

Education and the Nation State: The Role of Public Policy

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<u>Singapore</u>

- Moved from a Third World nation to a First World nation in 40 years.
- No natural resources, a native population of 3 million has a GDP of around US\$35,000 and over US\$150 billion in reserves.

Singapore is exceptional in being policy rich and policy efficient, so successful in fact that the LKY School of Policy Study was created to build upon and share Singapore's experiences.

WHY?

Key Questions:

- How is Singapore's experience in economic-educational development to be understood?
 - What were key challenges & how were these met?
 - ➤ How did policies change over time to meet new needs?
 - ➤ How is Singapore planning for the future?
 - What experiences in the development of Singapore's economy-education system are relevant for other countries?

Singapore between 1945-1959, had all the features of a 'failed colony'. The political challenge was to build a strong economy that would provide resources to rebuild infrastructure, invest in the economy, provide socio-economic security. These developments were vital to give the state legitimacy.

Singapore (1965-1978): Building the state; investing in education.

- Failure of merger (1963-1965) led to Singapore's independence in 1965. Withdrawal of British forces precipitated a crisis mentality. Singapore faced enormous challenges- political, economic, social & educational.
- Political to build a Singapore nation in which citizens unite, contribute and have opportunities 'regardless of race, language or religion'.

- Economic to transit from an entropot economy to an individual one via Export-Orientated Industrialization (EOI).
- Social to strengthen unity between the ethnic groups
- Educational to build an education system appropriate to emerging socio-political needs

- Adoption of a politics of survival strategy and a 'developmental state' ideology; 'depoliticised, administrative state'.
- Singapore was blessed with a visionary and competent cabinet
- Early and sustained commitment to building a competent and non-corrupt bureaucracy

Rationale:

- 1. Language policy of 'equality of treatment' allows state to claim neutrality, builds social cohesion via a common language, English.
- 2. English as a vehicle of economic and sociopolitical modernization – indispensible in the search for capital, markets, talent.

Consequences of Bilingual Policy

2000 Census

- Literacy rate 92.5%
- Bilingual literacy 56%
- English use in homes 23%
- Mandarin use in homes 35%
- Decline in dialect use from 60% in 1980 to 38% in 1990

Building a High Skills Workforce for an Industrial Economy

- •1965-1978 Singapore attempts an export led industrialisation model of economic development.
- Jurong Industrial Estate established in late 60s. By early '70s GDP growth had exceeded 8%. By 1975 218,096 workers were employed in manufacturing.

In order to make a successful economic transition Singapore needed

- Close linking of manpower and economic priorities, e.g.,
 National Industrial Council
- An education system with a strong focus on science and technology and technical/vocational options
- English to communicate with investors & to seek export markets
- Upgrading the existing labor force with relevant industrial skills

The Nature and Challenge of Globalisation

- Globalization, rise of China, India Vietnam as a source of cheap labor, advances in automation, increased importance of data & information in economic activity, greater importance of innovation and enterprise necessitated economic and educational rethinking.
- Cultural globalization was putting pressure on identity formation, civic and moral values.

TSLN to introduce critical and creative thinking, more diversity in curriculum, greater structural diversity (independent & autonomous schools, school cluster scheme) greater resourcing to encourage bottom up innovation, improvements in teacher education and service and working conditions.

IT Master Plan: to exploit the potential of information and communication technology to give students access to new information sources and make anytime, anywhere learning possible.

National Education: designed to better acquaint students with their own history, to strengthen civic commitments, and protect and defend Singapore's core values

Results:

- Singapore had created a system of 'high averages' with high levels of post-secondary participation in further training and education; 75% of year 10 school leavers go on to postsecondary institutions.
- Outstanding results for Science, Mathematics & Language Education (TIMMS/PISA)

Results:

- Lower attrition, more students having vocational technical opportunities and closer education-economy, fit was achieved.
- High regard for TVET; skill acquisition pays off in the economy

Results:

- Education and skill levels have gone up substantially in the last 20 years.
- Workforce has a strong work-ethic, is collaborative rather than confrontational and has much improved opportunities for re-training.
- Government investment in R&D is rapidly increasing; new institutions created to boost R&D – A*; National Research Foundation

Education Ecology

- System is one of interlocking parts; there is no one single 'magic bullet' for education excellence
- Strong tripartite relationship between MOE·NIE·Schools
- Need both intelligent policy and capacity to implement

Policy and Practice in a Strong State: Education Policy in Singapore Critical Success Factors

- Key national priorities were identified and resources allocated. Enhanced human capital skills were seen as crucial to the economy leading to appropriate investment in different types of education and training.
- There was an acceptance of the need to take unpopular decisions eg. retention of English

Key Features of Policy

- Focus on building up human capital
- Focus on social cohesion
- Pragmatic not ideological
- Build up new institutions EDB, POSB, SAF
- Emphasis on Excellence, Meritocracy

Singapore 2013 and Beyond

- What is the 'new normal'? Is a new social compact needed?
- More politics (contestation) in policy formulation now? What about education policy making? With what possible consequences?
- Globalisation is straining the social compact immigration (access to jobs), schooling opportunities (university admission), income and wealth gaps
- State legitimacy is weakened
- Control over information is weakened

- Singapore's economic model is being questioned as immigration numbers increase and inequality widens.
- Singapore's model of meritocracy is also being questioned, and education's role in this is under scrutiny. The Government has been forced to raise university participation rate to 40%, to take steps to make high-quality kindergarten education more affordable and to promise to review the assessment system.

