What are we expecting from Liberal Studies? 
Personal Development (修身), 
Hong Kong (齊家), 
China (治國), 
Globalization (平天下).

When we look back to our teenage years in secondary schools where most, if not all of us used to play hard (though work hard too), we did learn well through the formal curriculum in class. Yet we learnt even faster from activities held outside classrooms because we were given the "space" to identify our talents, exercise our creativity and realize our dreams. Should teenagers of this generation not be allowed the "space" to think what learning should be and to enjoy learning before being expected to become independent learners, self-directed learners and life-long learners? 

"Space"—where and how? In the New Senior Secondary Curriculum, Liberal Studies stands out to be a newly-introduced core subject for all students sitting for the HKDSE. There have been lots of debates on its curriculum coverage, assessment modes, lesson pedagogy, etc. Yet with the introduction of this new core subject and the elimination of clear demarcation between arts or science streams which comes with the reduction of electives from 6 or 7 to 2 or 3, is space not being created?

Now let us take a closer look into the curriculum aims of Liberal Studies as stated in the "Liberal Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide 2007". It is not difficult for us to visualize how high our expectations on the teenagers are. As quoted from the guide book, students should become independent thinkers who are to develop a range of skills and multiple perspectives understand interpersonal relationships evaluate different aspects of life analyze interaction between science & technology and the environment understand interconnectedness of personal, local, national and global issues, and the interdependence of the physical and human environment be self-managed carry out self-directed learning I will never object to aiming high. For instance, most principals and teachers should have been reminded by members of the External School Review Team, EDB that it is teachers' responsibility to stretch students' potential. In fact, most teachers do encourage students to set goals which are higher, if not much higher, than what their existing capability level can achieve. My concern is that as revealed in the Curriculum Guide, are we not being "too" demanding on our teenagers? For the subject matter itself, have we not scared the teenagers with our critiques on the "side" issues of this core subject rather than on the merits of its come into being? Should we not tender them the courage to face the challenges associated with its curriculum content, assessment modes and impact on their future?

In the adult world, we are never free from challenges. Why should we not try our best possible to train up our students to be psychologically prepared and intellectually equipped to jump over the hurdles as we could see in the learning process towards HKDSE? How?

We should always be there to provide them with appropriate guidance and advice, but not offering them helping hands right on the spot. We are no helicopter teachers, but their role models. Liberal Studies itself is a new challenge. Students need the encouragement and foresightedness from their role models rather than their complaints with limited constructive meanings. Should we not try to make every attempt to broaden their horizons by enlightening them with the multiple pathways in their ways forward, be their cheering team members, help them to maintain their interest in learning, further their curiosity towards life, and enhance their motivation to explore and create?

What is the function of schooling?
Schooling is a socialization process leading to (ABC) awareness, broadening, critical thinking, (KASH) knowledge, attitude, skill, habit and (3C) communication, creativity, critical thinking. In schools, students are in the process of learning to master these ABC, KASH, and 3Cs which are the "expected" learning outcomes which might only become reality after years of graduation. While some are more capable of echo捡 our expectations within a shorter period, some take longer. Are we not being too ambiguous if we are expecting to see these "expected" outcomes immediately after their six years of secondary education as revealed in the assessment papers of the HKDSE?

All in all, as educators, I embrace the Curriculum Reform initiated a decade ago and the incorporation of Liberal Studies as a core subject in the current senior secondary curriculum. I am eager to see my students in the possession of the qualities listed in the "Liberal Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide 2007". Yet we must remind ourselves of the essentiality of allowing our students to experience and enjoy learning, to commit mistakes and learn from their own mistake, to develop the courage and skills to survive and face the uncertainties of the adult world, and to mould their own characters and colour their own lives in the schooling process. There seems no rush or can we slow down when we are talking about修身, 齊家, 治國, 平天下?