

Address by President Yuk-Shan Wong, BBS, JP

Pro-Chancellor, Council Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Graduates, Colleagues, Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is my third congregation as President of HK Open University. But for those of you who are gathered here for graduation, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, this is a day like no other. I share in your joy. I celebrate your success.

The Open University is unique. One way in which this university differs from other conventional universities is in the diversity of our graduates. We are in essence two universities in one. Our full-time programme is no different from other peer institutions, while our part-time programme defies the barriers of time and space to enable aspiring working adults to learn and earn a degree anytime, anyplace, and at their chosen pace.

Today we also welcome four outstanding leaders to join the OU family. As recipients of our honorary doctorate, they represent a treasure trove of knowledge gained from decades of service to the community. They have much to teach us about our community and how we live together. I am proud to introduce them into our academic hall of fame. They are:

Prof Chang Hsin-kang: a biomedical engineering scholar by profession but an arts and culture evangelist at heart. Prof Chang is a rare breed of education leader who masters both the beauty of science and the elegance of arts and culture, and devotes himself to the advancement of both.

Mr Edward Cheung Wing-yui: a veteran solicitor and a top-notch accountant who has contributed immensely to the promotion of good corporate governance. His sterling record of public service covers education, youth work, and welfare services. His wise counsel and the warmth of his personality have nurtured the growth of OUHK throughout his 19 years of service on our Council.

Mr Michael Suen Ming-yeung: a household name as the former Secretary for Education before his retirement. He was a consummate civil servant who knew how to get along with everybody, regardless of politics. He had held various senior portfolios and was instrumental in Hong Kong's smooth transition to Chinese sovereignty.

Mrs Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai: who distinguished herself as the three-time President of the Legislative Council and the first woman elected to that position. She served our legislature with judicious impartiality and distinction, earning the respect of lawmakers from different political camps. She has also served as chairperson of the Board of Education and the Education Commission.

Diverse as their background is, these four leaders share a common passion: the passion for education. In their presence and yours as graduates, this is the perfect forum to begin a public dialogue on education.

In 2000 Hong Kong rolled out a bold education reform in which I was actively involved. Today, 16 years later, with the benefit of hindsight, we are entitled to ask what it has achieved, where it has fallen short, and what are its unintended consequences.

To begin with, the education reform was nothing less than what its name suggested: it was a major surgery, not a facelift. With a clear objective in mind, the education reform sets out to nurture in our students four clear attributes: to enjoy learning, strong in communication, daring in innovation, and unafraid of commitment. It seeks to reduce students' examination pressure, enhance their critical thinking, broaden their learning space, and diversify school operation model. The reform has brought sweeping changes and advancement to our education landscape that significantly enhanced our capability to cope with the changing world. For example, by introducing a four-year curriculum, it has redefined undergraduate education across Hong Kong, broadening students' horizon, enriching their learning experience, and enabling them to go on overseas exchanges. By merging two secondary school public examinations into one, it reduced examination pressure. By focusing on the four key learning areas of IT, reading, civic and moral education, and project learning, it has livened up the classrooms, adding pleasure to learning. The benefits to our students are there for all to see: students of today are self-confident, opinionated, dashing and daring, polished when presenting what they think and persistent when fighting for what they believe in.

But at the same time, some unintended consequences of the reform have shown up as rapid global changes have outpaced our reform, and also due to mutation in implementing the reform agenda.

Looking back, when the reform was launched, it drew a mixed reception. Critics denounced it as a blatant attempt to mold the thinking of our future generations. The pro-establishment camp embraced it as the right prescription for what ailed our system. Now, 16 years later, you would be amazed that their roles have been reversed: the former critics have become supporters, and the supporters have become vocal critics. The former supporters now blame the reform for producing a curriculum that has radicalized some of our students, who deny their own national identity and even disown their country. The former critics, on the other hand, have leapt to the defense of the reform and oppose any attempt to change and improve it.

What then is the proper verdict? In my view, any reform's effectiveness must be measured against what I regard as the three key objectives of education:

First, the test of competence.

To function in today's interconnected world, students need multiple competences: these include language competence, communication competence, quantitative reasoning and, IT competence. While our students are generally competent in quantitative skills and presentation, I must point out that being quick to criticise doesn't necessarily mean independent thinking. At times it only shows up the lack of a broad perspective, a hallmark of independent thinking. Their social postures are at times the result of peer pressure rather than independent thinking. As an educator, I would love to see amongst Hong Kong's youngsters a greater moral courage and intellectual ability to defy the herd mentality and to exercise independent thinking.

The second test is knowledge.

A person strong in competences but without a solid knowledge base is like a high-speed computer without the necessary software programme and datasets to run any meaningful analysis that generates insight. Does our teaching offer students enough core knowledge? Many educators give a definite "no", and put the blame not on the design of education reform but on the implementation of the subject called "Liberal Studies". The original intent of liberal studies was to provide a broad-based core subject that straddles different disciplines so that students would be exposed to different branches of knowledge. The idea

came about because at that time it was generally agreed that our secondary school students were channeled into either the arts stream or the science stream at too young an age. As a result they may not even have found out their own study interest before specializing into the arts stream or the science stream.

The solution was therefore to introduce an integrated core subject that would provide arts students with a bit more science, and science students a bit more arts. Such an integrated subject can have – and should have – a well-structured curriculum with required reading in key science texts and also great books of arts. In Chinese, we call it 「文中有理，理中有文」. But things went astray, and such a broad-based integrated subject underwent an unexpected DNA change. Today this knowledge-based core subject has become current affairs-driven and at times news media-based, with neither a structured curriculum nor required textbooks. Students very often engage in shallow debates on the issues of the day without the benefits of in-depth research and time-proven theories and principles to guide them in analysing contentious issues with rigor and discipline.

The third test is value.

Strong competences supported by a solid knowledge base are a necessary but insufficient condition to turn our student into a Whole Person. For that to happen he or she must be anchored by values, which give us a sense of right or wrong, good or bad, worthwhile or worthless. A society without the bonds of common core values would descend into chaos or even violence.

What common values do we share? I would list, among other things, social justice and harmony, human rights, freedoms of expression, national identity, consistent rationality, respect for the views of others, the rule of law, and the rejection of violence as a means of persuasion.

These days we hear a constant reference to our common core values. But these are sometimes empty slogans invoked to justify the selective violation of some other core values. Some teachers lament the erosion of our core values because the inquiry-based liberal studies programme is at times void of any value and moral judgement. The ability to determine what is right and what is wrong is no longer a key learning outcome. Students are encouraged to argue their case without the moral compass of right or wrong. As long as they can come up with a superficially sound argument, their case would carry. Basic issues of right or wrong thus become different shades of grey, leading to the misguided belief among some youngsters that our core values such as non-violence can be trampled on.

Weakening of Science Education

There are other unintended consequences of the education reform. One unfortunate after-effect is that at a time when STEM education is increasingly the key driver of innovation and growth, our secondary schools are not giving science students the solid grounding in science to prepare them for the rigor of science and engineering schools at universities. In the past, science students had to take the compulsory subjects of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, and it was common for senior form students to take nine or even ten subjects in public examinations. With the good intention of easing examination pressure on students, the education reform reduced the number of subjects through consolidation. Today, to maximize their chances of university admission that is based on the results of five best subjects, many science students take just one science subject instead of three.

This explains the common complaint among science and engineering faculties at universities across Hong Kong that fewer and fewer students are ready to tackle the demands of STEM disciplines at the tertiary level. Fortunately the four-year undergraduate programme provides an opportunity to remedy the science deficiency.

Another major concern is Chinese history, which has now become a marginalized subject, with only 10% of candidates taking it in this year's DSE exams. Those who know little history are quick to put the blame on the subject itself, saying Chinese History is boring. The fact is, like any other subjects, Chinese History can be as exciting as it can be boring. It all depends on how it is taught and learned. Clearly the teaching of this essential subject in our schools leaves a lot to be desired, as evidenced by the growing alienation among our youngsters towards our mother country.

I am glad to see that the Education Bureau has responded to public demand for corrective measures by launching a public consultation on revising the history curriculum for secondary schools. We look forward to the outcome of the revision.

Education reform is a work in progress. The world has changed and is changing rapidly, and our education system should keep pace with it. With the experience and insight from 16 years of implementing the reform, the time has come for an overall review of the Year 2000 education reform. We owe it to our future generations to ensure that our schools will nurture our students into competent, knowledgeable, and principled young adults with a noble character.

Thank you.

黃玉山教授致辭

副校監、校董會主席、各位嘉賓、畢業生、同事、家長、先生和女士：

這是我作為香港公開大學校長所參與的第三次畢業典禮。但對於在座每位畢業生而言，今天則是永留記憶的大日子。經過長時間的努力，終於學有所成，取得學位。這份喜悅，是無可替代的。能夠分享您們的喜悅，本人深感榮幸，並為您們感到非常驕傲。

公大在香港是獨一無二的大學。與其他較傳統院校不同，我們畢業生的背景甚為多元。在操作上來說，我們可以說是兩所大學合而為一：公大的全日制課程與其他院校並無二致，而我們的兼讀制課程能使學員跨越時空限制，能夠隨時、隨意、隨心，按照自己的需要和選擇的步伐取得認可學歷，在事業上邁步向前。

今天我們也非常榮幸和高興，有四位傑出人士加入公開大學的大家庭。他們作為榮譽博士榮銜的領受人，在所屬範疇對社會貢獻良多，實為我們效法的楷模。他們四位為：

張信剛教授：為生物醫學工程之傑出學者，同時亦為文化藝術的大師級宣導者。他從容駕馭科學及文藝：在兩者之間出入自如，境界超然；此外，於高等教育亦領導有方，貢獻宏大。

張永銳先生：張氏於法律及會計專業知識淵博、經驗甚豐，對香港企業管治亦貢獻至鉅。其投入的公共服務涵蓋眾多範疇：教育、社會福利以至青少年服務。張先生多年扶持公大發展，盡心盡力，成績有目共睹。在服務校董會十九年期間，對香港公開大學的發展起著關鍵作用。

孫明揚先生：孫氏服務政府多年，榮休前執掌教育局，其盡心作市民公僕，深受敬重。此外，他以人為善，待人以誠，政壇內外，多年廣結善緣。對香港回歸中國，順利過渡、孫氏作出了重大貢獻，讓我們能夠看到持續的繁榮安定。

范徐麗泰女士：范太為三屆立法會主席，亦是首位女性擔任此職。在任期間，處事公正、取態持平，深得不同政黨之議員的尊重。此外，范太先後出任教育委員會及教育統籌委員會主席，對教育事業建樹良多。

雖然四位榮譽博士榮銜領受人之背景不盡相同，但均對教育事業擁有不移熱情。今天，他們的撥冗蒞臨，大家深感榮幸；而今天亦是各畢業生完成重要學習階段之際，實在是的大好機會開展一次有關教育的思考。

在千禧年，香港特區政府推行了一項大規模的教育改革，而本人適逢參與其中。十六年後的今天，正好讓我們回顧一下：教改的成果如何，當中有甚麼不足之處，是否有些發展和變化是我們始料未及的。

當年的教改並非小修小補，而是相當大刀闊斧的改革，教改開宗名義提出“樂善勇敢”的方針（樂於學習，善於溝通，勇於承擔，敢於創新），主張減輕考試壓力，開拓學習空間，鼓勵多元學習，培養思考能力。這些改革，為香港的教育發展既帶來進步，而又有著深遠影響，莘莘學子因而得以更好地裝備自己，面對瞬息萬變社會的各種要求。舉例來說，大學本科改為四年制，使課程涵蓋面更加廣闊，期間學生可以到外地交流實踐，豐富學習體驗、拓闊視野。此外，將兩個公開考試減至一個，能有效減輕學生的考試壓力。透過專注於資訊科技、從閱讀中學習、德育及公民教育，以及專題研習這四個「關鍵項目」，課堂學習比以往生動活潑，而且充滿樂趣。學生的得益亦顯而易見：他們充滿自信，對事物抱有自己的看法，並勇於發表己見，無畏無懼地捍衛自己的觀點。

當然，教改亦有未盡完美之處。一方面，全球的變化日新月異，教改中的若干舉措現已顯得落後於時代；另一方面，教改的某些具體內容也出現了一些「異化」的現象。

回望過去，當教改推行之初，各方反應不一。有批判者認為課程改革目的是企圖限制下一代的思維方向；而支持者則認為有關措施是解決教育制度缺失的良方。十六年過去了，有趣之處是兩派陣營的立場似乎倒轉，過往的批評者變成今天的支持者，而過往的支持者，今天卻抨擊這個當初認為甚佳的教育改革，認為新課程使一些學生變得激進，並導致他們缺乏國民身份認同感，甚至疏離自己的家國。過往的批判者現時卻處處維護有關的課程，認為不應改動。

兩種看法孰是孰非？本人認為，任何的教育發展及改革都應以三個教育目標作為測驗成敗的準則：

首先，是學生綜合能力的檢測。

要在今天全球化聯繫緊密的世界中取得成就，學生需要具備多元能力，包括語文、溝通、運算、科技等能力。我們的學生一般能夠掌握數字運算，匯報也做得有板有眼，但我希望指出，未經深思的批評並非一定就顯示具備獨立思考能力。許多時蠻加批評，可能只證明一己思維的狹窄，只能管窺事情的一二；而這正是缺乏獨立思考的明證。他們的姿態許多時顯示其囿於群眾壓力，未有明辨是非，不能進行獨立的深層省思。作為教育工作者，我希望香港的年青人有道德勇氣和全局的思維，作出獨立的思考而非隨波逐流。

第二項檢測，是學生是否具備所需知識？

空有能力但缺乏堅實的知識基礎，就有如一部高速電腦未有匹配的軟件程式及數據庫，當然無可能進行有用的分析以達致真知灼見。我們的教育是否能為學生裝備所需的核心知識？許多教育界人士對此問題都不持正面看法。他們認為責任並不在於教改的設計，而是其中「通識教育科」實施不當。該科的設計原意是為學生提供廣博的核心學科知識，使其可以應用於不同科目所學，進行跨學科的整合和應用。不少人認為此舉非常合理，因為當年學生不是選修文科、便是選修理科，經渭分明，所以過早分流、並非良策。事實上，許多學生在入讀文科班或理科班多時，仍未清晰自己的真正興趣所在。

當年的計策就是引入一科綜合學科，使文科生也能學多一點科學，而理科生對文科亦可以有所涉獵。理論上，這種整合的綜合課程可以而且應該包括科學和人文的內涵。正所謂「文中有理，理中有文」，就是這個道理。但事與願違，今天的通識科出現了意外的「變異」：這個以廣博及綜合知識為本的學科變質成為以時事新聞為本的學習，課程結構鬆散，且無指定教科書可資參考。在實際的課堂中，學生往往只能作浮光掠影式的討論，既無理論亦無原則作為基礎，故此在分析議題難免流於表面。

第三項檢測，是學生價值觀的培養。

有了知識基礎，加上解難的能力，是全人教育的必需條件，但並非足夠條件。培養學生正確的價值觀是全人教育重要的一環。正確的價值觀，能夠讓我們分辨善與惡、是

與非。一個社會，如果沒有一套全民皆守的共同價值，就會禮崩樂壞、甚至暴力四起。那麼，我們有何共同的價值觀？且容我在此等略舉幾項：社會公義、和諧共容、人權、言論自由、法治、國民身份認同、理性、尊重他人意見，不可使用暴力等等。

今時今日，我們不時都會聽到人們論及香港人的「核心價值」。但討論許多時未免流於空洞，不少人似乎選擇性地強調某項價值，目的就是以此為理由去違反其它的共通價值。有些教師承認正因為通識科過分強調爭辯，而以價值和道德為基礎的明辨是非、分別對錯，已不再是學習主要目標。這樣做法是鼓勵學生在沒有道德與價值指導下進行爭辯。連大是大非的問題，亦可以因觀點與角度而變成灰色地帶。於是，連「非暴力」等核心價值，亦可以選擇性地任意踐踏。

科學教育未得充份重視

教改還有一些始料不及的結果。STEM 教育，亦即科技、工程和數學教育，現時越益成為推動創新和發展火車頭，但這個時候我們的中學教育卻未能裝備學生，使他們能夠擁有堅實的科學知識基礎，而這些基礎知識是升讀大學進修理工科必需的基礎知識。過往，中學的理科生必修數學、物理、化學和生物，而且中五學生往往會在公開考試中選修九科甚至十科。教改減少學科數目，以減輕學生考試壓力，本意很好。但今時今日，不少中學文憑試考生為了提高入讀大學的機會，卻策略性地只選修一科理科。使理科的基礎變得薄弱。

這解釋了為何不少香港的大學教師投訴科學及工程學系的學生缺乏堅實的理科基礎知識，未能應付理工科的要求。可幸的是，四年制大學有著額外一年的時間，可以讓有志求學問的學生彌補理科根底的不足。

中國歷史是另一科頗受關注的學科，甚至有輿論認為該科已被邊緣化。本年的中學文憑試，只得一成的學生應考此科。亦有批判者認為學生不選讀中史，是因為中史科內容本身沉悶所致。事實上，中史和其他學科一樣，可以非常沉悶，亦可趣味盎然，端乎如何教、如何學。毫無疑問，中史教育有急需改善之處，從我們有些年輕人與中國日益疏離可見一斑。

最近教育局積極回應訴求，就中國歷史科課程的修訂展開了公眾諮詢。我期望見到修訂的正面成果。

教育改革是香港仍需努力的工作。在瞬息萬變的世代，我們的教育亦需與時並進。教改實施了十六年，箇中我們得到珍貴的經驗和啟發。現時是總結經驗，檢討教改的最好時刻。進一步完善我們的教育制度，讓我們的青年能在知識上、能力上、和價值觀念上都得到充分的裝備，成為學養豐富、品格高尚的公民，是我們這一代教育工作者的責任。

謝謝各位。