

# Forum on Parents and Schooling

Thursday, 31 August 2017  
Ballroom 3, Level 3  
Orchard Hotel Singapore

PANEL II  
Curriculum Emphases and Tuition – What needs to Change?

PRESENTATION BY  
**Dr Suzanne Choo**

**Assistant Professor**  
English Language & Literature Department  
National Institute of Education



# Learning Beyond the Test: Preparing Students for the Twenty-first Century

**Suzanne Choo, PhD**

English Language and Literature Academic Group  
National Institute of Education

TRANSFORMING TEACHING  
INSPIRING LEARNING

An Institute of



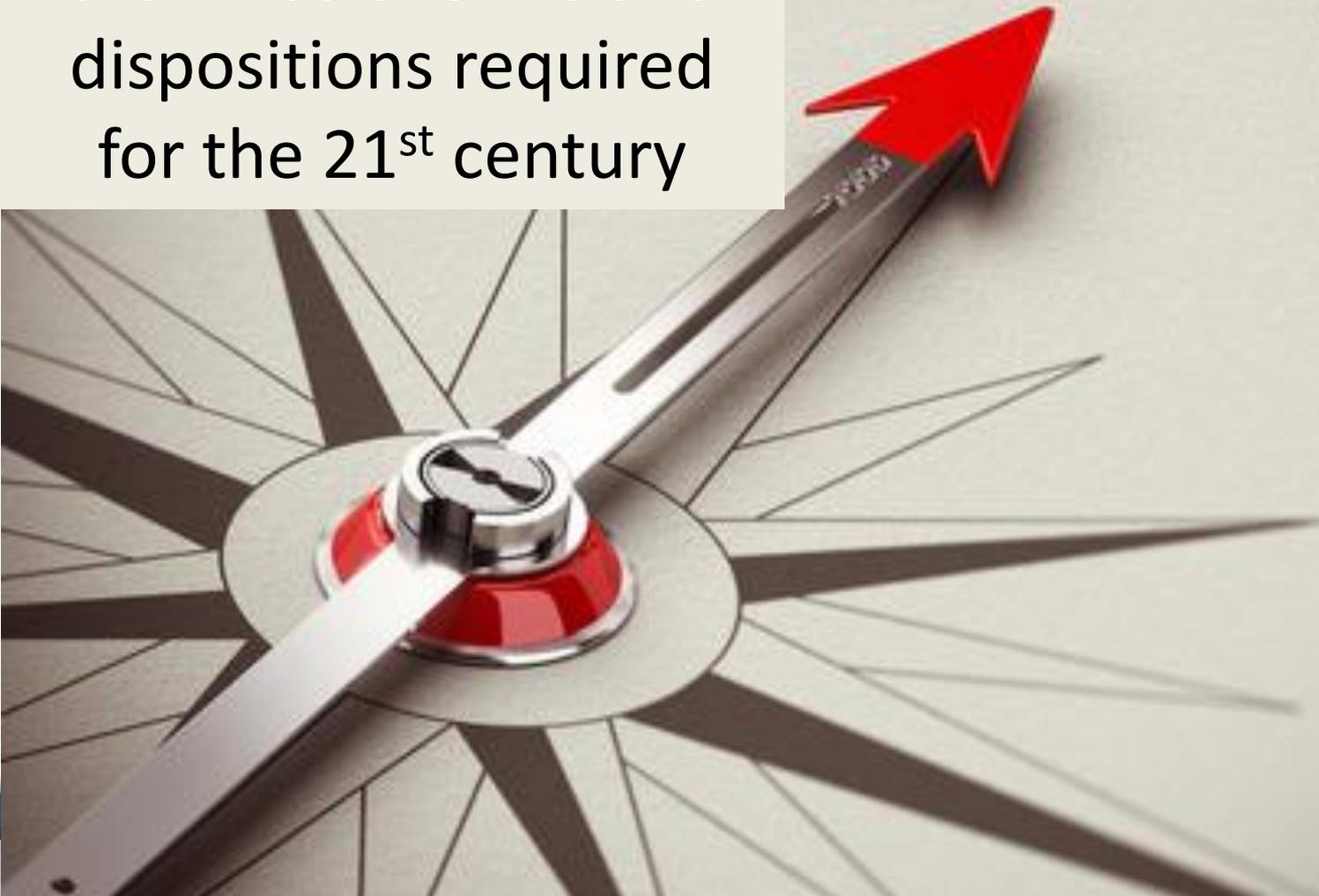
# Panel 2 Focus: Curriculum emphases and tuition — What needs to change?

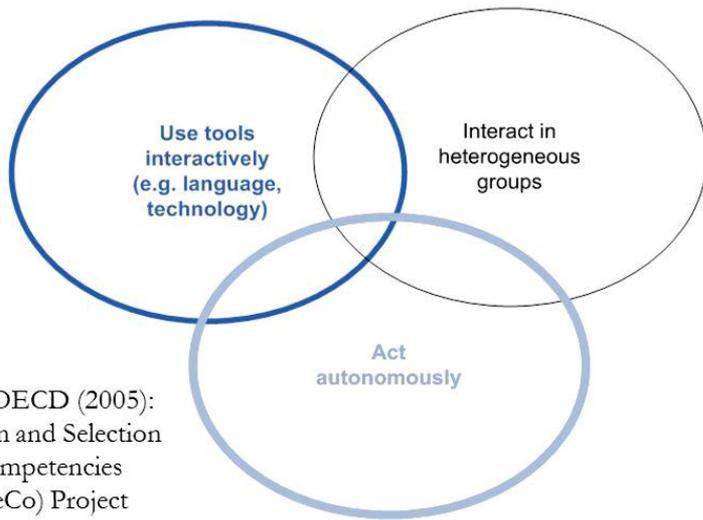
Part 1. Understanding the kinds of skills and dispositions required for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Part 2. What needs a re-orientation: Assessment, Skills, Philosophy

Part 1. Understanding  
the kinds of skills and  
dispositions required  
for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

**FUTURE**





Source: OECD (2005):  
Definition and Selection  
of Competencies  
(DeSeCo) Project

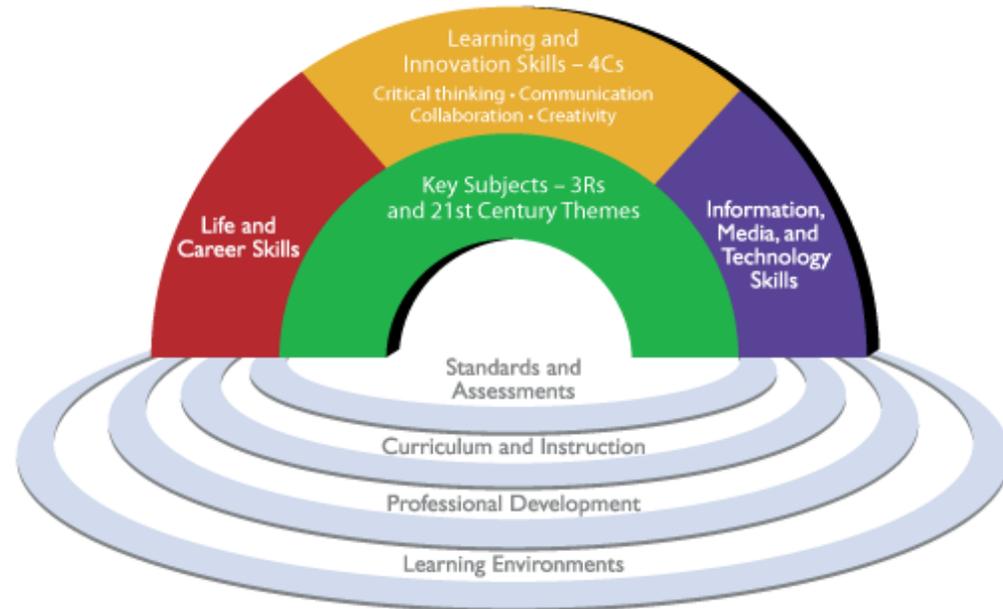
All over the world, governments and policymakers are centrally concerned with how to best prepare students for the twenty-first century.

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### P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning

21st Century Student Outcomes and Support Systems



Source: P21 (2007). <http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework>

Source: Ministry of Education (2010). <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/21st-century-competencies>

Common among the spread of twenty-first century frameworks around the world is a resistance towards traditional factory/ “Fordist” model of schooling.

1) Instead of memorization and regurgitation, more emphasis is placed on equipping students to search, analyze, synthesize, evaluate data and appropriate multimodal tools to communicate meaning.



Image source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Socialmedia-pm.png>

Globalization has resulted in the increasing **digitization of the work**. According to OECD (2016), 95% of workers in large businesses and 85% in medium-sized businesses have access to and use the internet as part of their jobs. Yet, 56% do not have sufficient skills to complete tasks in a technology-rich environment.

Source: <http://oecdinsights.org/2016/12/21/the-future-of-work-a-world-of-new-and-changing-skills/>

In an influential paper, MIT Prof Henry Jenkins (2006) highlighted the following 21<sup>st</sup> century skills schools need to emphasize:

- 1. Networking** — the ability to search for, synthesize, and use information (Extension: Appropriation, sampling, remixing);
- 2. Transmedia Navigation** — the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities;
- 3. Negotiation** — the ability to engage with diverse communities respecting multiple perspectives;
- 4. Collective Intelligence** — the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal.

Source: Jenkins, H. (2006). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. Chicago, IL: MacArthur Foundation.

In learning English for example, this means a shift from a “template” model of teaching to equipping students to evaluate available models obtained from their own research.



2) Instead of insisting on standardization, more emphasis is placed on critical and creativity thinking as well as the capacity to make intra and interdisciplinary connections

In a survey of over 400 employers across the United States, it has become apparent that applied skills are as important as basic skills.

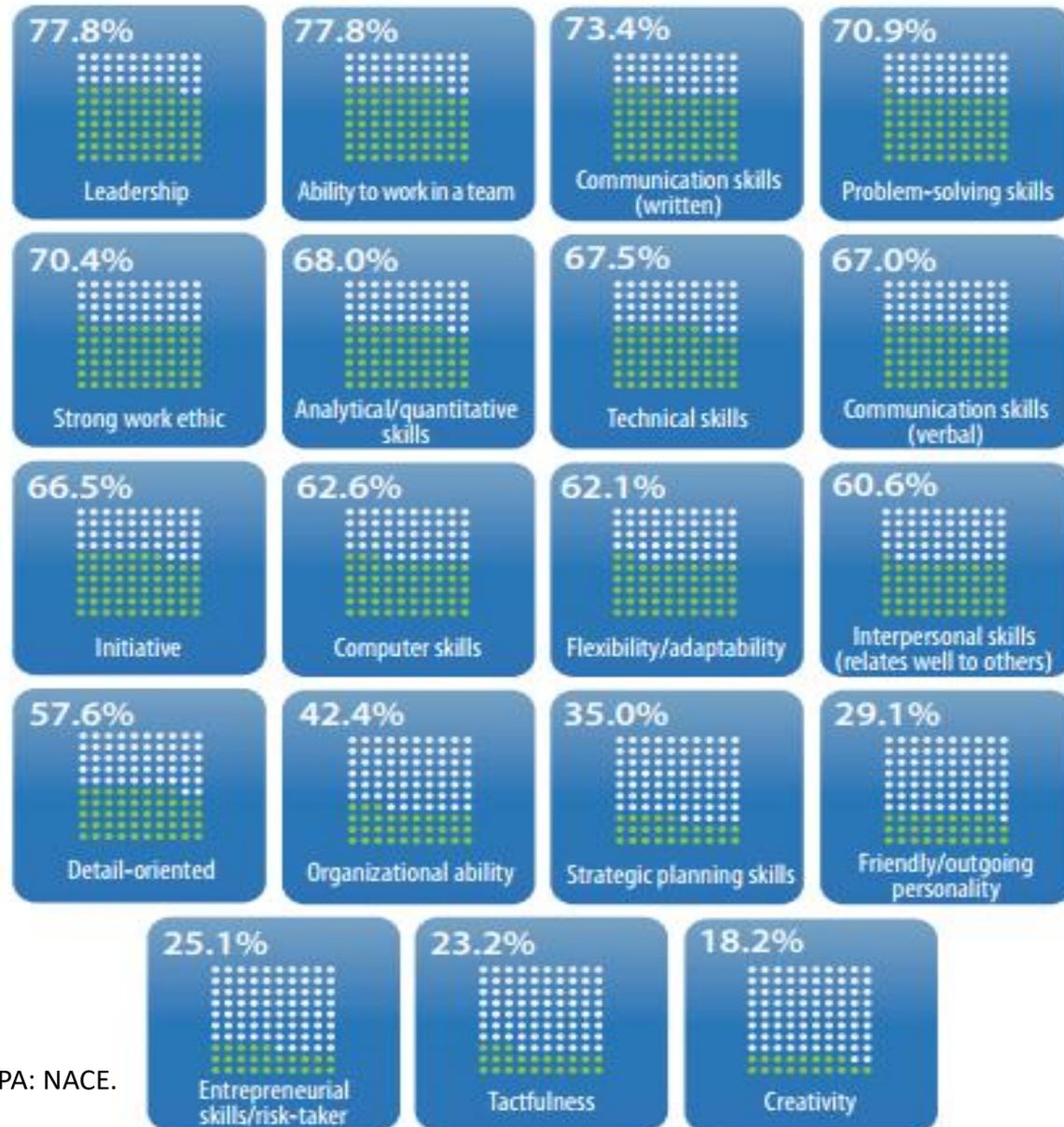
Basic Knowledge/Skills	Applied Skills
English Language (spoken)	Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
Reading Comprehension (in English)	Oral Communications
Writing in English (grammar, spelling, etc.)	Written Communications
Mathematics	Teamwork/Collaboration
Science	Diversity
Government/Economics	Information Technology Application
Humanities/Arts	Leadership
Foreign Languages	Creativity/Innovation
History/Geography	Lifelong Learning/Self Direction
	Professionalism/Work Ethic
	Ethics/Social Responsibility

3) Instead of acquiring content knowledge, social skills (communication, collaboration) are increasingly prioritized.

**Attributes employers seek on a candidate's resume** (2015 study in the US conducted by National Association of Colleges and Employers).

Top attributes are:

- Leadership
- Ability to work in a team
- Communication skills
- Problem-solving skills



Source: NACE. (2015). *Job outlook*. Bethlehem, PA: NACE.

4) Instead of the teacher as center of authority, progressive approaches now emphasize student ownership of learning.

Current pedagogical methods in universities employ terms such as “flipped learning”, and “makerspaces” – common to these modes of learning is the importance of learner autonomy and ownership rather than dependence on teachers.



## ‘Makerspaces’ allow students to get messy — and creative



Source: <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/makerspaces-allow-students-get-messy-and-creative>

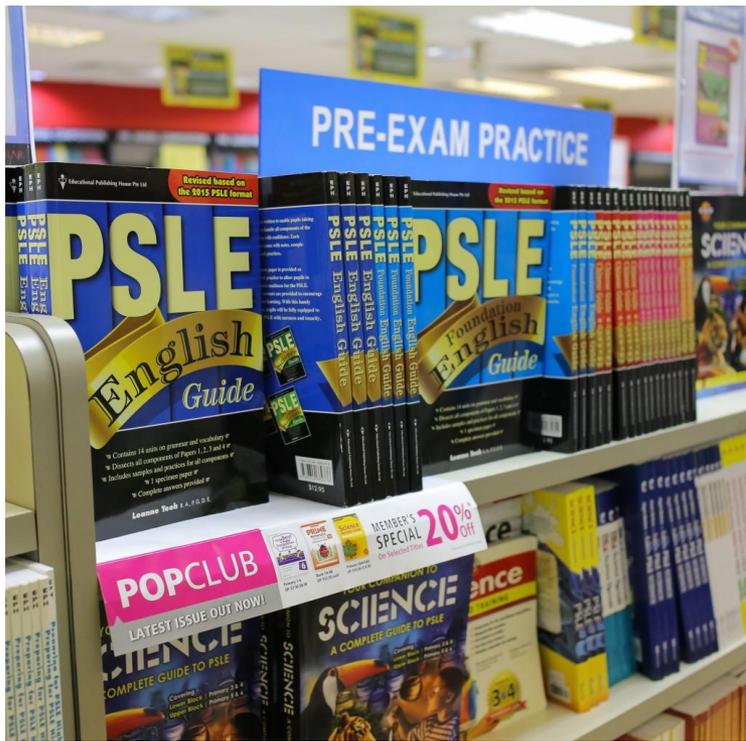


Image source: Kelman Chiang

Tuition reinforces a culture of learning that is more aligned with traditional “fordist” model. Less emphasis is given to the kinds of twenty-first century skills and dispositions students will need to thrive in the future workplace

Parents need to recognize that while tuition may help their child in tackling high-stakes assessment, it may not equip the child with the kinds of critical, creative thinking skills and learner dispositions needed in universities and in the workplace. At worst, it may curtail dispositions such as love for learning, curiosity, imagination, autonomy that may affect students’ learning in the long-run.

Part 2. What needs a  
re-orientation:  
Assessment,  
Skills, Philosophy

**FUTURE**



## 1) Assessment: Closer alignment with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills

High-stakes assessment could include more open, formative forms of assessment that provide room for students to demonstrate critical and creative thinking as well as the capacity to collaborate with others to solve problems.

### Some positive changes in English Education:

- GCE 'O' Level English Language assessment – The inclusion of questions pushing students to think about language and its effects e.g. “In what ways is xxx (technique) effective?” or “What does xyz suggest...?”
- International Baccalaureate Literature paper: External assessment (pen and paper examination) - 70% and Internal assessment (oral commentary and oral presentation) - 30%

## 2) Skills: Give greater importance to soft skills. Consider a closer alignment between English Language and Literature

### English Language

- First language, compulsory
- Emphasis on accuracy, fluency, proficiency, effective communication
- Focuses on skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing etc.
- Typically 6 periods a week in secondary schools

### English Literature

- Not compulsory at Upper Sec
- Emphasis on critical appreciation and engagement/response to texts
- Focuses on skills of analysis and evaluation as well as students' capacity to dialogue with others and craft an argument
- Typically 2 periods a week in secondary schools

Language is not merely a means for communicating effectively, but **a means for reaching understanding**. In increasingly globalized work places, individuals cannot just communicate proficiently but must learn to engage and dialogue with others from diverse cultures.

3) Philosophy: A more concerted effort to communicate a philosophy of education grounded in ethics

- A **Human Capital model** of education aims to equip students with skills for the global economy.
- A **Human Capability Approach** is aimed at the development of human well-being
- A **Cosmopolitan-ethical Approach** is aimed at the flourishing of others in the world.

## Ends: Cosmopolitan Flourishing

This refers to the capacity to perceive, understand, empathize with and defend or find solutions to enable the flourishing of oneself as well as others in the world.

## Ends: Human Well-being

These are opportunities, freedom, agency for the flourishing of the individual and the development of human well-being.

## Means: Competencies & Skills

These involve:

**Critical**  
(Example: critical reasoning, analysis, synthesis and evaluation)

**Creative**  
(Example: improvising, appropriating, envisioning, imagining)

**Communicative**  
(Example: communicating, navigating, collaborating, engaging.)

The humane man “wishing himself to be established, sees that others are established, and wishing himself to be successful, sees that others are successful” – Confucius. (1993). *The analects* (R. Dawson, Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 500 BCE.)



“Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only” – Kant, I. (1995). *Foundations of the metaphysics of morals*. (2nd ed., L. W. Beck, Trans.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. (Original work published 1785).

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