



# **EDUCATION: ARE WE BEING RESPONSIBLE?**

**Kai-ming Cheng**

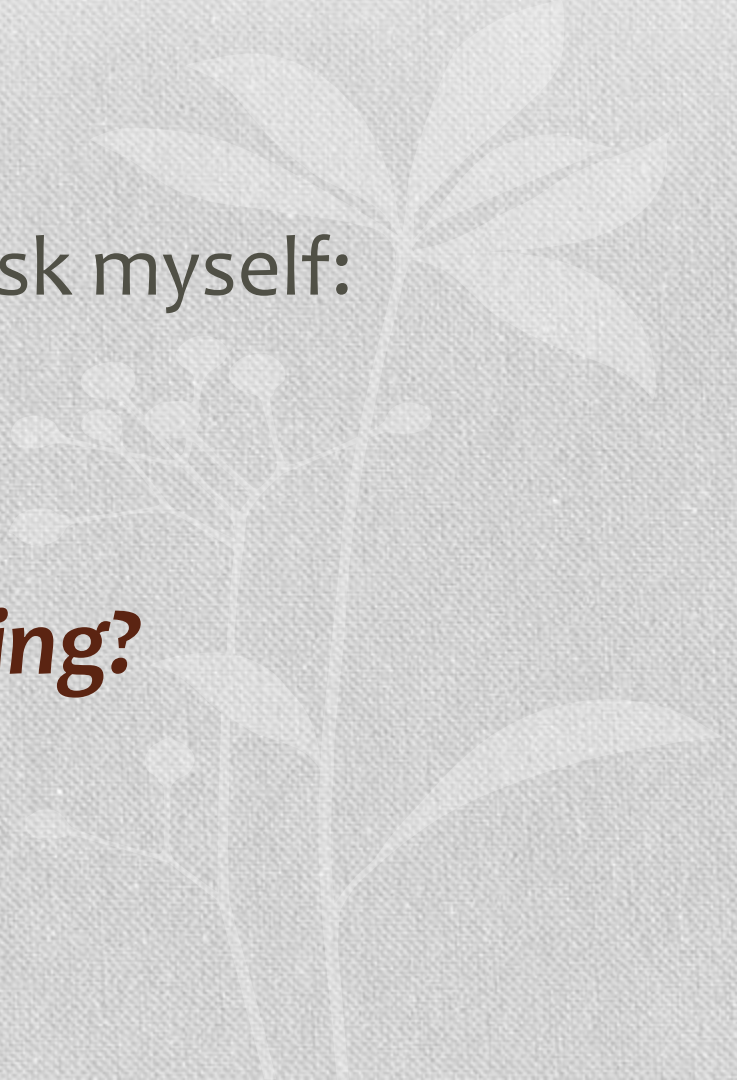
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UNESCO HK

10 November 2021

As an educator, I constantly ask myself:

***Do we know  
what we are doing?***



My usual first page:

The **Ultimate Aim** of Education  
is **Students' Future**

The **Core Business** of Education  
is **Students' Learning**

My usual first page:

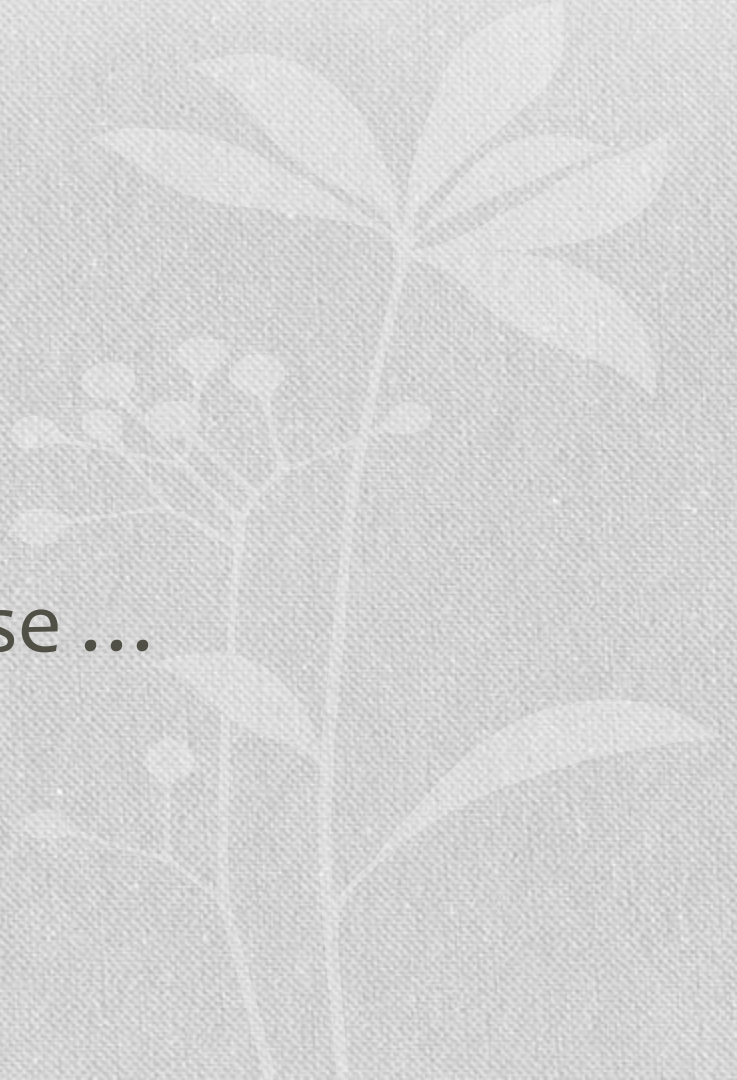
The **Ultimate Aim** of Education  
is **Students' Future**

Macro:  
Society

The **Core Business** of Education  
is **Students' Learning**

Micro:  
Individual

Let us look at a case ...



# Typical career path, 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- John
  - BScEng (1971)
  - Graduated in Electrical Engineering
  - Appointed to the Department of Engineering
  - Promoted to a very senior position
  - Stayed in the Department until 55
  - Enjoying early retirement

- One credential
- One job
- One occupation
- One organization

一紙文憑  
一技傍身  
一勞永逸  
一帆風順  
從一而終



Assumption, 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Training for **specific occupations**

Engaged in a **lifelong career**

So that they contribute to the economy.

Hence, education is about **manpower preparation**.

Turning human beings into **human resources**.

Hence,

For society

Education is for **economic growth!**

For individuals

Education is for **employability!**



Therefore,

*Put it positively*

Education is to provide credentials  
as tickets to the job market.

*Put it negatively*

Students are tortured until  
they confess to the manpower requirements.

Therefore

*Kindergartens are for School Readiness*

*High Schools are for College Readiness*

*Colleges are for Career Readiness*

However,  
Let us look at the reality ...



Today, ...

Study-work Mismatch  
Frequent Change of jobs  
Change of Occupations  
Slashers  
Intermittent Jobless  
Early Retirement  
Fluctuating Incomes  
Insecure Positions

## Example: Work-Study Mismatch (HKU)

Medicine 0%

Law **25-30%**

Engineering **35%**

.....

## Example: Jobs /Life

UK 2006 **13**

US 2006 **10.4**

Australia 2016 **15**



# Typical career path, 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- John
- BScEng (1971)
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- Appointed to the Department
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- Stayed in the
- Enjoyed

**That belongs to the past!!!**  
**此情不再!**

- One cre
- One jo
- One
- Or

一紙文憑  
一技傍身  
勞永逸  
一帆風順  
從一而終

## Assumption, 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Training for **specific occupations**

Engaged in **lifelong career**

So **people's concept about education**  
still stays with that.

Hence, **education is about manpower preparation.**

Turning human beings into **human resources.**



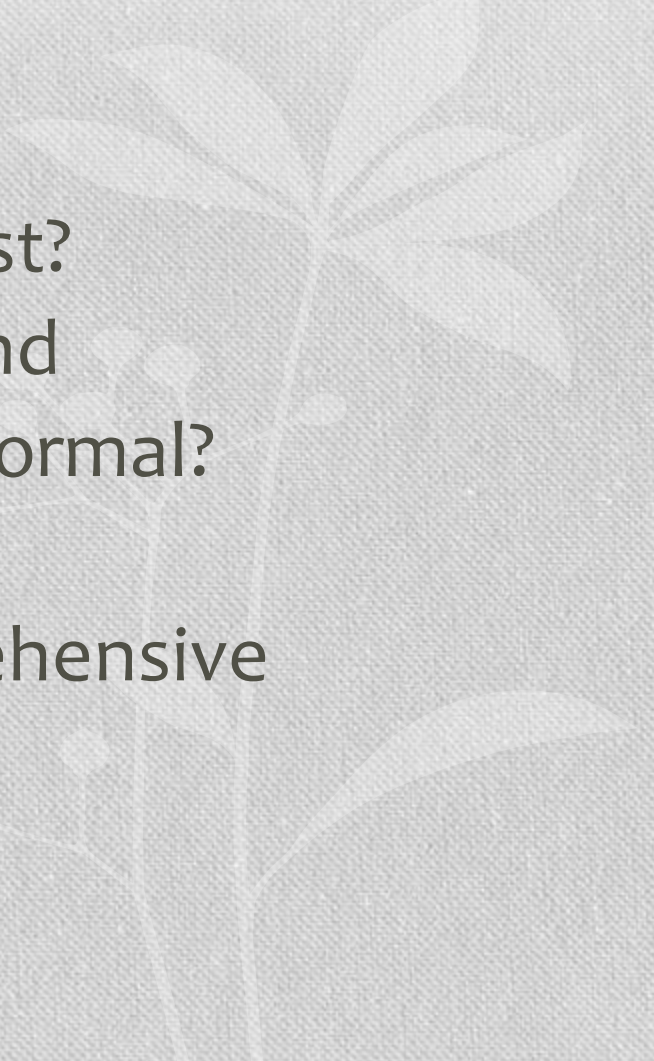
Still in the literature ...

*Kindergartens are for School Readiness*

*High Schools are for College Readiness*

*Colleges are for Career Readiness*

**Are we being Responsible?**



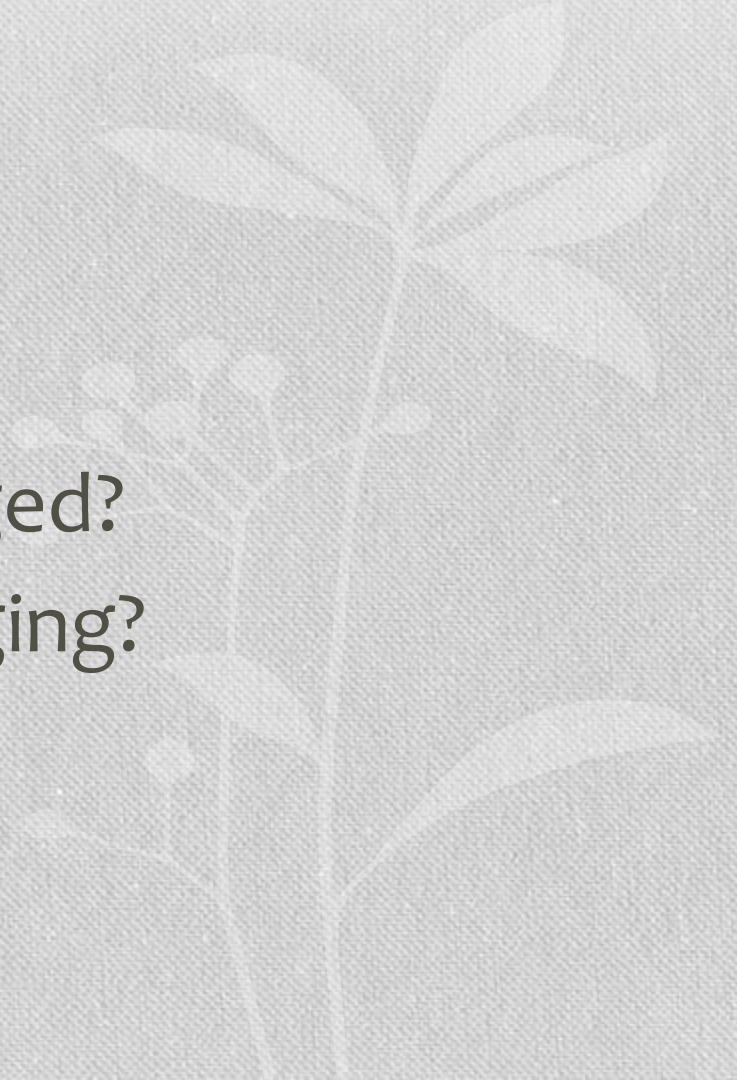
But, is this going to last?  
Is it just abnormality, and  
things will come back to normal?

The change is rapid, comprehensive  
and **irreversible**.

The **New Normal!**

Let us look at ...

What have changed?  
and are still changing?





A middle-income, middle age  
Hong Kong male, home.



滿足需要?  
Satisfying Needs?

大量生產?  
Mass Production?

規模效益?  
Economy of Scale?

營造慾望  
Creating Desire

個別化  
Customized

少量多款  
Less of More

單位小而脆  
Smaller & Fragile Units

Hong Kong:

Business Registrations – 300,000

>99% under 100

>94% under 20

>87% under 10



Fragmented Society

Free but Insecure Individuals!

One Goal  
One Path  
One Hope  
One Step at a Time

No Choice  
Limiting!  
Holding you back!

***Do you want our kids  
to be trapped in this?***



階梯：可望可即 Ladder





Squiggle 繞迴：海闊天空

New Options  
New Choices  
New Interests  
New Directions  
New Hopes

Exploring!  
Turning new pages!

*Only then our kids  
could survive and thrive!*



Squiggle



Ladder

# Implications for Education

Indeed

We are preparing students for a ladder.

Education itself is a ladder.

Students are trained to climb the ladder!

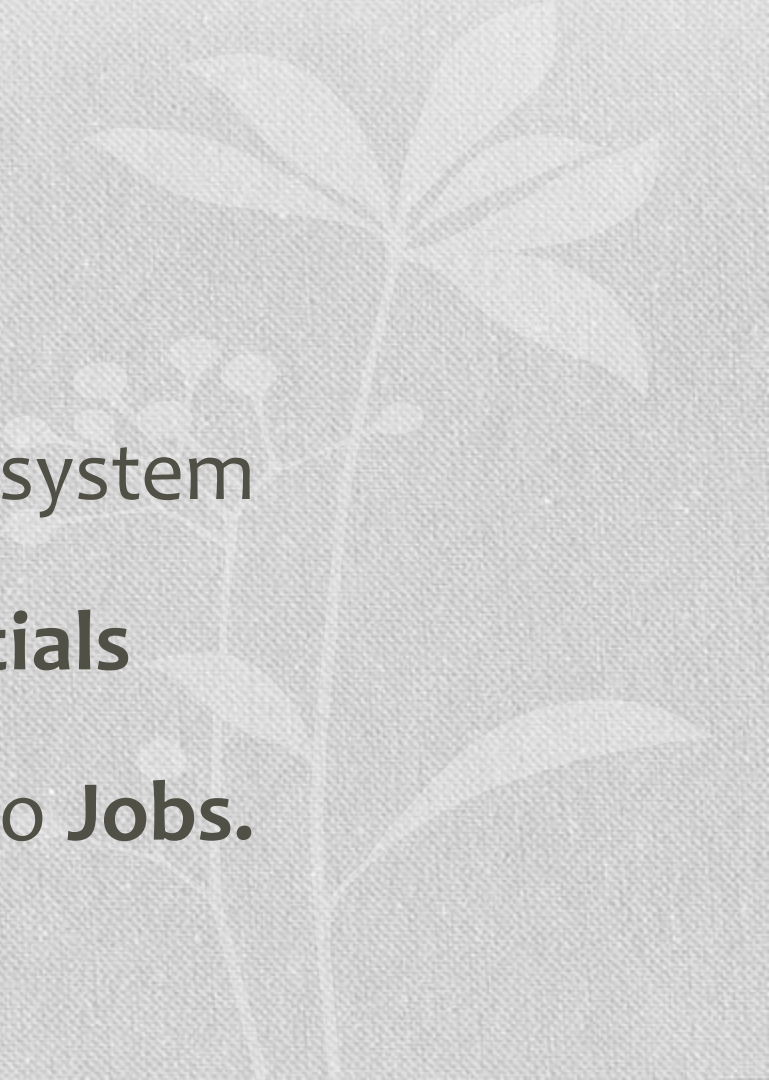
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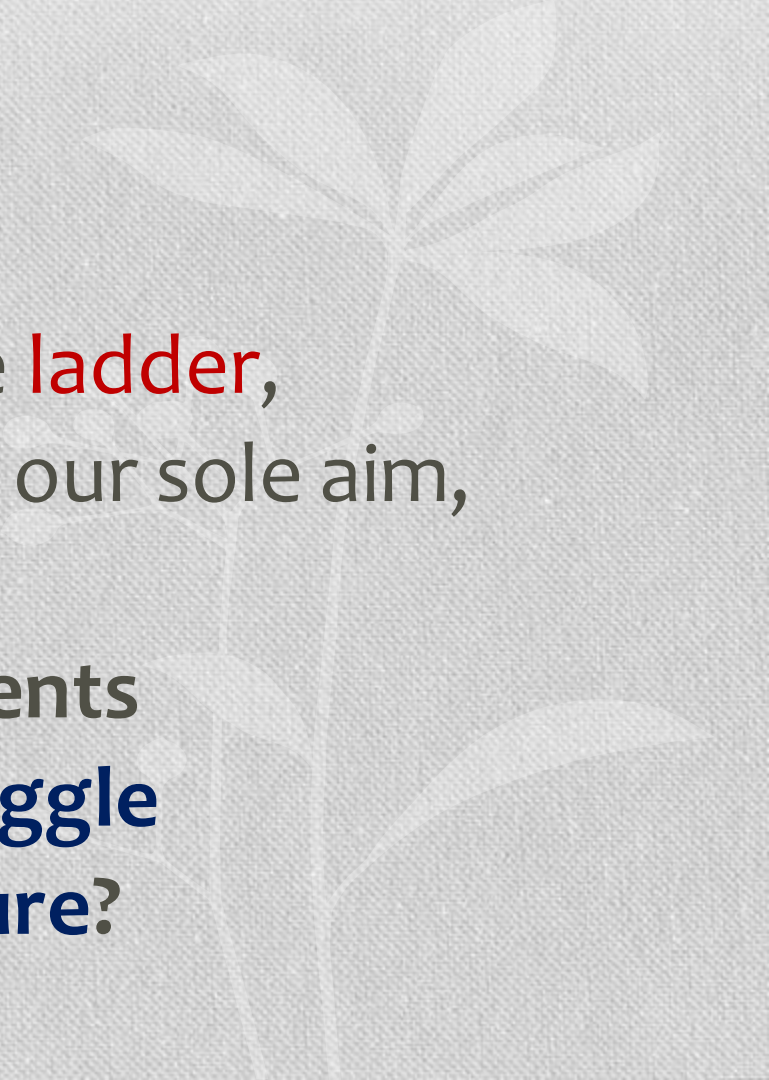
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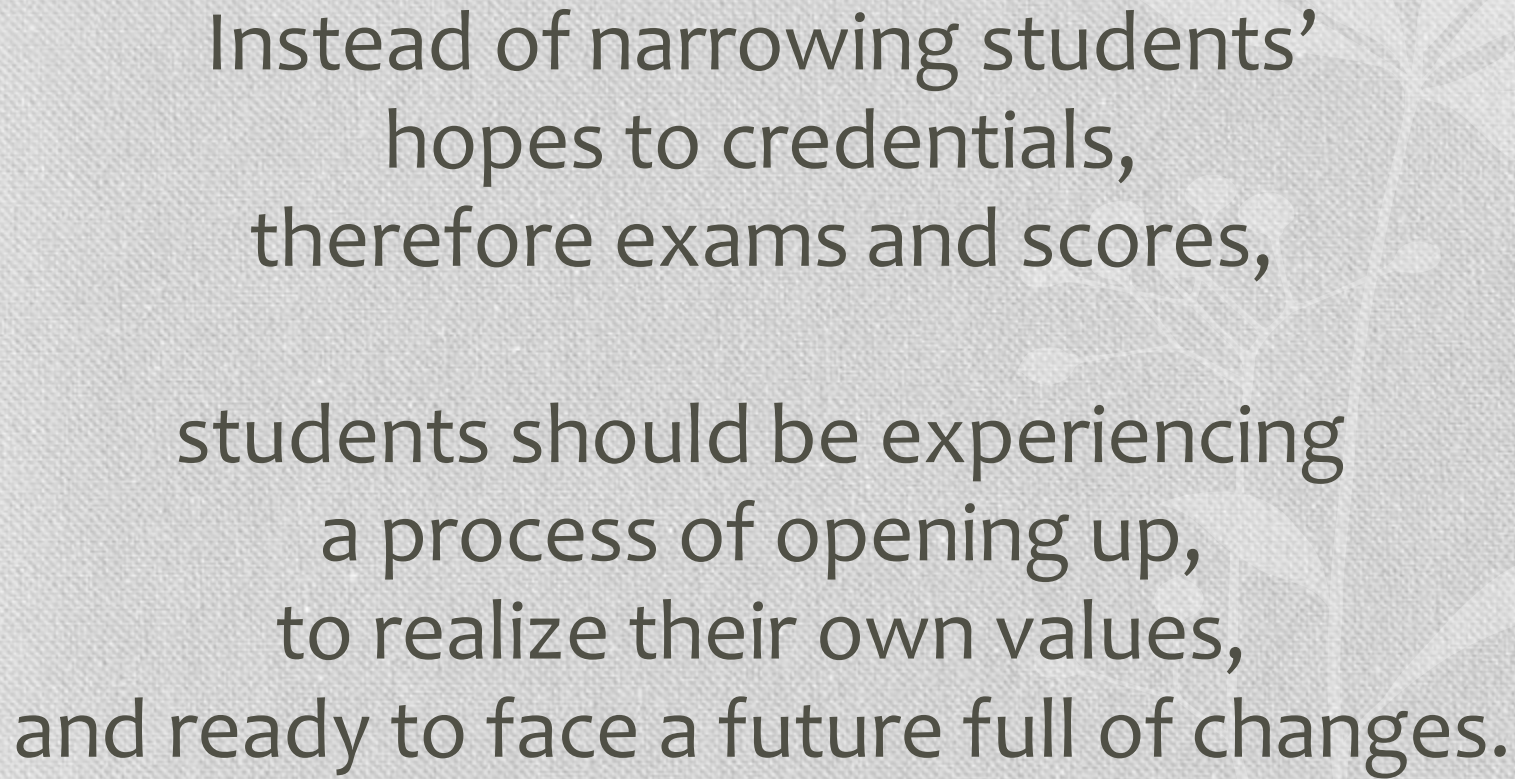


All the way,  
Education is a closed system  
aiming at **Credentials**  
as admission tickets to **Jobs.**



Of course  
we cannot change the **ladder**,  
but if climbing the **ladder** is our sole aim,

how can our students  
survive in the **Squiggle**  
and thrive in **Future**?



Instead of narrowing students'  
hopes to credentials,  
therefore exams and scores,  
students should be experiencing  
a process of opening up,  
to realize their own values,  
and ready to face a future full of changes.

Hence,

Climbing up

or

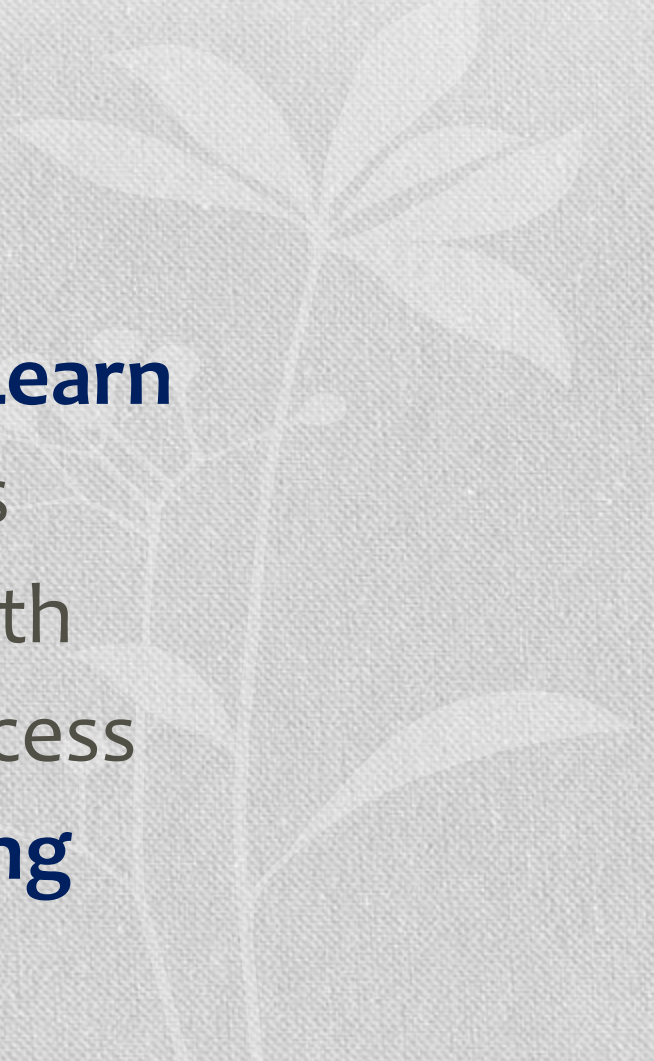
Opening up

Credentials

or

**Learning**





They have to **Learn to Learn**  
set their own goals  
choose their own path  
and see their own success  
**Self-directed Learning**

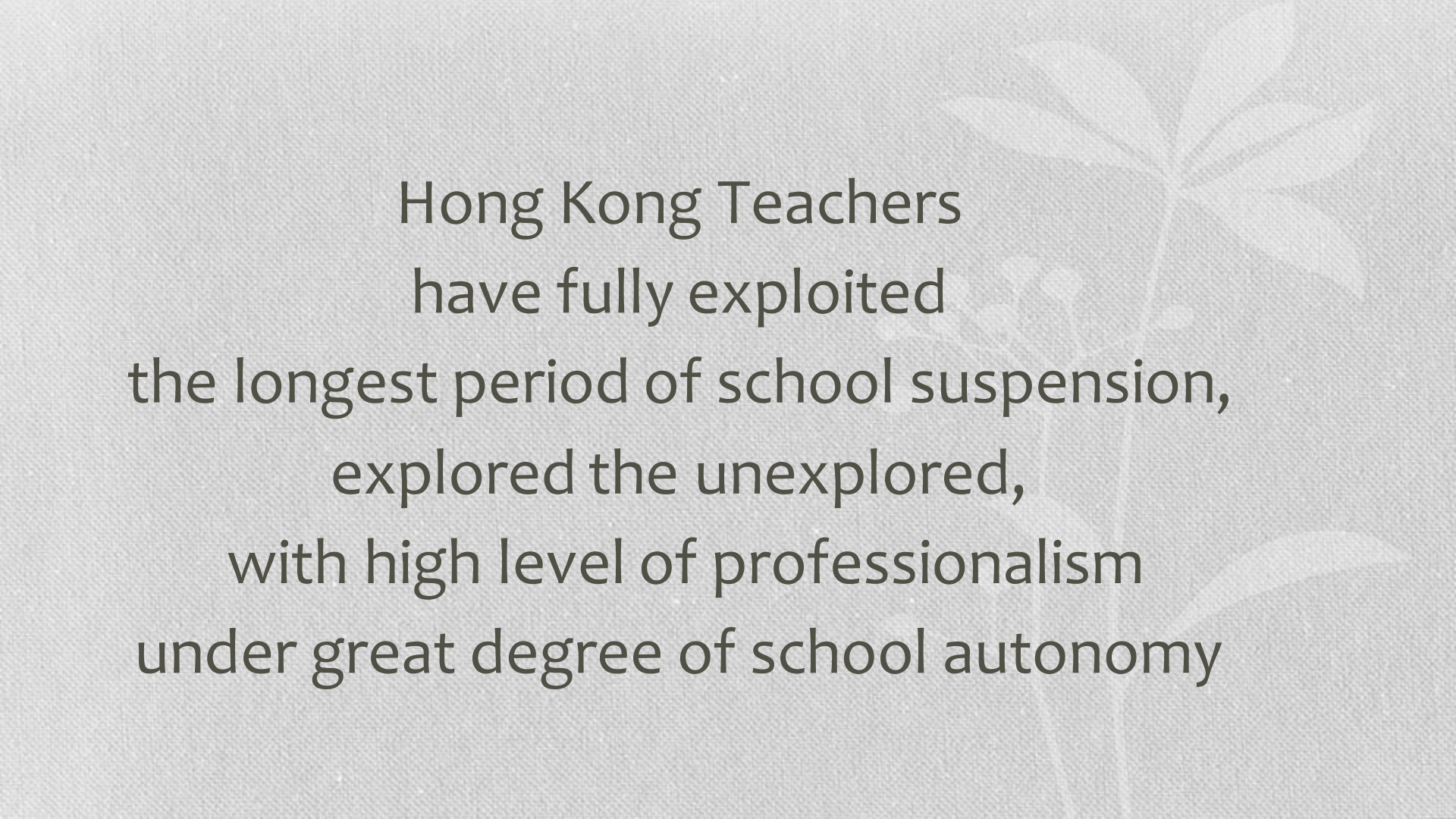
It will be a  
**Long Journey !**

Yet,  
we have to start somewhere,



Ironically,

The Pandemic,  
School Suspension (18months)  
unfortunate and unprecedented it is,  
provides opportunities  
to test out the possibilities  
for fundamental changes.



Hong Kong Teachers  
have fully exploited  
the longest period of school suspension,  
explored the unexplored,  
with high level of professionalism  
under great degree of school autonomy



Salute!  
to Hong Kong Teachers!

What they are doing are  
Prelude to the Future!



It's a Test for Educators,  
but do we have a Choice?

Otherwise,  
***Are we being responsible?***

Thank you!

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