

Design a Curriculum

Winnie Yoe

For context, I attended two drastically different high schools in Hong Kong—from Form 1-Form 4 (we were following the British education system up until 2011) I went to a local all-girls secondary school, afterwards I went to a United World College—an alternative educational movement. The comparison between the two different systems inform my thought process in this exercise.

HEEP YUEN SCHOOL CURRICULUM (F.4)		UWC Curriculum	
HKCEE Subjects - electives	1. CHINESE	IB	1. CHINESE A2 ^{Higher Standard Level} (HL)
	2. ENGLISH		2. ENGLISH A1 ^{Standard Level} (SL)
	3. MATHEMATICS		3. Mathematics SL
	4. ECONOMICS		4. HISTORY HL
	5. GEOGRAPHY		5. BIOLOGY SL
	6. BIOLOGY		6. VISUAL ART HL
	7. HISTORY	+ QUAN CAI (Extra-curricular) + CULTURAL EVENING (Show put on by students from the same region) + PROJECT WEEK (Travel abroad - volunteering) + TOK - THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE + EXTENDED ESSAY	
	8. ACCOUNTING		
	9. RELIGIOUS STUDIES		
+ PHYSICAL EDUCATION			

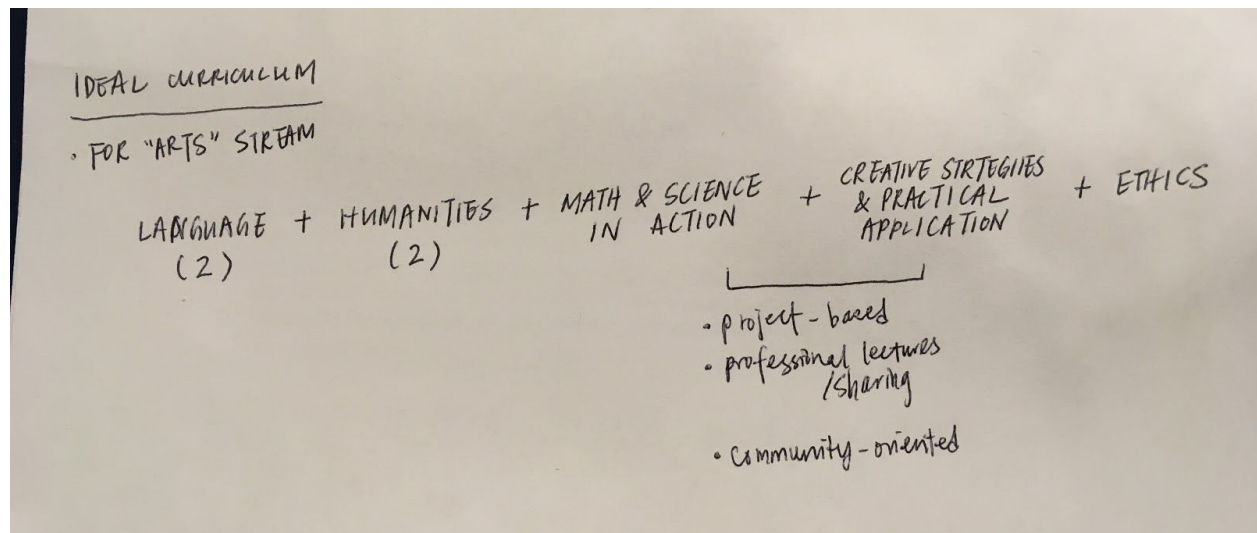
High school sophomore is equivalent to Form 4 for me. This is the first year where we are divided into arts or science stream, which dictates what classes we can pick for the public exam in Form 5. Not everyone gets the stream they want because the decision is based on your scores. It was really stressful because the public exam would determine whether you could enter university without taking a even more brutal exam at Form 7, and also determine whether you could stay in the same school or scramble for a different school that may be of a "lower tier", hence less chance in getting into the university subject of your choice (You are already committed to a major when you apply, which is determined by your public exam score). Back then, I wanted to pick Visual Art as one of my subjects but was advised not to for "practical reasons". I was fortunate that I was able to select my subjects again at the UWC, where I

dropped Economics for Visual Art. Thinking back, it would have been nice if my F.4 curriculum was not as limited—limited not in terms of the number of subjects or topics covered, but limited in their presentation. I set the goal to make a curriculum that would be more applicable to student's individual interests and would teach in ways that engage students in subjects that they would not think would be interesting if seen from a traditionally perspective.

I thought about what I enjoyed from either system's academic experience—in my local high school that was a out-of-class project where we conceptualized strategies to solve traffic issues; at UWC we had to write an extended essay (like a mini thesis) of a topic and subject of our choice. I referenced other education models, such as how in Design Academy Eindhoven, their departments were not divided by media, but topics: Man and Identity, Man and Leisure, Food Non Food etc. I liked the DAE curriculum because it is more theme-based/issue-focused, but I'm not sure if that would work given the different social-cultural environment.

My ideal curriculum would consist of the following:

- 2 subjects in Language (Chinese + English in my case)
- 2 subjects in Humanities (I'll pick History and Geography)
- Math and Science in Action
- Creative Strategies and Practical Application
- Ethics
- Physical Education (Or Gym class in the States)



This would be the curriculum for arts stream students. For most students in this stream, learning calculus and osmosis may not be the most relevant. Having seen amazing projects in the field of architecture and bioart, I feel it is a missed opportunity in how math and science was taught. I do not think the universal one for all model does not work. For students who are more inclined to the arts and humanities, I purpose "Math and Science in Action", where students will learn creative application in these areas. For instance, learning about physics and architecture and

urban planning; or learning about DIY microscopes. Instead of Visual Art or Theater, I purpose “Creative Strategies and Practical Application”, students work on a creative project that is community-oriented and they have to work with stakeholders to implement their project, which could be an industry expert, or a non-profit organization. They have to practice writing project plans, and have a final paper/presentation. This will be accompanied by guest lectures and exhibitions visits. I believe for students interested in the arts, especially in an environment like Hong Kong, it would be beneficial to be exposed to a wide variety of creative fields (I didn’t know design was a subject/field). The project implementation would also be great in building up resources to tackle resistance they may encounter later in the creative career. Last, I included an ethics class because for some reason, many of our teachers dated/were dating/married/tried to date students in my school. I hadn’t thought much about this until the recent years, when I talked to friends from other schools (both in Hong Kong and the States) about this. I think about this a lot because while I was not aware then, the normalcy of teacher-student relationship had skewed my understanding of boundaries and power dynamics, which I learnt in hard ways. While the ethics class is an additional element to the curriculum, the lesson of boundaries and self-empowerment is perhaps the only lesson/curriculum I wished I had as a high-school sophomore (or, in any of my education).