NIE Higher Degrees
Distinguished Speaker Series 2019

Special Feature

NIE NTU and Teachers College Columbia University Symposium
Beyond Exams: Transforming Schools in the Changing Educational Landscape in Singapore

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It is our pleasure to present the third publication of the NIE Higher Degrees Distinguished Speaker Series by the Office of Graduate Studies and Professional Learning (GPL) at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University (NIE NTU), Singapore. A special feature of this publication is the inaugural symposium by NIE NTU and Teachers College Columbia University on 11 January 2019 with the theme, “Beyond exams: Transforming schools in the changing educational landscape in Singapore”.

The Distinguished Lecture was delivered by Professor A. Lin Goodwin, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. Her lecture, “Becoming a researcher and scholar: Theoretical, practical and philosophical lessons for surviving . . . and thriving!” was framed by her conceptualisation of the Five Dimensions of Knowledge for Teaching that offered rich perspectives and raised important questions for scholars to keep themselves wide awake to research possibilities. In the seminar with NIE’s doctoral students entitled, “Doing research that matters, to both the researcher and the researched”, she highlighted the challenges, tensions and dilemmas commonly encountered by graduate students and offered some principles to guide research that matters.

The first NIE-Teachers College Symposium, with the theme, “Beyond exams” highlighted the challenges posed by complex educational issues in the face of a changing and uncertain future that require school leaders, teachers, students and parents to engage in new ways of thinking, doing and being. Drawing on research and practices in school change and leadership from Singapore, the United States and elsewhere, the symposium sought to raise questions about teaching, learning and assessment, and challenge assumptions about innovations in education. How can leaders and teachers in schools make sense of current dilemmas and be inspired to
reimagine possibilities for the future of education in Singapore? What can schools do to enhance joy and create greater purpose in students’ learning? How do we prepare future-ready learners in schools?

Associate Professor Ng Pak Tee from NIE asked the fundamental question, What is “joy of learning”? Highlighting increasing interconnections in the 21st century, Assistant Professor Suzanne Choo, NIE spoke on the topic, “Empowering students with network literacies for a global age”. Also urging educational leaders to take a more global view, Professor Emerita Frances Schoonmaker from Teachers College raised several compelling issues with her session, “Who are schools for? Leadership in the age of PISA”.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all who have contributed to this publication. Foremost, our special thanks to Professor John Wang, Dean, Graduate Studies and Professional Learning, NIE, for his strong support for this event. Beginning with the first Distinguished Speaker, Professor Andrew Brown, University College London Institute of Education (2012), Professor Bruce Fuller, University of California Berkeley (2013), Professor Christopher Day, University of Nottingham (2014), Professor Andrew Tolmie, University College London Institute of Education (2015), Professor Charles Kinzer, Teachers College, Columbia University (2016), Professor David Labaree, Stanford University Graduate School of Education (2017), and Professor Rena Subotnik, American Psychological Association (2018), we are proud to present a special feature publication this year with the NIE Higher Degrees Distinguished Speaker Series and NIE-Teachers College Symposium 2019.

Our grateful thanks to Professor Lin Goodwin, NIE Higher Degrees Distinguished Speaker 2019 for her wise advice and practical strategies on surviving and thriving as a researcher and scholar, and to professors from NIE and Teachers College who came together for the first NIE-Teachers College Symposium to discuss current and compelling issues concerning Singapore schools. Our esteemed professors included Associate Professor Ng Pak Tee and Assistant Professor Suzanne Choo from NIE, NTU, and Professor Emerita Frances Schoonmaker from Teachers College, Columbia University. Our grateful thanks to the graduate students in the writing and editorial team from the NIE Doctor of Philosophy programme who worked tirelessly on the first to final drafts. Our appreciative thanks to Dr. Andrew Pereira for his editing work and review, and to our wonderful colleagues, Jaslyn Ng and Nurhasni Binte Khamis from GPL for their highly professional support.

And to all our fellow educators, we hope this publication will bring forth enriching new conversations.

Associate Professor Mary Anne Heng
Associate Dean, Higher Degrees and Strategic Partnerships

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June 2019
FOREWORD

PROFESSOR JOHN C. K. WANG
DEAN, GRADUATE STUDIES AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, SINGAPORE

Each year, outstanding professors in education and education-related fields are hosted under the NIE Higher Degrees Distinguished Speaker Series. The aim of this series is to stimulate academic discussions and encourage scholarship in critical issues in graduate education and research for Singapore schools and the broader education community.

In 2019, Professor A. Lin Goodwin, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong spoke in the Distinguished Speaker Series. Professor Goodwin’s Distinguished Lecture entitled, “Becoming a researcher and a scholar: Theoretical, practical, and philosophical lessons for surviving . . . and thriving” was well-received by about 300 graduate students and faculty.

This third publication is a special feature publication with the inaugural NIE-Teachers College Symposium that brought together graduate students, faculty, and educators from Singapore schools and the Ministry of Education who gained insights into current dilemmas about innovations in education.

A key message of the symposium is that teachers play an important role in enhancing joy and creating greater purpose in students’ learning. Moreover, teachers should empower students with network literacies in today’s rapidly-changing world.

This publication documents the above two milestone events through the eyes of students in the NIE Doctor of Philosophy programme. It is a strong testament to fulfilling knowledge creation and co-construction for the betterment of education through global interactions. The essays reflect rich ideas and discussions catalysed by Professor Goodwin’s lecture. They are also inspired by fruitful conversations between the graduate students and invited speakers at the NIE-Teachers College Symposium, namely, Associate Professor Ng Pak Tee and Assistant Professor Suzanne Choo from NIE NTU, and Professor Emerita Frances Schoonmaker from Teachers College Columbia University.

I am confident that you will find this publication interesting and inspiring.

June 2019
ABOUT THE NIE HIGHER DEGREES
DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER 2019

Professor A. Lin Goodwin is Dean and Professor of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). Prior to joining HKU in 2017, she was Vice Dean at Teachers College, Columbia University (TCCU) in New York, and the Evenden Foundation Chair of Education. She is immediate past Vice President of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) — Division K: Teaching and Teacher Education, and the inaugural Dr. Ruth Wong Professor of Teacher Education at the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Singapore. She is also the Co-Architect and served as Co-Director (2012-2017) of a joint Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Change (MALEC) between TCCU and NIE. In 2015, Dr. Goodwin was honored as a Distinguished Researcher by AERA’s Special Interest Group: Research on the Education of Asian and Pacific Americans.
Abstract

Anyone who aspires to be a researcher or a scholar knows that the journey is long and challenging, and the demands and sacrifices are many. Even established researchers find the work continues to be filled with frustrations, and that the road to good research remains bumpy and filled with ethical questions. How do researchers manage the road bumps, maintain their integrity, and sustain their enthusiasm and energy when the going invariably gets tough? Professor A. Lin Goodwin, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong addresses this question by discussing common dilemmas, conflicts and challenges facing anyone who aspires to be a researcher or scholar. She shares perspectives critical to emerging (and established) scholars, as framed by her own theorising and research on Five Dimensions of Knowledge for Teaching, and illuminated by extant international literature. Each of these perspectives suggests questions that scholars must consistently ask, and learning they must continuously seek so as to keep themselves wide awake to possibilities as they engage in research that, by its very nature, is designed to find discrete answers and collapse data. She offers practical strategies to find sanity, progress and meaning in the day-to-day-ness of the work that often seems uncertain, endless, and maddening. She closes by sharing three simple principles for living a happy (academic) life, no matter what one may choose to do or be.

Introduction

Professor Goodwin began by describing her arduous and exciting research journey 25+ years since she began her doctoral studies at Teachers College, Columbia University. She presented the outline for her three-part talk, each part of which would focus on a key aspect of research: (a) the academic and intellectual, (b) the practical, and (c) the philosophical and spiritual. She highlighted that research is not simply about doing and thinking, but
also involves the inner being of a researcher’s identity.

**Part 1: Academic and Intellectual Aspects of Research**

Professor Goodwin began by explaining the theoretical framework for teaching and teachers. Spending most of her academic life at Teachers College preparing pre-service elementary and secondary teachers, she has learnt a great deal about teacher preparation, reflecting and dialoging with colleagues about fundamental questions such as: What does it take to be a good teacher? What do teachers need to know and be able to do in order to undertake the incredibly complex, complicated and critical work of teaching? Professor Goodwin presented her conceptualisation of Five Knowledge Domains for Teaching (and Researching).

This theoretical framework has emerged from extensive practice (involving grounded theory) and her research work with pre-service teachers and other teacher educators, and constantly refined through debates and research. Professor Goodwin spoke about praxis as the intersection of theory and practice and it is where the Five Knowledge Domains are situated.

The Knowledge Domains are also supported by extensive bodies of literature and include: (a) knowledge for teaching and what teachers need to know in order to do their work (cf. Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Shulman, 1987), (b) particular skills or competencies beyond content knowledge that deal with the basic competencies, discrete skills and core practices that are essential for all beginning teachers to have, know and be able to do (cf. Ball & Forzani, 2011; Grossman, 2018), and (c) equity and social justice in teacher preparation to achieve equity and equal opportunities for students (cf. Cochran-Smith, 2004; Oakes and Lipton, 2006).

Professor Goodwin emphasised that these conceptual ideas are powerful because they can transcend the practicalities, realities and limitations of politics, culture, human capital, resource distribution, and local norms, by going deep beneath the surface to touch the heart of learning and teaching. Professor Goodwin noted with concern that teaching has unfortunately become a conversation that is far too technical and discrete. Locally or globally, then, we need to conceptualise teaching as the broad and complex practice it is. Professor Goodwin noted similar issues about research talk. As the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong, she is engaged with faculty, many of whom are untenured and are anxious to be tenured. There is a great deal of pressure to publish if faculty do not want to perish. She does not hear much talk about ideas, but about impact factors, size of grants and number of publications. What has been lost is the heart of research, which is about asking deep questions to better understand ourselves and the human condition for the sole purpose of making things better. Professor Goodwin proceeded to elaborate on the elements of the Five Knowledge Domains.

1. **Personal knowledge (autobiography and philosophy)**

Personal knowledge is owned personally because we bring who we are as a person into the realms of the classroom, organization, or research. This is because all of us have lived experiences that tell us how things work, what the truth is, or what reality ought to be. Personal knowledge shapes how and what we think about the world. We organise knowledge by categorisation or attachment to previous experiences. This organisational process is part of sense making. However, that organisation may be expedient, downright incorrect or very personal. The question becomes what we do with that personal knowledge once we enter a different context or environment that might ask us to challenge some of those beliefs. She gave the example of teaching. Everyone in the world presumes he/she knows about teaching and tells teachers what to do. Policy makers pronounce all kinds of things for teachers without having any sense about what really happens in the classroom. Why is that so?
Dan Lortie (1975), a sociologist, commented on the long apprenticeship of teaching. This comes from the fact that everyone who has gone to school has spent a great deal of time observing, categorising, stereotyping and conceiving what teachers do. From the outside, great teaching looks easy and poor teaching is just a matter of making all the wrong choices. So every person enters the classroom with a preconceived notion of what a teacher will look like and do. This preconceived notion is reinforced by media and internet images where teachers are portrayed as happy and smiling. They are also seen to be taking charge of the class through teacher-directed instruction. These images portray students as passive learners while teachers are the ones directing, orchestrating and telling. Hence, personal knowledge and impressions about teachers and who they are, have been formed for a very long time; they come from years of being a student in elementary, secondary, and university classrooms (Goodwin, 2002a, 2002b).

Teacher preparation thereby represents an intersection of what a person brings into that preparation and who that person will be after preparation is complete. If one is open to new ideas, genuine transformation may occur. However, if one holds onto existing beliefs, opportunities to learn may be lost. This reflects Carl Sagan’s point that:

At the heart of science is an essential balance between two seemingly contradictory attitudes: an openness to new ideas - no matter how bizarre or counterintuitive they may be - and the most ruthless skeptical scrutiny of all ideas, old and new. This is how deep truths are winnowed from deep nonsense.

As there is the possibility that we enter the arena of research already having some notions of what we expect to see, the first message to take from the lecture is: How do we step outside ourselves in order to become conscious of the pre-beliefs, preconceptions, biases and stereotypes that we carry? We all have preconceptions or pre-beliefs but, we need to be awake to the fact that we bring ourselves every time we enter any research question or research project.

2. Contextual knowledge (understanding and knowing learners and schools)

Professor Goodwin defined context as the setting, situation or circumstance in which a phenomenon occurs. She highlighted how no teacher preparation programme can prepare for every circumstance, as classrooms are dynamic and changing. Part of the problem of teacher education is that we have ignored the contingency of teaching and the classroom. As a result, when student teachers enter a classroom, they will definitely be exposed to unprepared realities. This causes them to say that their teacher preparation programme did not do a good job and that they should have been forewarned. Professor Goodwin and her colleagues wrestle with this reality all the time: How do you help prepare someone for the unknown? How do you help prepare teachers for the contingent, the unexpected, the unusual and the new? The best way to do this is to enable teachers to develop ways of asking questions, observing and gathering information so that they can respond to any situation by first studying it.

She next showed images of schools to highlight how teaching in each of the contexts depicted in the images will be very different due to varying resources, local pressures and priorities, languages, teaching styles and stance, curriculum, and notions of what is worth knowing, even though there are commonalities across schools. As researchers, contextual knowledge is critical. Context is more than a place and a position. It is not simply immediate or proximate but must include knowledge that is political, historical, structural, cultural, and so on (Goodwin, 2010). One cannot simply study each context individually. There is a need to know the different contexts because within each multidimensional context, things are constantly shifting. She gave the example of the digital environment in today’s world, where transnational spaces and rising nationalism happen simultaneously. Researchers need to wait, ask questions, observe closely, listen, look and learn. Researchers have to learn to listen closely to their participants, to research with versus research on.
Professor Goodwin shared a story about context from a research project focusing on mentor teachers, or cooperating teachers, who are also school-based teacher educators (Goodwin, Roegman & Reagan, 2016). Interested in finding out what mentor teachers considered as effective mentoring practices, the study used two theoretical frameworks. The first consisted of Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) notion of “educative mentoring” based on an explicit vision of good teaching and an understanding of teacher learning that moves away from approaches that emphasise situational judgments (doing things as we do here), technical (this is how you do it) and emotional support (you did a good job). Feiman-Nemser (2001) built on Dewey’s (1938) concept of educative experiences to talk about eight different moves that educative mentors employ. The second framework was by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) who theorised about knowledge for, in and of teaching practice. Knowledge for is theoretical and technical where teachers are receivers of the methods, content and so forth. Knowledge in practice is practical knowledge that emerges from the doing of teaching, embedded as part of one’s practice after years of teaching so that one can think and talk about practices clearly within the context of one’s practice. Knowledge of practice conceptualises teachers as inquirers looking into their own teaching.

Goodwin et al.’s (2016) two-year study involved 46 mentor teachers and data included mentor teachers’ self-assessments, vignettes (short stories about times when mentor teachers felt particularly successful or proud of their mentoring) and focus group interviews. Reading an excerpt from Goodwin et al. (2016), she highlighted the importance of context where:

*Before we present our findings, we feel compelled to take a moment, and unwrap some of the policy context in which mentor teachers in this study operate, so as to ensure that our interpretations of the data are framed by these very complex and oftentimes restrictive contexts and which are not construed as teacher bashing or deficit constructions of these teachers.*

At the time of the study, the climate in New York was oppressive and restrictive, where teacher performance was reported even to the point where some teachers’ photographs were actually printed in the newspapers if their students’ achievement scores were especially poor. There were teacher suicides and one teacher was hounded because her students did very badly on standardised tests. She was called “Worst teacher in New York City”, even though there were solid reasons for students’ weak performance. Thus, teachers at the time were incredibly pressured to make sure that students did well on high-stakes tests. In the study, they found educative mentoring was not happening and that teachers were understandably focused on the situational (this is how we do things here), the technical (do it this way and follow this protocol) and the emotional (what you did was correct and in the way I asked you).

Similar to teaching, it is important to bear in mind the need to frame research within contexts so as to tell the “facts” as embedded within real lived experiences. The Goodwin et al. (2016) study highlighted the “dilemmas of practice” that teachers faced that caused them to work and behave in certain ways. One example of a dilemma of practice was student teachers’ opportunity to fail. Because teachers could not afford to have principals come in to see things in disarray with the student teachers in front, they had to make sure that student teachers were successful, which meant telling them exactly what to do. It would be easy to characterise these teachers as rigid, focused on the technical, or unable to provide space for their student teachers/learners. Yet, Goodwin shared another excerpt from the article to further emphasise the importance of taking into account context when studying teaching and teachers, and acknowledging the realities they confront:

*The mentor teachers in our study exemplified professional commitment and dedication for which they received little recognition or compensation from their school leaders, the district, policy makers or the general public. Their generosity cannot be minimalised with their willingness to learn, and to be vulnerable to the gaze of outsiders, us. They cannot be faulted for focusing on the expedient, the technical, the present and the pressing. They need, after all, to meet too many*
Professor Goodwin recounted the story so that the audience would similarly understand how important it is to study the background and context in one’s research.

3. Pedagogical knowledge

Teachers tend to think of pedagogical knowledge as simply what teaching is about. However, if one looks at teachers as pedagogues, there are many roles teachers play. A teacher can play the role of someone who simply delivers the curriculum and does what the official curriculum states. A teacher can also position the curriculum within the context and the lives of students. In contrast, a teacher can be a curriculum maker where the teacher has decision making power or agency and makes choices based on powerful practice and best knowledge of students. This would then mean that the teacher and students are not simply acted upon, but that they are actors.

Pedagogical knowledge is not simply a pedagogy (the art and science of teaching), but different forms of pedagogies that include critical, culturally responsive, feminist, and inclusive pedagogies. Pedagogies can be uplifting and emancipatory as well as limiting and damaging. For instance, the pedagogy of poverty is about the kind of instruction, curriculum and classroom that seems to be reserved for children of the poor or children who do not count in society. Very often the kind of instruction these children receive is different from what more privileged children receive.

In a similar vein, Professor Goodwin talked about how researchers should learn to see the complexity in the simple and the connection in the disparate. Researchers need to make the familiar strange and strange familiar. This is because with familiarity, the researcher might not see. At the same time, it is easy to make judgments about things that we do not know about, that seem odd to us, and to make pronouncements about things. To see the connections between the strange and the unfamiliar is a challenge, but it is a wonderful learning experience.

Researchers also have to discern meanings in the silences and the gaps. Quite often, the most exciting part of research is not answering the research questions or using the data collected, but stating what is missing and unsaid. Research is more than plowing through pre-established research signposts.

4. Sociological knowledge

Sociological knowledge is the most difficult and challenging of the five domains, because in today’s world, the reality is disturbing. Around the world, there is inequality, racial conflicts, wars, hunger and poverty. It is easy to exclude those who do not conform in some ways – a natural human behaviour which we need to resist. It is challenging to enter into conversations around diversity and difference. We like to celebrate diversity with food, festivals and traditions, but understanding multiculturalism involves puzzling and challenging dissensions because we bring very different ways of seeing the world that may come with emotionally charged values.

Professor Goodwin shared with the audience how she was struck by a picture from one of the newspapers from Singapore in 2018 showing a man holding up a banner entitled “Singapore for Singaporeans.” Showing how notions of pluralism, nationalism, multiculturalism and citizenship are playing out today in the context of larger global conversations, can be seductive. These could either cause us to succumb to narrow-mindedness or to ask broader questions.

So what do we need to do as researchers? Researchers need to be self-aware, as no one is completely sensitive, open, tolerant and non-discriminatory. How can researchers work at constantly being self-aware? Diversity is not simply a noun or a state of being. It is a mindset, a concept, a way of thinking, perceiving, living and teaching, a
quality, a characteristic, a disposition and a perspective that we must seek, particularly if we are engaged in the process of studying, observing, and asking questions about the world.

5. Social knowledge

Social knowledge involves the idea of groups working together, people connecting, and children, particularly, being able to uphold a peaceful world. It is not about cooperative learning or group process per se (although both fall under social knowledge). Social knowledge is about participation, democracy, equality, inclusion, and justice. The key message is that one has to do research that will have positive impact on the world—the good of humanity. Teachers College President, Professor Thomas Bailey, emphasised that “There is no reason to do research unless it has an impact on our practice and what we do and live every day.”

Professor Goodwin asked the audience a question to conclude the first part of the lecture: So, what does all this mean for surviving and thriving?

In response, she offered six tips for researchers:

• Get out of your own way: This means being able to step outside of yourself to become conscious of the images, ideas and truths that one brings to research. One needs to be self-assessing and vigilant all the time.
• See possibility in the invisible: The most exciting part of research is to discern meaning in what does not seem to exist at first glance and to make connections across really disparate things.
• Be inclusive, ethical, and moral: When you think about sampling your subjects, think first about who you invite, who talks first, who talks last, the pronouns you use and the images you include. All those things matter because they say something about you and something to the people you are working with.
• Engage in work on the self and mindfulness: It is not about meditating but about working and talking with your colleagues. Find and create a group of critical others or friends who will challenge you and keep you alert.
• Develop an integrated and coherent body of research: This means thinking carefully about the questions you are asking and thinking about a core set of questions that allow you to progress to a deeper understanding. This means using the core question as the window you look through in order to make connections with other interests you might have.
• Do good! Be good! Do good work! This is because research should always be about improving the human condition.

Part 2: Practical Aspects of Research

Professor Goodwin talked about how she still wrestles with many perplexing issues such as dilemmas and questions (which are not insurmountable although some are perennial). She offered suggestions for two key concerns of researchers: coming up with the right question to guide the research and overcoming writer’s block.

What is the right question?

Beginners in research will need to ask the foremost question as they embark on their research journey: What is the right question? She shared her own experience at Teachers College when she first started on research and searched to find a burning question. She felt inadequate as she had trouble finding a focus for her research. Her search caused her to read widely on things that were of interest to her and recounted how she came across the notion of teacher beliefs. Teacher beliefs was an area of study she did her dissertation on, and it is an area she continues to research 25 years later, with compelling, rich and fruitful questions that have fueled her research for many years.

The second piece of advice she offered for asking the right question is to look around for issues, problems and gaps. There is so much that one can do in research to address questions or issues. One just needs to open one’s eyes, talk to people, interview people, and take time to get to the right research question.
Finally, she advised the audience to think about what they have done in the past. Research should not only be duplication and replication per se, but like clinical trials in medicine, to derive protocols we can trust, we have to try things more than once, learn from practice. She advised the audience to think about how to deepen and extend a past research study and to look for opportunities for collaboration with researchers established in the field.

Professor Goodwin’s tips for asking the right research questions:

1. Read!
2. Look around (as the world is full of research issues)
3. Look back (think about what you have done in the past for research areas)
4. Keep reading

Writer’s block

Writing can be challenging and the process may be painful. In breaking writer’s block, she shared how she also struggles with it on a daily basis, as translation from thinking to writing is not an easy process. One way to overcome writer’s block is to talk to and confer with other researchers. As Dean at The University of Hong Kong, she is trying to change the culture at the university through creating an intellectual culture and community where people talk to each other about their work and research. It is only through public engagement and sharing that one sharpens one’s ideas and learns.

Professor Goodwin’s tips on overcoming issues related to the writer’s block:

• No negative self-talk.
• Give yourself a break. Reward yourself. Do not punish yourself but work around the writer’s block by taking small breaks.
• Fool yourself to get started. Write just a page. Give yourself a word limit. Make the task of writing simple and easy—write in chunks or break it up.
• Feeling overwhelmed? One bite at a time. Do something related to the research such as editing, going back to read the literature or going through the referencing. Such tasks make you feel productive. They save time at the end as you will not be hunting for references or figuring out the formatting. It is better to do something than nothing for such tasks actually help refine research writing and keep you moving forward as you are formulating your thoughts.

Part 3: Philosophical Aspects of Research

Professor Goodwin ended the lecture by talking about the philosophical and ethical aspects of research. Firstly, she showed a slide to remind the audience of new graduate students that: “What got you here won’t get you there.” Even though graduate students are successful, driven, and disciplined, students face difficulty in writing the research proposal, among other things. This is because what has allowed students to enter the graduate programme is not enough to help students with the research proposal. Professor Goodwin highlighted the need to embrace cognitive dissonance. As part of the learning process, it is not uncommon that many things remain unknown.

Secondly, she advised the audience to find their own way. They should look around to discover that there are people doing things in ways that are very useful and productive and they might want to follow some of these practices.
However, one also needs to keep in mind one’s own working styles or preferences, with some students preferring to wake up early to write and others preferring to work late into the night.

She encouraged the audience by telling them that their best work is likely to lie ahead. This is because some doctoral students feel that the dissertation has to be the best ever piece and that they are going to develop a theory that will change the world. Professor Goodwin reminded them that research is a developmental process and although the work for the doctorate is great, the work that they do tomorrow is going to be better.

Finally, she advised the audience to learn to let go, because there will be disappointments, feedback they do not like, rejections, and bad reviews of their writing. Failures and rejections are part of living and learning and part of being a researcher and a scholar. If you do not let go of negative experiences, you are not going to thrive. You may survive but you will not be happy.

Question-and-Answer Section

Associate Professor Mary Anne Heng served as the moderator in the question-and-answer session that followed the lecture.

Audience Member 1: I am from the Master in Applied Linguistics programme. I would like to ask about the prevalent theme from the lecture, with regard to sticking to your own path, listening to counsel and seeking advice from well-known researchers. Sometimes, in order to tread your own path, you might think you are right and disregard certain points of view. How do you know where is the balance in terms of listening to the viewpoints of others and treading your own path in seeking the invisible?

Professor Goodwin: Good question. The first thing I would say is to let go of the idea of finding balance, which is another impossible goal which makes us feel inadequate. There really no balance as all we can do is to juggle and find enough time to complete tasks. I think of it as deliberate imbalance where I spread the tasks over time to achieve a sort of equity. I am not suggesting that in finding your way path, you ignore common wisdom, but it is easy for your own instinct and voice to be silenced by people with experience and titles. Being a world-renowned researcher does not mean that you know everything. What you have to do always is to weigh and figure out the different messages that you receive. Many of those messages come from personal experience. Even if you think you are not making your own path, the reality is that you are. The questions then will be: Is it a deliberate and conscious path? Is it going to be one that you stumbled through or one that you structured, focused on or thought about deeply? It is about consciousness and deliberateness.

A/P Heng: Looking back to my own doctoral journey and my ongoing work as a teacher educator and researcher at NIE, I would say that as you begin your graduate journey, find a small community, a friend or two and talk about what you are encountering – challenges, questions, issues – and you will find that you are not alone. There are others who grapple with similar issues and seek to find some equilibrium between balance and imbalance in the research journey.

Audience Member 2: I am quite interested in interdisciplinary research. What would you suggest about getting different departments to work on interdisciplinary collaboration?

Professor Goodwin: I am very fortunate to be at Teachers College, which is a collaborative place where people connect and talk all the time. What I often say to new colleagues at the university is that they should just ask people to have a cup of coffee, ask questions or ask for help. Don’t be fooled by what you see on the outside, because everyone is very busy and many people are very important. However, I will guarantee you that out of 100 people, 99 people will give you time. Colleagues have come back to me time after time to tell me that what I have said is true. The first thing I will encourage you to do is simply to reach out because you will always be surprised by what the answer is. Sometimes it will be “Yes, I am busy. I am not interested.” That is fine. However, most times, the responses will be “Gee, that is an interesting idea.”
I have been involved in many collaborations. I am part of a research team of about nine people. We have been working together since 2009 or 2010. When we first started, most of the team were doctoral students. This year, there is only one doctoral student left. Everyone else is a faculty member and scattered all over the world. We meet through Zoom or Skype every week or every other week to continue our work.

I am part of another collaborative team consisting of really well-known teacher educators, one in UK, one from Canada and one in Australia. How did it come about? We happened to be in an invitational seminar together in 2014 and we connected and we decided to do something together. We have written a book together, had several presentations and we are currently engaged in a research study. I am also engaged in a collaboration team here at NIE. All of them had been by happenstance where you sat next to one another, you were on the same panel, you exchanged cards or had a chance conversation. Before you know it, you have an amazing relationship. So opportunities for collaborations are really everywhere. You have to be willing to reach out. So just reach out.

A/P Heng: As a student of NIE and part of the larger university community, please also reach out to students at NTU because you learn from new perspectives outside your discipline of study.

Audience Member 3: I am hearing a lot about being open and being comfortable about cognitive dissonance. I acknowledge that it involves a lot of courage to do or try something that is not familiar. Have you ever put yourself in uncomfortable situations just to get yourself out of the comfort zone?

Professor Goodwin: I came from the Singapore school system and I was fortunate to be one of those people who did well in school. Unfortunately, what I did not learn to do was to step out of the comfort zone. I learnt that my opinion was not sought, that I did not have a voice and that I should not ask questions. I learnt to absorb and regurgitate. I remember I was in a History class in the US which I had to complete as part of the basic prerequisites. As a good student, I took good notes and recorded practically every word like an audio-recorder. The first examination was a qualitative essay examination and I scored 100. The professor was so impressed with me that he thought I was very smart. From that point on, in the middle of his lecture, he would ask: “Miss Goodwin, what do you think?” I had no idea. I had simply absorbed what he told me and given it back. So I had to really think about something in order not to appear completely stupid.

Another incident happened in graduate school. The professor of a curriculum design class, who became my thesis supervisor, conducted a mid-term assessment through individual one-to-one meetings with me. She gave me a B+ overall. I thought to myself that I was not a B+ but an A student. I told her I did not understand how I had a B+ because I had received an A for every assignment. She told me that I did not participate in class because although I talked when I was in groups, I had never talked in a large class. This was the most profound thing she told me: “You have things to say that other people need to hear.” Wow! So I set myself a goal, which was that in every class from that point on, I would say at least one thing. It did not have to be profound. It might be, “Can you repeat that?” or “How many pages?” I am serious. We are talking about baby steps. Of course now people wish that I would shut up because my professor did such a good job. This is a very long answer to your question.

What is the lesson then? First of all, you have to find those situations through joining a group of people you do not know and taking a risk, reading material that is not in your field, reading works by people whose point of view you disagree with, putting yourself in situations where your own comfortable thinking is challenged and surrounding yourself with people who are willing to tell you the truth. In December, I had to finish a piece of writing. I was fairly satisfied with it although I had worked on it for a long time. I decided to submit it as the deadline was upon me. However, I sent it to a very good colleague of mine in the US to ask for her views. She read it and she said it was fine to be sent in but it was not powerful enough. I was angry initially and told her I could not revise as the deadline was the next day. Still, I stayed up until four in the morning fixing it and what I ended up with was definitely so much better
and powerful than it was to start with. I wrote back to her to thank her for being a really good friend - the kind of friend who can tell me the truth. Surround yourself with such people.

Questions for reflection

1. Professor Goodwin highlighted in her lecture the best reason for research - the good of humanity. What are the implications for your own research?
2. How would you step outside yourself in order to become conscious of your beliefs, preconceptions, biases and stereotypes? How can researchers work at constantly being self-aware and reflective in doing research?

References


DOING RESEARCH THAT MATTERS, TO BOTH THE RESEARCHER AND THE RESEARCHED

PROFESSOR A. LIN GOODWIN
11 JANUARY 2019, SEMINAR, NIE, SINGAPORE

Abstract
At this seminar for NIE’s doctoral students, Professor A. Lin Goodwin used her own journey as a researcher and teacher educator to illustrate perennial tensions that researchers face - and can resolve - as they strive to engage in enquiry that will enhance the common good as well as their own careers.

Introduction
Professor Goodwin began the seminar by positioning herself as a researcher. She identified herself as a qualitative researcher and a phenomenologist. Her personal, educational and career backgrounds, involving Hong Kong, Singapore and U.S. contexts, have equipped her with a transnational lens that facilitates her international research. Her research focuses on teacher education, specifically in the areas of teacher-educator identity, curriculum enactments, pre-service classrooms, policy and practice comparison, and Asian/Asian American identities within the U.S. context. She then used the “road bump” analogy for a doctoral journey where the road ahead usually starts relatively smooth, but gets more bumpy and treacherous. She candidly admitted that as a researcher, there is a need to face all difficulties in the form of challenges, tensions and dilemmas. More importantly, she provided the audience with some valuable and encouraging tips on how graduate students can cope with some of the most commonly encountered challenges, tensions and dilemmas.

Challenges, tensions and dilemmas (CTD) 1: Alone or not?
Researchers often face the question, “Should I work alone, or should I work with other people?” In fact, this is not an either-or question as we can actually do both. Professor Goodwin believes that negative experiences of group work usually stem from the lack of explicit training in working in groups. Drawing on her numerous collaborative experiences and partnerships, she talked about how working as part of a team, though challenging, facilitated her development as a teacher and a researcher. Reviewing her own CV in terms of the authorship of her publications, she pointed out that it would be ideal to have a mixture of single-authored pieces and
collaborative works. Yet she also cautioned that when working in a team, young researchers should be particularly careful about establishing guidelines, norms and rules concerning certain issues, such as division of work, ways of collaboration, number of meetings, and authorship. Such tough or sensitive decisions should be talked through before things get tough or delicate. Failing to do so in an upfront manner may lead to sticky and challenging situations at a later stage. Finally, it is necessary to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each option.

CTD 2: Balancing . . . life, time, family . . . ?

The second CTD is that of balancing life and work as a researcher. Admitting the improbability of striking a perfect balance, Professor Goodwin encouraged graduate students to just let go of this notion, and instead seek to carve out small spaces to find peace. She gave examples of herself sometimes putting work aside to focus on family, and of a colleague setting steadfast rules of not reading emails on Sundays, and another colleague who allows herself only two hours, one each in the morning and evening, for emails.

CTD 3: What about academic invitations?

Professor Goodwin then shared her experience in dealing with academic invitations (to conferences, to write a book chapter, etc.). Although these provide one with the sense of being included in a community, invitations can sometimes be a burden, because one is hard pressed for time but still feels obliged, especially when invitations come from senior scholars. In order not to get overwhelmed, Professor Goodwin suggested that one should be well prepared and thoughtful. The first rule is not to let the flattery of being invited get the best of us. In cases where we cannot turn down the invitation, we have to find ways to make the invitation work for us, by using our core research interests as a lens to make our contributions. In addition, it is important to allow ourselves some time to mull over the invitation, instead of rushing into a decision on the spur of the moment and regretting later. To handle invitations better, we can always ask for advice from a mentor. Rehearsing an appropriate response beforehand is also a good idea, so that we will not be caught off guard and say something against our will.

Doing research that matters . . . and not just to you

Professor Goodwin emphasised the importance of asking the right question. She used her work in Asian American and Asian-ness contexts as an example. Since the concept of Asian is much broader than our personal experiences might suggest, we need to ask a series of questions to figure it out: Whose “Asian” are we talking about? What does it mean to be Asian? Which Asian? (because the Asian diaspora is very broad) And who is an Asian? (because it can be really hard to tell by how one looks). She then situated these questions in three particular contexts, the U.S., Singapore, and Hong Kong, where the Asian identity can be defined very differently. Professor Goodwin explained how these conceptions of equity can be tackled from the perspectives of demographics and education systems, emphasising that there are usually multiple layers to the issues, and that we need to identify the most relevant layer without sacrificing the big picture.

Think reciprocity, look through another’s lens

In a similar vein, Professor Goodwin pointed out that researchers should not just focus on their sole benefit. Instead, we need to be encouraged to think about what we can give in return to our research participants. Rewards to participants can take the forms not only of tokens of appreciation or monetary gifts, but also something more meaningful, such as workshops and the sharing of relevant research results.

Principles to guide your research

In the final part of the seminar, Professor Goodwin proposed three principles to guide research that matters. First, one needs to learn to see (pay attention to the deeper meanings), un-see (step away from the surface), notice (be awake), and
believe (trust participants). She elaborated on the last point of trusting one’s participants, pointing out that perceptions of reality can be different. In response to differences in perception, quality research should provide multiple opportunities, data sets, and statistics to confirm that what we are seeing and hearing is what is most likely happening.

The second principle is to be generous. We should be generous to our research subjects treating them with trust and respect by never talking about them elsewhere and being fair in our reports about them. We need to also be generous to our peers and hope that this generosity will come back to us. We should be generous to those who matter and even those who do not. While the former is relatively easy to do, the latter is even more important, because it says a lot more about who we are. We should also be generous and forgiving to ourselves, and know when to let go and not to beat ourselves up.

The third and last principle is to say yes. That requires a willingness to take risks, the determination to be dependable, the courage to accept leadership, and the bravery to embrace uncertainty. Professor Goodwin concluded the seminar with a quote from her favorite poet Audre Lorde: “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives.”

**Question-and-Answer Session**

The seminar was followed by a question-and-answer session.

**Audience Member 1:** For early-career scholars who would like to publish and who have individual topics of interest, how much is that of value to the general area of teacher education? Also, what are the key buzzwords and trends that you can predict or foresee, especially for educators and researchers?

**Professor Goodwin:** The interesting thing about publications is that, each one has a particular purpose, vision, and an audience they are trying to reach. But when you read the description of any journal, it is rather general. They say “We are interested in conversation about this”, or “We are interested in research on that”. But within those specifications, it is actually wide open. There is value in looking at journal indexes. Mostly you want to aim for Q1 and Q2 journals. In Q1 alone, there are about 250 journals. That’s a lot of journals. Scanning through them to see what they are talking about and what they might be interested in, is one way. The second is that many journals have calls. Sometimes they have open issues. But quite often they’ll have a call. They say, for example, the next issue is going to be on poverty or on professional development of teachers. Pay attention to the calls, because that way you can tailor or connect your work with the particular call for a journal. The third is about connecting your work to the journal’s scope and purpose. The last thing is there are journals in fields that are related to education. They could be in cultural studies, sociology, health, or immigrant studies. You might be able to use that as an outlet for work in teacher education, but of course, from that particular perspective. I have used my work on domains of knowledge as a lens for talking about globalisation and teachers. I have used it as a lens for talking about what teacher educators should now be able to do. I have used it as a lens for content analysis. This is the latest piece that has just come out – an article on social justice in the domain of teacher preparation in journals in the UK, US and Australia. Those are the examples of how my core work on domains of teacher knowledge has ended up allowing me to touch on very different topics.

About the buzz words or trends. I think a couple of things are happening. One is the diversity in the world. Every conversation that I am part of internationally talks about diversity, immigrants, refugees, migrant children, and the mismatch between teachers and the new students that are coming in. These children have always been here. However, with the humanitarian crisis that we are experiencing, this issue has been brought to the forefront. This is definitely one issue that continues to be perplexing and in need of deep examination.

The second is this whole issue of teacher shortages. You do not really have them here in Singapore, but most of the world experiences teacher shortages because teaching is not seen as a high-status or worthwhile career, or a career for smart people. It is a consolation prize. In Singapore, most of the teacher
preparation is at the university. However, there is a strange tension in many countries. For example, some of the more developed countries have moved away from university-based teacher preparation and have opened the door for all kinds of providers. On the other hand, there are many countries that are trying to upgrade teachers, to move teaching to a university degree, to a master’s degree. So the whole notion of teaching and teacher professionalism is important.

The last thing I would like to talk about is the trajectory of a teacher’s career. And again, notions of advancement and notions of leadership without leaving the classroom come to mind. The majority of teachers in the world are in-service, not pre-service. How do we think about capitalising on this amazing pool of expertise and how do we tap into that resource to improve education? This goes beyond teacher education to education per se. Who are we thinking about? What are we thinking of when we think about educating citizens? What does it mean to be a citizen? Democracies are in trouble. Authoritarian governments are on the rise. Conservatism is on the rise. Nationalism is on the rise. What’s the role of education in these conversations?

**Question for reflection**

How can graduate students ensure that the research one engages in is meaningful not just to the researcher, but to the research participants, as well as the wider community?
WHAT IS “JOY OF LEARNING”?  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR NG PAK TEE  
11 JANUARY 2019, SYMPOSIUM, NIE, SINGAPORE

Abstract
In this symposium, Associate Professor Ng asks fundamental and important questions like: What is “joy of learning”? How do we go about implementing this concept in Singapore schools? Is it about injecting fun activities into classroom teaching? Is it about applied learning? Is it about reducing the number of examinations? How can school leaders and teachers in Singapore schools make sense of “joy of learning” in the light of preparing “future-ready learners”?

Introduction
A/P Ng delivered an engaging seminar with riveting insights from Singapore. Singapore’s education system is perceived to be highly effective, efficient and successful, given its noteworthy performances in international league tables such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends In International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS). The strong tripartite partnership between the Ministry of Education of Singapore (MOE), National Institute of Education (NIE) and schools contribute to this success in Singapore education.

Although Singapore has done well in international tests and has ranked highly in league tables, the education system is always a work in progress (Ng, 2017). During the seminar, A/P Ng highlighted that students who aced examinations might not find learning enjoyable. He urged the audience to reflect on what “joy of learning” was, and ponder on their own teaching practices. Educators are constantly reminded to reflect on their own teaching practices, and to think of means to effectively and meaningfully convey examinable content in an engaging manner. There was a need to know the difference between merely having fun without much learning taking place versus learning effectively through fun and engaging lessons.

Teach Less, Learn More
Singaporeans were first introduced to the education policy of Teach Less, Learn More (TLLM) in 2004 during Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s National Day Rally Speech. The reforms included syllabus reduction in a bid to reduce examination pressure and provide children with more space to explore (Ng, 2017). In 2005, MOE formally launched “Teach Less, Learn More”. Former Education Minister, Mr
Shanmugaratnam explicated that TLLM entailed a paradigm shift on teaching and learning, from quantity to quality (Ng, 2017). TLLM therefore necessitated teachers to reconsider the “What”, “Why” and “How” of teaching. Students were also expected to be actively engaged in learner-centered classrooms.

In short, teachers are expected not only to teach less, but to teach better. Consequently, students will not only learn better but will also be more motivated to learn. Unfortunately, existing beliefs about teaching in Singapore may not be helpful to implementing TLLM. A/P Ng used a feeding analogy to describe his observation. Teaching and learning is akin to cooking and feeding a child. When a mother cooks, she needs to prepare the ingredients for her dish. After cooking the dish, she will need to feed the child. The child will then need to “ingest, digest and absorb the food into the body” (Ng, 2017, p. 91). Similarly, the teacher needs to prepare her “learning ingredients and design a palatable lesson before ‘feeding’ the child with the material in the lesson” (Ng, 2017, p. 91).

What is joy of learning?
A/P Ng next exhorted teachers to take time to reflect on the meaning of joy of learning. Is the joy of learning just about having fun-filled lessons and reducing examinations?

Not just about having fun
A/P Ng underscored the need to know the difference between merely having fun without much learning taking place and learning effectively through engaging lessons. To implement TLLM and subsequently Joy of Learning, some teachers created lessons that were filled with fun activities. These lessons, especially during formal lesson observations, tried to show observers that students were having a good time through a wide range of activities. The question was whether in-depth learning was actually taking place.

An unhelpful mindset among some teachers was that imparting actual content would be the boring part of the syllabus. These teachers try to inject some fun introductory activities into a 45-minute lesson. These introductory activities could take 10 to 15mins and they are the “fun” bits. The rest of the lesson, which delivers the actual content, is then the “boring” bit.

A/P Ng proceeded to challenge the audience to think about teaching the “boring” examinable content in an engaging way. Again, he used the analogy of cooking. If the main dish (the bulk of the lesson) is not palatable, diners will feel shortchanged even though the side dishes (e.g. trigger activities) are delicious. In the same way, the challenge is to make the syllabus interesting, not just trigger activities. When students find learning an enjoyable process, this will inculcate a lifelong love for learning in them. Therefore, the concept of “joy of learning” should not be taken lightly. The joy of learning is not merely about having fun or merely conducting entertaining activities. Learning needs to take place through engaging and meaningful lessons.
Not about reducing standards or watering down the syllabus

Should we make learning more enjoyable by reducing standards? Should we simplify the syllabus to make learning more enjoyable? A/P Ng used several analogies to address the above questions. For example, a person who loves to cook actually enjoys the cooking process, not just the dish. The cooking process requires hard work before a dish is ready to be served to others. So, why not just buy the dish from a restaurant and the dish will probably taste better? The person who loves to cook will not want that. He or she enjoys the cooking process and the satisfaction of serving one’s own dish.

Likewise, learning is about enjoying the process and hopefully feeling the satisfaction of being able to do something that one has learned. If we choose to remove challenges by lowering standards, learning might lose its meaning. Hence, we should not over-provide or overprotect our students. This may not be the best thing for them. Rather, we should reflect on our teaching methods so that our students will feel both challenged and supported in their learning process.

Teachers need to be role models too!

The joy of learning cannot be separated from the joy of teaching. Teachers likewise must enjoy teaching and learning. A/P Ng emphasised that teachers need to be role models with the appropriate learning attitudes. If teachers expect their students to come to school and learn with a positive attitude, teachers too should be good learners and enjoy learning. Then teachers will have the moral high ground to persuade students to learn. So, a good question is whether teachers enjoy learning during professional development activities. Furthermore, teachers have a great influence on their students. Often, a child’s love for a subject is because the teacher cares enough to make the subject come alive. This motivates the child to appreciate and study hard for the subject. Hence, teachers need to role model appropriate learning attitudes, enjoy learning and advocate lifelong learning through their actions. To inspire students, we need inspiring teachers!

Making every lesson count

A/P Ng argued that a teacher, just like the fire in a campfire, should be the focal point for students in the classroom. If the students are not focused on the lesson, they will do other things, often disrupting the lesson. Some teachers claim that these are classroom management problems. Actually, they are pedagogical ones. A/P Ng described two typical scenarios in Singapore classrooms: (a) teachers are aware their students are not engaged but simply continue to teach; and (b) teachers are aware that their students are not engaged, and tried harder to convey what they want to teach by being repetitive or even by raising their voices. A/P Ng advised the audience not to focus on just transmitting information. Lesson content can only be conveyed when the teacher (as the focal point) is able to capture the students’ attention.

A/P Ng advised teachers not to rely on remedial lessons to reteach what has been taught previously, but make every lesson count by engaging students in class. Crafting interesting lessons that spark students’ interest is an art – the art of teaching.

Conclusion

A/P Ng reiterated that it is crucial for teachers to continue to hone their craft of teaching so that students may learn better and enjoy learning. It is important for teachers to make every lesson count and help students cultivate the habits of lifelong learning.

Question-And-Answer Session

Audience Member 1: What are some pedagogical approaches or teaching methods that teachers could adopt to make lessons interesting, or ensure that we do not need to reteach the same content after school hours (that is, we get it right the first time)? This is particularly so when there are many pedagogical approaches available for one to adopt.

A/P Ng: There’s no one-size-fits-all teaching methodology. Teachers should continue to hone their craft, stay abreast with current teaching
methods and approaches, and try their best to hone their craft. Classes are different, and students have differing needs. What works in one context may not be suitable in another. Therefore, if we really want to be a good teacher and want our students to enjoy learning, we must have the spirit to continue to improve our teaching. For example, through interacting with experienced teachers, being willing to experiment with new approaches, reflecting on experiences and attending professional workshops. Being equipped with a wide range of pedagogical approaches will help teachers prepare themselves to teach students with differing backgrounds and needs.

Audience Member 2: Pedagogical issues are not necessarily due to a lack of joy of teaching or a lack of appropriate approaches. Teachers could be weighed down by accountability issues and demands posed by a highly demanding curriculum as well as high stakes examinations.

A/P Ng: Excessive examinations could affect the joy of learning, but the removal of examinations does not necessarily make learning enjoyable. Lowering standards may not make learning enjoyable either. But what we try to do is to provide students with different pathways to success, based on their different abilities and aptitudes. Each pathway can still be challenging, but we hope students will enjoy that challenge more, because it is a pathway more suitable for them. We remove some mid-year examinations in schools so as to free up time for students to be engaged in interesting learning.

Questions for reflection
1. Do you enjoy learning? Why? What is “joy of learning”?
2. How can we make lessons more enjoyable for students without compromising standards or watering down the syllabus?

Reference
EMPOWERING STUDENTS WITH NETWORK LITERACIES FOR A GLOBAL AGE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR SUZANNE CHOO

11 January 2019, SEMINAR, NIE, SINGAPORE

Abstract

One dominant characteristic of the twenty-first century is the increasing interconnections among people and cultures in the world. Increasingly, traditional forms of literacy must be supplemented by newer forms that recognize the importance of dialogue and socialisation via mediated networks. In this talk, I highlight the significance of network literacies that involve the ability to make use of social networks via technology and media to extend learning. In the classroom, this necessitates designing environments that provide students with opportunities to participate in emerging knowledge networks offered on the internet as well as engage in forms of participatory culture where learning occurs through dialogue and community-building. Using examples from my own classroom, I discuss the kinds of pedagogical strategies that contribute to students’ active engagement and sociocultural sensitivities as they develop dynamic networks with one another.

Dr. Choo began her talk with a quote, “We often teach the way we were taught” and asked the audience to reflect on how they were taught when they were young. She continued to share with the audience the rules she remembered from her secondary school days. Some of the rules included, for example, “no talking aloud in class”, “bags to be placed on the left side of the desk”, and “skirts to be four centimeters above the knees”. Teaching has since evolved with society’s greater liberalization and modernization. In the past, teachers were regarded as the authority in the classroom and students hesitated to question the teacher. These days, student voice has been increasingly emphasised. In the literature classroom, for example, students are now encouraged to not only consider what the author or the teacher thinks but also what they think. This student-centeredness is a result of a shift from reproductive pedagogy to progressive pedagogy. Reproductive pedagogy originated around the 18th and 19th centuries in response to the need for mass education. Teaching was didactic and teacher-centered with a focus on the mastery of content and skills. Teachers were trained as technicians to master the science of teaching. Progressive pedagogy emerged later in the 20th century and was inspired by philosophers like John Dewy. Teaching has become more student-centered and is characterised by the use of constructivist approaches to cultivating active
learners. Today, pedagogy is not only considered as the science of teaching, but also the art of teaching. Teachers are no longer trained as technicians, but artists who design environment for learning.

The 21st century is characterised by globalisation and increasing interconnection among people and cultures around the world. These new developments require us to think about how to move beyond the idea of student-centered learning. While the concept of student-centeredness is still important, we should also understand that we are part of a macrocosm rather than a microcosm. Our students are connected to multiple networks and find affinity with other communities in the school, society, and larger global community. We need to make students aware of these connections rather than allow them to live in an insulated bubble.

Dr. Choo argued that one of the key goals of education in the 21st century is to disrupt the focus on self and help students see beyond the self to engage with diverse others. This is the essential premise underlying the philosophy of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is an ancient Greek term, which refers to citizen of the world. Developing students as “citizens of the world” has become especially important because most of the problems our students are going to encounter today and in the future will be transnational. This means that problems cannot be solved by actors from one nation alone but requires joint efforts by actors from multiple nations. Transnationalism affects not only the way we solve problems but also the production of goods and services. These take on increasingly transnational characteristics as they may be designed, assembled, and manufactured in different parts of the world. We now live in a so-called “global village”, “flat world”, or “networked society”, both virtual and physical.

Consciousness of globalisation is also observed in the mission statements of schools. Back in the 1980s, the mission of most schools focused on national goals to educate citizens who can contribute to the development of the economy. Today, the goal of schools is to develop citizens of the world. For example, the mission statement of a Japanese high school Dr Choo visited is to develop students who are generous towards differences. Here, the focus is on character building and the mission also has an intercultural emphasis. The idea of being a citizen of the world in this school is encapsulated in being generous to difference. Such an ethical ethos is especially important in today’s world where there are rising instances of fundamentalism, extremism, and xenophobia.

The increasingly interconnected world of today requires us to think about how to incorporate both progressive and cosmopolitan pedagogy. It is not a choice of either-or, but expanding progressive pedagogy to include cosmopolitan pedagogy (Choo, 2018). Firstly, we need to think about how student-centered learning can also encompass other-centered learning. Students need to be encouraged to think about how they can contribute to helping and defending others in the world, especially those who are marginalized and discriminated. Secondly, teaching should not be just about exposing students to what is familiar and comfortable to them, but also about engaging them with unfamiliar cultures. For example, the teaching of literature in Singapore used to center on western texts like Shakespeare. But today, there has been a push to include literatures from around the world. The topics that students discuss in the Literature class may also include issues that may be discomforting to students such as human trafficking. While some school leaders and parents are concerned about exposing young children to such topics, others strongly believe that teaching literature should empower students to engage with the realities of globalisation. Thirdly, education should shift away from centering curriculum around the interests of students. We often stress ideas such as “do what interests you” and “follow your heart” to students. While these ideas are good, it is important to ask what our eventual goals are. If we say that the goal is for students to develop critical and creative thinking capacities, we need to consider whether these may have undesirable outcomes. It is well documented that terrorists, for example, have applied criticality and creativity but for destructive ends. Therefore, education should have a cosmopolitan and ethical end, which encompasses equipping students with dispositions such as empathy, hospitality, justice,
and responsibility for others. The goal of education should not be overly focused on the flourishing of students as an end in itself, but should also enable the flourishing of students so that they can contribute to the flourishing of others in the world.

Therefore, an important goal of education today is to develop 21st century cosmopolitans who are locally and globally engaged. Some of the key dispositions of cosmopolitans we need to emphasise along 21st century skills include empathy, hospitality, and critical-ethical thinking. These can be translated into the classroom through the development of network literacies. Network literacies involve reading, writing, and other meaning-making practices that occur through social and digital networks. They prepare students to: (a) engage in a participatory culture where learning occurs through dialogue and community building (Jekins, 2009); and (b) participate in knowledge networks offered by the Internet (Miles, 2007).

There are three important dimensions to developing network literacies: (a) establish networks, (b) expand networks, and (c) critique networks. Dr. Choo shared with the audience some authentic examples from classrooms on how to develop network literacies in the three dimensions. First, establishing networks involves creating opportunities for students to work with peers from other cultures to solve global issues and build friendships in the process. Teachers could help students establish networks through collaborative projects. For example, in a project she led, students from three schools in Finland, Singapore, US collaborated on a nine-month project to propose solutions to wellness problems faced by teenagers. They interviewed students, parents, and teachers in their schools and shared the data with their peers in other countries to work out solutions. They communicated online through the use of a variety of apps to brainstorm, collaborate, and share ideas. For example, they used Google Drive for sharing documents, Zoom and Skype for video conferencing, Whatsapp and Flock for chatting, and collaborating. The students collaborated on the project virtually and only got together for the final presentation in Finland. The project showcased how technology enables students to work across cultures with little cost.

Second, expanding networks involves identifying limitations/boundaries in students’ understanding and then disrupting this by expanding knowledge networks. Recognizing that many students grow up in a bubble and are not very aware of the world around them, teachers in one school designed a ten-week unit titled, “the unseen and unheard” to expose students to challenges faced by migrant workers in Singapore. The teachers used short stories, news articles, and authentic poems written by migrant workers. They also invited representatives from migrant workers non-profit groups to talk to students and took students to exhibitions. The assessment of the unit involved interviewing a foreign domestic worker and creating art, poem or skit to depict his/her experience. Another example of expanding networks is a unit on “power and discrimination”. The teacher felt that although the students read about politics in the news, they were unable to make connections between the text they studied in Literature, Animal Farm and real-life politics. The teacher introduced the book, Shooting Kabul for comparison and asked the students to explore conflicts in the Middle East, conduct research about the Taliban in Afghanistan as well as discrimination faced by Muslims after 9/11. This helped the students expand their understanding of key global issues concerned.

The third important dimension of developing network literacy is to critique networks. There are a lot of digital tools available for this purpose. For example, the use of digital tools such as Voyant can help students analyze underlying structures and networks in texts. No matter what subject we teach in the classroom, we can push students to investigate visible and invisible networks of globalisation and follow network trails. For example, there was a recent documentary about the production and sale of bananas by CNA. While we all eat bananas, few of us understand the process of banana production including the involvement of multi-national corporations and how certain distributive practices may disadvantage local farmers. To help students understand the process, we can ask questions like “Who is part of the invisible networks of production?”, “Who benefits the most from the
process?”, and “How do multinational corporations influence local culture and practices?”

Another example Dr Choo gave was from a US classroom where the teacher was teaching the text, A Tale of Two Cities. The teacher pushed students to go beyond the text and critique what was happening in the current world and society. The students were asked to consider Charles Dickens as a social critic who wrote about poverty in his time. They had to compare him to contemporary social critics in America who were also writing about poverty and social justice. Students then discussed the influence of social critics writing on poverty today. This activity allowed the students to participate in building knowledge networks through collaborative researching and writing.

To conclude the talk, Dr. Choo emphasised the important idea of going beyond examinations. She prompted the audience to think about questions: What do we prioritise in curriculum and assessment? Despite the pressures of high-stakes examination, should we focus on:

- individual mastery or collaboration?
- communicating one’s ideas or dialogue?
- demonstrating knowledge or demonstrating an understanding of others and empathy?
- engagement with texts and abstract concepts or real-world global engagement?

The question is whether traditional and cosmopolitan approaches to teaching and learning can co-exist? How can they be equally prioritised? These are the important questions we need to consider in future research.

Questions for reflection

1. What strategies can be adopted in your own teaching context to help students develop network literacies?
2. Do you think there is any conflict between developing students’ network literacies and the current exam-oriented system? How do we address potential conflicts?

Reference


WHO ARE SCHOOLS FOR? LEADERSHIP IN THE AGE OF PISA
PROFESSOR FRANCES SCHOONMAKER
11 JANUARY 2019, NIE, SINGAPORE

Abstract
Looking at snippets from two kindergarten classes in a highly ranked school district in the U.S., separated by three decades, offers a concrete example of challenges to educational leadership. Teaching dispositions and skills necessary for democratic citizenship has been replaced by an approach that treats both teachers and students as a deficit and in need of remediation. This reflects a worldwide trend in which the curriculum of schools is driven by international benchmarking as nations link schooling to the development of competitive economies, leaving little room for anything other than technical-functionalist approaches to teaching and learning. The talk urges educational leaders to take a more global view, engage in international debates on issues driving schools, connecting these to deeper theoretical and conceptual issues. It urges educational leaders to ask what is left out in international benchmarking and to consider implications of new technologies for educational leadership and policy.

Introduction
Professor Schoonmaker began her teaching career in the 1960s. She later became a Professor at Teachers College, Columbia University (TC) before retiring in 2009. Over the years, she said she observed a shift in schools and classrooms in the United States, from places for children to places where national agendas are enacted with scripted curriculum and standard outcomes. This disjunction gained prominence when she volunteered at a kindergarten classroom after her retirement.

A kindergarten teacher’s schedule: Thirty years apart
Professor Schoonmaker recalled that when she started her career as a classroom teacher, the classroom was organised around the main purpose of helping children to acquire the skills and dispositions to be a full participant in a democratic society. By the time she retired from TC, there had been a shift. She was well aware of the shift. In fact, it was one of the reasons why she left the public school classroom and went into teacher preparation.

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1 Based on a video presentation.
at the university level. She wanted to try and make a difference. She observed the shift from her students at TC, as they talked more and more about having less and less discretionary power because of scripted curriculum and required standard outcomes. But she did not realise the starkness of the disjuncture between schools as places for children and schools as places where national agendas are acted out, until she decided to be a volunteer in a kindergarten classroom after retiring from TC.

The context was a school district on the East Coast of the US that has a long history of teacher development through curriculum development. In the 1980s, when Professor Schoonmaker was teaching in this district, “Schools are for Children” was a slogan that guided curricular practice. Teachers were encouraged to create conducive environments for learning, and teacher development was facilitated through curriculum development workshops with the help of subject specialists. Every summer, teachers would participate in these workshops. The kindergarten curriculum was developed in this way, and it was consistent with a long, progressive tradition of kindergarten as a place for children to explore the world. She proceeded to describe a typical kindergarten classroom that would be a big spacious room full of children’s work. It would be defined by areas of interest, such as big hollow blocks, smaller building blocks, a housekeeping area, a place for art and music and drama, a place to explore maths, science and the like.

Thirty years later, Professor Schoonmaker began volunteering in one of the “best” elementary schools in the very same district, where she worked half a day, two to four times a month for the entire school year. She chose to adopt an “under the radar” approach. This meant that she said nothing about her past experience in the school district and at TC. Her job as a volunteer included drilling children on sight vocabulary (as each week every child had a packet of six to eight words to be memorised by the end of the week), sometimes cutting out materials to be used at a later date, and assisting in the daily activities such as snack, clean-up, and writing exercises. This experience allowed her access to first-hand data which in turn enabled her to examine and compare the daily schedule of a typical kindergarten teacher in 1980 and 2012.

The comparison began with an observation of how the classrooms were decorated (see Table 1). The classroom in 1980 was clearly children-centred with areas purposefully set up for interaction. On the other hand, the 2012 classroom, looked more like a highly prescriptive, teacher-centred first or second-grade room. In fact, if you enter the 2012 classroom, there was no evidence that a child had ever been there, as it was orderly and beautifully laid out, with none of the work done by children.
### Table 1  A typical kindergarten classroom in the United States: 1980 versus 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1980</th>
<th>2012</th>
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| **Decoration inside the classroom** | The classroom is organised around the theme of Community Helpers, focusing on the post office. The children have turned the large hollow blocks area into a post office. The theme is depicted in almost every other work area - for example, an “office” has been added to the housekeeping area along with a typewriter. All around the room there are pictures of post offices, mail delivery and the like as well as pictures and ‘letters’ written by children. | The room (which was half the size of the room in 1980) is decorated with commercially made materials: the alphabet, days of the week, number line from 1-10 and slogans (e.g. “The more you read the better you read,” - a slogan is the mantra for the year). A small shelf is filled with boxed materials ranging from manipulatives, puzzle sets and tinker toys to puppets. The classroom is dominated by three spaces:  
• the rug area - where teacher-directed activities occur  
• table area - where children have assigned places  
• a reading and listening area - where the teacher guides the children in reading basal readers |
| **Presence of children’s work** | Children’s paintings and drawings are everywhere, some of them reflecting the post office theme and others the words they are learning through word banks, many of which now include words related to postal services. Paintings and drawings line the hallway and appear in books created for the classroom library. | There is no evidence of children’s work, drawings or paintings. |

The curriculum in 1980 focused on arousing children’s interest in themes related to language arts, social studies, maths and science, and allowed children to progress at their own pace, while the one in 2012 was intent on preparing kindergartners for a better future by equipping them with the basic skills. To further draw out the differences, Professor Schoonmaker offered a detailed explanation of the typical morning schedule adopted in each classroom (see Table 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arrival</strong></td>
<td>Table Top Activity (children choose a short-term activity, e.g., cube blocks, puzzles, book)</td>
<td><strong>Arrival</strong></td>
<td>Children are told to look at and be ready to answer the teacher-posed question for the day [e.g., “What is a word that begins with D?” “Get a book to read at a group table.”]</td>
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<td><strong>Announcements for whole school</strong></td>
<td><strong>School-Wide Announcements</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Circle Time</strong></td>
<td>Calendar, children share (things they want to talk about), a listed schedule of events for the day (Table Top, Meeting, Work Time, etc.), story related to “Work Time” theme (tied to language arts and/or social studies, themes are expressed by books, pictures and labels in all activity areas). [Some classrooms have Teacher Aides and/or volunteers who assist the teachers through customised needs]</td>
<td><strong>Circle Time</strong></td>
<td>Teacher-directed, calendar, behavioural objective (children will write the letter D and find words that begin with D), question of the day, letter from the teacher, letter/sound bag, direct instruction in phonics [Volunteer drills children on sight words or other activity as assigned]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work Time</strong></td>
<td>(1 hour) Children choose areas of the room (hollow blocks, small blocks, housekeeping, writing, math, science, library corner, games, crafts, painting) in which they “work/play”. The teacher moves to various areas to stimulate talk, writes down what children are saying (or make notes), guides them in counting, classifying and/or labeling things. About half-way through work time, the teacher invites children who wish to add vocabulary to a word bank to sit with her individually and confer with her.</td>
<td><strong>Directed writing Activity</strong></td>
<td>(15 min.) Directed writing activity. Teacher demonstrates the correct technique and children practice together as the teacher directs. [Parent volunteer assists, making sure children are listening and following teacher directions.]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Circle Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Circle Time</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poetry or songs are used to gather</td>
<td>Teacher reads a story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>children to the circle. Children and</td>
<td>[Parent volunteer cleans up as necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>teacher meet to talk about what has</td>
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<tr>
<td>been done in ‘Work Time’. Conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td>or stories children have dictated to</td>
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<td>teacher or parent volunteer are shared.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Studies/Language Arts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Centers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher directed activity focusing on</td>
<td>Teacher directs children to the activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>the social theme (story, sorting</td>
<td>she has chosen for them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>artifacts, or a direct experience, e.g.</td>
<td>• Reading group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Helpers: The Post Office).</td>
<td>• Directed activity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conducting a visit to the school office</td>
<td>• Directed craft</td>
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<tr>
<td>to find out how mails are received and</td>
<td>Children may choose a free play activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>distributed at the school.</td>
<td>when they finish their work (small</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children draw pictures and write or</td>
<td>blocks, puzzles, math, manipulative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>dictate sentences a day before the</td>
<td>materials, puppets, painting, library</td>
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<tr>
<td>visit. Teacher taps on these experiences</td>
<td>books)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>during a social studies lesson. The</td>
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<tr>
<td>teacher will review the activity (the</td>
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<tr>
<td>visit to the school office) and teach</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>concepts of beginning, middle and end.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch, Outdoor Play</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch, Outdoor Play</strong></td>
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A cursory look at the two daily schedules at different points in time revealed a shift in the school district’s commitment. In 1980, the school was for children, while in 2012, the goal was for children to achieve certain benchmark standards. Interestingly, this district has maintained its top ranking in national comparison charts. This shift in focus was seen by Professor Schoonmaker as a trade-in of real greatness for an illusion of greatness in exchange for government funding. The emphasis of education has changed from teaching the dispositions and skills necessary to be successful participants in a democratic society, to teaching the skills that children need to pass benchmark tests. Teachers of today are in a rush to meet or exceed test scores of other schools in the state. Internationally, similar shifts are observed, which reflects a worldwide trend in which the curriculum of schools is driven by international benchmarking as nations link schooling to the development of economic competitiveness.

Food for thought

While there is no such thing as culturally neutral knowledge, technology enables nations to immediately “cherry pick” best practices from high performing countries, which are culturally embedded. Benchmarks have come to define the most important things that people should know and do. How can we address the notion of “Beyond Tests” under such circumstances? Professor Schoonmaker posed the following thought-provoking questions:

- What is the role of educational leadership in broader intellectual debates on goals of education at the national and international level?
- How do we help the public and our governments critique these goals? Can we, as educational leaders and scholars, tap on our theoretical, epistemological, and historical resources to help the public and government engage in critical assessments?
- What are the systems of knowledge and reasoning that are applied to justify international comparisons? And how can we elevate such comparisons and question them in ways that are helpful?

More importantly, she asked: As educators, what perspectives can we offer nations, so as to help them think about the broader and deeper human dimensions of development? To what extent are systems like PISA westernised and how do they contribute to the colonisation of the mind?

Finding spaces for resistance

Before concluding up her talk, Professor Schoonmaker encouraged the audience to invent creative ways to carve out spaces within the school system that they serve. She expressed confidence that the educational leadership at NIE and at TC are well-positioned to be at the forefront of such endeavours. While acknowledging schools’ role in serving national development, she emphasised that education is a human activity, an activity of both the head and the heart. Educators need to capture the heart of young people and the communities they serve, in order to open the door to their minds. In her concluding remarks, Professor Schoonmaker called on the audience to call out practices that stifle the human spirit, and offer alternative ways of thinking that are within the current paradigm. There is also a need to broaden existing paradigms. By doing so, all children will be served and nobody needs to feel that he or she has failed to meet the demands of kindergarten education.
Questions for reflection

1. Based on your personal experiences and observations of the educational context that you are most familiar with, has the focus of education shifted over the last few decades? Is the situation in Singapore similar to what has occurred in the United States?

2. In an era when benchmark tests are widely embraced and high-stakes examinations dominate teaching in many national contexts, how can educators and parents both open the world to children and equip them with the necessary skills to pass benchmark tests?

Reference

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