehalt*) that determines the educational potential of content
- The elemental (*das Elementare*) -- *reduced* educational content in the form of penetrating cases, concepts, methods.
- The fundamental (*das Fundamentale*) – the *primordial* experience with content, or the potential impact of the reduced content on the perspectives, modes of thinking, dispositions and ways of being-in-the-world of individual students( Krüger, 2008).



Wolfgang Klafki  
(1927--2015)



# Teaching as meeting between content and learner

- Teaching as a ‘fruitful encounter’ between content and the learner (Klafki, 2000)—rather than a mere acquisition of academic knowledge.
- Instructional planning entails a *didaktik* analysis to identify the essential elements of content and unpack their meaning and significance for *Bildung*, with particular students in mind (Klafki, 2000).
- The teacher unlocks the educational potential of content by reducing content to ‘powerful’, elemental categories (cases, concepts, methods) and open up manifold opportunities for students to cultivate intellectual, moral and social powers.



# Challenge 1 – Restating *Biluding* and its attendant theory of knowledge

- An image of an educated person with fully developed powers
  - What does it mean to be an active individual – an intellectual and moral agent – who is actively participating in and interacting with the current social, cultural and physical world characterised by globalisation, rapid technological advancement, an ever-increasing rate of information exchange, and mobility?
  - What are the intellectual, moral, social, civic, aesthetic, technological and (even) physical powers such an educated person needs to possess? (Deng, 2018)
- A theory of knowledge for the cultivation of powers
  - What are the contributions of various forms of disciplinary knowledge to the development of human powers?
  - In addition to academic, disciplinary knowledge, what are the other forms of knowledge that could contribute to the cultivation of human powers for all students?
  - How would all these knowledge forms be re-conceived in ways that are productive of the cultivation? (Deng, 2018)

## Challenge 2 – Content selection and origination for *Bildung* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

- How would various kinds of knowledge be selected, translated and organised into the content of the curriculum geared towards cultivating human powers for all students?
- What are the differences and relationships between school subjects and academic disciplines?
  - School subjects and academic disciplines are essentially continuous
  - School subjects and academic disciplines are basically discontinuous
  - School subjects and academic disciplines are different but related (Stengel, 1997; Deng, 2012).
- How would a piece of content be ascertained in terms of educational potential for the cultivation of human powers?

## Challenge 3—Teaching as a vehicle for the cultivation of powers through fruitful encounters with content

- How would a teacher interpret and enact the content of a school subject (traditional or integrated) in ways that allow knowledge content to open up manifold opportunities for all students to cultivate human powers?
- How should we theorise the kind of *Didaktik* thinking that undergirds their interpretations and enactments?
- What do teachers need to know and be able to do in order to teach for the cultivation?