



葉劉淑儀議員辦事處
Office of Hon. IP LAU Suk Yee, Regina

立法會教育事務委員會
何秀蘭主席

尊敬的何主席：

對新高中學制通識教育科的意見

在新高中學制下，通識教育科將會成為高中 4 個核心科目之一，本人對此表達以下憂慮：

- 一、 刊登於 The Economist 13/12/2008 的一篇文章指出（請參閱附件），英國就開辦通識教育科引起極大爭議，教育界人士擔心通識科把基本科目融合為幾個學習領域，會令學生專科學識的水平下降，數個專科學會也對此極為關注。正如香港同樣有教育界人士質疑，開辦通識教育科會令學生“通通不識”，引致他們的知識水平下降。雖然察悉教育局開辦通識教育科已經事在必行，但本人極為擔憂學生的專科水平會因此受到負面影響。
- 二、 新高中學制把中國歷史列為選修科目，違背加強國民教育的目標。沒有一個先進國家會不重視自己的歷史，例如美國國史是美國學校的必修學科。國民對自己國家的歷史、文化和傳統知識不充分，絕對會影響其對國家的感情，很多外國人的愛國情懷源於他們愛自己語言和文化的感情，以及對國家歷史的了解。因此，我建議當局把通識教育科內容微調，把世界歷史融合於通識課程並列之為選修科目，另把中國歷史列為必修的核心科目。



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三、 根據政府資料，通識教育科旨在幫助學生“成為獨立思考者……；培養與終身學習有關的能力，包括 Critical Thinking，創造力，解決問題能力……”。但有教育專家向本人指出，新科目考試仍會沿用舊有的評卷方法，以標準答案為依歸，在這情況下真正獨立思考、擁有分析能力的學生不會得到優良成績，完全違背了這個科目的宗旨。

希望主席會同意就這些憂慮在教育事務委員會會議上討論。

教育事務委員會委員

二〇〇九年三月二十七日

Primary schooling

Please, sir, what's history?

The Economist Dec 13th 2008

A missed chance to make hard choices about what children should learn



IF YOU are in your 40s and British, it is quite possible that your spelling is an embarrassment. You may never have been taught the distinction between “there”, “their” and “they’re”, or perhaps even your times tables. If you moved house during your primary years you may have entirely missed some vital topic—joined-up writing, say. And you may have struggled to learn to read using the “initial teaching alphabet”, a concoction of 40 letters that was supposed to provide a stepping stone to literacy but tripped up many children when they had to switch to the standard 26.

Those days of swivel-eyed theorising and untrammelled experimentation—or, as the schools inspectorate put it at the time, “markedly individual decisions about what is to be taught”—ended in 1988 with the introduction of a national curriculum. But though that brought rigour and uniformity, it also created an unwieldy—and unworldly—blueprint for the Renaissance Child. Schools have struggled to fit it all in ever since. Now, 20 years later, the primary curriculum is to be cut down.

In January the government commissioned Sir Jim Rose, a former chief inspector of primary schools, to trim ten existing required subjects to give extra space to computing skills and to accommodate two new compulsory subjects: a foreign language and the now-optional “personal, social, health and economic education” (eating fruit and veg, refraining from hitting one’s classmates and much more). On December 8th he published his interim report—and many fear that, as well as losing fat, education will see a lot of meat go too.

Sir Jim proposes merging the subjects into six “learning areas”. History and geography will become “human, social and environmental understanding”; reading, writing and foreign languages, “understanding English, communication and languages”. Physical education, some bits of science and various odds and ends will merge into “understanding physical health and well-being”, and so on. His plan would “reduce prescription”, he says, and, far from downgrading important ideas, “embed and intensify [them] to better effect in cross-curricular studies”.

Learned societies are livid. "An erosion of specialist knowledge," harrumphs the Royal Historical Society; its geographical counterpart is worried about "losing rigour and the teaching of basics". Even those with no brief for a particular subject are concerned. Pouring 12 subjects into six "learning areas" is not the same as slimming down; if the curriculum is to become more digestible something must be lost, and just what is being glossed over. "Wouldn't it be better to address the question of subjects directly—which ones, for how long and what to specify?" asks Alan Smithers, of Buckingham University.

One answer is that making hard choices openly would provoke complaints that the curriculum was being dumbed down. Attempts to cut it outright would run counter to powerful forces, as politicians look to schools to solve myriad social ills—from obesity to teenage pregnancy to low turnout in elections—and to pick up the slack left by poor parenting. But Sir Jim's prescription indicates more than the difficulty of his job. He has been asked to solve tricky educational conundrums before and, every time, he has managed to catch the prevailing political wind.

In 2006 he reviewed reading tuition, and plumped for the back-to-basics "synthetic phonics"—to the delight of a government already mustard-keen on the method. In 1999 he answered "no" to the charge that rising exam results were a sign of less exacting exams rather than of better teaching. In 1991 the Tory government of the day was equally thrilled to be told that primary education had become too progressive.

This time, too, Sir Jim has captured the *Zeitgeist*. Synthesis and cross-cutting are once more fashionable in educational circles: since July 2007 England's schools have been overseen not by an education ministry but by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, which is responsible for pretty much everything to do with young people, from health to criminal justice to learning. (The three other bits of the United Kingdom—Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—go their own way on education.) Primary schools were turning away from discrete subjects even before he pronounced: a 2007 survey found a third taught mostly "themed" lessons; another 40% were planning to do so soon. Another recent review, this time of what 11-14-year-olds should learn, also plumped for more cross-curricular learning.

Many countries' curriculums consist of high-flown descriptions of the paragonic citizens that education is meant to help produce, couched in impenetrable educationese. But alongside are usually some hard facts: which textbooks to use and how many hours to devote to each topic, for example. England's lacks such a crib sheet. Schools can choose their own texts, even write their own, and apportion the school day as they please. Exams come in competing varieties from independent exam boards that must, like teachers, read between the lines to figure out what is meant to have been taught. That leaves England particularly exposed to the consequences of curricular woolliness.

Despite seeming vague, though, national curriculums do often encapsulate some aspect of national ideals. France's is explicit about the primacy of *la belle langue*; Sweden's elevates equality above all other virtues; Japan's, love of country. That these match stereotypes so well suggests that they capture a national spirit, or create it, or a bit of both—and raises a worrying question for anyone looking at England's proposed mishmash of a new curriculum.