




LTE 2023

2023.12.14

A stylized, light gray illustration of a plant with several leaves and a cluster of small, round buds or flowers, positioned on the left side of the slide against a dark gray background.

EDUCATION DISCOURSE THE EVOLUTION

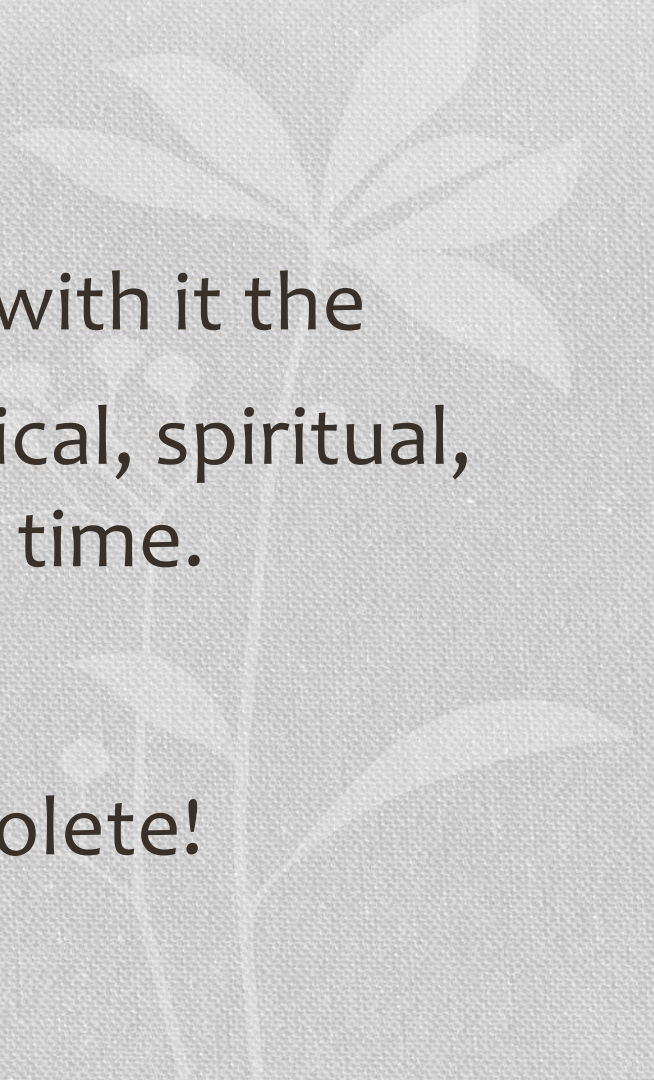
Kai-ming Cheng
Emeritus Professor
University of Hong Kong

LTE 2023
2023.12.14

Learning is a Human Distinct!

Education is NOT!

Education is a system of learning
designed by human beings
for human beings.



Education therefore carries with it the
economic, social, cultural, political, spiritual,
... underpinnings of the time.

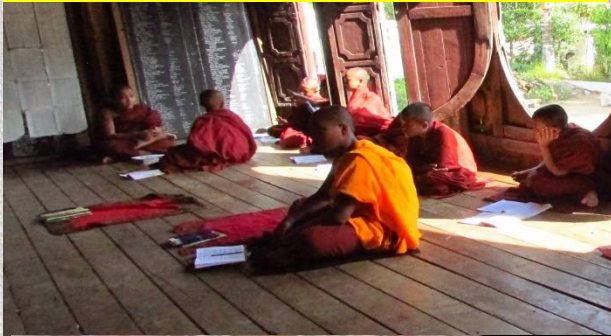
In other words,
Education could be Obsolete!



Education Discourse
in the older days ...

There were indeed schools ...

Buddhist Schools
Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia



**Religious
Discourse**

**Elite
Discourse**

**English
Public Schools**



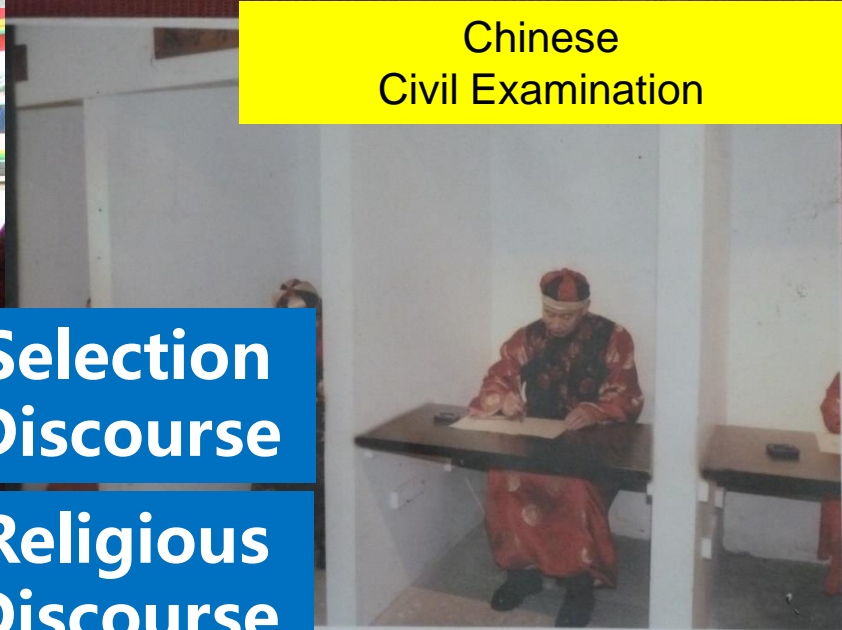
**Selection
Discourse**

**Religious
Discourse**

Madrasa
Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan,...



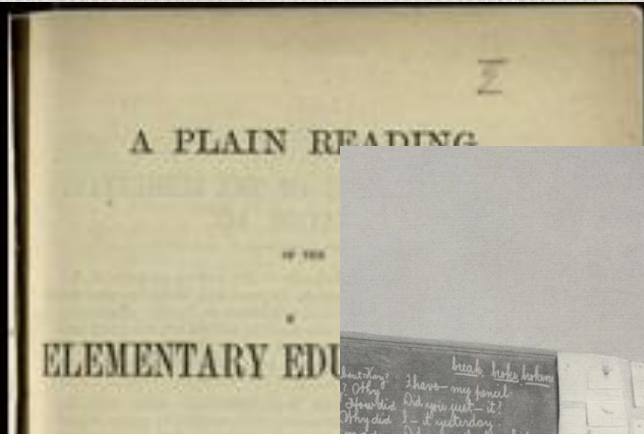
**Chinese
Civil Examination**



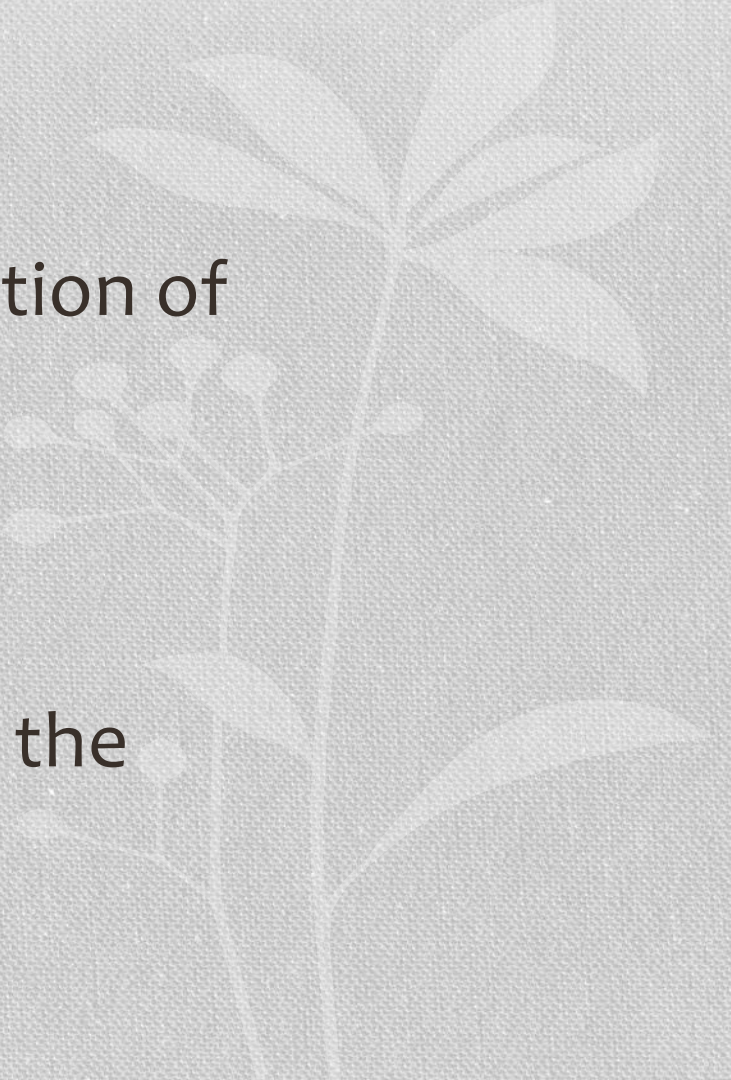
**1870 UK
Elementary
Education Act
Government
intervention
whole-society
SCHOOLING**

**Economic
Discourse**

**English businessmen:
Otherwise the British Empire
would lose its supremacy!**



The contemporary notion of
SCHOOLING
is a product
at the high-time of the
Industrial Era!

A faint, light-colored botanical illustration of a plant with several leaves and a seed pod is visible in the background on the right side of the slide.

Schools as a Production Line for classification of manpower



Charlie Chaplin Modern Times 1936



Such a Discourse
prevails over almost all systems of education.

Turning Human Beings
into
Huma Resources
Economic Discourse

1950-60

Human Capital Theory

Economic Discourse

a theoretical underpinning

“Education is an Investment”



Turn of the Century

“21 Century Skills”

further reinforcement of
the Economic Discourse

The US

21st Century Skills

Key-subjects: 3R

Learning &

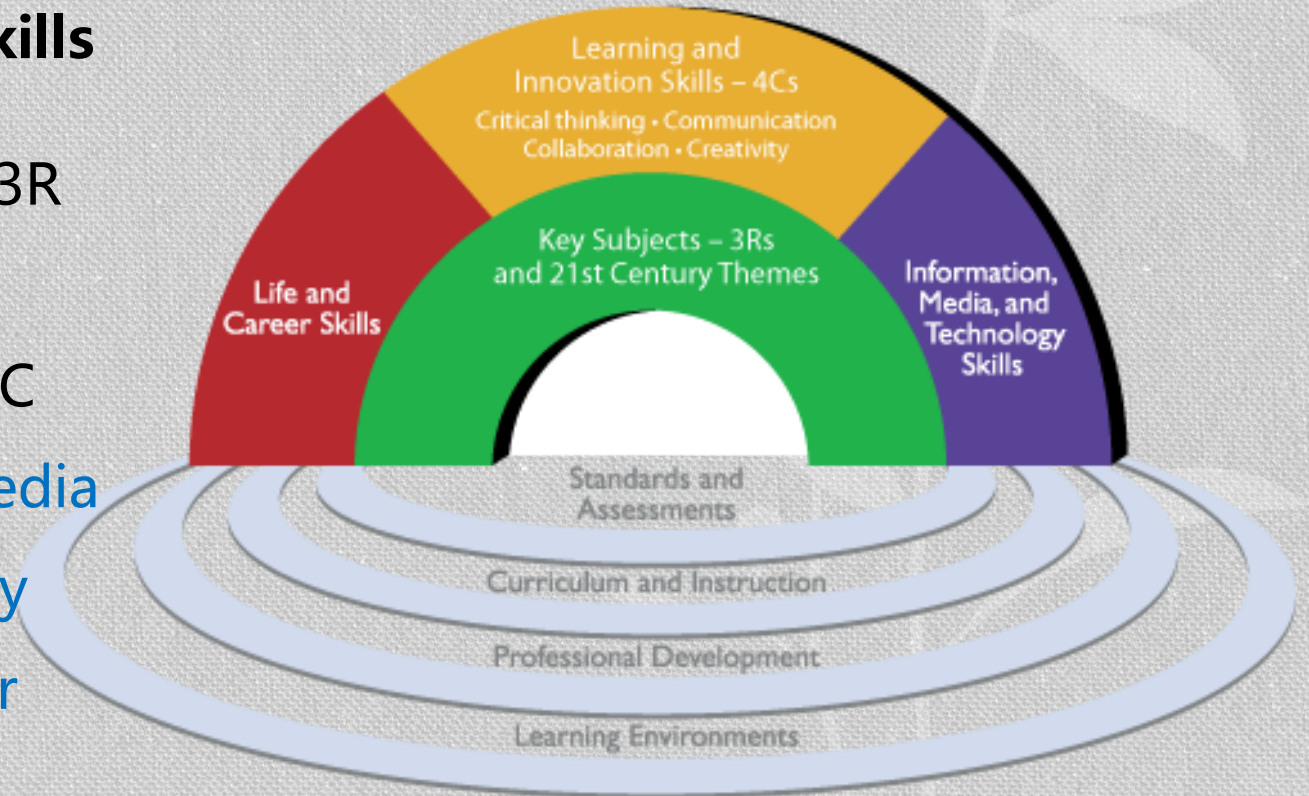
Innovation: 4C

Information, Media

& Technology

Life & Career

P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning 21st Century Student Outcomes and Support Systems



A story: **Harvard Business School**

Graduate Reunion every 5 years

1st: Polished and prosperous

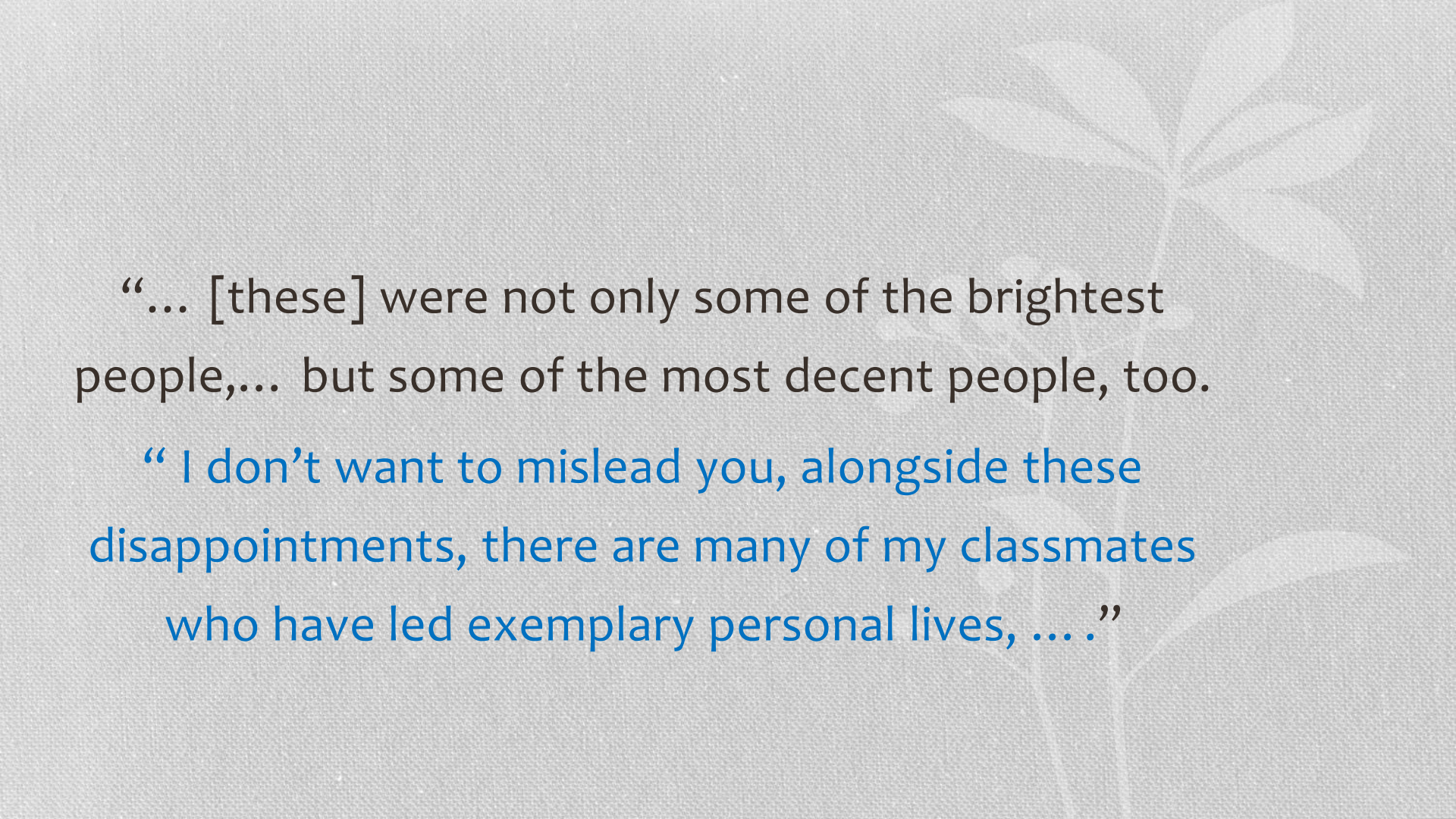
2nd: Accomplishments, unhappy, absent

3rd: Embarrassing personal lives

.....

6th: One in jail (Enron)

Clayton Christensen, *How will you measure your life?*



“... [these] were not only some of the brightest people,... but some of the most decent people, too.

“ I don’t want to mislead you, alongside these disappointments, there are many of my classmates who have led exemplary personal lives,”

美國

P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning
21st Century Student Outcomes and Support Systems

21世紀能力

關鍵能力

讀、寫、算

學習與創新能力

明辨、溝通、合作、創新

信息、媒體、科技能力

生活與職業能力

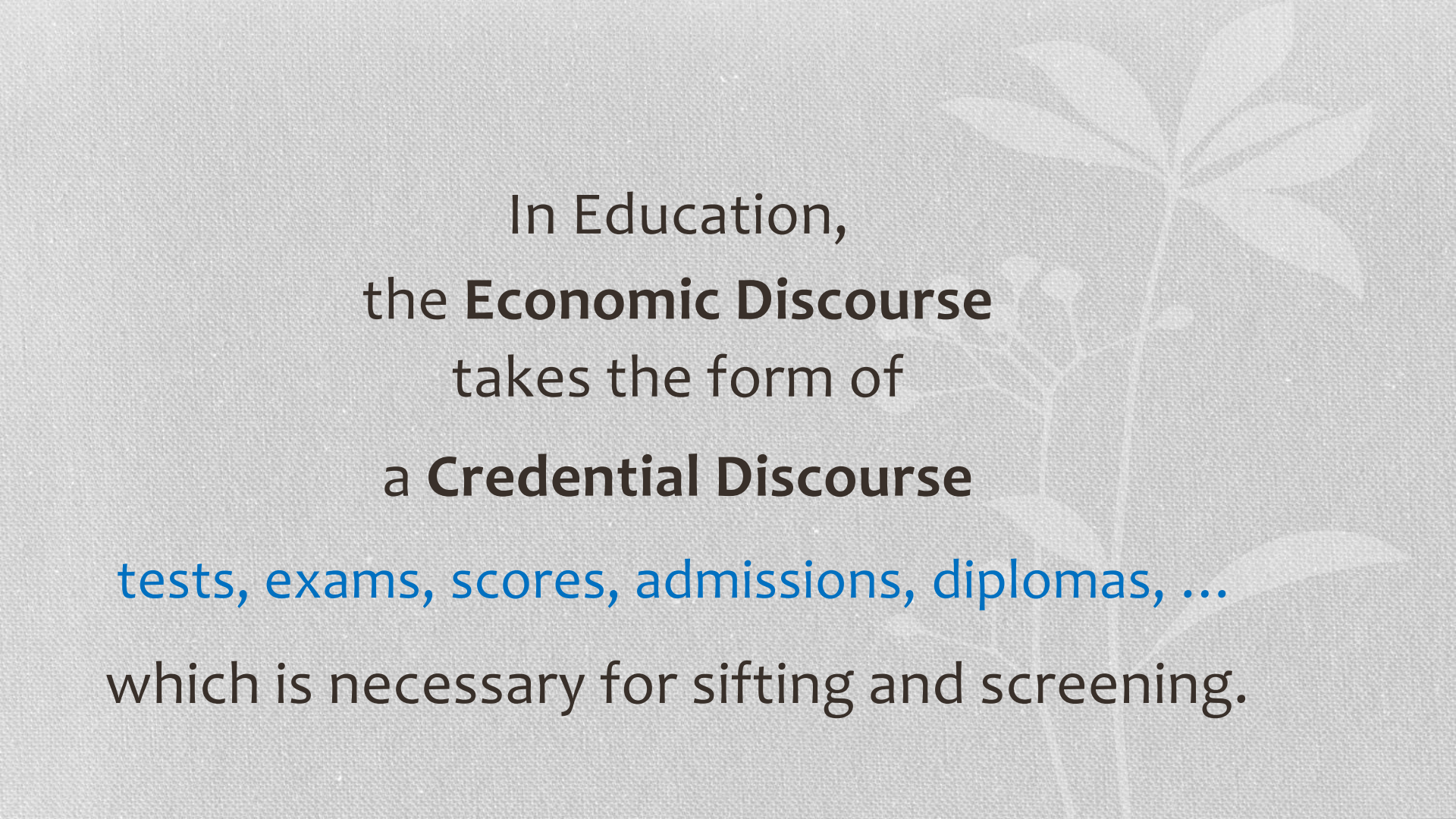
Even with all the

21st Century Skills

**there is no promise for
a meaningful life.**



Standards and Competencies
Curriculum and Instruction
Professional Development
Learning Environments



In Education,
the **Economic Discourse**
takes the form of
a **Credential Discourse**

tests, exams, scores, admissions, diplomas, ...

which is necessary for sifting and screening.

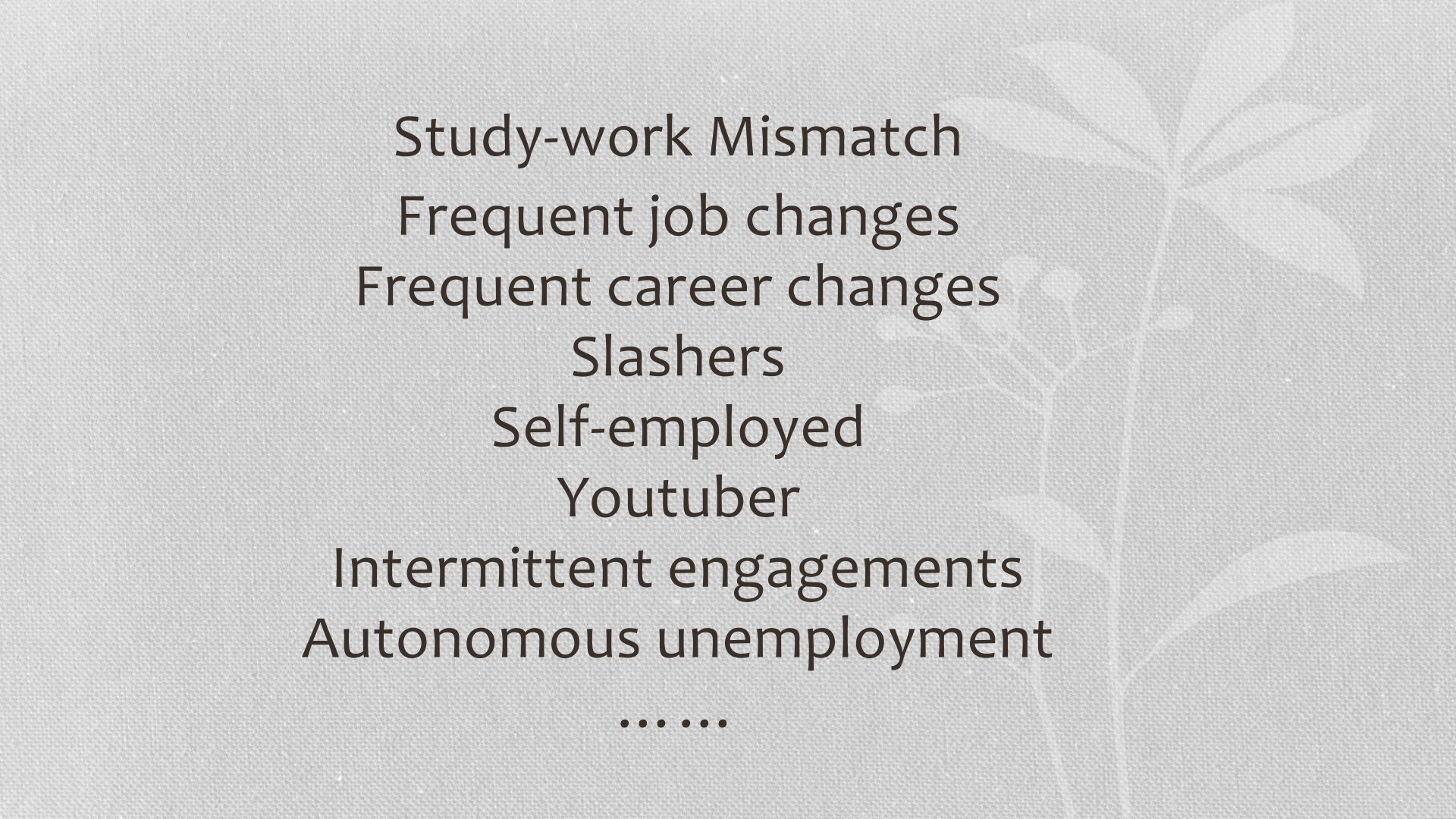
Credentials

1. prevail over entire education systems
2. often the most visible KPI in education
3. tickets for smooth sailing in society
4. affecting students' self-values

.....

However,
credentials are facing challenges....





Study-work Mismatch
Frequent job changes
Frequent career changes
Slashers
Self-employed
Youtuber
Intermittent engagements
Autonomous unemployment

.....

Major investment bank – Analyst Recruits

Anthropology, Literature, Classics

Physics, Political Science, ...

Finance 0%

Accounting 0%

Economics 0%

Work-study Mismatch – one leading university in Hong Kong

Medicine 0%

Law 25-30%

Engineering 35%

Science ? %

Arts ? %

Business ? %

Graduates of HKU

Dentistry » » Pop-star

Architecture » » KOL

Engineering » » Michelin Chef

MBA » » Farmer



由薄扶林出發:

港大新生代

SO 築夢方程式

鄧日朗 徐詠璇 編著

由薄扶林或上水或天水圍，或長洲或山脊出發，
讓世界看到你的能量和夢，發光也發熱。
你一定能找到共鳴，譜出自己的樂章。

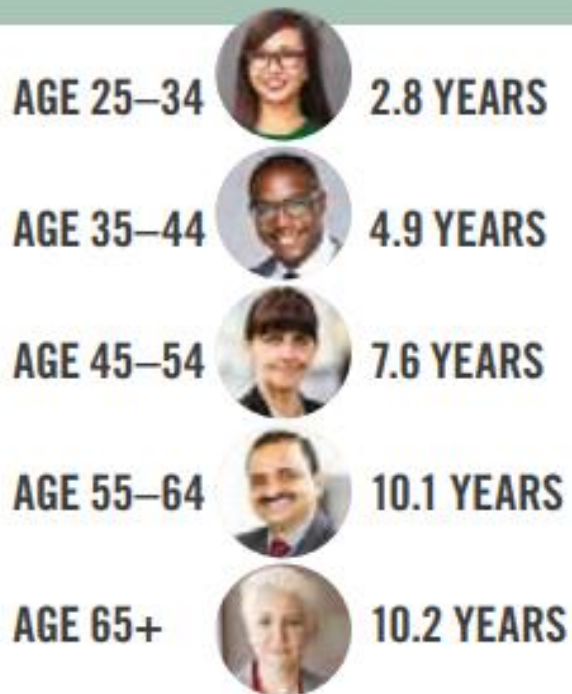
然後問：真的一定讀大學？



*The average person
changes jobs 12 times
in their lifetime*

US Department of Labor Statistics 2021

Average job tenure by age



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics



91% of **Millennials**:
expect to change **jobs** every **3** years.

86% of **Millennials**:
interested in changing **careers**.



Organizations fragmented

Work individualized

Less commitment from the Employer

Less commitment from the Employees

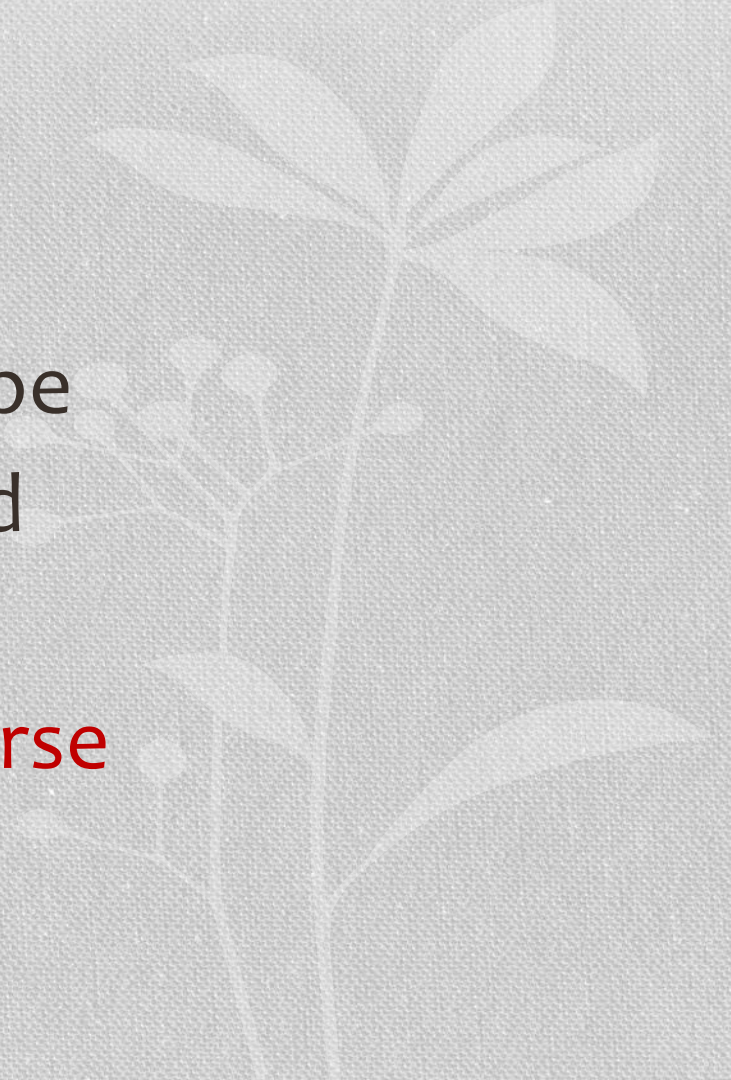
Changed concepts of a **Job**

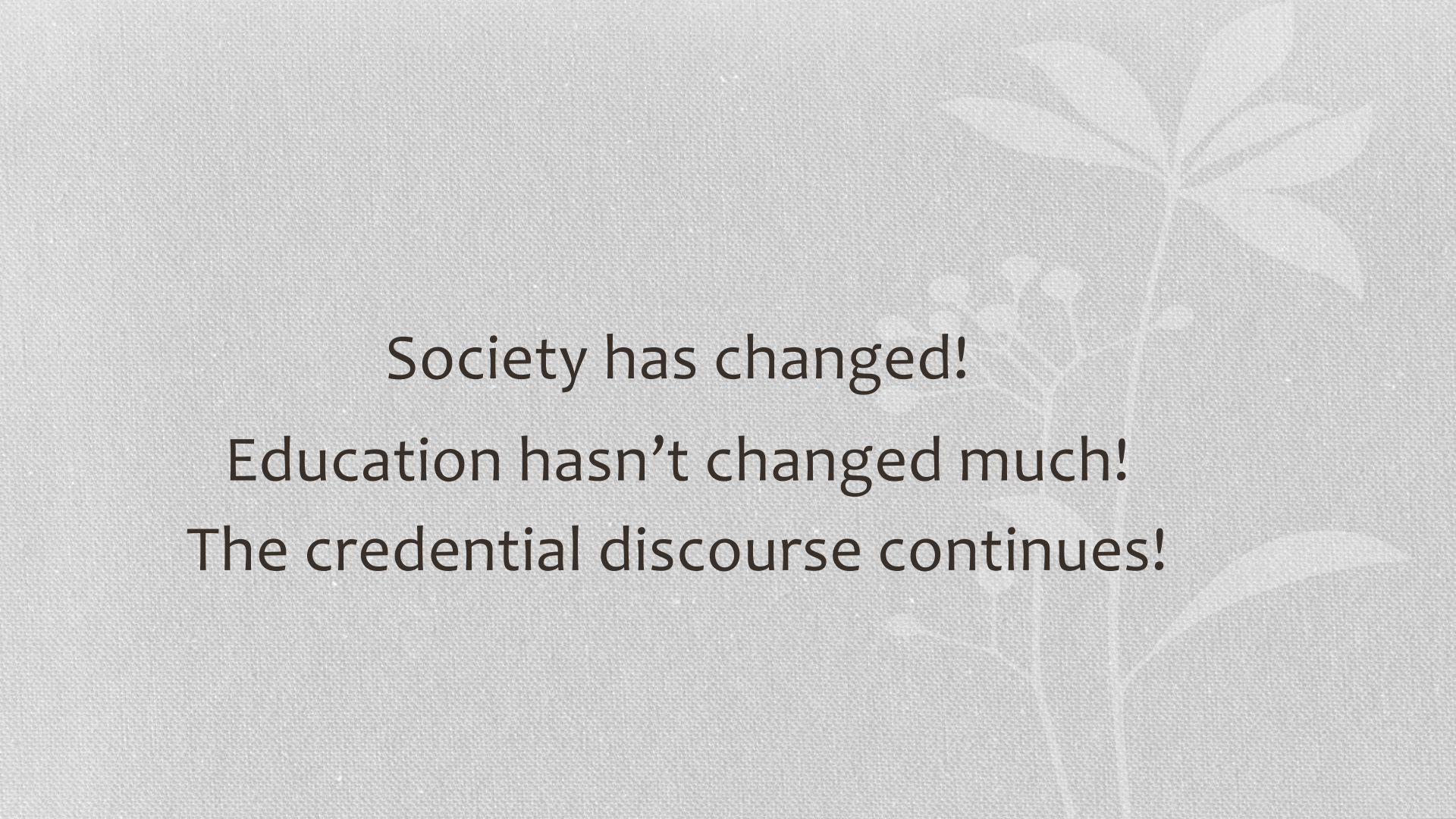
Credential Discourse
is facing challenges

Economic Discourse
is facing challenges



There needs to be
a move beyond
the absolute
Economic Discourse





Society has changed!
Education hasn't changed much!
The credential discourse continues!

There are nonetheless
emerging changes
at East Asia





Singapore

takes a lead

“21st Century Competencies”

“Desired Outcomes of Education”

Singapore



Core Values

Respect

Responsibility

Resilience

Integrity

Care

Harmony



Aiming at People

Confident Person

Self-directed Learner

Concerned Citizen

Active Contributor

Social-Emotional Competencies

Self-Awareness

Self-Management


Responsible Decision-Making

Social Awareness


Relationship Management

Emerging 21st Century Competencies

Critical, Adaptive and Inventive Thinking
Communication, Collaboration and
Information Skills
Civic, Global and Cross-Cultural Literacy



Focus on **People**
underpinned by **Values**
beyond skills
a move away from
pure Economic Discourse



Chinese Communities
Emerging moves
beyond the Economic Discourse

2000

Curriculum Reform in Mainland China

“**Learning to Learn**”

2002

Curriculum Reform in Hong Kong

“**Learning to Learning**”

a **Learning Discourse**

2016

Mainland China

素养 (*suyang*)

2016

Taiwan

素养



中国

中国学生发展 核心素养



Core *suyan* of Student Development

Overall: All-round Person

Self-management

Learning, Health, Planning

Social Participation

Social Responsibility, National Identity, Global Awareness

Knowledge and Culture

Cultural Underpinning, Scientific Exploration, Aesthetic Interests

素養 *suyan*

Personal Quality

Capacity and Attributes

Attitudes and Healthy Values

.....

a Paradigm alternative to Skills

Chinese approach

培養人才 Cultivating Talents
an obvious Economic Discourse

立德樹人 Moral & Personal Development
a Humanistic Discourse

Dialectical embracement of
two apparently contradictory target goals

Developing **human resources** from the perspective of **human** development

versus

Developing **human** beings in order to turn them into **human resources**

... they are different.

At a conference at
Tokyo Institute of Technology ...



Leading Engineering University, London, UK

Dean of Engineering

Class	1	2	3	4
Do you want to be an Engineer?				

Leading Engineering University, London, UK

Dean of Engineering

Class	1	2	3	4
Do you want to be an Engineer?	<i>81</i>			

Leading Engineering University, London, UK

Dean of Engineering

Class	1	2	3	4
Do you want to be an Engineer?	<i>81</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>44</i>

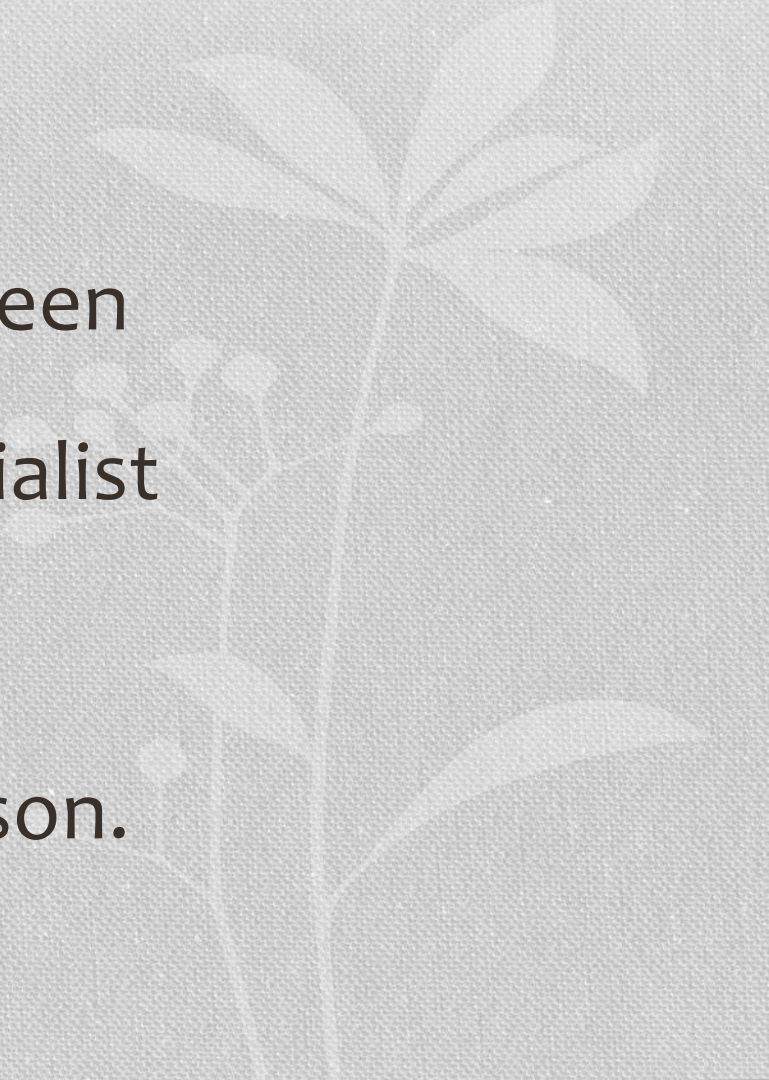
MIT US Dean of Engineering

“I don’t mind!

Our graduates spread over various occupations,
an evidence that we are providing all-round,
whole-person education.

However, I can assure you, that
the best engineers are still from MIT.”

This tells the difference between
Developing a specialist
and
Developing a person.



Challenges
to educators



Challenge One

See future as
volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous,
and allow **student** to see the same.

Challenge Two

Social-Emotional Learning

not optional

not on the side

essential for embracing the future

Challenge Three

Return Learning to Students:

respect them as **active learners**,
allow them to have **more choices**,
create space to enjoy **autonomous learning**.

Challenge Four

Create Alternatives to Exams:

alternative learning **experiences** (not examinable)

alternative ways of **recognition** (rather than tests)

alternative means for **assessment** (innovations)



Society has changed!

The change is

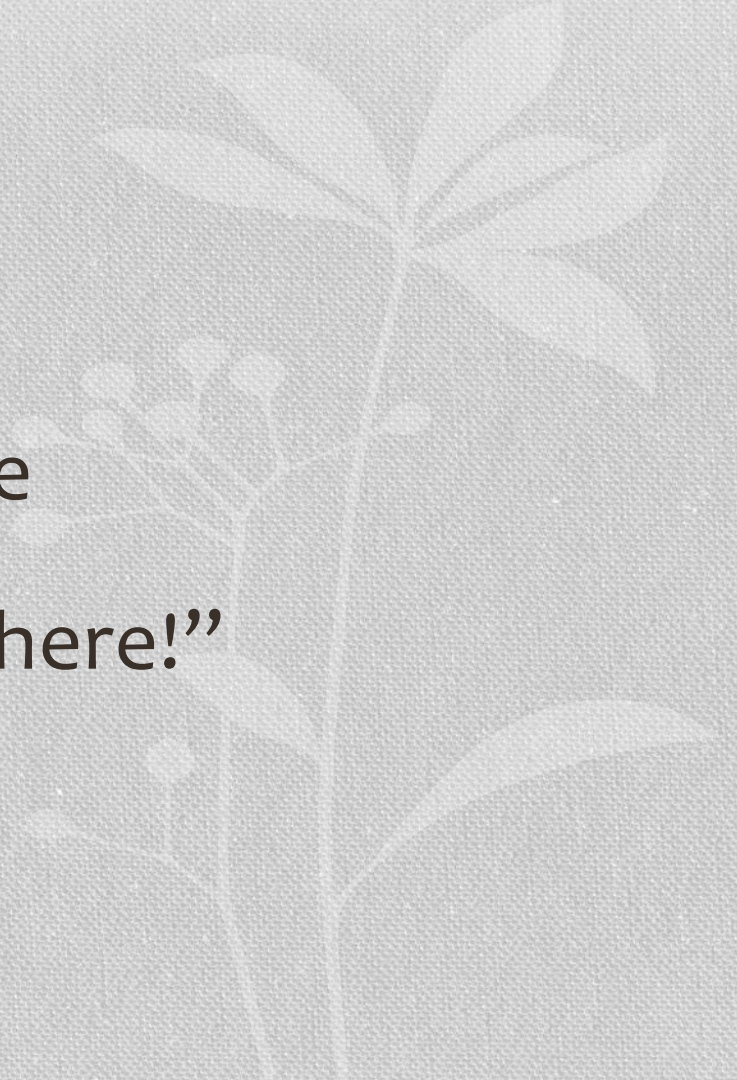
Fundamental, Comprehensive & Irreversible

No less dramatic than the change
from agricultural to industrial societies.

A true story

3 young people

“This is my last day here!”



Changing jobs?

No!

Unhappy?

No!

No job satisfaction?

No!

All my projects are very successful!





Then, why?

I have been on this job for such a long time

... 2.5, 3.0, 2.5 years

I need to pause, and think ...

Responses

... from those who grew up in the 20th Century

Ridiculous! Difficult to understand.

... from those who has grown up in the 21st Century

Admirable!

The are conscious of what they are doing!

They can afford to make choices!

They are able to control their own life!

Educators:
Are we prepared?



... a dissert

Cardistry
a price-winner

Ivy-League Actuarial Science

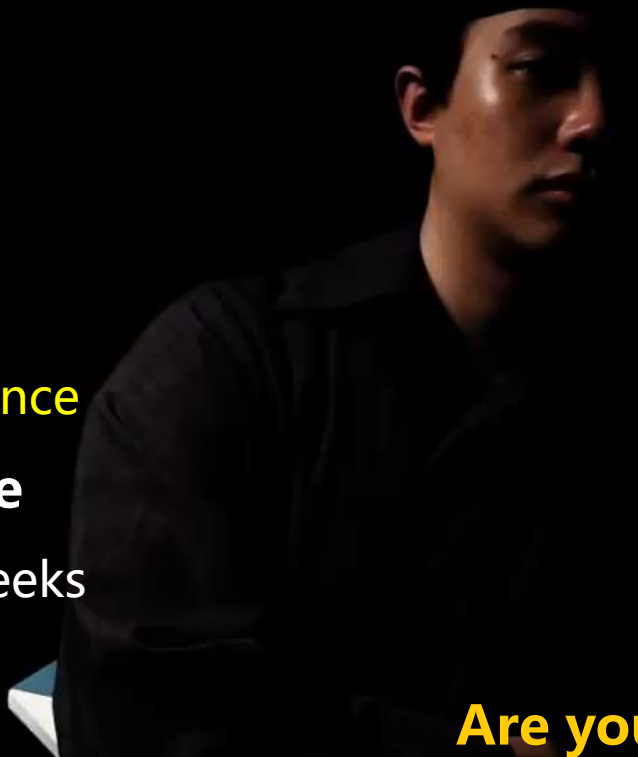
Cards with his name

Sold 1000-1500 sets/2 weeks

@USD 18-24

Sold-out in 3-5 minutes

**Are you happy with
this graduate?**



Thank you!

kmcheng@hku.hk

