

Free Thinker Institute – The Philosophy Café (BMUIN)

The Whole Concept of Thought Community Education

The Curriculum

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The Whole of Concept of Thought Community Education Curriculum

H.10 Teaching - Free Thinker Institute (FTI). The Philosophy Café (TPC)

CURRICULUM.

Public and applied history in the community education 'classroom':

On the New York-Brisbane Global Experience

THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF THOUGHT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Dr Neville Buch has been a scholar in studies in religion and Australian-American intellectual history for 41 years. He is an expert on histories and historiography of big belief and doubt, within the scope of Queensland intellectual history. He has worked as a higher education policy researcher for the Vice-Chancellor, Professors Roy Webb, Glyn Davis, Kwong Lee Dow, and Alan Gilbert, along with work for Chancellors, Mr Ian Renard, and Sir Edward Woodward (1998-2008). He has been a Q ANZAC Fellow at the State Library of Queensland (2015-2016). He has recently published on the influence of Charles Strong in Queensland. He works as a community participatory teacher for The Philosophy Café Brisbane Meet Up (TPC), and the Brisbane Meetup Intellectual Network (BMUIN). Recently, Dr Buch has been researching Freethought, Rationalism, Humanism, Unitarian-Universalism, during the 20th century. He is an active member of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society (ANZHES).

*Thinking Historiographically*¹

The average person thinks about history in terms of a sense of place. These are categories with markers – events listed in a chronology, names listed in a Who's Who, or environmental features, including human constructs, in a list of locations. We usually categorize such markers on three levels, globally, regionally, and locally. The last two categories are relative to some limits. Regional can mean large areas within a state, or a large area on part of the

¹ Reproduced from Blog, [Thinking Historiographically](#).



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globe. Local can refer to areas within a city or parts of a country, or the country itself. Global has clear boundaries; however, the focus in a collection of markers can shift from one part of the world to another part. There is such a thing as national history but when you examine how the average person thinks about the history of a nation, the descriptions are local, regional, or global. The history of a nation itself demonstrates the concept as a political category which sits very artificially on the sense of place. This signals that concepts of the local, the region, and the global are also products of an interpretive framework.





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Nevertheless, the average person's approach to history is generally limited to the sense of place. The professional historian goes beyond the inherit schema to the work of history-making, or thinking Historiographically. What is at stake is a reflection on an interpretative framework or schema, the relationship between those aspects within the interpretative process, and also the various relationships that link up in a sense of place, and across time. This last set of relationships – earth time – is the unique factor in the historian's work. The important caveat is thinking Historiographically does not equate to a denial of either scientific or common-sense realism. All that historiography admits is that our ideas shape our memory of the past, as well as how we project a view of the past beyond any memory. Factors, scientific or otherwise, are the cognitive "material" which are shaped, or even constructed, but this does not make most factors appear fluid or malleable, as the realist often fears in admitting intellectual approaches to our way of thinking.

The interpretative framework arises from the corpus of our intellectual disciplines. From a broad understanding of the humanities and sciences, it is obvious there is no one framework, but a wide range of debates between various schemas, some arising from particular disciplines, and others which have developed a life across several disciplines. The historian is not forced to make an even treatment over all schemas, as she is not required to take an even treatment over the categories of place. Each question or topic to hand will determine the extent and focus on the level of interpretation and the sense of place.

The Whole of Concept of Community Education²

The Whole of Concept of Community Education is framed historiographically but is presented as a seamless set of life-focused lesson plans, structured between the historiography and the educational theories.

² The Whole of Concept of Community Education is an applied summary of the document of the same name.

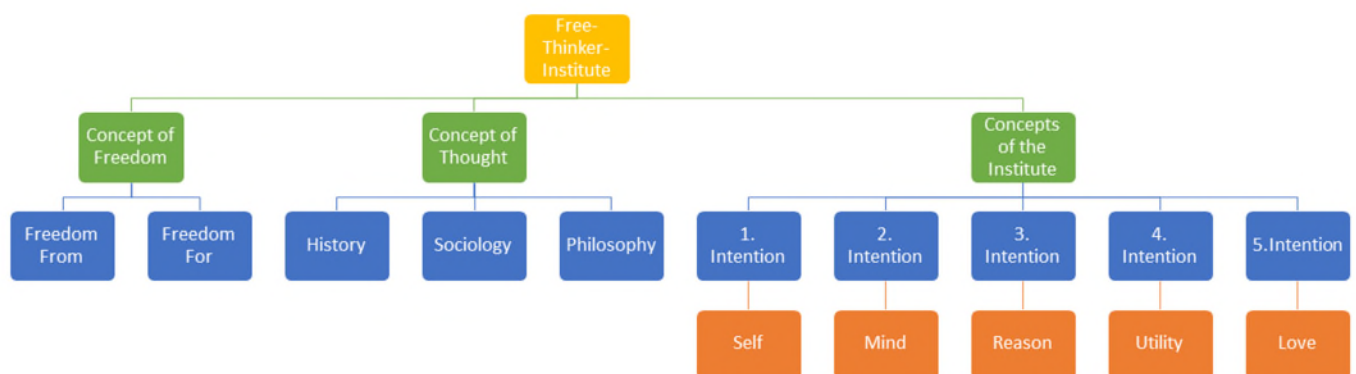


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The recommended lesson format, use 'terms' of community education to lay down the groundwork in understanding what 'community education' is, and what it can be for the Free Thinker Institute (FTI) and The Philosophy Café (TPC). The teacher facilitates between knowledge (disciplinary content) and opinionated discussion (student-centred learning); and walking through each term on a PowerPoint presentation or alternative visual technology, each term in order, so as to build one from the other. Pauses taken after the introduction of each term to allow participants to question or make specific comments.

Further details on the alignment [community education](#) and lesson terminology can be found at this [link](#).

The FTI-TPC Concept of Thought Curriculum



The Curriculum Plan and Design is conceptualised as the 'Concept of Thought' to reflect the holistic scoping of 'Whole of Concept of Thought Community Education.'



The Whole of Concept of Thought Community Education Curriculum

There are twelve modules in the curriculum, each with a range of lessons from two to five. Each module is self-sufficient and can be slotted in or out of a semester program. However, the twelve modules are in a thematic order.



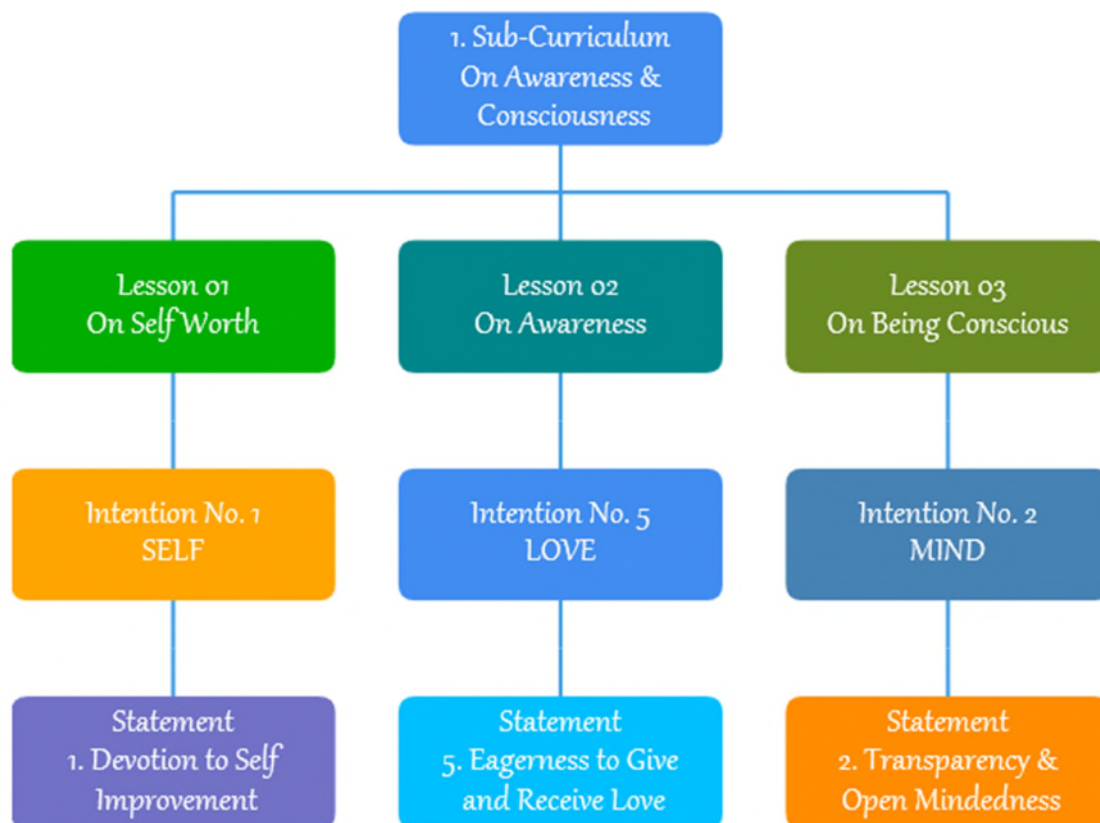
Figure 1. IMAGE OF ORDERING FOR 12 MODULES AND LESSON PLANS

The focus of each lesson planning is one of [FIVE INTENTIONS](#) which define the Free Thinker Institute, which have been given a one-word heading: Self, Mind, Reason, Utility, and Love. Each Intention has a statement, a proposition to argue the case. In the following pages, each module is considered in turn.



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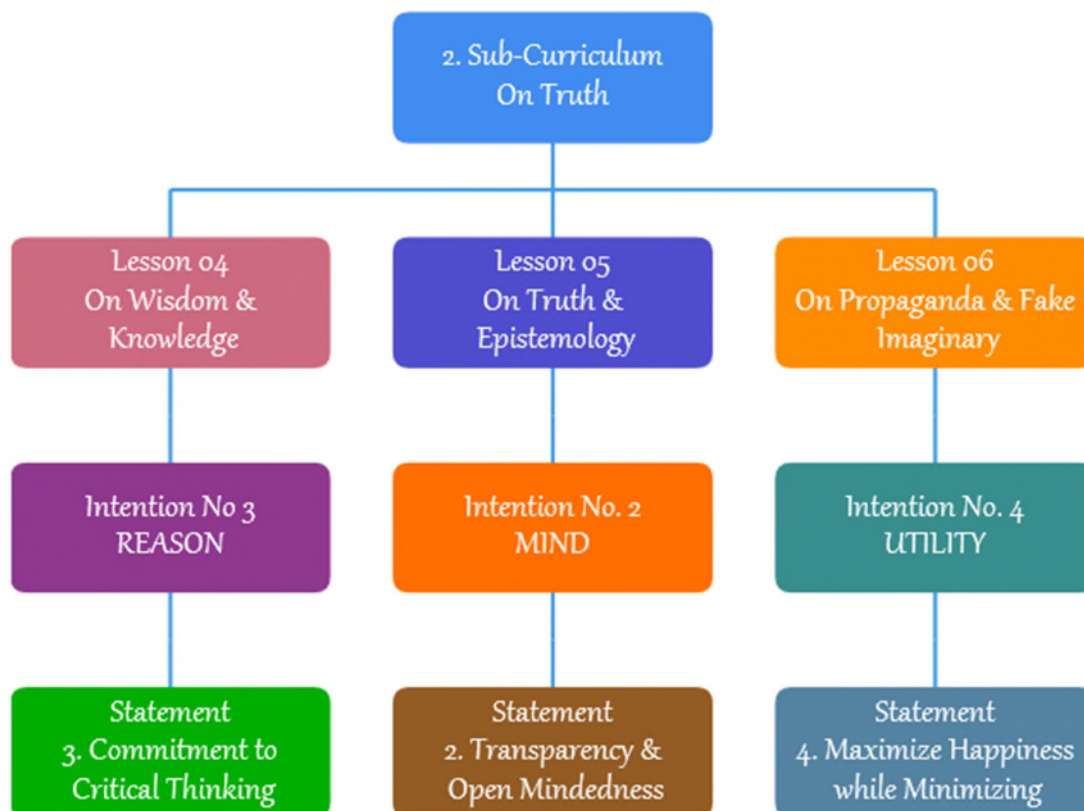


Awareness is the first step in Consciousness, but judgement on consciousness is directed by a sense of self-worth. Awareness increases to the measure of worth which is challenged or verified for Self. Questions of challenge goes to what is being, and what being am I? The discussion always comes back to the concepts in Philosophy of Mind. However, to get there, the question has to be do I want to improve myself, and that question hangs off the capacity to love oneself and others.



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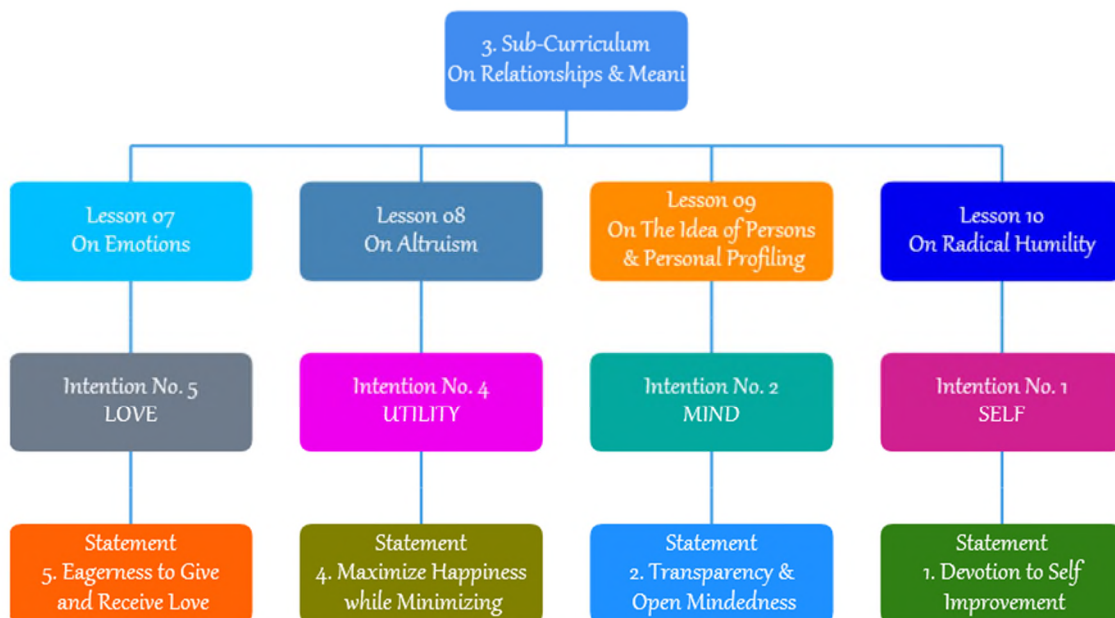


The argumentative always go to the question, is it true? A popular response is to undermine the relevance of 'truth.' Only in one sense is that a good response. Wisdom can be an outcome of knowledge or not, and is not epistemic dependent but essential in the *knowledge* of wisdom. Knowledge is a crafting of critical thinking, called 'reasoning'. Essential in the process is openness to understanding the mind. Useful, but not essential, is the utility in this process, however, that is where critical thinking can breakdown in abuse.



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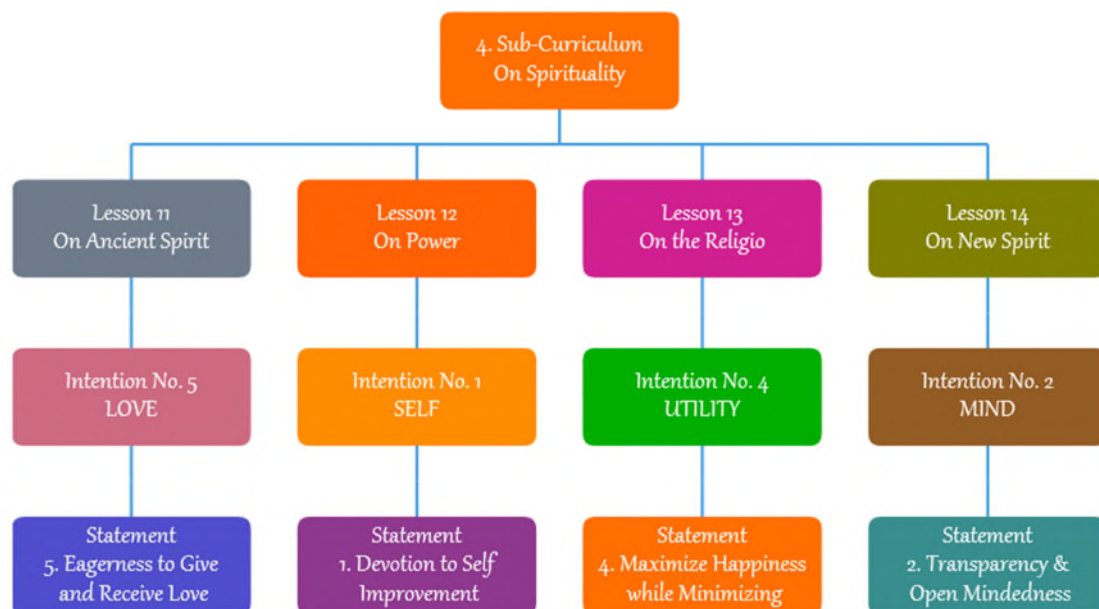


After that epistemic base, what we find are connections, and those connections are relationships between objects, between subjects, and between subject-objects (or object-subjects). Relational cognition mostly (but not always) speak emotionally. Love is normatively seen as the highest value among moderns, influenced by the Romantics, and emotion is highly valued in the cognitive process. The position is contested in doctrines of Karma and Stoicism (further on). Altruism is an overlapping position, and brings utility to the discussion table. However, there is a more basic understanding, that of persons, which usually needs these few steps to get to the personal. And that requires an openness of mind to what is a person? What person am I? And what person are you? The critical outcome in the process is a readiness to face oneself, and ask what must I do to improve? The four-step process on relationship and meaning is one answer to that question. It is a demonstration of radical humility.



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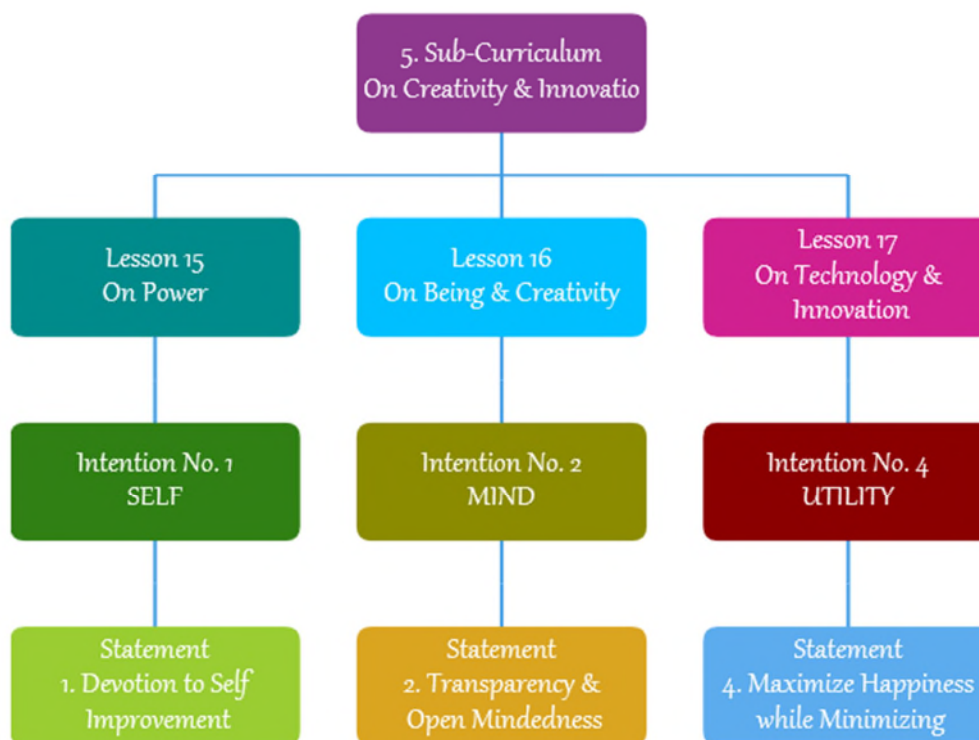


Those influenced too much by Karma and Stoicism, without understanding therein, react horribly to the notions of 'spirituality.' It is not 'spirit' but fate and calmness which is the essence of being, goes the argument. However, that does not explain love, self, utility, and mind at all. Fate and calmness are important perspectives, but they cannot tell the whole story. The story is of 'religion' or 'spirituality.' Daniel Pals (2022) shows that there are ten different theories which explain the categories of 'religion.' One view, though, is solid [pun] and that religious thought originated in supernatural belief, 'spirits'. That supernaturalism was based in fear. What casts out fear, but love. It may seem strange, but love is the pathway to naturalist beliefs. Even more strange to the unexpected populist thinker, is that religion is well connected to the concept of utility. The Latin meaning gives this legal understanding between the State and the People. The People is the expression of the religion, and the State is the defender and administrator of the religion. Law is useful but not very bright, and needs to be open to the new spirit of the mind.



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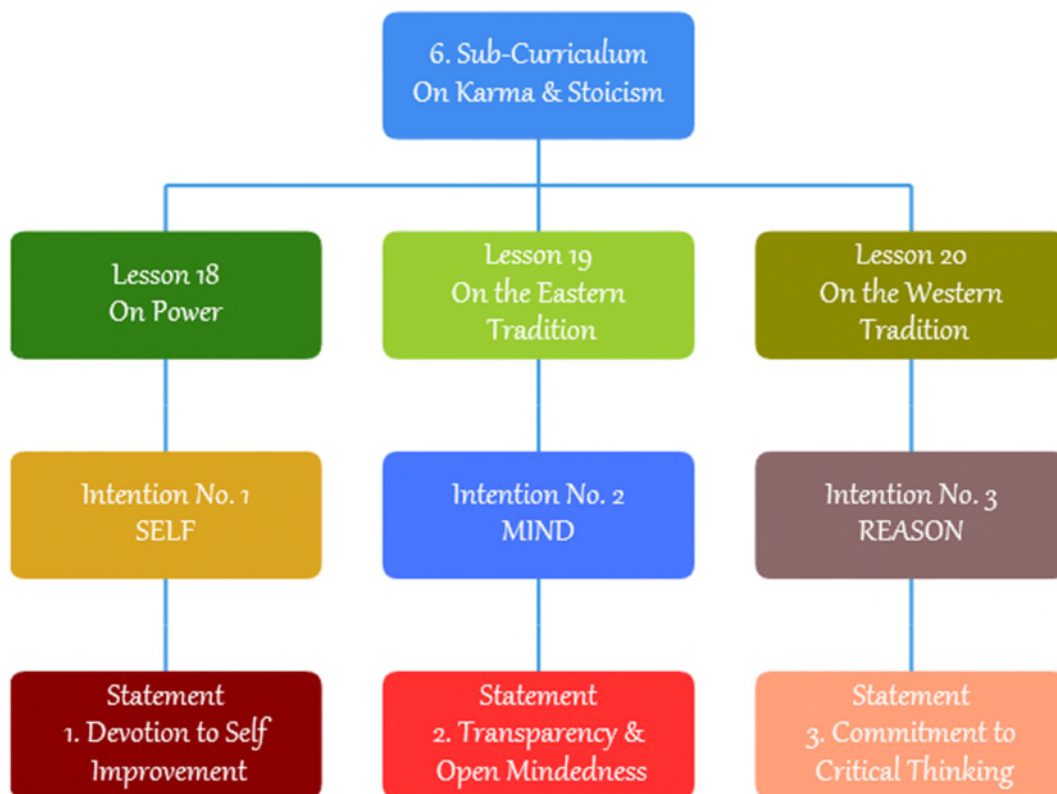


The Foucauldian outlook means that arguments usually end at the notions of power, rather than a clear understanding of the concept. It is a factor of the Neo-Liberal Age. What is needed is that self can get to grips with being and its creativity. Again, that is about transparency and openness. At this step, what tends to muck everything up is technology and ideas of innovation which have become too dependent upon the technological agenda. It goes to the problems in the concept of utility. We can clearly see in our society that happiness is meaningless if technology replaces the human with the machine.



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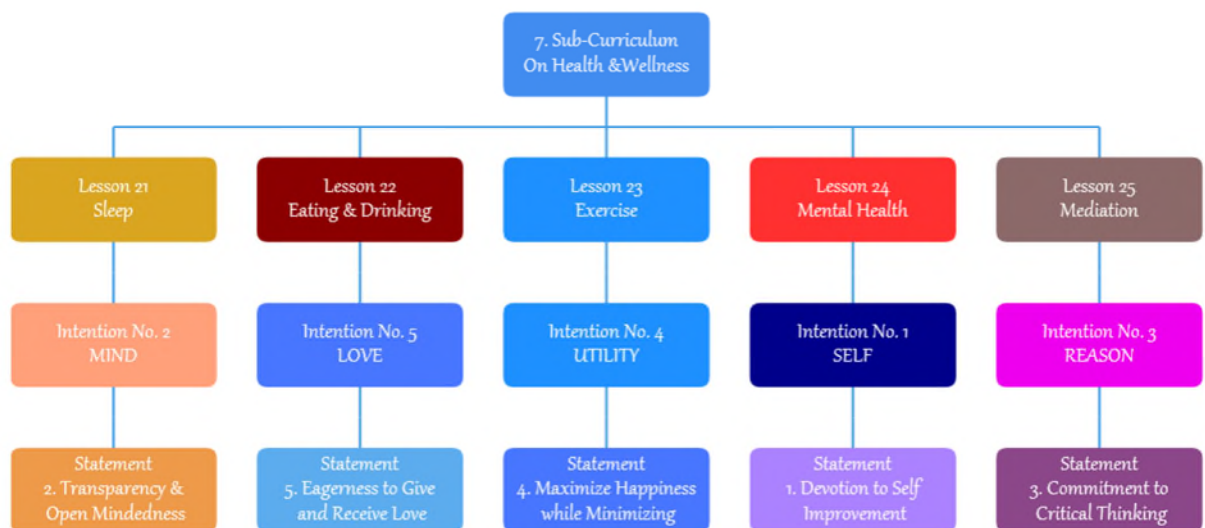


The mindfulness movement either goes to the emptying of self or a devotion (worship?) of self-improvement. From the Eastern tradition of thought, the best of mindfulness is the transparency and openness; and in the Western tradition it is the commitment to the rational traditions.



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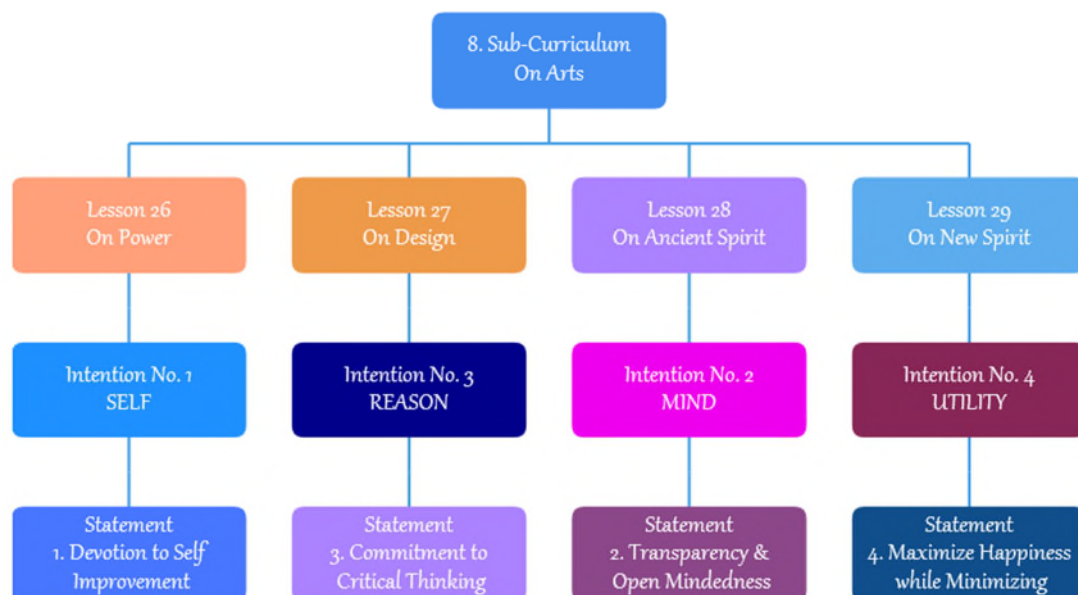


Mindfulness is an axillary to the Health & Wellbeing movement. It tends to argue itself as practical and not abstract. What people generally fail 'to get' is not to understand the role of mind, love, utility, self, and reason for understanding health and wellness. It easy to give instructions to sleep, eating and drinking, exercise, mental health, and meditation without concept, but all that has been induced is an ignorant habit which breaks at the first pressure. Understanding is needed make habit stick. Concepts drive understanding.



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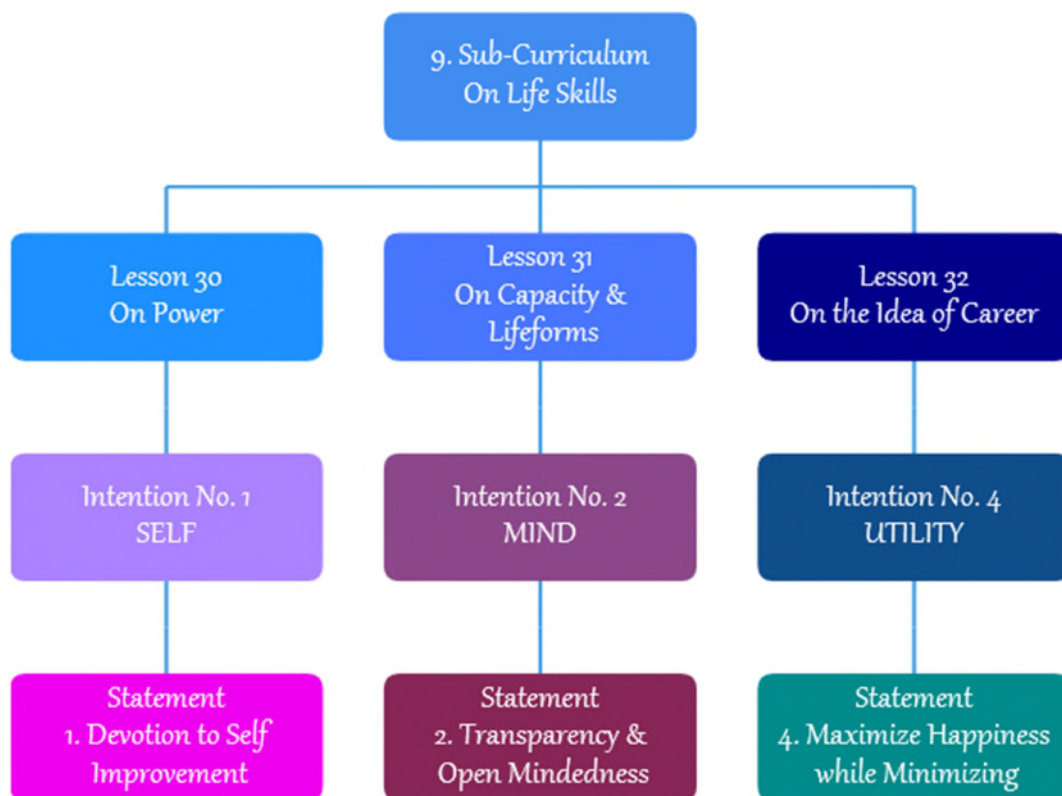


Arguments on the value or use of the Arts abound. In modernism 'art' is seen as liberation, including, in twisted thinking, the 'anti-art' or art-is-dead position. Such liberation is inseparable with egoism. There is reason why the libertarian position is flawed, and that is, it fails at reasonable self-criticism. And again, that takes us at a third step to transparency and openness. The openness in debates on the Arts is often whether it makes me happy or unhappy, and what utility is it for Society.



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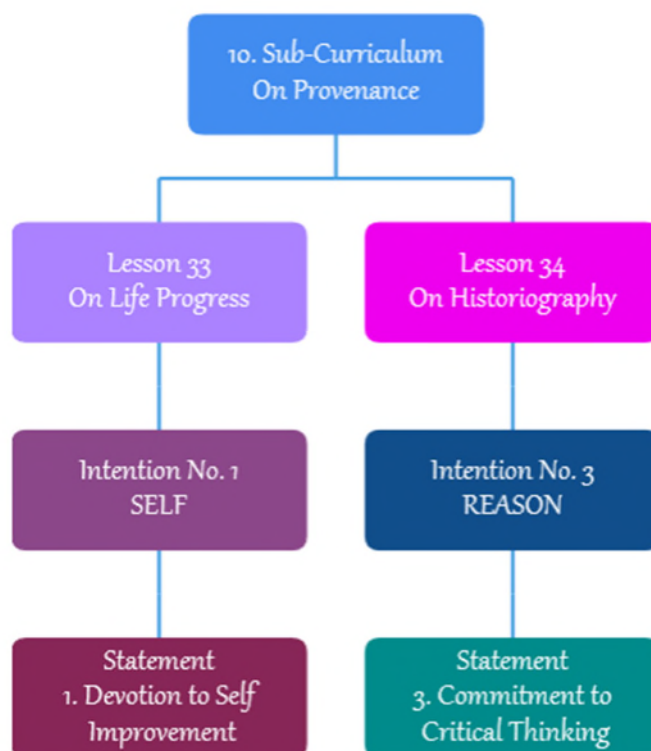


Not many are artists by profession, and this leads to other needed lessons. Power is inescapable in any discussion on skills for life. This is primarily connected to capacity, and foremost to be able to think in/on/about our form of life. Practically, it leads to ideas of careers, but as demonstrated the abstraction is not too far away, and utility chief among the concepts for work, jobs, projects, passions, careers, and lifeforms.



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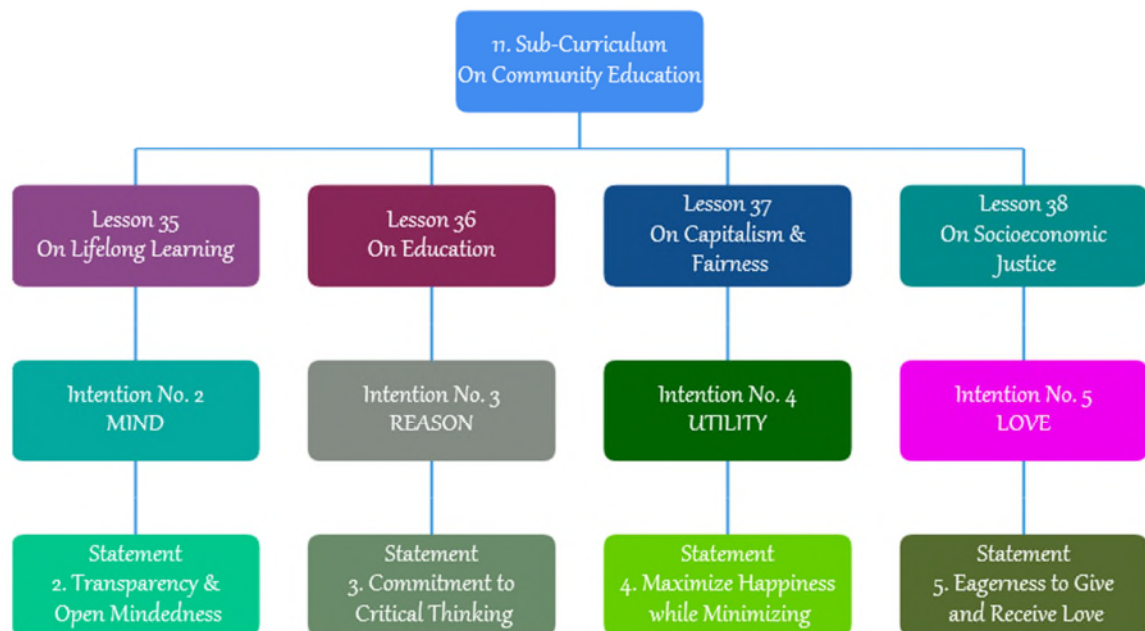


In viewing life as a whole, we come to the concept of provenance. It is the whole view of life and existence. In western historiography, the concept of Progress is critical. Even in Post-Modern thought it can never disappear. It is an abstract structure which we normatively place on time-space. Even in a network historiography where the linear is complexed out of the equation, there is still an abstract sense of movement, back and forth, in and out. The question is where am I going in this network? The answer can only be reasoned out.



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The last modules in the curriculum are the meta-reflections: what have we been doing in these lessons. Answer is 'community education', and it starts as a project of lifelong learning, it continues as lifelong learning, and finishes as lifelong learning. As we have seen across the lessons, among two others, the key concepts are Reason, Utility, and, strange as it might seem to hard-heads (rocks-in-the-head?), Love. Education is thinking critically but it does not last and becomes corrupted, if 1) the practice and ideas of our economic system is not understood, and 2) the fight for fairness and justice is not achieved. It is a process, and success does not happen in one step, but in several steps to put back the practice and abstraction together.





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Figure 2: IMAGE OF THE CURRICULUM DESIGN PROCESS

This curriculum design process is higher education, through and through, and from many fields of the humanities and the social sciences. Community education is a part of higher education. This needs to be understood.



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