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**The trend of de-politicization in the Liberal Studies curriculum in Hong Kong**

Submitted by:

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A research dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work and that it has not been previously submitted to this University or other institution in application for admission to a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

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## Abstract

Liberal Studies as a senior secondary subject in Hong Kong is now facing a dilemma between its educational aim of cultivating self-determined individuals and an appeal for its de-politicization. The aggravated dissonance regarding the subject's future development arouses this study to find out whether signs of de-politicization can be detected in its curriculum and textbooks, which could fundamentally alter the essence of this subject.

To investigate whether there the tendency of de-politicization is reflected in Liberal Studies, content analysis is conducted on the official curriculum documents and selected textbooks. A framework of four types of de-politicization is developed based on the conceptions of de-politicization from political science and schools of civic virtues from citizenship education. These four types, *reduction*, *selection*, *deflection* and *neutrality*, are identified with their characteristic and values promoted, and subdivided into more specific forms corresponding to various modalities of issue framing.

The results of the content analysis indicate that a neutral approach to de-politicization with maximal presentation of values is found widely used to address issue enquiry. The inconsistency between the politicized orientation in the curriculum and the de-politicized interpretation in textbooks is believed to be the result of deficient guidelines and exemplification on how moral reasoning can be made in the curriculum and the textbooks.

## Introduction

### 1. Background

As part of the broader context of political transition from British colonial rule to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of China, Hong Kong has witnessed dramatic changes in its education curricula. In terms of political socialization, it illustrated traits from a de-politicized, de-contextualized and abstract disposition to be more politicized and contextualized (Morris & Chan, 1997). Before 1984, the Education Department implemented severe control over school curriculum, textbooks and activities thought to be political in nature, with a need identified to educate the public to cope with the local system of government; after the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed in 1984, there was a shift in educational needs and approaches to nurture rational, active and responsible citizens (Leung and Ng, 2004). A number of studies have noticed such trend, looking at various subjects, including History, Civic Education, Social Studies, and Liberal Studies (Morris & Chan, 1997; Lo, 2000; Vickers & Kan, 2003). However, from 1997 onwards, a re-depoliticization tendency has become evident with an official affirmation of nationalistic education by the HKSAR Government. To promote loyalty based on a homogeneous sense of Chinese culture and morality, sensitive political issues were left out of the school (Morris, Kan & Morris, 2000). The cultivation of national identity was further stressed in the proposal of a new subject, *Moral and National Education*, in replacement of the previous civic education. It was accused of brainwashing and thus triggered massive objection and protests, compelling the government to shelve its commencement (Leung & Yuen, 2012; Information Services Department, 2012).



Amid the sociopolitical changes and concomitant controversies of political socialization in education, Liberal Studies (LS) is one of the disputed subjects that have experienced undervaluation, promotion, criticism and re-evaluation to find its place in the senior secondary curriculum. The subject shares similar contents and goals with citizenship education, designed to provide a more contextualized and politicized curriculum, but centering the aim of developing critical thinking skills within a degree of controversy (Morris & Chan, 1997). Incorporated into six modules, politics-related contents take up a larger proportion in LS learning than traditional disciplines, from political institutions to democratic virtues, rule of law, and multiplicity of Hong Kong people's identity, put forward in an issue-based approach to address existing conflicts in society. The rationale is that the ability of critical thinking is a required quality of contemporary citizens to make sense of social complexity and understand others' viewpoints, so as to make self-informed judgments.

Although it has been more than two decades since its introduction in 1992, LS was not a mandatory core subject in the public examination until 2009 (Morris & Adamson, 2010). Previously, it was an optional subject merely opened in slightly more than 10% of schools, and they were entitled to greater discretionary power to decide on knowledge and issues to be taught (Morris & Adamson, 2010). The limited scale of implementation and prevailing tendency of *status quo* to teach it in less "radical" ways made LS less conspicuous outside the field of education. Mandatory popularity of Liberal Studies, nevertheless, has brought it to the foreground of public discussion, when it is able to impose more prominent influences on political literacy of the younger generation. It is now facing a dilemma between its intention of cultivating self-determined individuals and an appeal for its de-politicization, criticized by some pro-establishment councilors for promoting values at odds with authority's aim to

foster patriot citizens (So, 2007; Cheung, 2014). This contention was further ignited upon active participation of some secondary and university students in vigorous civic movements and support of some LS teachers. The climax, Occupy Central Movement in 2014, came at a time when the Education Bureau (EDB) was conducting the New Academic Structure Medium-term Review, with LS included to be assessed. It was queried to instigate hyper-politicized culture undesirable to the HKSAR Government. Dissidents in Legislative Council proposed to reduce and modify political elements covered in the LS curriculum, and to develop publically agreeable syllabus and textbooks (Leung, 2014). The aggravated dissonance regarding the subject's future development triggers my interest to find out whether signs of de-politicization can be detected in the LS curriculum and textbooks after the medium-term review, which could fundamentally alter the essence of this subject.

## **2. Purpose of the study and research questions**

Despite ongoing controversies globally and locally on the kind of citizenship education our students should be exposed to, few studies could be found centering LS, due to its uniqueness to Hong Kong and the rather short time span after its promotion in the education reform (Morris & Adamson, 2010). Even though analogy can be made to citizenship education, the intrinsic inclination towards criticality and multiplicity makes LS distinct from traditional civic education we understand. In-depth analysis into this subject, one supposed to be politicized and liberating, is valuable not only to shed light on the future development of LS, but also to bring more insights into types and manifestations of de-politicization in education, applicable to other humanistic subjects. For these reasons, I conducted this content analysis study to examine types and features of de-politicization in the

LS curriculum documents and textbooks. The study addresses research questions as following:

- 1) Does the intended curriculum demonstrate any inclination towards any type(s) of de-politicization?
- 2) How do the textbooks interpret the curriculum and present the political contents?
- 3) What values are verily promoted?

In this essay, a framework of de-politicization typology is first developed based on literature review on the conception of de-politicization and differentiation of schools of civic virtues. Then it is applied in the content analysis of the LS curriculum documents and three selected textbooks on the module Hong Kong Today. In the findings, these materials are assessed from the four types of de-politicization respectively. While the result indicates prevalence of the neutrality approach to de-politicization with maximal presentation of values, there is further discussion on its possible influences on teaching and learning, and the reasons behind.

## Literature Review

Considering the lack of research in Liberal Studies as well as its similarity with citizenship education in sociopolitical aspects, reference is drawn to some studies of the latter, so as to facilitate the development of a framework of de-politicization for the subsequent content analysis.

### 1. What is "politics" referring to?

In the first place, analyzing de-politicization entails clarification of what can be regarded as "political" contents, the object of de-politicization. So far there have been a number of studies looking into political education in different societies, mostly in civic education and history, but not yet a consensus on a clear and publically accepted scope of its coverage. Kerr (1999) found that a variety of issues were touched upon in citizenship education of different societies, including pluralism, ethnic diversity, tolerance, social cohesion, individual rights and responsibilities, social justice, national identity, and many else. In a study on a junior secondary subject Economic and Public Affairs in Hong Kong, So (2007) parsed citizenship education into *citizenship knowledge* (political faculties such as government structure, constitution and electoral system), *other core knowledge* (social issues) and *civic virtues* (values such as respect for human rights, loyalty and patriotism, and rule of law). Ng (2010) made a step further to recognize political and civic knowledge, intellectual skills, participation skills and political attitudes to be the "core components of political socialization in responsible citizenship and a democratic society" (p. 52). Although it is inconclusive what "should" be included in political education, it is noteworthy that political

literacy comprises not merely factual knowledge of politics, which has been well recognized in our common perception of education, but also intellectual skills and values for certain political means.

## **2. Definition and characteristics of de-politicization**

We can now come to the notion that the term de-politicization could be understood beyond the mere idea of reducing political elements in presentation. Instead, the attempts of de-politicization can be overt or subtle.

Such phenomenon is broadly studied in political science. According to Burnham (2001), de-politicization is a governing strategy to remove the political character of decision-making from individuals. Wang (2007), who looks into the issue from the lens of party-state polity, echoes that individual autonomy is undermined in de-politicization. In his framing, it is a tendency that individuals are directly or indirectly denied of their freedom and dynamic roles in political participation, with public discussion silenced and decision-making restrained to the small circle of governance and elites (Wang, 2007). He summarizes three main trends in de-politicizing societies: proceduralization, neutralization and homogenization (Wang, 2007). Proceduralization refers to gradual stabilization of power structures within the government and among parties, and formalizing the order of participation. It is commonly observed in the development of procedural democracy. Neutralization, on the other hand, places unsolvable value conflicts into a field of minimal common interests so that congruence is stressed to avoid frictions from dissonance, leading to the subsequent phenomenon of homogenization in society (Schmitt, 1929, as cited in Wang, 2007).

Beveridge and Naumann define de-politicization through the contrast to

politicization, based on visibility of an issue (2014). Politicization is to render an issue to be unsatisfactory, unacceptable and in need of closure, by promoting it from the realm of necessity to the private sphere, then to the public sphere, and ultimately the governmental sphere (Hay, 2007, as cited in Beveridge and Naumann, 2014). De-politicization is, to the contrary, to downplay an issue from policy focus to be uncontroversial normality by making it less visible or invisible. It is regarded as institutional and discursive movements to restrict the visibility of an issue and reduce its importance in policy making, in which an inherent anti-politics ideology that seeks to preclude conflict is embedded (Beveridge and Naumann, 2014).

Based on these literatures, an essential idiosyncrasy of de-politicization is recognized central to its definition, discouraging individual citizens, who are supposed to be the fundamental subjects to constitute state's political activities, from engaging into decision-making of public affairs. Discussed in the realm of education, de-politicization can thereby be understood as a process of political socialization through manipulation of students' exposure to political knowledge, skills and values, so that they are discouraged to engage intellectually and/or physically in public affairs. It involves limiting one's capability, autonomy and sense of efficacy, to hold back the individual from decision-making and participation in social issues or to shape his/her preferences toward certain political ends.

### **3. Values and civic virtues**

Different from subjects of natural sciences, social sciences subjects are commonly considered to be less objective, in which predominant values and norms play important roles to determine what kind knowledge prevails in the curriculum and textbooks. Either inclusion

or exclusion of some political elements is associated with a preconceived set of values (civic virtues), such as obedience, deference, liberty or collectivism. It is grounded on authority's inclination toward its identified aims of political socialization to encompass preparation of the new generation to be "good" citizens. Traditionally, there is civic education charged with the responsibility of instilling a sense of national identity, loyalty to the nation state, and patriotism; while more recently, qualities of being independent and critical thinking, responsible, participating, democratic and multidimensional have been reiterated in educators' appeals for contemporary citizens (Leung & Ng, 2004). Such values reveal underlying qualities, political considerations and even hidden interests of the authority, which are exactly what political socialization is dedicated to. Moreover, LS as a cross-discipline subject within social sciences particularly recognizes values as significant as knowledge and skills in its core learning objectives, according to the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) (2007). Investigating what and how values are expressed can have marked impacts on the approach to this subject. Therefore, distinguishing different types of civic virtues can be helpful for the categorization of types of de-politicization.

There are three traditional schools of civic virtues for different forms of polity: liberalism, republicanism and communitarianism (So, 2007). The liberal model is concerned primarily with the creation of autonomous citizens "who can act towards supporting their own self interest", and thus demands education to enhance the basic level of neutral knowledge and skills needed for this end (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; as cited in Hoskins, 2013, p.26). Usually it advocates values neutrality, even though values of individualism and respect for personal freedom are implicitly indicated. Republicanism, however, emphasizes

active political engagement within the public sphere for realization of the common good. Thereby, not only are basic knowledge and skills required in education, but also values and attitudes should be made explicit on public spiritedness, solidarity and obligation for ultimate public good (Hoskins, 2013). Communitarianism also highlights the connection between individuals and the community, but focuses more on the collective well being based on people’s shared identity and interests. A nationalistic citizenship education agenda is presented under such rationale to maintain the order and unity of the nation state (Etzioni, 2011; Hoskins, 2013). In real practice, education curricula often contain a mixture of the aforementioned values, yet the variables of autonomy, social awareness and discipline are weighed dissimilarly by authorities in different societies, indicating diverging approaches to interpret citizenship in curriculum development. According to Kerr, there is a continuum indicating the extent to which citizenship is interpreted, from minimal to maximal levels (1999, p.12). In the context of political education, citizenship is usually in its minimal interpretation if there is a disposition toward de-politicization.

*Table.1 Citizenship education continuum (Kerr, 1999)*

Aspects	MINIMAL	MAXIMAL
Definition	Thin / narrow	Thick / broad
Interests to be promoted	Exclusive	Inclusive
Participator	Elitist	Activist
Teaching and learning approaches	Civics education	Citizenship education
	Formal	Participative
	Content-led	Process-led
	Knowledge-based	Value-based
	Didactic transmission	Interactive interpretation



#### 4. Types of de-politicization

Based on the conception of de-politicization and differentiation of schools of civic virtues, there can be four types of de-politicization synthesized to assist the textual analysis, according to different characteristics presented and values accentuated.

*Table 2. Types of de-politicization in education*

Type	Characteristics	Values promoted
Reduction	Reduce contents (knowledge & values) indiscriminately	Political apathy/ignorance; elitism; discipline
Selection	disproportionate presentation; selective contents; values-explicit partiality; distortion	<i>(Communitarianism &amp; Republicanism)</i> Patriotism & national identity; unity & solidarity; responsibility & individuality (in the sense of self-cultivation); law obeying & stability;
Deflection	Attribute problems to non-political or uncontrollable factors; de-problematize issues	<i>(Communitarianism)</i> Collective interest; harmoniousness; conflict avoiding; short-term/partly sacrifice for long-term/general well-being
Neutrality	Content-based (minimize value teaching); overload with multiple values	<i>(Liberalism)</i> Respect for personal freedom; neutrality & objectivity; personal autonomy; pluralism & mutual understanding

##### 4.1 Reduction

This is an approach comparatively more direct and overt in people's common

perception when mentioning the term de-politicization. In its simplest manifestation, the authority deliberately de-politicizes the curricula by compressing or eliminating political knowledge, controversial issues and values in students' learning experience. Different from the *selection* approach, which will be discussed in more details later, *reduction* stands for a general deduction of the volume of political contents, without differentiation of political orientations. In the education of Hong Kong, such approach was observed particularly during the colonial rule. According to Ng (2010), at that time teachers were strictly prohibited to do any form of political teaching in schools, and there was a lack of any democratic values and critical thinking skills in the content of Civic Education or Social Studies curriculum.

This type of de-politicization reduces the political awareness of people by undermining the visibility of issues. It promotes a disposition for passivity and even sense of alienation towards public affairs among citizens, termed as the anti-politics ideology by Beveridge & Naumann (2014). Politics is regarded as the task of small circle of governance and ruling elites, while other citizens bear no need to develop political literacy except for learning and obeying the established discipline.

#### *4.2 Selection*

De-politicization can also be achieved through selective or unilateral presentation of political contents. There is purposeful manipulation of political contents students are exposed to. It can be subdivided into 4 types:

- 1) Disproportionate presentation: showing opinions of different stances unequally in an issue;
- 2) Oriented presentation: presenting merely endorsed facts or formulating

guiding questions towards certain political orientation;

3) Values-explicit partiality: making explicit judgment or acknowledgement;

4) Distortion: overtly misinterpret realities

The stress on accepted values and ideologies in this approach leads to common criticism of bias and indoctrination. To take the post-1997 Hong Kong as an example, the HKSAR Government rendered stronger civil and social rights but weak political rights to the Hong Kong people, and correspondingly played down discussion of politically controversial topics in schools, stressing the significance of patriotism and national education (Leung & Ng, 2004; Fairbrother, 2005; Leung & Yuen, 2012). In addition, collectivism is commonly emphasized to justify state policies, which is also what it seeks to promote among the citizens. Based on the prevailing political ideologies of different countries, the values promoted can be various, such as democratic or authoritarian values. For countries like Japan, Korea, Singapore and China, they tend to instill some of the Confucian virtues in their citizenship education, such as tolerance and order (Kerr, 1999). On the whole, a level of social awareness is commonly directed to Republican and Communitarian values, including shared identity, solidary and unity, public interest, observation of the law, individual's role and responsibility as a social member and etc.

#### *4.3 Deflection*

*Deflection* is a type of de-politicization used mostly to deal with political controversies and conflicts, by attributing the dispute to non-political reasons or de-problematizing the issue to be a non-issue. When challenging questions arise toward the ruling authority, such as legitimacy, power distribution or social injustice, a de-politicized

response might try to ascribe the problem to factors outside the fields of governance and public administration, like economic, social or cultural causes, to sidestep genuine debates in politics; or to justify delay in political reform with economic and social imperatives (Maghraoui, 2002; Wang, 2007).

Communitarian values underlie this type of de-politicization, stressing collective interest, harmoniousness, avoiding conflicts, and temporary or partly sacrifice for general well being of the state in the long-term. The adoption of *deflection* in education and public discussion inherently leans to *status quo*, in which civic participation for changing is not desired.

#### *4.4 Neutrality*

While the three approaches above are comparatively more obvious in their intention to restrain individual's knowledge or awareness to engage in public and governmental spheres, the last type of de-politicization is subtler, sometime appearing to be politicized seemingly. Political contents are presented in a neutral and objective manner, through either minimal or maximal presentation of values, so as to avoid bias and indoctrination. The former emphasizes the learning of factual knowledge on political faculties, whereas value teaching is minimized or demonstrated neutrally if there is any. The latter, on the contrary, does recognize the necessity to teach about values, but try to include as many opinions as possible so that each can receive balanced attention. Such practice, nevertheless, can discourage students from making personal judgments and choices, if propped by an absence of skill training for political engagement.

Values in the school of Liberalism are promoted, including respect for freedom of

choice, personal autonomy to judge and act towards one's own interest, impartiality and objectivity, equality, and acceptance/tolerance of a diversity of values.

## Research Methods

Content analysis is adopted in this study to examine the curriculum and selected textbooks in the subject Liberal Studies. The curriculum is the most direct expression of authority's intention on political education, from which we can identify its scope of coverage and its political discourse in the articulation. The textbooks can serve as visible and convenient media to study how the LS curriculum is commonly interpreted and delivered.

The analysis concentrates on the module "Hong Kong Today" to make the comparison more focused and more efficient. As described in the curriculum, this module is designed to help students explore "the quality of life in Hong Kong, rights and responsibilities with respect to the rule of law, socio-political participation, and the identities of Hong Kong residents" (CDC&HKEAA, 2007, p.25). Therefore, it is considered to be the most politically relevant one among the six modules of LS.

For the curriculum analysis, the study looks into three official documents of LS, the *Curriculum and Assessment Guide* (CDC & HKEAA, 2007), its updated revision after the mid-term review (CDC & HKEAA, 2015), and the *Liberal Studies Curriculum and Assessment Resource Package* (EDB & HKEAA, 2013). The first two are different versions of the official curriculum, and the last one is a supplement to give more elaboration and examples. Comparison is first made between the framework of citizenship education contents developed by Cox, and learning objectives and contents in the latest LS curriculum. There are six domains identified by Cox to be necessary for political education, including civic values and principles, citizens and democratic participation, institutions, regional and national identity, peaceful coexistence and macro context (Bascopé, Bonhomme, Cox, Castillo &

Miranda, 2015, p.1177, see in Appendix I). Application of this framework in the curriculum analysis can effectively help us to assess the scope of coverage in LS, to see if there is anything left out from the curriculum. In addition, the two versions of the LS curriculum are also put together to compare with each other. Such comparison can help us extrude the amendments and review them with the formulated categorization of de-politicization. The unit of analysis is sentences and paragraphs. After reading through the official documents, direct quotations will be extracted for more in-depth analysis to find out what knowledge, skills and values are emphasized in the curriculum.

Three sets of LS textbooks have chosen for content analysis as well. Two of them are in Chinese and one in English. The selection of textbooks considers medium of instruction, popularity of use as well as variation in political propensity.

*Table 3. Textbooks selected for content analysis*

textbook A	<i>Liberal Studies in the New Century (2nd edition)</i> (《高中新世紀通識 (第二版)》), published by <i>Ling Kee Publishing Co., Ltd.</i> in 2014
textbook B	<i>Yaji Senior Secondary Courses: Liberal Studies (2nd edition)</i> (《雅集新高中通識教育 (第二版)》), published by <i>Aristo Educational Press Ltd.</i> in 2014
textbook C	<i>New Horizon Liberal Studies (2nd edition)</i> , published by <i>Hong Kong Educational Publishing Company</i> in 2015

Cox's framework of citizenship education contents is adopted here as well to be a checklist, to find out what political contents are presented in the textbooks while what are omitted. The unit of analysis is issue. Since LS is an issue-oriented subject, to see how is the curriculum interpreted, it is very important to examine what issues are selected, how they are framed, and what learning activities are designed to analyze them. Qualitative analysis is made based on the four types of de-politicization, and some of the issues are chosen as cases to study.

## Findings and Discussion

### 1. De-politicization through reduction

#### 1.1 In the curriculum

Through revision of the original LS curriculum (2007) and its latest version in 2015, there are few signs denoting any attempts to compress or eliminate the political contents in students' learning experience. It seems to be more of a politicized and contextualized curriculum, as developers' ambition is evinced clearly in the curriculum aims to construct students' knowledge in different levels of analysis, to cultivate skills of critical thinking and multiple-perspective analysis, to confront the controversies in perennial and contemporary issues, and to develop values as respect for pluralism, responsibility and conscientiousness (CDC & HKEAA, 2015, p.5-6). As it stresses:

*"Liberal Studies aims to broad student' knowledge base and enhance their social awareness through the study of a wide range of issues...the learning experiences provided will foster students' capacity for life-long learning, so that they can face the challenges of the future with confidence"*

*- Curriculum and Assessment Guide (2015), p.1*

To look closer how such aims are embodied in the guidance for the module "Hong Kong Today", the learning objectives and scope of contents are synthesized in Appendix II. Assessed with Cox's framework (Bascopé et al., 2015), the LS curriculum appears to be quite comprehensive, addressing knowledge, skills as well as values in learning objectives, and all the six domains of political education in learning contents.

As for the comparison between the 2007 and 2015 versions, modification can be



found in three places. Firstly, the section specifically dedicated to "adolescent's participation in community affairs " has been removed (CDC&HKEAA, 2007, p.22). Instead "adolescents" is incorporated as one of the interest groups into "participation of different social groups in socio-political participation" (CDC & HKEAA, 2015, p.29-30). Secondly, one of the key inquiry questions, "how do different social groups, such as new arrivals, indigenous inhabitants in the New Territories and ethnic minorities, develop a sense of identity?", has been deleted from Theme 3 Identity (CDC&HKEAA, 2007, p.31). Thirdly, still in Theme 3, two points regarding the manifestations of identity and sense of belonging are erased in the explanatory notes, namely "feelings and responses towards symbols of social groups and major events related to them" and "participation in and contribution to social groups" (CDC&HKEAA, 2007, p.32). It would be too arbitrary to read these changes as a shift in authority's stance toward de-politicization. However, since the three points excluded are indeed concerned with connections between students themselves and their society and nation, such change can conceivably weaken the sense of relevance in their learning.

### *1.2 In the textbooks*

Correspondingly, the selected textbooks follow the curriculum to elaborate on the knowledge, skills and values recognized, while the abstract learning objectives and key concepts are further reified through an issue-oriented approach. Therefore, the *reduction* approach of de-politicization is not reflected in textbooks either. Brief contents of each textbook and a summary of all issues cited can be captured in Appendix III & IV.

## 2. De-politicization through selection

### 2.1 In the curriculum

The LS curriculum can undoubtedly be deemed as a values-explicit one, but in a more politicized rather than de-politicized way. It declares its commitment to help students to become informed and responsible citizen with a sense of global and national identity, and a critical, reflective and independent thinker (CDC&HKEAA, 2015). In general, the curriculum is devoted to a hybrid of values from *Liberalism*, *Republicanism* and *Communitarianism*. On the one hand, it stresses respect for pluralism and equity, applauding attitudes of embracing heterogeneous viewpoints and values, respecting autonomy and different courses of actions, and making informed and unbiased judgments (CDC&HKEAA, 2015). This echoes what *Liberalism* appeals for. On the other hand, *Republican* and *Communitarian* virtues are mirrored as well. Some of the values are reiterated, such as collectivism, sense of belonging to local society and the nation, social awareness, conscientiousness, mutual understanding and harmoniousness.

In this sense, the way LS includes diverse discourses is rather a progressive breakthrough in the education of Hong Kong, going beyond each school of civic virtues and extricating the subject from traditional civic education that is always criticized for indoctrination and brainwashing.

Ideal and liberating as the curriculum seems to be, it should be noted that preference shaping is still entailed in framings toward society's common good, and forms of participation based on stability and harmoniousness. When mentioning individual's socio-political participation, the major focus is casted to actions within legal frameworks like voting, standing for election, and attending public consultation forums, while more

controversial forms, such as protest, demonstration and civil disobedience that prevails in real practice, are not mentioned.

## 2.2 In the textbooks

Although the de-politicization tendency is not evident in the curriculum, there are more diverse representations of de-politicization with *selection* in textbooks' learning materials. More in-depth investigation indicates that selective presentation in three of the forms, as shown in the table below.

*Table 4. Number of cases of selection in three textbooks*

		A	B	C
Disproportionate presentation		7	1	4
Oriented presentation	Information	23	13	19
	Question	5	1	9
Values-explicit partiality		20	2	18
Distortion		X	X	X

The first form, disproportionate presentation, is used less frequently than the other two. With its adoption, opinions from contrasting stances are presented, yet one side weighing heavier than the other. For instance, in the issue enquiry on filibustering in textbook B, there are four sources of information cited against this way to express objection, but only one for its defense (see Appendix V). Although the textbook does not explicitly denounce filibustering in the Legislative Council, it tends to direct readers' perception that there are more people against it, especially when no data from actual opinion polls or surveys are presented. Such form of *selection* can be found in 7 issues in textbook A, 1 in textbook B and 4 in textbook C.

The second form is to select facts or formulate guiding questions in favor of certain political ends. One of the issue analysis activities in textbook C can well exemplify both methods. It draws students' attention to CEPA (*Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement*) (see Appendix VI). Although the task is designed to invite discussion on whether CEPA can promote sense of national identity or not, the reading materials provided give information merely on the positive side. The negative influences CEPA brought about are not adverted to, such as Hong Kong mainland conflicts induced by tourism and retailing industries, hot money from the mainland, as well as disputes on the Individual Visit Scheme. Selective presentation of political reality and views like this case can be found in 23 issues in textbook A, 13 in textbook B and 19 in textbook C.

Below the reading materials, two questions are listed:

a) *"What do you think might be the advantages of the agreement shown in the resources on the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland?"*

b) *" 'The signing of CEPA can help strengthen Hong Kong residents' sense of national identity.' To what extent do you agree with this view?"*

- Hui, 2015, p.220

Even though the second question is open to dissidence, students' judgment on the issue could easily be directed to advantages of CEPA, by the aforementioned reading materials as well as their answers to the first question. Although disagreement is not refuted, the focus on advantages in the first question can greatly shadow on decision-making. The enquiry is thus believed to subtly promote approval of reconciliation between Hong Kong and the mainland, and inserting sense of national identity. The use of questions to direct focus

of thinking appears in 5 issues in textbook A, 1 in textbook B and 9 in textbook C.

In the third form of the *selection* approach, judgment or interpretation of certain issues is made straightforwardly, which can be exemplified by the way the June Fourth Incident and Earthquakes in the mainland are put forward and explicated in textbook C (see Appendix VII). Hong Kong people's reactions to both issues are unilaterally interpreted to be expressions of national awareness and national sentiments, to reinforce students' sense of belonging to the nation. Textbook A has 20 issues addressed with values-explicit partiality, while textbook C has 18, and textbook B has only 2.

There is no visible distortion of facts and opinions in three textbooks.

Judging from the three forms of *selection* detected, the three textbooks demonstrate different degrees of selection on the learning materials students come across and the explanations for conflicts. It can be noticed that readers are guided to accept a political discourse highlighting government achievements, promoting local and national identities, and endorsing orderly participation, but in a mild and subtle way.

### **3. De-politicization through deflection**

#### *3.1 In the curriculum*

Since LS is designed to be a subject centering critical thinking skills within a degree of controversy, the place of issue analysis is foregrounded not downplayed. Instead of directing problem focus to non-political or irrelevant factors, the LS curriculum tries to pin down problems that are ostensibly normal in our lives. In a suggested example for enquiry in the *Resource Package*, a survey is cited, conducted by the Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong on problems for which people have the greatest concern, to

demonstrate how critical thinking skills should be trained. While the survey results show that respondents are most concerned with economic problems, the EDB suggests the enquiry to:

*"...instigate an exploration of why people are most concerned with economic problems based on the survey findings. Does the greatest concern on economic issues mean people give priority to economic considerations in making choices relating to quality of life? What is the impact for economic issues to be given priority?"* - EDB & HKEAA, 2013, p.34

Instead of alienating students from real-life conflicts, the curriculum recognizes a need to problematize them, to teach students how conflicts should be treated, and to guide them to reflect on the reasons and think of solutions. However, the curriculum does stress a point that there are political as well as non-political hurdles hindering resolution of many controversies and problems in real practice, some being government's responsibility while others not (CDC&HKEAA, 2015, p.27).

### *3.2 In the textbooks*

The point mentioned above on hurdles to government's administration is narrated in detail in textbooks to explain the existence of many social conflicts, including limited disposable resources, various and sometimes incompatible appeals from different interest groups, diversified perceptions of social justice, and external influences from the mainland and the world. For instance, amidst the widespread dispute whether the means test should be carried out for Old Age Living Allowance, textbook C justifies government's demand on applicant's asset declaration with reference to the limitation from economic slowdown and inadequate fiscal reserves (Hui, 2015, p.92). Issues presented in this way appear for 15 times

in textbook A, 11 times in textbook B and 10 times in textbook C. However, although non-political or uncontrollable reasons are cited to explain why many problems remain unresolved, it is rather difficult to tell whether they are employed strategically to defend government's administration, or to present one of the aspects in political life.

*Table 5. Number of cases of deflection in three textbooks*

	A	B	C
Attribute conflicts to non-political/uncontrollable factors	15	11	10
Play down the seriousness of conflicts	X	X	X

In alignment with guidance from the curriculum, the second form of *deflection* is not reflected in the textbooks, since they tend to bring the conflict points into discussion rather than playing down their significance.

#### **4. De-politicization through neutrality**

##### *4.1 In the curriculum*

The LS curriculum attaches much importance to the attitudes of open-mindedness and unbiased judgment, so its emphasis on balanced presentation of viewpoints in an issue is primarily not for the end of de-politicization.

As stated in the curriculum, the authority strives to foster critical and independent thinkers who are able to "discern and appreciate the views and values held by others and to develop their own system of values for guiding their reflections, judgments and decisions" (CDC&HKEAA, 2015, p.84). Therefore, the content-based approach of de-politicization is nowhere to find in this values-explicit subject.

Nevertheless, while the significance of incorporating multiple perspectives and decision-making thereupon is put forward, there is little guidance found on how the skills of reasoning can be developed in the enquiry process. In the example given to elucidate how to select and adapt teaching and learning materials, the curriculum particularly urges a need to "collect different stakeholders' opinions on the issue and avoid over emphasizing any specific stance" (EDB&HKEAA, 2013, p.9). Yet there is not further mention on the processes, principles and approaches applicable to compare and evaluate these opinions. When such a gap comes in between, students might find obstacles to develop personal judgment in the face of various opinions, and thus they are likely to be held back from intellectual engagement.

#### 4.2 In the textbooks

There is no issue found appearing in a content-based, values-implicit way in the three textbooks, but the other form, overloading with a plenty of views and values, is the most salient one among all the approaches of de-politicization identified in this study. It can be further subdivided into two kinds of presentation, to involve contrasting discourses in the textual description and to introduce multiple stakeholders' opinions in an issue enquiry task.

*Table 6. Number of cases of neutrality in three textbooks*

		A	B	C
Content-based		X	X	X
Multiplicity	Issue	25	28	34
	Text	27	19	9

The first kind of multiplicity appears with merely enumeration of views and no enquiry questions follow. For instance, on the issue of wealth disparity, textbook A says:

*"Some people believe more protection for poor people can redistribute*



*resources, narrow the gap between the poor and the rich, and thus enhance justice. Others, oppositely, deem free-market mechanism to be the best in resources distribution, believing justice can be realized provided that there is adequate space for free competition. Meanwhile, a few people even suggest that allocation of limited resources to poverty relief is unfair to self-supporting ones. Therefore, we can see how opinions split over the issue, which would influence the formation and implementation of welfare policies."*

*- Chan, Hung, Wong & Chiu, 2014, p.101*

After the opinions are presented, no explanation on their comparison follows. There are 27 issues handled in this way in textbook A, as well as 19 in textbook B and 9 in textbook C.

Multiple perspectives in enquiry activities, on the other hand, are usually accompanied by questions to urge personal judgments. To discuss whether the Occupy Central is the only way out for Hong Kong, textbook C makes reference to views from 6 stakeholders to display the controversy (see Appendix VIII). With many opinions laid out, the question comes subsequently, "Do you think the 'Occupy Central' campaign is the most effective way to fight for universal suffrage?"(Hui, 2015, p.128-129). There is no guiding tips, analysis examples or any demonstration of how the learnt principles can be applied to comprehend and evaluate an issue. Instead, the process of reasoning is totally left to readers themselves to make arguments and self-justification. A large proportion of issues are discussed in this way, namely 25 in textbook A, 28 in textbook B and 34 in textbook C.

## **5. Possible influences on teaching and learning**

Judging from the findings of this study, it is noticeable that even though the authority expresses its inclination towards politicization rather than de-politicization in the LS curriculum, its effectiveness is to some extent compromised, since textbooks as medium of the curriculum tend to handle issue enquiry in a more or less de-politicized way. Among the four approaches of de-politicization, maximal presentation of multiple values within the *neutrality* approach is noticed to prevail in issue enquiry, which is likely to distort the cultivation of critical thinking skills and hinder the development of personal judgments.

The controversial issues we come across in LS are always concerned with what we want and what we ought to do regarding public affairs. To address the issues effectively towards cultivation of critical thinking skills, educators should be aware that between the stages of information reading and decision-making, there is an inevitable process of moral reasoning, which is exactly where education should step in to empower our students. In the similar context of dealing with ethical dilemmas, Strike proposes that we require ethical principles by which to judge the facts as well as ethical reasoning to apply these principles (Strike, 1988). Ethical reasoning can be further specified into two stages, "applying principles to cases" and "judging the adequacy or applicability of the principles" (Strike, 1988, p.156). Likewise, when confronting controversial social and political issues, we need to learn about a preconceived set of principles and values as tools for evaluation, such as respect for the rule of law and concerns for common good. Yet with tools at hand, we also need to learn how to use the tools. Students need to learn about moral reasoning comprising of more specific skills, including ascertaining relevant facts, assessing level of fulfillment to the principles, and comparing the plausibility of different choices. Nevertheless, neither the curriculum nor the

textbooks address adequately this link in between, while the task is left to teachers and students.

As for teachers, they are rendered greater space to adapt the curriculum and textbook materials into their own classroom learning, which also means that teachers need to develop conception and strategies on their own to teach about reasoning skills, which can not be find from the curriculum and textbooks. It allows them much discretion to determine the extent to which issue enquiry is politicized. We should admit that there are many LS teachers dedicated to realization of the subject aim, nurturing independent thinkers with critical thinking skills, yet there are also teachers act differently. According to a recent research, while the need for the nurturing of higher-order thinking skills is acknowledged, Hong Kong LS teachers still have a strong tendency towards examination-oriented learning, giving more attention to the formulated answer structures than intellectual reasoning in their teaching (Leung, 2013). This is a common phenomenon in LS classrooms that reinforces the tendency toward de-politicization in the subject.

The lack of guidance on moral reasoning in curriculum and textbooks can result in two possibilities of influence on students, if the teacher could not supplement it. Upon encounters of issue analysis tasks akin to that in Appendix VIII, students are asked to make their own judgments right after reading the materials. If there is nowhere to learn about how to apply the knowledge and values to weighing facts and claims in the issue, confusion could presumably emerge, especially when it is possible to argue reasonably for multiple choices and courses of actions. In this situation, the first possible reaction of the student could be to pick any one of the stances (i.e. the one with more points and supporting evidence), and to cite what others say to justify the chosen stance. In this process, there is no authentic

intellectual engagement into critical evaluation of validity, reliability and applicability of those arguments and evidence. While LS is a subject encouraging challenges to mainstream norms and inertia in our thinking, students' learning experience in this situation is conversely de-politicized by debilitating their independent thinking. What is worse, it might even give learners an illusion that they are capable of critical evaluation to make autonomous judgments.

Another possible consequence is a propensity towards neutrality and inaction. Viewing the complexity of various controversial issues, different interest groups hold their ground in the argumentation. Even if we promote understanding and respect for people's interests and choices, it is usually not pragmatic to give due consideration to every request. When the learner is pushed into such dilemma, but not equipped with the capability to distinguish importance and priorities, he/she might hesitate among different parties, especially amid severe conflicts like the Occupy Central campaign. Suggestions of action could potentially instigate further antagonism, while inaction seems to be an easier way to maintain temporary stability. In this way, the student is discouraged from making his/her own judgments on and participation in disputed social issues. This is why Kerr (1999) criticizes the values-neutral approaches in citizenship education of failure to help students to deal adequately with real-life, controversial issues. Overloading multiple opinions and values without cultivation of moral reasoning could stir up senses of powerlessness and indifference, and thus deterring students' active participation in public affairs.

## **6. Reasons**

The question comes next why does such a politicized curriculum incur effect of

de-politicization in the textbooks.

Content analysis of the LS curriculum indicates that it covers a broad range of contents with mixed political discourses, while many of the key concepts are explained in fewer details. It is a progress of the LS curriculum not defining itself in any single school of virtues and ideologies, inclusive of social transformative as well as social conservative elements. While it deserves recognition to bring more of the political dynamics into students' learning experience, it is also noteworthy that well-roundedness can fall into abstractness and generalities. Although the curriculum introduces plenty of concepts and reasoning skills, their elaboration and exemplification is inadequate. A lot of them are mentioned merely as a term, but not well defined, leading to ambiguity and large space for interpretation. To take "critical thinking" as an example, for numerous times as it has been mentioned in the curriculum, there is not clear definition and explanation on what constitute its being. In fact, it can be deconstructed into several skills in different contexts of application, such as identifying unstated assumption, distinguishing between fact and opinions, providing counter-arguments with justifications and etc. (Anderson, Howe, Soden, Halliday & Low, 2001; Kuhn, 1999). But these are not well addressed in the curriculum guidelines. To a large extent, this is one of the reasons why "critical thinking" is understood dissimilarly in public discussions, some even misinterpreting it to be denial of everything (Shum, 2014). While we appreciate the abundant contents LS curriculum contains and the large space it allows to accommodate autonomy and flexibility of knowledge interpretation, the lack of clarification can easily trigger misunderstandings, especially on abstract concepts and skills. In terms of moral reasoning skills, the lack of guidance could easily endanger the subject to be "catch-all" for a myriad of issues and aspects.

The responsibility of teaching about moral reasoning is thus shifted to textbooks and teachers. Since LS is a subject tending to introduce controversies into student learning, many of the issues discussed are in intense social debates, such as the universal suffrage, Hong Kong-mainland relations, freedom of press and self-censorship. If to demonstrate moral reasoning in the enquiry process, examples would have to be made toward judgment on the issues. Many textbook writers and educators, however, are too cautious to make such judgment, in view of the dispute to balance against indoctrination. Therefore, a tendency emerges to interpret controversies in a less controversial, de-politicized way, presenting all the viewpoints and relevant information neutrally for students to make decisions and argumentation on their own course, as what is noticed in the textbook analysis. This is criticality in modality but not in authenticity, which is to the disadvantage of students' empowerment towards independent thinkers. In this gap between the intended and the implemented curriculum, the education of moral reasoning is missing, when a number of curriculum deliverers tend to refrain from showing any stances publically on issues.

To view this problem in a broader context, it reflects the competing ideologies of social re-constructionist versus *status quo* in Hong Kong society. The emphases of Liberal Studies on criticality and challenge to norms make the subject itself in controversy amidst the game between two ideologies. It is understandable why the curriculum deliverers tend to limit the extent to which LS is politicized, viewing how teachers were criticized when they showed support to student participation in the Occupy Central Movement, and how the subject was urged to reduce the proportion political contents by many interest groups. The undesirable disparity of learning outcomes among our students from LS is largely resulted from the deficiency of moral reasoning. This is the gap leading to inconsistency between LS

subject aims and the learning outcomes. To cultivate our students to be critical, self-determined and responsible citizens who are able to face challenges confidently, moral reasoning is indispensable in the education of Liberal Studies.

## Conclusion

This study tries to examine whether there the tendency of de-politicization can be reflected in Liberal Studies, a senior secondary subject in Hong Kong, through content analysis of the curriculum documents and selected textbooks. It aims to find out whether signs of de-politicization can be detected, and if yes, in what ways they appear and to what values they are committed.

While there are few studies looking into LS from this aspect, a framework of four types of de-politicization is developed based on the conceptions of de-politicization from political science and schools of civic virtues from citizenship education. These four types, *reduction*, *selection*, *deflection* and *neutrality*, are identified with their characteristic and values promoted, and subdivided into more specific forms corresponding to various modalities of issue framing.

The framework is then applied to the content analysis of the curriculum documents and textbooks, with a specific focus on the module of Hong Kong Today, considering that it is more politically relevant and usually refers to more sociopolitical controversies. In the findings, these materials are assessed from the four types of de-politicization respectively. Although the official curriculum is found to be a politicized curriculum devoting to preparing informed, responsible participatory citizens, signs of three types of de-politicization are discovered in textbooks. To be more specific, there are symptoms of selecting aspects of an issue or formulating directive questions for preference shaping, attributing problems or policy delays solely or partly to non-political or uncontrollable, and overloading student with multiple viewpoints without addressing skills needed to parse the complexity. The first two



approaches are not so significant and obvious, since they are to some extent inconformable to the curriculum requirements of openness and criticality. However, the last one, a neutral approach to de-politicizing learning with maximal presentation of values, is found widely used to address issue enquiry in the name of training critical thinking skills.

What is noteworthy in the findings is the inconsistency between a politicized LS curriculum and de-politicized textbook interpretation. Upon the presentation of information and opinions from stances of different stakeholders, there is a lack of guidelines and exemplification on how moral reasoning can be made in both the curriculum and the textbooks. The missing of this part in education is very likely to result in a sense of powerlessness and even indifference among students to engage in public affairs. The reason for such deficiency is largely from the ambiguity of definitions and requirements in the LS curriculum on key concepts such as critical thinking and multiple perspectives. When the abstract terms are not fully addressed in more details, many of the curriculum deliverers interpret it in less controversial ways driven by a tendency towards *status quo*.

This study underlines the lack of attention to cultivate moral reasoning in the LS curriculum, which remains inadequate in the updated version after the mid-term review for this subject. It points to an unelected problem in political socialization, which is important for the long-term development of Liberal Studies, as well as many other humanities subjects. However, there are some limitations in this study. On the one hand, it focuses on in-depth analysis of merely the curriculum documents and three textbooks, so that there is limited representativeness. The aim of this study is mainly to identify whether a trend of de-politicization exists and possible ways it could take place, so as to offer directions for further studies on the topic. On the other hand, the study did not look at the implemented

curriculum. For instance, the students' actual learning experience is also influenced by the teacher, who bears the critical role of “make or break” (Kelly, 2009, P.14). De-politicization could also take place through teachers' deliberate evasion of political aspects, selection of issues for discussion or explanation. In fact, there are a lot more factors involved, such as teachers' pedagogies, environment of classroom interaction and school cultures. To assess the phenomenon of de-politicization more comprehensively, we need to look at other levels of education as well.

As an immature subject, LS has been widely implemented for less than a decade, its subject nature is still unclear to many people. Responding to the deficiency of moral reasoning highlighted in this study, the curriculum developers need to clarify the ambiguities and preclude the possibilities of de-politicized interpretation, and offer more detailed supplementary guidelines to address how can skills of higher-order thinking and reasoning be nurtured in our students. This is essential to the educational aim Liberal Studies. We have always been concerned about cultivation of citizenship as "status" and "volition", yet it is time for us to think about citizenship as "competence".

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## Appendices

### I. Citizenship education contents by domain

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>I. Civic values and principles</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Freedom</li> <li>2. Equity</li> <li>3. Social cohesion</li> <li>4. Common welfare</li> <li>5. Human rights</li> <li>6. Social justice</li> <li>7. Solidarity</li> <li>8. Equality</li> <li>9. Diversity</li> <li>10. Tolerance</li> <li>11. Pluralism</li> <li>12. Democracy</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>II. Citizens and democratic participation</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Citizens' rights</li> <li>14. Responsibilities and obligations of the citizen</li> <li>15. Voting (right, duty, responsibility)</li> <li>16. Representation – kinds of representations</li> <li>17. Deliberation</li> <li>18. Negotiation and accomplishment of agreements</li> <li>19. Participation and decision making: the majority and respect for minorities</li> <li>20. Critical reflection skills for active citizenship</li> <li>21. Participation in the school government and/or collective social support projects</li> <li>22. Participation in political activities (debates, demonstrations, political parties)</li> <li>23. Accountability</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>III. Institutions</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24. The State</li> <li>25. Rule of law</li> <li>26. Power by branches in democratic governments (judiciary, legislative, and executive)</li> <li>27. Government: public administration, institutions, civil services for the community</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28. National government (federal) and regional (states)</li> <li>29. Constitution, law, norm, legality, culture of legality</li> <li>30. Judicial system, penal system, police</li> <li>31. Armed forces</li> <li>32. Political organizations in a democratic society: political parties</li> <li>33. Elections, electoral system, electoral participation</li> <li>34. Gremial or civil society organizations, social movements, unions, NGOs</li> <li>35. Risks to democracy: authoritarianism, patronage, populism, nepotism, press monopolies, justice control, organized crime</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>IV. Regional and national identity</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>36. National identity</li> <li>37. Group identities (ethnic, regional, occupational, etc.)</li> <li>38. Multiculturalism, stereotypes: race and gender prejudice</li> <li>39. Discrimination, exclusion</li> <li>40. Patriotism</li> <li>41. Nationalism</li> <li>42. Latin American identity</li> <li>43. Cosmopolitanism</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>V. Peaceful coexistence</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>44. Illegitimate uses of force, conditions for legitimate uses of force by the state</li> <li>45. Coexistence: value, objectives, characteristics</li> <li>46. Pacific and negotiated conflict resolution</li> <li>47. Coexistence skills</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>VI. Macro context</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>48. The economy and work</li> <li>49. Sustainable development, environment</li> <li>50. Globalization</li> </ol>
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## II. Curriculum summary for Module Hong Kong Today

Learning objectives and key learning contents identified in the Liberal Studies curriculum (with updates in 2015) for Module 2 Hong Kong Today:

Knowledge	Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand important issues in the society, country and the world;</li> <li>• assess qualities, phenomena, changes, trends and impacts in relation to various aspects of society and culture</li> </ul>
	Contents	<p><b><i>Theme 1: Quality of life</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perspectives and measurements of quality of life;</li> <li>• hurdles for maintain and improve quality of life</li> </ul>
		<p><b><i>Theme 2: Rule of law and socio-political participation</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• factors affecting the level and form of socio-political participation, and degree of significance;</li> <li>• relationship between the rule of law and observing the law;</li> <li>• significance and implementation of the rule of law, and its functions and limitations;</li> <li>• the demands and interests of different interest groups;</li> <li>• institutionalized and non-institutionalized responses of government, and their validity, effectiveness and impacts</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Theme 3: Identity</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• characteristics of Hong Kong residents' identity;</li> <li>• factors affecting sense of belonging and identity;</li> <li>• manifestations of identity;</li> <li>• significance of multiple identities of Hong Kong residents</li> </ul>		
Competence/skills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apply critical thinking skills and adopt multiple perspectives in making decisions and judgments regarding social issues and problems;</li> <li>• identify the interdependence among societies, countries and the world, and their mutual influences upon one another</li> </ul>
Values	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appreciate the views and values of people from different</li> </ul>



	objectives	<p>social and cultural backgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflect on and develop multiple identities, responsibilities and commitments as citizens in their community, country and the world</li> </ul>
	Related values	<p><b><i>Theme 1: Quality of life</i></b>  respect for quality and excellence; sustainability; rationality; sensitivity; care and concern</p> <p><b><i>Theme 2: Rule of law and socio-political participation</i></b>  respect for rule of law; participation; human rights and responsibilities; democracy; justice</p> <p><b><i>Theme 3: Identity</i></b>  sense of belonging; plurality; open-mindedness; individuality; interdependence</p>

(Summarized from CDC & HKEAA, 2015, pp.23-32)

### III. Table of contents of the selected textbooks

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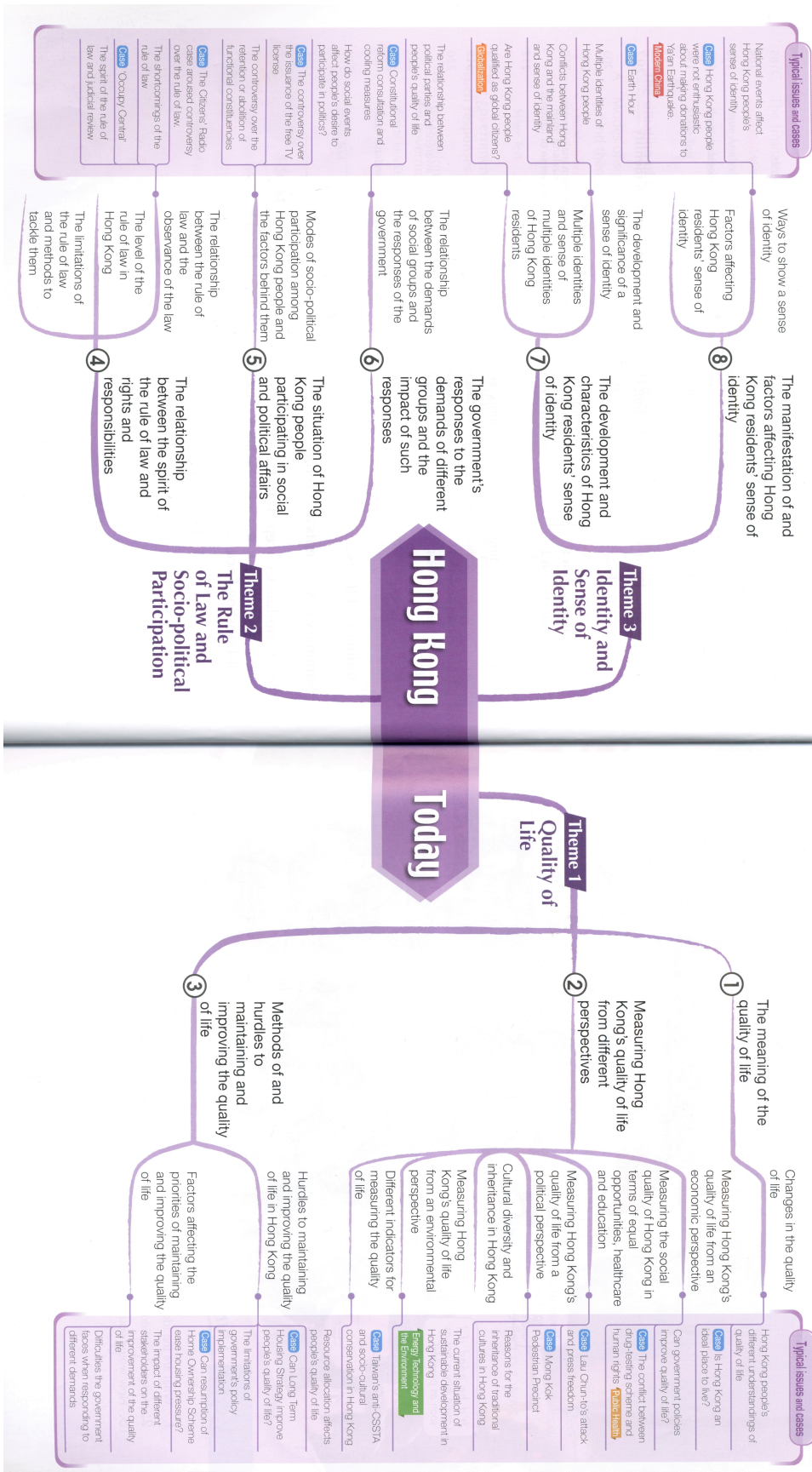
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## 3. textbook C: *New Horizon Liberal Studies (2nd edition)*



#### IV. Issues cited in the three selected textbooks

##### Issues in textbook A

1) Mentioned through text/photo (brief):

1. increase of wages lags behind economic development	19. Protests for universal suffrage
2. rapid inflation in Hong Kong	20. HKU POP survey on rule of law, government performance
3. wealth disparity and intergenerational poverty	21. freedom of press & censorship
4. 334 Scheme in education reform	22. legislation of Article 23
5. lack of placement and funding for tertiary education	23. construction of Columbaria in Shek Mun
6. CSSA	24. protests against property hegemony
7. 长者卡计划	25. \$6000 grant to Hong Kong permanent residents under 18
8. <i>Food Safety Ordinance</i>	26. 2008 global financial tsunami
9. 2003 SARS	27. 2008 Swine flu
10. universal suffrage	28. unauthorized building works in the houses of government officials
11. construction of the Lok Ma Chau branch line	29. government's plan to collect sales tax
12. levy on garbage	30. judicial review on government's illegal phone surveillance
13. China's tainted milk incident	31. residency dispute in CSSA application
14. aging population	32. the right to vote of prisoners
15. Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF)	33. 2012 Carrie Lam responded to the plastic pollution incident
16. dispute on <i>Competition Ordinance</i>	34. 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and 2010 Shanghai EXPO
17. legislation on car engine idle	35. 2008 Hong Kong people's supports during Wenchuan earthquake
18. opposing Japan's distortion in history textbooks	

2) Mentioned through enquiry activity (detailed reading materials and questions)

1. high property price & resumption of	19. Hong Kong Mainland Driving Scheme
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<p>Home Ownership Scheme</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. educational equality and social mobility</li> <li>3. who bears most responsibility to improve Hong Kong people's quality of living</li> <li>4. can Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme resolve aging problem?</li> <li>5. safeguarding human rights (security controversy during Li Keqiang's visit)</li> <li>6. living conditions in Hong Kong</li> <li>7. freedom of press vs. privacy</li> <li>8. development vs. conservation (construction of the third runway of the airport)</li> <li>9. legislation of standard working hours</li> <li>10. Is respecting the rule of law equals to observing the law? (<i>Public Order Ordinance</i>)</li> <li>11. sociopolitical participation of the post-80s (demolition of Star Ferry Pier &amp; Queen's Pier, anti-high speed rail, Central Value)</li> <li>12. the influence of globalization on people's sociopolitical participation (Occupy Wall Street &amp; Occupy Central)</li> <li>13. July 1 marches</li> <li>14. stakeholders' opinions on housing policy</li> <li>15. criticism on government's public consultancy</li> <li>16. unauthorized building works in New Territories Small Houses</li> <li>17. how to promote citizenship education in schools?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. implementation of <i>Minimum Wage Ordinance</i></li> <li>21. public opinions vs. rule of law (right of abode of foreign domestic workers)</li> <li>22. equality of all in the rule of law (Amina Bokhary controversy; Mak Chai-kwong fraud case)</li> <li>23. implementation of legal aid and equality of all</li> <li>24. interpretation of <i>Basic Law</i> by Standing Committee of National People's Congress (right of abode of Hong Kong permanent residents' children born in mainland, Chief Executive election, term of office of Chief Executive)</li> <li>25. How do the <i>Basic Law</i> protects people's rights of sociopolitical participation?</li> <li>26. retention and abolition of the functional constituencies in the Legislative Council</li> <li>27. Should Hong Kong implement compulsory voting?</li> <li>28. the influence of independent media on sociopolitical participation</li> <li>29. the influence of political parties in Hong Kong</li> <li>30. ethnic discrimination in Hong Kong</li> <li>31. □ the Individual Visit Scheme</li> <li>32. how does cultural difference influence sense of identity? (manners of mainland visitors on MTR)</li> <li>33. actions for defending the Diaoyu Islands</li> <li>34. Moral and National Education</li> </ol>
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18. the meanings of multiple identities to Hong Kong people	35. doubly non-permanent resident children
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### Issues in Textbook B

1) Mentioned through text/photo (brief):

1. 1997 Asian financial crisis	22. King Yin Lei conservation controversy
2. 911 US terrorist attack	23. 2010 collapse of Ma Tau Wai tenement house
3. 2003 SARS	24. medium of instruction in schools
4. 2008 global financial tsunami	25. drug testing scheme
5. wealth disparity	26. inclusion of private land into country park in Sai Kung
6. high working hours	27. the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA)
7. aging population	28. maternity leave for males
8. small-class teaching & funding for tertiary education	29. Old Age Allowance
9. demolition of Star Ferry Pier, Queen's Pier, Lee Tung Street and Ho Tung Garden	30. Home Ownership Scheme
10. 2013 New Year march conflict between police and NGO parties on demonstration booth	31. Community Care Fund ·gentrification of Lee Tung Street ("Wedding Card Street")
11. Establishment of Commission of Poverty	32. one-time grant of allowance (\$6000)
12. HKU POP survey on rule of law in Hong Kong, government performance and Chief Executive	33. transgender person W v.s. Registrar of Marriages
13. Elsie Leung's criticism on judges' lack of knowledge on Hong Kong-mainland relationship	34. protests against the construction of high speed rail
14. freedom of press controversy	35. 2012 protests against Moral and National Education
15. development of wetland park in Tin Shui Wai	36. 2014 Scholarism urged five constituencies referendum
16. increase taxes	37. Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF)
	38. Universal Retirement Protection

17. minimum wages	39.2008 Central and Wan Chai Reclamation
18. "Central Value"	40. Quality Migrant Admission Scheme
19. limits on export of powdered formula	41. democratic activists Liu Xiaobo & Ai Weiwei
20. "multiple entry" and "one trip per week" of Shenzhen residents	42. Manners of mainland visitors
21. redevelopment of Kwun Tong	43. Actions for defending the Diaoyu Islands

2) Mentioned through enquiry activity (detailed reading materials and questions):

1. declining social mobility	14. President Xi's proposition on cooperation of the three branches
2. aging population	15. issuance of free TV license
3. economic development and environmental protection (the third runway of airport, developing north-east of New Territory, developing Lantau Island, Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge)	16. interpretation of <i>Basic Law</i> by Standing Committee of National People's Congress (right of abode of foreign domestic workers, Feng Zhuangyuan Case & doubly non-permanent resident children)
4. Lung Mei Beach	17. retention of functional constituencies in Legislative Council
5. expansion of landfill sites	18. protest and demonstration
6. how to resolve poverty	19. popular nomination in Chief Executive election
7. legislating standard working hours	20. filibustering
8. government support for house purchasing	21. violent ways of expression
9. restraint on arbitrary power (2009 government's illegal phone surveillance, 2011 forced isolation of protesting HKU student during Li Keqiang's visit, 2012 dislodging journalist asking about June 4 incident during Hu Jintao's visit, 2013 government demanding telecommunication servers for provide customer information)	22. mainland students taking up education resources
10. legislation of Article 23	23. Hong Kong people's local and national identity
11. Citizen's Radio violated <i>Telecommunications Ordinance</i>	24. refusing donation for Wenchuan earthquake
	25. mainland-Hong Kong integration and conflicts
	26. citizenship education in Hong Kong



12. Is the rule of law impaired? (unauthorized building works in New Territories Small Houses)	27. preferential treatments to New Territories indigenous people
13. fiscal policy	28. equal welfare to Newly arrivals and permanent residents?

### Issues in textbook C

1) Mentioned through text/photo (brief):

1. structural unemployment	15. influx of mainland hot money
2. 1997 Asian financial crisis	16. Article 23 legislation
3. 2003 SARS	17. Old Age Living Allowance
4. 2008 global financial tsunami	18. Community Care Fund (CCF)
5. freedom of press and self-censorship	19. probity (Tong Hin-ming case)
6. declining social mobility & intergenerational poverty	20. 2012 Chief Executive election
7. people's level of trust in the HKSAR Government (HKU POP)	21. prohibition of unlicensed export of powdered formula
8. June 4 Candlelight Vigil	22. luggage check on East Rail Line to crack down on parallel traders
9. Moral and National Education	23. Special Stamp Duty & Buyer's Stamp Duty
10. universal suffrage	24. mainland pregnant women giving birth in Hong Kong
11. urban planning and conservation of historic buildings (Star Ferry Pier, Queen's Pier, 'Wedding Card Street', 'Sneaker Street', Choi Yuen Tsuen)	25. give out \$6000 to eligible permanent residents
12. wall effect and heat island effect in Hong Kong housing	26. 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami
13. H7N9 bird flu	27. hostage crisis in Philippines
14. China's tainted milk scandal	28. Hong Kong residents' response to the Gansu mudslide, earthquakes in Wenchuan and Yushu
	29. Taiwan's plasticizer food incident

2) Mentioned through enquiry activity (detailed reading materials and questions)

1. wealth disparity	19. abusive use of judicial review
2. minimum wage and standard working hours	20. interpretation of the Basic Law by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress
3. poverty line	21. Citizen's Radio case
4. integrated education	22. Occupy Central
5. drug testing scheme	23. Article 23 legislation
6. freedom of press	24. residency dispute in CSSA application
7. archives law'	25. issuance of free TV license
8. Use of public space in Mong Kok Pedestrian Precinct	26. retention or abolition of the functional constituencies in Legislative Council
9. urban renewal and conservation	27. constitutional reform
10. Lung Mei Beach Controversy	28. cooling measures on property market
11. July 1 marches	29. legislation against humiliating the police
12. Taiwan anti-CSSTA protest	30. parallel trading
13. filibustering	31. conflicts between Hong Kong and the mainland and sense of identity
14. property hegemony	32. discrimination against ethnic minorities
15. resumption of Home Ownership Scheme	33. the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA)
16. Government's Policy Address	34. the Individual Visit Scheme
17. observing the law & respecting the rule of law	
18. Mak Chai-kwong fraud case	

V. An issue analysis task in textbook B on filibustering

參考資料

資料一

2012年立法會組成概況

地區直選 (共 35 席)	泛民主派議員	建制派或其他
18	17	
傳訊功能組別 (共 30 席)	6	24
新增區議會 (第二) 界別 (共 5 席)	3	2

資料二

民主國家反對「拉布」最重要的理據，是議員濫用少數人的權利來凌駕多數人的利益。但目前香港的立法會約有一半的議席是由選民基礎極之狹窄的功能組別組成，並且在分組點票制度下，只代表少數人利益的功能組別議員更享有否決權，因此，立法會的組成並未能真正反映多數人的利益。相反，由更具民意基礎的議員「拉布」，才能抗衡由少數人壟斷的議會，真正維護多數人的權益。

資料三



立法會議員

立法會議員濫用「拉布」技術浪費大量公務和議會時間，單單是其中一次「拉布」就花費了1275萬元公帑，超出用於長者電車乘車優惠的總支出。而「拉布」又拖延了關於政府開支的議案，若該議案無法順利審議，政府就不能有任何開支，屆時各項民生福利措施和政府部分運作將受影響，市民大眾會是最終受害者。

有人批評「拉布」之風不可長，若議員未來經常濫用這種策略，將會引發無休止的辯論，拖垮立法會和政府運作，但這種觀點是不必要的。因為少數派議員採取「拉布」策略，都有充分的理據，獲得部分市民支持。若議員濫用「拉布」而引起市民不滿，有關立法會議員就會在下次選舉中落敗。



立法會議員

資料四

立法會主席解釋終止辯論理據 (節錄)

「本會由5月2日起就現時這項條例草案恢復二讀辯論，至5月17日凌晨4時我們已經用了超過42小時，其中發言的議員集中在三、四位議員。根據秘書處的統計，三名議員分別發言20次、28次和27次……在議員發言期間，我曾超過75次指出議員的發言離題，多次指出議員的發言冗贅煩厭，重複論點」。

資料五

高等法院法官對「拉布」行為的評論

「參與「拉布」議員並非旨在正當地表達意見，而是要一直持續辯論下去，永無休止，去阻礙立法的程序……如果視「拉布」為議員的一種權利，立法會的程序就會被少數議員在無止境的時間內「劫持」，立法程序會陷入個人的中止狀態，立法會亦無法履行其憲制角色。」

資料六

代議政制除了是投票外，還同樣重視理性的討論和審議。議員們既然為民發聲，對可能損害民眾權益的政策理應有所詰問，避免政府濫用權力。若議員的發言權被輕易剝奪，議會就很容易被多數黨所操控，淪為沒有分析和討論、只求盡快通過法案的工具。另一方面，在紛亂和複雜的現代社會中，「拉布」也可以吸引社會人士關注一些容易被忽略的議題，讓公眾有更多時間認識該議題的利害關係，使經議會審議的法案更為穩妥，更符合市民大眾的利益。

## VI. An issue analysis task in textbook C on CEPA

### Can CEPA promote a sense of national identity?

Study the following information and answer the questions.

Source A

#### Economic achievements of the implementation of CEPA after a decade

- ◆ A decade after the implementation of the *Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement* (CEPA), the ultimate goal of liberalization of trade in goods and services between Hong Kong and the mainland is fast becoming a reality. ... liberalization of trade in services between the mainland and Hong Kong should be basically achieved through CEPA by the end of 2015.
- ◆ One further step along the liberalization road is the signing of *Supplement X* to CEPA on August 29, which provides for a total of 73 liberalization services and trade and investment facilitation measures. ... Inclusive of the measures in *Supplement X*, there are 403 liberalization measures for trade in services under CEPA.
- ◆ CEPA's implementation offers a timely economic boost by providing preferential access to mainland markets in 18 services areas and eliminating tariffs on 374 mainland product codes.
- ◆ The most immediate and visible impact of CEPA comes in the form of relaxed restrictions on cross-boundary travel.
- ◆ CEPA has also proven its worth to Hong Kong time and again during times of economic crisis. Perhaps the most notable crisis took place the year that CEPA was signed in 2003 — the devastating after-effects of the SARS outbreak that claimed almost 300 lives and sapped the energy out of Hong Kong's economy. ... Its launch gave Hong Kong's ailing economy a much needed boost during the recent global financial crisis.
- ◆ Today, the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) covers 49 cities with a combined population of some 270 million people. Of the nearly 34.9 million mainland visitors to Hong Kong in 2012, 23.1 million arrived under the IVS. ... These visitors have helped local retailers, restaurants and small business generate profits and opportunities that were unthinkable just 10 years ago.
- ◆ The film industry has made excellent use of CEPA to reach audiences in China by collaborating on over 30 Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions annually, including several of the top 10 annual box office hits in China.

Figures as of 31 July 2013 unless otherwise stated

(Source: Extracted from the website of News.gov.hk. Downloaded from <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201309/02/P201309020603.htm>)

- a. What do you think might be the advantages of the agreement shown in the source on the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland? Identify and explain TWO advantages. **(6 marks)**
- b. 'The signing of CEPA can help strengthen Hong Kong residents' sense of national identity.' To what extent do you agree with this view? Explain your answer. **(8 marks)**

Analysis

Critical Thinking

## VII. Interpretation of issues for national identity in textbook C

Framing of national identity with regard to the June Fourth Incident and Earthquakes in the mainland in textbook C:

### June Fourth Incident

In 1989, students and residents in Beijing assembled in Tiananmen Square, expressing their demands for a **democratic political system** and **no corruption** to the Chinese government. The Central Government took action to clear the protesters and the event ended. Over the years, Hong Kong people have been expressing their concern about the June Fourth Incident and democratic development in China.

**Source 96** Every year on June 4, local groups organize a June Fourth Candlelight Vigil in Victoria Park.



### Earthquakes in the mainland

Over 60,000 people died in the earthquake in Wenchuan County (汶川縣), Sichuan in 2008, while over 2,000 people died in the **earthquake in Yushu County of Qinghai** (青海玉樹地震) in 2010; About 12,000 people were injured in Ya'an Earthquake in 2013. These disasters aroused Hong Kong people's **empathy towards their fellow Chinese**. The fundraising campaigns and disaster relief organized by Hong Kong people showed the intensity of their national awareness and feelings.

**Source 97** The rescue teams after the Sichuan earthquake



## VIII. An issue analysis task in textbook C on Occupy Central

### Different people's views on 'Occupy Central'



Chief Secretary for Administration

The path to universal suffrage has become clear. However, if there are unlawful events or events that ignore the Basic Law during the process, it may make the goal to elect the Chief Executive by universal suffrage impossible. If people adopt radical and unlawful behaviour in order to achieve the 'ideal plan' in their mind, such acts will not be tolerated in Hong Kong, which is a place that upholds the rule of law. It will also make people worried about whether the rule of law and the core values of Hong Kong can be maintained.

The Central Government supports universal suffrage in Hong Kong. Yet Hong Kong needs to oblige the framework set in the Basic Law. The relationship between Hong Kong and the Central Government must be taken into consideration in the constitutional reform so as to ensure that the sovereignty of the Central Government and the power of the HKSAR government are protected. 'Occupy Central' and 'civil disobedience' are merely a disguise, and a society which upholds the rule of law does not allow anyone to challenge the law of Hong Kong for political demands.



Director of Liaison Office of the Central People's Government of China in the HKSAR



A media professional in Hong Kong

The rule of law is a set of values that defends social justice. If the government attempts to distort the principle of the rule of law and ignore people's requests while emphasizing that people must obey the law, it merely regards the law as a tool to rule. The government is undoubtedly fooling around. Hong Kong people are equipped with quality of citizenship. Politically, universal suffrage can increase the government's legitimacy, raise people's sense of political efficacy and stabilize society. It is unreasonable for the government to deliberately delay universal suffrage using the rule of law as an excuse. 'Occupy Central' is the last resort.

Hong Kong cannot force the Central Government to change its stance and 'Occupy Central' will only paralyze the political and economic activities of Hong Kong and damage its existing economic advantages. This will have an impact on Hong Kong, which is renowned as a society upholding the rule of law. Now, China enjoys thriving political and economic development. The Central Government has repeatedly insisted on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics as its development guideline and stated that there is no need to adhere to Western values on every matter. It is unwise to force the Central Government into accepting universal suffrage by sacrificing Hong Kong's economic interests. It is also not an action that values the rule of law. Besides, it is better to settle the dispute over constitutional reform through consultation.



Member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress



Citizen A

Although the government had undergone public consultation regarding the constitutional reform, Central Government officials often gave speeches and set frameworks on the election. Such constitutional reform can never achieve universal suffrage. Since there is no way to achieve universal suffrage through common means, we can only fight for it by participating in 'Occupy Central'.

I hope universal suffrage can be realized in Hong Kong as soon as possible. Yet it does not mean that we need to fight for it by unlawful means. Although the organizer emphasized that 'Occupy Central' will be carried out peacefully, they cannot exclude the possibility that someone will use violence during the process which will damage social order and seriously affect the economy and international image of Hong Kong. The Central Government may distrust Hong Kong people because of this, and it will not help the constitutional development of Hong Kong at all.



Citizen B