

'Creating good citizens, or a competitive workforce, or just plain political socialisation?: tensions in the aims of education in Singapore'

Christine Han

Abstract

Singapore is a young nation, having only gained its independence in 1965. As a result, its political leaders saw the need to create a nation out of a diverse and, at the time, largely immigrant population. At the same time, there has been a strong imperative to keep the economy competitive. A city-state without natural resources, Singapore's government views the quality of its people as being vital to the survival of the country. It also sees political and social stability as being equally important to the country's continued prosperity and well-being. It is consistent with this outlook that the two main purposes of education are the creation of a workforce with the requisite skills for the knowledge economy, and the formation of a citizenry that is loyal, committed, and cohesive. This chapter will focus on the latter aim in education, and discuss the values and messages related to civics, moral and national education in Singapore schools. It will examine the tensions between the two main aims of education, as well as the inconsistencies within the aim of creating good and loyal citizens.

Introduction

To describe education as a political tool suggests the instrumental use of education towards an end related to society, politics, or the state. Singapore has, since its independence in 1965, been ruled by the People's Action Party (PAP), and the PAP has never hesitated to use any of the instruments at its control for political ends. Education policy has been no exception, and education is viewed as a means to serve higher purposes. One of these is the creation of a workforce with the skills to support economic growth and competitiveness. The other is the forming of a citizenry that is loyal, committed, and cohesive. In this chapter, I shall look at how education policy is used in Singapore to create the kind of citizens deemed necessary to the country's continued survival and prosperity, and analyse this vis-à-vis the challenges facing the country in an age of globalisation and change. To do this, I shall review the literature examining the curricular subjects and initiatives most closely associated with civics, moral, and national education, viz. *Civics and Moral Education*, *National Education*, the mother tongue languages, and *Social Studies*. I shall also carry out my own analysis of the current *Civics and Moral Education* texts.

Singapore: background

The People's Action Party has never had any compunction about using the instruments at its disposal for political ends. In housing policy for instance, ethnic quotas have been used to ensure an ethnic mix in the housing estates, as a means of fostering ethnic integration (Chua, 1995: 140ff; Ooi, 1993: 11ff). Similarly, population policy has been used to promote family planning and limit family size in the 1970s, to provide incentives for graduate women to produce more babies in the 1980s and, currently, to encourage all, except the poor, to have more children (Chua, 1995: 21, 69).

Education has been no exception in that it is viewed a means to serve economic, social and political ends, specifically, the creation of a workforce with the skills needed for economic growth and competitiveness, and the formation of a loyal, committed, and cohesive citizenry. This approach to education needs to be understood, not only in terms of the pragmatic attitude of the political leaders, but also the country's brief history as a nation. Singapore's departure from the Federation of Malaysia was unexpected, and Separation meant an urgent need to create and inculcate a sense of national identity, one that was oriented to the new, suddenly independent country. There was an equally urgent need to unify a diverse, largely immigrant population. Events leading to independence had included ethnic and religious tensions and disturbances (Turnbull, 1977), and the political leaders saw the need to imbue Singaporeans with a sense of identity and unity, as well as the values and attitudes that would not only enable them to live in harmony, but also ensure the continued survival of the country. There was also a sense of urgency at the time – which has persisted if only in slightly milder form to this day – to ensure the city-state's economic survival. I shall touch on this in the next section.

The economic purpose of education

Singapore has been often been described as a developmental state, i.e. it is a state that 'establishes as its principle of legitimacy its ability to promote and sustain development, understanding by development the combination of steady high rates of economic growth and structural change in the productive system' (Castells, 1992: 56). Hence, an important role that the political leadership takes on is the country's economic planning and development. Where education is concerned, much has been written on how policy is used to serve economic needs (Ashton and Sung, 1997; Yip, Eng, and Yap, 1997).

Although the focus of this chapter is on the use of education as a *political* tool, it is worthwhile reviewing the economic imperative of education policy for three reasons.

First, economic well-being does not simply ensure the survival of the country; it also undergirds social cohesion. While the economy grows, and people feel they are doing well, there is a greater likelihood that the country will remain socially and politically stable. Among other things, the government has encouraged meritocracy, and the country has proven itself willing to adopt policies promoting economic competitiveness. In recent years, this has included the welcoming of foreign talent who compete with locals for jobs. In addition, the government has also overseen – and, in the case of ministers, Members of Parliament (MPs), and civil servants, undertaken policies that have resulted in – dramatic salary increments for those whose talents are most in demand, regardless of the growing disparity in income (see Straits Times Online, 2007; Teo, 2007). According to some studies, there may already be evidence of social class reproduction, with the result that disadvantaged groups might find it increasingly difficult to succeed (Chiew, 1991). However, as long as the economic pie is growing, and everyone feels they have an equal chance to get their share of it, political stability and social cohesion will not be threatened.

Second, the economic well-being of the country also provides political legitimacy for the PAP. One way to understand the social contract between the government and the people of Singapore is in terms of a ‘collectivist nationalism’ (Brown, 2000), about which more will be said later. Another way is to see it as a tacit understanding between the government and the people that the former will work for improvement in the quality of life. So, in addition to national interests, it is also in the interests of the PAP to ensure the continued economic well-being of the country. Indirectly, therefore, the economic aim of education ultimately serves political ends.

The third reason to review the education policies directed at economic growth is because these may have an impact on, even contradict, those aimed at political ends. More will be said on this later in the chapter. In the meantime, a brief account will be given of the policies that have been made with economic aims in mind.

The fact that Singapore lacks natural resources gives impetus to the need to develop its human resource, and the country's commitment to this economic imperative can be seen in how closely education policy is tied to the needs of the economy. As Ashton and Sung put it:

From the outset, changes in the education and training system moved in tandem with changes in production; ...they (the interests of industry) were seen as central to its development.

(Ashton and Sung, 1997: 209)

Ashton and Sung identify the strong and efficient state bureaucracy as the mechanism for synchronising the education system and the needs of the developing economy, and go on to describe the phases in education policy over the years. In the post-independence phase, with a poorly educated population and high unemployment, the government 'moved to upgrade basic literacy levels and provide training in maths and science'; in the 1970s, when the policy was to attract value added industries, 'there was an attempt to shift the emphasis of the curriculum away from the academic to the technical'; in the 1980s, with the goal to attract high value added goods and services, there was 'the identification of the basic skills required for effective participation in an advanced industrial society', 'the production of intermediate-level technical skills', and 'the expansion of higher education' (Ashton and Sung, 1997: 210-12). The periods of education reform identified by Yip, Eng and Yap (1997) are broadly in agreement with Ashton and Sung's characterisation of the changes in the education system over the years, including the economic reasons for these. By the turn of the millennium, Singapore was looking towards preparing its people for the knowledge economy, and recent education policies have reflected this. Among other things, curriculum content was cut down so that schools could, in the words of the policy, 'Teach Less, Learn More' (see Ng, 2005). Also, children were to be taught to think independently and to develop an 'entrepreneurial and creative spirit' (Ministry of Education, 2004b).

At a general level, education in Singapore is meritocratic and highly competitive. National examinations are conducted at Primary 6 (11plus), and Secondary 4 or 5 (15plus or 16plus). The education system can be seen as a pyramidal structure, with different 'Desired Outcomes' for those occupying different levels of the pyramid (Ministry of Education, 2004b; see also Han, 2007). At the apex are the most academically able

children; it is this group that is most likely to do their 'A' levels before going on to university, and that is encouraged to think independently and creatively, and to 'understand what it takes to lead Singapore' (Ministry of Education, 2004b). The medium achieving group, who may not go beyond 'O' levels, are to 'possess a broad-based foundation for further education', and 'know and believe in Singapore', while those who do not progress beyond primary education are to 'be able to think for and express themselves', and 'love Singapore' (Ministry of Education, 2004b). On the whole, the government appears to be more comfortable with the educated class thinking independently and critically because, it is believed, this group is likely to be less emotive, more rational in their deliberation, and less likely to resort to violence. Whatever the case may be, the emphasis on grooming children who can think critically, creatively, and entrepreneurially has less to do with the liberal goal of fostering autonomous individuals than with ensuring the production of human capital suited to a globalised, knowledge economy.

In a system that places emphasis on meritocracy, there are attendant dangers in a maturing economy and, also, what is increasingly becoming a knowledge economy. In these conditions, it is the most talented who will be able to meet the needs of such an economy, who will be in greatest demand as 'symbolic analysts'¹, and who will be remunerated accordingly. Also, as was observed earlier, a maturing economy means not only fewer opportunities for the less able, but also a certain rigidification of the class structure (see Chiew and Ko, 1991; Tan, 2003). The result is that the groups that have managed to avail themselves of the economic opportunities during the period of high growth are more likely to do so in the knowledge economy, while those who failed to benefit from those opportunities, are even less likely to do so in the new economy. The likelihood therefore is that the income gap will grow, with the danger that an underclass might become entrenched. There is concern, not least on the part of the political leaders, about the Malays as a group who tend to occupy the lowest rungs on the social class, education, and economic ladder. There are also fears of growing divisions – and, hence, tensions – between 'old and new Singaporeans', 'less well-off and more successful Singaporeans', and 'the elderly and the young' (Goh, 2007).

Hence, there is a clear economic imperative where education policy is concerned. However, as will be seen, it is not always possible to keep the economic and socio-

political policies separate, with the result that these may sometimes contradict each other. At the same time, the policies aimed at economic ends may also create tensions that could have social and political consequences. These issues will be taken up in the penultimate section, after a look at the ways in which education is used as a political tool in Singapore.

Education as a political tool

Following Singapore's independence, education policies were devised to create citizens who would not only have a sense of national identity, and who would be able to live in harmony with one another, but who would also have the kind of values and attitudes needed for the continued survival and well-being of the country. Indeed, Green observes of the role of the development state that this:

goes beyond economic planning and regulation. It also involves the construction of national identity and the legitimation of state power.
(Green, 1997: 47)

And

(Education)...develops the attitudes and motivations in individuals which will ensure continuing collective commitment to and active participation in the goals of national development.
(Green, 1997: 48)

Over the years, Singapore's education has been reformed and modified to ensure the achievement of these aims. The areas on which such reforms have focused have been the structure of the national education system as a whole, school practices, and the curriculum.

In the years following independence, the PAP government overhauled the education system with the view to fostering a sense of national identity and a set of shared values. Even before 1965, the government had begun to implement 'a more integrative approach to education', and to provide 'common and nationally-oriented curricula for all schools'; after independence, integrated schools were created, in which different language streams were accommodated in one building, and *Civics* and rituals involving national symbols - such flag-raising and pledge-taking ceremonies - were introduced (Yip et al, 1997: 4ff, 8). Children were also given the opportunity to mix with one another,

for example, in extra- or co-curricular activities² outside formal lessons. In seating arrangements and project work, teachers also often ensured that children sat beside, or worked with, those of a different ethnic or religious group.

Changes were also made to the curriculum to ensure that children acquired the requisite values and attitudes. These can broadly be divided into four groups:

- (i) moral and, specifically, 'Asian' values;
- (ii) the values aligned with the national Shared Values³, and the Ministry of Education's Desired Outcomes of Education⁴; and
- (iii) the values and attitudes related to the continued survival of the country, i.e. the National Education messages, which includes
- (iv) the values needed for a cohesive society

These values are promoted in all subjects where appropriate, as well as in co-curricular and other school activities. But the main 'values carrying' subjects are *Civics and Moral Education*, the mother tongue languages, and *Social Studies*.

I have elsewhere described the evolution of civics and moral education in Singapore (Han, 1997) and how, over the years, interest has been taken in the subject at the highest levels. This interest has led to regular revisions to civics and moral education with the view, not only to making the content more relevant, but also to making its delivery more effective. These reforms have taken the subject from *Ethics and Civics*, to *Education for Living, Being and Becoming*, and *Good Citizens*, to *Civics and Moral Education*. *Religious Knowledge* was briefly introduced in the 1980s, in the hope that religion would be more effective in inculcating moral values, but this was abandoned when it was realised that the subject opened the door to proselytising, and created tensions among the different faith communities (Tan, 1997).

A major innovation was the inclusion in 1997 of National Education (see Han, 2000). Concern that young Singaporeans lacked knowledge about the country's recent history, and the personal qualities that would ensure Singapore's continued survival, led to the announcement of the National Education (NE) initiative. NE aims to 'develop national cohesion, the instinct for survival and confidence in the future':

- by fostering a sense of identity, pride and self-respect as Singaporeans;
- by (helping children learn) the Singapore story - how Singapore succeeded against the odds to become a nation;

- by (helping children understand) Singapore's unique challenges, constraints and vulnerabilities, which make us different from other countries; and
- by instilling the core values of our way of life, and the will to prevail, that ensures our continued success and well-being.

(Ministry of Education, n.d.)

Six National Education (NE) messages were drawn up:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Singapore is our homeland; this is where we belong. |
| 2. | We must preserve racial and religious harmony. |
| 3. | We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility. |
| 4. | No one owes Singapore a living. |
| 5. | We must ourselves defend Singapore. |
| 6. | We have confidence in our future. |

(Ministry of Education, n.d.)

The drive to transmit the NE messages has been carried out with a high degree of commitment over the last decade. NE is not itself a subject, but *Social Studies* was introduced as a compulsory subject at the primary and secondary levels, and is clearly designed both to remedy the ignorance of young Singaporeans with respect to the country's recent history, as well as to promote the NE messages. For Sim and Print, the 'positioning' of the subject 'must be seen within the chronology of the continuous single-minded pursuit of citizenship education to meet government needs' (Sim and Print, 2005: 66)._

The NE messages are not restricted to *Social Studies*, but are infused in all the subjects, as well as special events (e.g. Racial Harmony Day, Total Defence Day, etc.). Children are also expected to take Learning Journeys - excursions to military installations, and cultural and economic facilities – and to carry out voluntary work in the form of the Community Involvement Programme (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

If there were concerns at the time of the introduction of NE as to whether 'the account of history that is presented is one that is inclined to reflect the view of one party in the events' (Han, 2000: 7), analysis that has since been carried out on school texts provide evidence that such concerns have not been entirely without grounds. Commenting on the *Social Studies* textbooks, for instance, Kho refers to the 'single dominant

perspective' presented in the texts (Kho, 2005: 9). In my study of a more recent set of *Social Studies* texts, I found there was indeed an overriding sense of 'a single, approved narrative' (Han, 2007: 394-5). In addition, electoral practices peculiar to Singapore – e.g. voting for a group of candidates – that were regarded by critics as being dubious in democratic terms, were presented as the accepted, unquestioned norm (Han, 2007: 394–5, 390). In addition, both Kho and I noted the portrayal of the Japanese Occupation in all its brutality, even in the texts for young children. The reason for this was presumably to impress on children the need to defend Singapore, and this was so important that it overrode their need to be protected from the harsher aspects of life.

Admittedly, children were encouraged in the *Social Studies* texts to exercise critical thinking skills, and there were attempts to foster a critical awareness of history as a subject. There were, for instance, topics concerning the nature, methodology and sources of history, as well as bias in interpretation. For Sim and Print, 'the emphasis on thinking in social studies per se is a significant departure from past citizenship education programmes' (Sim and Print, 2005: 67). Having said that, the questions children were asked sometimes read as if these were 'intended to reinforce the interpretation of the text rather than to foster critical and creative thought' (Han, 2007: 391). And, in the view of Nichol and Sim, the pedagogy for Social Studies and National Education is a concern: 'it is too often didactic and narrow, perhaps responding to the arguably rather strident NE slogans' (Nichol and Sim, 2007: 20).

In addition to *Civics and Moral Education*, National Education, and *Social Studies*, the mother tongue languages (*Chinese*, *Malay* and *Tamil*) are also expected to transmit moral values. Specifically given the task of providing 'cultural ballast', the texts have been designed to transmit 'Asian' values through the vocabulary, as well as the myths, legends and idioms of the language. In our study of the *Chinese* texts (Han and Tan, 2007), Tan and I identified three types of discourse: the discourse of culture, of behaviour, and of life in Singapore. In addition to moral values such as honesty and responsibility, children were also exhorted to be filial, and respectful to elders. Personal and physical discipline was encouraged: good or well-behaved children (*guai hai zi*) (乖孩子) go to bed and rise early (*zao shui zao qi*) (早睡早起), and love cleanliness (*ai qing jie*) (爱清洁). The overall picture of the ideal Singapore child in the *Chinese* texts was not only one who has been imbued with the usual moral values, but also with 'Asian' values

which, among other things, encouraged respect for elders and for authority. Together, the three types of discourse constituted a model in which the child is familiar with Chinese culture and traditions, is well-behaved, patriotic, self-sacrificing, and respectful of elders, and perseveres against the odds. As we observed, such a model involved a passive notion of citizenship in which civic consciousness was promoted rather than, say, the ability to participate actively in a democratic society (Han and Tan, 2007).

To summarise, I examined in this section the literature related to civics, moral and national education, including the analysis that had been carried out on *Social Studies* and *Chinese* texts, and the National Education initiative. It was shown that, in addition to general moral values, children were also taught 'Asian' values, as well as the values and attitudes that were deemed necessary for a cohesive society, and the continued survival of the country. Where the teaching of the country's history was concerned, there was also the construction of a single, approved narrative, with historical events presented in such a way as – it would appear – to reinforce the National Education messages.

Civics and moral education: analysis of the current texts

This section will look at current Ministry of Education (MOE) policy and school curriculum with respect to civics and moral education in Singapore. According to the MOE,

The overarching goal of CME (*Civics and Moral Education*) is to nurture a person of good character, who is caring and acts responsibly towards self, family, school, community, nation and the world.

(CPDD,
2006a)

The task of civics and moral education is to uphold 'values like service to the nation and community above self, the appreciation of different cultures, the importance of family togetherness, filial responsibility, the respect and care of the elderly in society, nurturing the younger generation, thrift, diligence, respect for authority and the belief in social order' (CPDD, 2006a, pp. A2 – A3).

The primary civics and moral education texts (ages 6plus to 11plus) are written in the mother tongue, and are based on a syllabus developed by the Ministry of Education. The practice is to write the curriculum in English, and translate this into Chinese, Malay, and

Tamil. The different language texts should therefore contain the same content. For reasons of language competence, I looked only at the Chinese primary texts. The secondary texts (ages 12plus to 15plus or 16plus) are written in English. I used the pupil's workbook for two levels (Secondary 3 and 4) because the texts were not available at the time of writing; however, the content would be consistent with that in the textbooks. The texts dating from 1999 to 2002 were produced in the years following the announcement of National Education (NE), and would have been written to incorporate the NE messages. Some of the texts were dated 2007, and represented the latest reforms following a review of civics and moral education. An examination of the *Civics and Moral Education* texts is instructive because these present a clear and detailed picture of the kind of citizen that schools are supposed to produce, with the latest texts reflecting the current concerns of the government, and the attempts to deal with these within the curriculum. While schools are allowed to use approved textbooks produced by commercial publishers, and some do take up this option for subjects like *History*, all the civics and moral education texts currently in use are developed by the Curriculum Planning and Development Division of the Singapore Ministry of Education. The texts and pupil's books used in schools at the time of writing were analysed for this section⁵.

In the texts, there are the usual elements that one would expect from values education textbooks anywhere in the world. Children are encouraged to help others (Pr. 3A, Ch. 8⁶; Pr. 5A, Ch. 12), shown how to apologise when they make mistakes, and to forgive those who have wronged them (Pr. 3A, Ch. 6). There is the promotion of courtesy (Pr. 6B, Ch. 10), honesty (*cheng shi*) (诚实) (Pr. 3B, Ch. 10; Pr. 4B, Ch. 2), concern for others (*guan huai*) (关怀) (Pr. 1, pp. 71ff), sharing what one has with others (*gen bie ren fen xiang*) (跟别人分享) (Pr. 5B, Ch. 13), and helpfulness (Pr. 4A, Ch. 5; Pr. 5B, Ch. 12).

However, the kind of behaviour encouraged in children goes beyond mere moral behaviour. As in the *Chinese* texts, children are to develop good habits (*hao xi guan*) (好习惯) related to personal and physical discipline. They should love cleanliness (*ai qing jie*) (爱清洁) (Pr. 2, p. 65), and cultivate habits like washing their hands, and packing their schoolbags and brushing their teeth before they go to bed (Pr. 1, pp. 63-5). The texts portray as exemplary children who are neatly dressed, e.g. hair combed, with the shirt tucked into the waistband of the shorts (Pr. 1, pp. 14-15). Critics might be

concerned that, taken too seriously, such minute attention to the details of personal and physical discipline verges on regimentation.

In addition, considerable space is devoted to 'Asian' values. For instance, much importance is given to the family, and to family values. The family is invariably portrayed as 'loving' or 'lovable' (*ke ai de jia ting*) (可爱的家庭) (Pr. 5B, Ch. 4). From the time they begin school, children are taught *zun zhong* 尊重 – which is translated as 'respect' or 'reverence' – particularly for their elders. In the Pr. 1 text, for instance, children are shown how to use the honorific form of 'you' (*nin*) (您) when speaking to their elders. There is a great deal of emphasis on filial piety (*xiao shun fu mu*) (孝顺父母), and this is illustrated in terms of gratitude to and love for one's parents (Pr. 5A, Chs 6 and 9), being considerate to them (Pr. 4B, Ch. 7; Pr. 5B, Ch. 14), and caring for them when they are ill or elderly (Pr. 6B, Ch. 4). It is 'Asian' values such as these that are supposed to be the bulwark against the individualism and anti-social behaviour associated with Westernisation. These passages also reflect the Shared Value, 'family as the basic unit of society'. In addition, children are told that their actions affect the family's reputation (*jia ting sheng yu*) (家庭声誉), and any misbehaviour on their part would bring shame to the whole family (*rang quan jia ren meng xiu*) (让全家人蒙羞) (Pr. 6A, Ch. 2; see also Pr. 4B, Ch. 10).

Furthermore, children are constantly reminded of the need to think of, and behave with consideration towards, others (*wei ren zhao xiang*) (为人着想) (Pr. 3A, Ch. 9), and to take care of school and public equipment (*ai hu gong wu*) (爱护公物) (Pr. 4A, Ch. 2; Pr. 6A, Ch. 9). As with the *Chinese* texts, it is civic consciousness (*gong de xin*) (公德心) – rather than the kind of attitude that would lead to the flourishing of a civil society or a participative democracy – that is promoted (Pr. 6A, Ch. 9). The aim of these texts seems to be to reinforce another of the Shared Values, viz. 'nation before community and *society above self* (my emphasis).

Ultimately, the message is that every citizen can make a contribution to the nation (*wei guo jia zuo chu gong xian*) (为国家做出贡献) (Pr. 4A, Ch. 9), and that it is honourable and glorious (*guang rong*) (光荣) to be of service to one's country (*wei guo jia xiao lao*)

(为国家效劳) (Pr. 4A, Ch. 15). In accordance with the National Education message 'We must ourselves defend Singapore', children are told they must be prepared for any disaster or enemy attack (Pr. 6A, Ch. 5), and to protect and defend family and country (*bao jia wei guo*) (保家卫国) (Pr. 6B, Ch. 6). In addition, they are shown ways in which they can protect the country's reputation, viz. by being polite and honest, not littering, and watching what they say and do; they can also tell foreigners good things (*mei hao de shi wu*) (美好的事物) about Singapore, and explain any misunderstandings (*wu jie*) (误解). The implication seems to be that loyalty involves only ever speaking well of Singapore, and that any bad impressions of the country are 'mistakes' that need to be corrected. There is no recognition of the fact that things may not be perfect in a country or that, sometimes, the most loyal thing a citizen can do is to point out problems, and work to ameliorate these.

Brown observes that, in Singapore, the nation is 'the family writ-large' (Brown, 2000: 102). And, indeed, the Ministry of Education does conceive of the application of values in terms of 'concentric circles', starting from the individual, through the family, school and community, to the nation and the world (CPDD, 2006a: A-4). It would not be a stretch to suggest that the same respect that children are taught for their parents and elders would extend to the political leaders, in the same way that the attitude of service applies to the nation, as it does to the family and society.

At the same time, no distinction is made between loyalty to the country, and the particular characteristics the country has developed over the years. In fact, some of the chapters seem to be written with the intention to counteract negative views about the extant characteristics of the country. For instance, it is generally known that laws are strictly applied in Singapore, and the country is sometimes criticised for applying fines and even caning for criminal acts such as vandalism. And there is a chapter in which two children visit an imaginary place where the rule of law does not apply; they are appalled by the vandalism and acts of lawlessness that are carried out with impunity, and conclude that they do not like the place (Pr. 5B, Ch. 8). The implication is clear: things are much preferable in a place like Singapore where the rule of law is strictly applied.

The attitudes associated with multiculturalism, social cohesion, industriousness, and meritocracy, that are considered to be necessary for a stable and prosperous society,

are also promoted. To begin with, children are told that people are Singapore's main resource, and that they need to develop themselves and their abilities (*chong shi zi ji, ti gao ji neng*) (充实自己, 提高技能), and work hard to overcome the odds; they need to learn continually and improve their adaptability (e.g. Pr. 6B, Ch. 2; Pr. 6B, Ch. 1; Pr. 6B, Ch. 8), and to have perseverance (*nai xin*) (耐心) (Pr. 3A, Ch. 5), and not give up in the face of adversity (e.g. Pr. 3B, Ch. 1). Well known historical characters like Si Ma Guang⁷ (司马光) are held up as models exemplifying determination and willpower (*jue xin he yi li*) (决心和毅力) in overcoming difficult circumstances to achieve success (Pr. 4B, Ch. 12). There is a strong sense that children must always work hard and do their best, and avoid making mistakes so as not to let other people down (Pr. 4A, Ch. 7; Pr. 5B, Ch. 7). It is the greater good – i.e. the good of society or the country – that should be given priority. There are also chapters on caring for the less fortunate (*guan huai bu xing de ren*) (关怀不幸的人) (Pr. 5A, Ch. 10). In addition, the importance of foreign talent to Singapore's competitiveness is impressed on the children (Pr. 6B, Ch. 8), and they are expected to support the policy of attracting foreign talent, even though the reality is that they might themselves be disadvantaged by it.

There is general encouragement to live in harmony with people of other ethnicities and religions. Chapters are devoted to ethnic and religious harmony, and children are given examples of different customs, and ethnic and religious festivals, and shown the appropriate greetings on these occasions (Pr. 2, pp. 88 – 89; Pr. 3B, Ch. 12). In 'Visiting Hassan's Home' (Pr. 3B, Ch. 3), a Chinese family visits a Muslim former neighbour during Hari Raya; the text and pictures illustrate the kind of interaction that can take place on such an occasion, viz. sharing Malay snacks, and trying on Malay traditional dress. All this sounds rather artificial, and it can only be wondered as to what the children really make of it. At the secondary levels, the pupil's books differ from the primary texts only insofar as these provide more information about the various ethnic customs and religious practices (e.g. R³ICH: Sec. 1, pp. 113ff; Sec. 3A Pupil's Book). Where it comes to ethnic and religious diversity, therefore, the assumption seems to be that dressing up in each other's traditional costumes, and learning about different customs, will deepen children's understanding of these cultures (*you shen yi ceng de ren shi*) (有深一层的认识) (Pr. 4B, Ch. 3), and foster a spirit of mutual respect (*hu jing hu zhong de jing shen*) (互敬互重的精神) and understanding (*hu xiang ti liang*) (互相体谅)

(Pr. 5A, Ch. 15; see also Pr. 5B, Ch. 3). While knowledge about the different ethnic cultures and religions is important in a multicultural society, the question needs to be asked as to whether this assumption is a little too simplistic.

There is also the question as to the form of multiculturalism that is being promoted in Singapore. Although it is the practice of schools to encourage inter-ethnic mingling, there is a sense in which the model of multiculturalism in use shares similarities with what Amartya Sen terms 'plural monoculturalism', viz. 'having two styles or traditions coexisting side by side, without the twain meeting' (Sen, 2007: 157; see, also, Vickers' introductory chapter in this volume). Chua notes how, in Singapore, multiracialism involves, among other things, 'a high visibility of race' (Chua, 1995: 107), while Hill and Lian refer to the 'policy of ascription', according to which every Singaporean has to fit into one of four ethnic categories – Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others (Hill and Lian, 1995:103). Within education, the policy is for children to learn their mother tongue⁸ from the time they begin school, in order to provide them with 'cultural ballast'. In practice, this means children leaving the classroom during mother tongue lessons, and reassembling in their ethnic groupings. With civics and moral education lessons being conducted in the mother tongue at the primary level, the same practice is also followed for these lessons. The result is that ethnic identity is not only ascribed and reinforced in school, ethnic difference is also something children are constantly reminded of⁹.

Where National Education is concerned, this is handled in several ways in the *Civics and Moral Education* texts. First, there is the elucidation of national symbols (Pr. 4A, Ch. 1), and the observation of national rituals (Pr. 1, p. 28). Next, there are passages that celebrate Singapore's landscape and landmarks, and her people and achievements (Pr. 3B, Ch. 13). Children are presented with reasons as to why Singapore is their home, and the best place to be: it is where they were born and raised, and where their family and friends are; it has a clean, green environment, and a stable government and economy; it is a food paradise (*mei shi tian tang*) (美食天堂); and Singapore has a (it is implied) unique multi-ethnic and multicultural environment. There are also passages in which high rise living is explained in terms of land shortage (Pr. 5B, Ch. 11), and in which characters are shown to prefer to live where they are – in a place where people live in harmony (*he mu xiang chu*) (和睦相处) – than elsewhere (Pr. 6A, Ch. 5). Since some Singaporean have been known to feel constricted by the limits of an urban lifestyle and

so feel the urge to emigrate to countries with open spaces, critics would suggest that the aim here is to tie the children to the urban setting, and provide them with reasons to remain in the country.

Children are encouraged to take an interest in political issues (*guo jia da shi*) (国家大事), but this is done at a mundane level, e.g. seeing how activities such as tree planting or building schools improve their environment, or help society progress and lives improve (Pr 5A, Ch 13). In the primary texts, the democratic process is covered in just one chapter 'I too want to vote' ('*Wo ye yao tou piao*', '我也要投票', Pr. 6B, Ch. 11). In the chapter, the important role played by Members of Parliament in representing the views of the electorate is explained. The secondary pupil's workbooks do describe the Singapore Constitution and the structure of the government (Sec. 3B Pupil's Book, pp. 20ff), but the fundamental liberties are covered in a single sentence:

These are the rights of all citizens of Singapore, e.g. freedom of speech, freedom of religion and the right to education.

(Sec. 3B Pupil's Book, p. 21)

The texts also describe Singapore's parliamentary system, including its system of Group Representation Constituency MPs, Non-Constituency MPs, and Nominated MPs, in addition to elected single constituency MPs; but, as with the *Social Studies* texts, this is done without any indication that that the system is unusual in democratic terms¹⁰ (e.g. Sec. 4B Pupil's Book). The process and reasons for electing someone (in this case, a class representative) are set out in a primary text, and children are reminded that they should choose their representative on the basis of their ability (*cai gan*) (才干), not the influence of friendship (*jiao qing*) (交情) (Pr. 6A, Ch.10). The message is clear: it is important to elect suitable candidates, i.e. individuals who (according to the passage) should possess good judgement, foresight, honesty, a strong sense of responsibility, and righteousness. Children are warned that exercising the vote carelessly, and electing unsuitable candidates, would put the country's future at risk.

For anyone who committed to democratic values, the treatment of democracy and suffrage leaves something to be desired. There is little sense of a democracy being a government of the people, by the people. Neither is there much by way of an attempt to develop in children the attitudes and skills that would lead to their active and effective participation in the democratic process. And, given that members of opposition parties

have in the past often been criticised by those from the People's Action Party as being 'irresponsible' and 'dishonest', among other things, the exhortation to elect 'suitable' candidates can be misunderstood to mean electing only those who have been put forward by the PAP.

There has been an attempt to move from the didactic approach used during the early years of civics and moral education, to one in which children are more actively involved. One reason is the need to develop children's critical and creative thinking skills in order to prepare them for the knowledge economy. However, there is also a recognition that children of increasingly educated and middle-class parents are simply less willing to accept what they are told. From the time they begin school therefore, children are asked ostensibly open-ended questions in the texts. In the early years, the questions are designed to develop in children the ability to empathise with others, e.g. 'If your brothers or sisters take your things without asking your permission, how would you feel?' (Pr. 2, p.18). There are also questions asking children what they ought to do in a difficult moral situation ('*gai zen me zuo?*') ('你应该怎么做?')(Pr. 3B, Ch. 2). Children are also asked to give reasons for their views (*ti chu ni de li you*) (提出你的理由) (Pr. 4B, Ch. 2). In addition, there are chapters in which they are encouraged to voice their opinions, including one in which historical characters are shown to tell the truth bravely, despite being threatened with death by a wicked official (Pr. 5A, Ch. 10). Procedural values are also taught. For instance, children are shown how to discuss their ideas in a moderate and calm manner (*xin ping qi he*) (心平气和), and in a mutually respectful way (*hu xiang zun zhong*) (互相尊重) (Pr. 5A, Ch. 15; see also Pr. 6A, Ch. 8). The newly revised lower secondary texts provide much more space for the children's input. After each section, for instance, there is space for 'Reflection and Action', and 'My Thoughts'. All these are positive developments.

For the most part, however, the questions at the end of the chapters serve to reinforce the message in the text. In a chapter describing how Singapore was occupied by the Japanese because the British troops were ill prepared, the question is: 'Why is National Service so important for Singapore?' ('*Wei shen me guo min fu yi dui wo guo hen zhong yao?*') (为什么国民服役对我国很重要) (Pr. 4A, Ch. 15). Children are also asked with respect to the National Education messages, 'What are Singapore's constraints?' and

'What measures has Singapore adopted to overcome the difficulties arising from different kinds of constraints?' (Pr. 6B, Ch. 8). In most of these cases, the answers are clearly stated in the text, and the questions do little to help children develop the ability to think for themselves.

Hence, the picture of the ideal Singaporean child that emerges from the analysis of the *Civics and Moral Education* texts is one who has absorbed moral and, specifically, 'Asian' values. He has personal and physical discipline, and a strong sense of responsibility to his parents, to others, and to his country. He is willing to be of service to society – making personal sacrifices if necessary – and ever ready to defend his country. He loves Singapore, with its people and achievements, its multi-ethnic diversity, and high rise, urban environment. He is able to discuss issues moderately, calmly, and respectfully and, when he grows up, he will vote responsibly, and only for suitable political candidates.

According to the 2007 *Civics and Moral Education* syllabi for primary and secondary schools, the content revolves around six values and themes: respect, responsibility, integrity, care, resilience, and harmony (CPDD, 2006a, 2006b). Although only two primary (ages 6plus and 7plus) and two lower secondary (12plus and 13plus) texts were available at the time of writing, the chapters were all organised according to these six values and themes. The idea seems to be to revisit, reiterate and elaborate on these values and themes in each successive year of schooling. It was demonstrated in this section how there is a remarkably similar approach across the 'values carrying' subjects: there is the single, dominant narrative, and the overt way in which certain messages are put across in the text; there is the conflation of patriotism and an uncritical love of the country with all its extant characteristics, as well as the presentation of unusual democratic practices as the accepted, unquestioned norm; and there is the way in which questions are used to reinforce textual messages. In addition to all this, there is the repetition of a set of values and themes across the lifespan of a child's education. Taken together, there is a case for arguing that the cumulative effect of such an approach over a decade of schooling could amount to indoctrination.

Civics, moral and national education: the challenges

It was earlier noted that developmental states are often involved in the construction of national identity, and that education is used to develop the attitudes that would 'ensure continuing collective commitment to and active participation in the goals of national development' (Green, 1997: 48). Singapore's approach, however, is distinctive in at least three ways.

First, it is distinctive in terms of the comprehensiveness with which children are socialised into a set of values and attitudes. The desired values, attitudes, and messages are promoted systematically across all the subjects of the curriculum – particularly *Civics and Moral Education*, the mother tongue languages, and *Social Studies* – and in the National Education initiative, and co-curricular and other school activities. In addition, as has been demonstrated, a similar approach is used across the different subjects, such as the single, dominant narrative, and the questions that reinforce the message of the text; there is also the repetition and reinforcement of values and themes across the years. Even a child who is perceptive enough to be able to identify some elements as being propaganda, may yet absorb the other values and messages that pervade her school experience.

A second, related point is that the strong dominant 'voice' – whether this is to do with the values and attitudes children should have, or the historical narrative – is not, on the whole, complemented by alternative views in Singapore. The local media generally reflect the viewpoint of the ruling People's Action Party, and foreign publications that express alternative opinions sometimes face lawsuits, and the possibility of having their circulation restricted. While children increasingly have access to the internet, they may not use it to obtain alternative social and political views, nor – on the whole - are they taught or encouraged to do so. Hence, there is a virtual hegemony of the PAP discourse related to moral, civic and national values, and the values and messages heard by the child in school are also pervasive in the media. The result is that it is difficult for all but the most questioning children to be able to think independently and critically about the views and messages they are taught.

Third, certain values and attitudes or messages are considered so important, that the need to put these across overrides other considerations. As was seen from the treatment of the Japanese Occupation in both the *Social Studies* and *Civics and Moral*

Education texts, the need to reinforce a particular value or message trumps the need to protect young children from the brutality of war. However, the justifiability of exposing vulnerable young children in this way is something that any educationist needs to consider extremely carefully.

Overall, therefore, the analysis of the content and approach in the 'values carrying' subjects suggest that there is a greater concern to teach children to be well-behaved, disciplined, responsible members of society who are committed to the country's survival and development, than to develop a group of citizens capable of making independent decisions, and participating actively and effectively in the political process.

It might be argued that the ideal of the autonomous individual belongs to the realm of a liberal democracy. However, teachers and Ministry of Education officials have been given the task of helping children to think critically and creatively, if for nothing else than to prepare them for the knowledge economy. In any case, educationists in Singapore generally do accept that young people are now more questioning, and less likely to accept what they are told. They also realise that, in a maturing democracy, there is pressure from the citizenry for more political participation, and that there is a need to prepare children for this eventuality.

However, as has been demonstrated, the model of citizenship in use is one that is essentially passive. There is a great deal of emphasis on personal responsibility and discipline, but very little on political rights and participation. It is civic consciousness, and responsibility to family, society and country that are stressed, not the empowerment of individuals through political education, or the developing of personal autonomy and independent thought. Children are expected to absorb a whole slew of values and messages – ranging from general moral values and behaviour, to 'Asian' values, and the National Education messages. They must watch their behaviour which, they are told, will have an impact on their family and country. They are also expected to make a contribution to society and to Singapore. It is a great deal to have to take on, and a huge amount of responsibility and expectations to place on young shoulders.

One way to understand Singapore's approach to civics, moral and national education is to see it in terms of the political leaders' response to globalisation. Many of the values

and attitudes are devised with the view to staving off the ills of 'Westernisation', and to impose the moral and personal discipline needed to meet the challenges of the competitiveness of a knowledge economy while maintaining social cohesion. To do this, a form of 'collectivist civic nationalism' is promoted in schools in which class and individual interests are subordinated to 'visions of the common good' (Brown, 2000: 99). If I may paraphrase Brown, the political leaders have used their 'ideological strategies of collectivist nationalism' to legitimise and facilitate their 'economic strategies of globalisation'; in so doing, they have – in effect – used the fact of globalisation to 'promote the development of both (Singapore's) economy and its national cohesion' (see Brown, 2000: 93).

In the final analysis, the model of the ideal citizen that is promoted is one with strong elements of moral virtue, and service to society and country, but it is also one that is passive and unempowered. And this may not be the model that can produce the worker who will be able to think critically and creatively in the knowledge economy, nor the citizen with the moral and intellectual autonomy and judgement to manoeuvre the complexities of life in an age of globalisation.

Conclusion

Hence, notwithstanding the incipient attempts to encourage critical and creative thinking, there may be justified concerns with respect to indoctrination in civics, moral and national education. If so, this would not only work against the formation of independent, autonomous individuals suited to a maturing democracy, it could also be inimical to the objective of developing the ability to think critically and creatively for economic purposes. In other words, such an approach could impair both the processes of Singapore's democratic maturation and economic development.

In Singapore, the government has the upper hand – and, indeed, holds most of the cards – where social and political change is concerned. It does recognise the need for reform and, as was seen in the texts, steps have been taken to make allowances for the fact that children are increasingly more questioning, as well as the fact that the messages would be better received if they arrive at these by themselves. However, the political leaders are committed to 'Asian' values and the National Education messages,

and the merit and importance of these are not negotiable. The challenge is therefore to transmit the values and messages without eliciting a reaction of rejection. It is of course the teachers who are at the chalk face, and the task requires political astuteness and social judgement, as well as pedagogical expertise combined with a commitment to educational ideals. This is great challenge, even for the most able teachers. There are doubts therefore as to whether the current approach is able to do everything it is supposed to – create moral individuals with a strong sense of service and civic consciousness who are committed to the well-being of Singapore, *and* who will also be able to think critically and creatively, even entrepreneurially. In all likelihood, the effect on children will be that – if asked - they will verbally reproduce the ‘correct’ values and attitudes. But how much they actually believe in these – whether they will really put others above themselves, or make sacrifices for society and country, for example – is another question altogether. And whether the approach used will result in a generation capable of thinking critically and creatively as citizens, or as workers in the knowledge economy, is yet another question.

Bibliography

- Ashton, D.N., and Sung, J. (1997) ‘Education, Skill Formation, and Economic Development: the Singaporean Approach’, in Halsey, A. H, Lauder, H., Brown, P., and Wells, A.S. (eds) *Education: Culture, Economy, and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 207-18.
- Brown, D. (2000) *Contemporary Nationalism: civic, ethnocultural and multicultural politics*, London: Routledge.
- Brown, P. Halsey, A.H., Lauder, H., and Wells, A.S. (1997) ‘The Transformation of Education and Society: an Introduction’, in Halsey, A. H, Lauder, H., Brown, P., and Wells, A.S. (eds) *Education: Culture, Economy, and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–44.
- Castells, M. (1992) ‘Four Asian Tigers with a Dragon Head: a comparative analysis of the state, economy, and society in the Asia Pacific Rim’, in Applebaum, R., and Henderson, J. (eds) *States and Development in the Asian Pacific Rim*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, pp. 33–70.
- Chen, P. (1983) ‘Singapore’s Development Strategies: A model for rapid growth’, in Chen, P. (ed.) *Singapore: Development Policies and Trends*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–25.
- Chiew, S. K. (1991) ‘Ethnic Stratification’, in Quah, Stella, Chiew, S. K., Ko, Y. C., Lee, S. M. C. (eds) *Social Class in Singapore*, Singapore: Centre for Advanced Studies (National University of Singapore), Times Academic Press, pp. 138–82.
- Chiew, S. K., and Ko, Y. C. (1991) ‘The Economic Dimension’, in Quah, Stella, Chiew, S. K., Ko, Y. C., Lee, S. M. C. (eds) *Social Class in Singapore*, Singapore: Centre for

Advanced Studies (National University of Singapore), Times Academic Press, pp. 116–37.

Chua Beng Huat (1995) *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*, London: Routledge.

CPDD (Curriculum Planning and Development Division) (2006a) *Civics and Moral Education Syllabus: Primary: 2007*. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.moe.gov.sg/cpdd/doc/New%20EL%20CME_Pri_Syllabus.pdf> (accessed 26 October 2008).

CPDD (Curriculum Planning and Development Division) (2006b) *Civics and Moral Education Syllabus: Secondary: 2007*. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses/humanities-and-aesthetics/files/civics-and-moral-education-secondary-2007.pdf>> (accessed 26 October 2008).

-- (2006c) *Revised Pre-University Civics Syllabus*. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.moe.gov.sg/cpdd/doc/New%20Civics%20syllabus%202007.pdf>> (accessed 3 January 2008).

Goh Chok Tong (2007) 'Three new cohesions and two priorities for CDCs (Community Development Councils)', speech at the Community Development Councils' 10th Anniversary Appreciation Dinner, 16 November 2007. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.straitstimes.com/Latest%2BNews/Singapore/STIStory_177465.html> (accessed 18 November 2007).

Gopinathan, S. (1974) 'The Beginnings of a National Education System', *Towards a National System of Education in Singapore 1945 – 1973*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–51.

Green, A. (1997) *Education, Globalization and the Nation State*, London: Macmillan Press.

Han, C. (1997) Education for citizenship in a plural society: with special reference to Singapore, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford.

-- (2000) 'National Education and 'Active Citizenship': Implications for Citizenship and Citizenship Education in Singapore', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 63–72.

-- (2007) 'History education and 'Asian' values for an 'Asian' democracy: the case of Singapore', *Compare*, 37(3): 383–98.

Han, C. & Tan, J. (2007) 'Asian' values in Chinese textbooks in Singapore, unpublished paper.

Hill, M. and Lian, K. F. (1995) *The Politics of Nation Building and Citizenship in Singapore*, London: Routledge.

Kho, E. M. (2005) Demonizing the Japanese occupation: exploring ideological discourses in Singapore history and social studies textbooks, paper presented at the International Conference, The Japanese Occupation: Sixty Years after the End of the Asia-Pacific War, Singapore, September 2005.

Ministry of Education (n.d.) 'National Education. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.ne.edu.sg/index.htm>> (accessed 6 February 2008).

-- (2004a) 'Desired Outcomes of Education'. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.moe.gov.sg/corporate/desired_outcomes.htm> (accessed 2 November 2007).

-- (2004b) 'Desired Outcomes of Education: Intermediate Outcomes of Education'. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.moe.gov.sg/corporate/desired_outcomes4.htm> (accessed 21 December 2007).

Ng Pak Tee (2005) 'Introduction', in Tan, J. and Ng, P. T. (eds) *Shaping Singapore's Future: Thinking Schools, Learning Nation*, Singapore: Pearson Prentice Hall, pp. 1–4.

- Nichol, R., and Sim, J. B.-Y. (2007) 'Singaporean Citizenship, National Education and Social Studies: Control, Constraints, Contradictions and Possibilities', *Citizenship Teaching and Learning* 3(1), pp.16-31.
- Ooi Giok Ling (1993) 'The Housing and Development Board's Ethnic Integration Policy', in Ooi, G. L., Siddique, S., and Soh, K. C. (eds) *The Management of Ethnic Relations in Public Housing Estates*, Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, Times Academic Press, pp. 4–24.
- Reich, Robert (1991) *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st-Century Capitalism*, London: Simon and Schuster.
- Sen, Amartya (2007) *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, London: Penguin Books.
- Sharpe, L., and Gopinathan, S., (1996) 'Effective Island, Effective Schools: Repairing and Restructuring in the Singapore School System', *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 5(4): 394–402.
- Sim, J.B.-Y., and Print, M. (2005) 'Citizenship Education and Social Studies in Singapore: A National Agenda', *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education*, 1(1): 58-73.
- Soon, T.W. (1988) 'History of Education in Singapore', *Singapore's New Education System: Education Reform for National Development*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 3–7.
- Straits Times Online (2007) 'CPF Changes to help Singaporeans build healthy nest egg: PM', Straits Times Online. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.straitstimes.com/Latest%2BNews/Singapore/STIStory_149857.html> (accessed 19 August 2007).
- Tan, Jason (1997) The rise and fall of religious knowledge in Singapore secondary schools, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 29(5): 603–24.
- (2003) 'Reflections on Singapore's Education Policies in an Age of Globalization', in Mok, K.H, and Welch, A. (eds) *Globalization and Educational Restructuring in the Asia Pacific Region*, Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 32–57.
- Teo Chee Hean (2007) Ministerial Statement by Mr Teo Chee Hean, Minister-in-Charge of the Civil Service, on Civil Service Salary Revisions, at Parliament 9 April 2007', Singapore Government Media Release. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://app.sprinter.gov.sg/data/pr/20070409992.htm>> (accessed 4 February 2008).
- Turnbull, C.M. (1977) *A History of Singapore: 1819 – 1975*, Third Impression 1980, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Yip, J., Eng, S.P., and Yap, J. (1997) '25 Years of Educational Reform', in Tan, J., Gopinathan, S., and Ho, W.K. (eds) *Education in Singapore: a book of readings*, Singapore: Prentice Hall, pp. 5–53.

¹ This is a term used by Robert Reich, and refers to work involving ‘problem-solving, problem-identifying, and strategic-brokering’; these are services that ‘can be traded worldwide and thus must compete with foreign providers’ (Reich, 1991: 177ff).

² After school activities include sports, clubs and societies, and uniformed groups; these were initially called ‘extra-curricular activities’, but are now referred to as ‘co-curricular activities’.

³ As set out in a White Paper issued in 1991, the Shared Values are ‘Nation before community and society above self’; ‘Family as the basic unit of society’; ‘Community support and respect for the individual’; ‘Consensus, instead of contention’; ‘Racial and religious harmony’ (cited in Hill and Lian, 1995: 217).

⁴ In the preamble to ‘the Desired Outcomes of Education’, it is stated that ‘An educated person is one responsible to himself, his family, and his friends’, and ‘An educated person is also someone who is responsible to his community and country’ (MOE, 2004a). The Intermediate Outcomes of Education include: ‘love Singapore’ for primary schoolchildren, ‘know and believe in Singapore’ for secondary schoolchildren, and ‘understand what it takes to lead Singapore’ for junior college (or ‘A’ level) children (MOE, 2004b).

⁵ Texts and pupil’s books used for analysis:

Civics and moral education texts: primary

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2007) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 1, Singapore: SNP Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2007) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 2, Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2001) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 3A, Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2002) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 3B, Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (1999) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 4A, Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2000) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 4B, Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2000) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 5A, Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2001) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 5B, Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2001) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 6A, Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2002) Civics and Moral Education Textbook 6B Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Civics and moral education texts: secondary

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2007) **R3ICH**: Secondary 1, Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Education.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2007) **R3ICH**: Secondary 2, Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Education.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2001) Civics and Moral Education: Pupil’s Book 3A: Special, Express and Normal (Academic), Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2001) Civics and Moral Education: Pupil’s Book 3B: Special, Express and Normal (Academic), Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2002) Civics and Moral Education: Pupil’s Book 4A: Special, Express and Normal (Academic), Singapore: EPB Panpac.

Curriculum Planning and Development Division (2002) Civics and Moral Education: Pupil’s Book 4B: Special, Express and Normal (Academic), Singapore: EPB Panpac.

⁶ Because many texts may be published in a single year, the usual method of referencing would not provide immediate information about the year of study, and I have chosen to use a method that does so. ‘Pr.’ and ‘Sec.’ means ‘Primary’ and ‘Secondary’ respectively, and ‘Ch.’ refers to the chapter within the text. Where the text is not divided into chapters, I have used page numbers.

⁷ Si Ma Guang is described in the text as a ‘great man’ from the Song Dynasty. The passage tells of how Si Ma Guang found it more difficult than his brothers to carry out the learning tasks given to them by their tutor. Although he was frequently punished for this, he was not discouraged, and was determined to work harder. His efforts paid off, and the passage concludes with him eventually becoming a great scholar.

⁸ As a general rule, a child’s mother tongue is – ironically – defined by her father’s ethnicity.

⁹ This is an observation that has also been made by Chua Beng Huat (personal communication).

¹⁰ I have made a similar observation in Han (2007). Most people would be familiar with elected single constituency MPs, but Group Representation Constituencies MPs, Non-Constituency MPs, and Nominated MP are innovations unique to Singapore. Group Representation Constituencies refer to the practice of

grouping up to six constituencies and MPs so that a vote by residents in these area counts as a vote for the whole team of MPs. Non-Constituency MPs comprise opposition MPs who win the highest number of votes in an election, without managing to carry the seat; Nominated MPs are not politically affiliated, but have a role in Parliament on the basis of being nominated by the President.