

Nation Building and Citizenship Education In Multi-ethnic Singapore

Introduction

According to Singapore's Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, Singapore is not yet a nation because "a nation is not built in one generation, much less a country made up of different races and religions, who until recently, were living in different racial enclaves" (Straits Times, 5 June 1999). Singapore is only a state, a sovereign entity and is still "a fragile society with racial faultlines that could not be erased by slogans alone" (ibid.). Rupert Emerson (1969) has defined a mature nation as a "single people, traditionally fixed on a well-defined territory, speaking the same language and preferably speaking a language all its own, possessing a distinctive culture, and shaped to a common mould by many generations of shared historical experience." Indeed according to Emerson, the hallmark of a nation is that "it is a body of people who feel that they are a nation" and that they are "a community of brethren imbued with a sense of common destiny" (1969:105). In short what makes a country a nation is the extent to which its citizens feel as one, the extent to which they have certain shared or national values¹.

Singapore does not measure up as a nation because of its people's different languages, religions, cultures and ancestry. Singapore has been an independent country only for about 35 years. People in a nation must have shared a past over many generations and must believe that they share a destiny for the future. Singaporeans have not been shaped into a common mould for more than one generation²; they have not shared a common past. Multi-racialism has given every race an equal place, "but whether it will last the next hundred years will depend on whether the different races can gel together as one people, feel as one people and pulsate with the same Singapore heartbeat" (Goh, ST, 5 June 1999). A Singapore tribe has to be created and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong has predicted that it would take a few more generations before a successful, multi-racial nation could be established (ibid.).

This essay explores the concepts of ethnicity and nation-building, and examines the strategies that Singapore has used to create "one united people regardless of race, language or religion" and "to build a democratic nation based on justice and equality"³. The Education Minister and Chairman of the Singapore 21 Committee, Teo Chee Hean, gave very poor scores to the performance of Singaporeans in two areas: (a) a sense of belonging to the country, and (b) contribution to the community (ST, 27 April 1999). The absence of racial conflicts for many years in Singapore has been largely due to the strong economy, which has generated full employment, rising standards of living and better housing. Singaporeans are too satisfied with their material existence and few would be willing to indulge in destructive ethnic confrontation. But for a highly plural society, intercultural knowledge and communication is disturbingly low. With the advancement of Information Technology and globalization, there is an emerging need for Singaporeans to live a more mobile lifestyle and to have a global cultural fluency in order to become more effective, creative and communicative workers. To enhance their rootedness as they become more mobile and at the same time to strengthen their intercultural competence, it is essential to provide deeper, broader, denser and more diverse cultural resources for the future Singaporeans. This essay also considers the relevance of Singapore's

National Education programme and argues for intercultural communication competence to be included in citizenship education.

Nation-building in Multi-ethnic Societies

Bell and Freeman (1976: 11-12) have defined nation-building as "the formation and establishment of the new state as a political entity and the processes of creating viable degrees of unity, adaptation, achievements and sense of national identity among its people". Smith (1986: 2) argues that "collective myth and memory is the *sine qua non* of a nation because there can be no identity without memory, no collective purpose without myth. Identity and purpose or destiny are necessary elements of the very concept of nation". A shared sense of identity and belonging to a national community, based on past, present and future, is therefore the crucial element which defines and sustains a nation. Nation-building involves the key task of creating this shared identity in a new state whose multi-ethnic population has diverse origins, histories and identities. While much of a new state's character is normally established during an earlier period of nationalist movement, nation-building is a continual process because "ethnic, racial, class and other cleavages may continuously threaten the unity, legitimacy and existence of the state" (Bell and Freeman, 1976: 12).

In many new nation-states, nation-building remains a central concern as, many years after independence, ethnic problems remain unresolved or new ones have emerged. The central question remains as to how ethnically diverse groups can be incorporated into a common and acceptable sense of nationhood. The difficult problems of nation-building posed by ethnic differences imply that, until they are resolved and managed, the formation of a nation based on multi-ethnicity remains elusive or shaky. In the management of ethnic cleavages and sentiments, certain "decisions of nationhood" (Bell, 1976: 285-6) and state intervention are involved. The basic question underlying these decisions should be the new nation's history and cultural traditions (ibid.: 293-4).

Smith (1986) stresses the importance of historical memories (besides common descent) in fostering national solidarity and a sense of rootedness. Which aspects of history to choose is also difficult where the nation's history is fraught with ethnic tensions. National culture is often seen as the culture of a dominant ethnic group by others, while the dominant ethnic group always regard its culture as the national culture. In the management of history and culture therefore, the judicious choice of events and aspects of history and culture to emphasize or ignore is crucial, as it may promote disunity instead of integration.

In the course of debate and choice over historical and cultural symbols, history, tradition, and myth themselves may be subject to interpretation and revision, reconstruction, and rediscovery, or even outright invention (Smith, 1986: 178). On the other hand, new nations without a rich past or strong cultural traditions may be less encumbered in the selection or creation of unifying symbols (Bell, 1976: 294). Such nations may, instead, manipulate cultural diversity and stress its strength and compatibility with unity. The slogans and ideologies of "multi-racialism" and "unity in diversity" are reflections of this approach.

Rex (1986: 133) suggests that the minimum level of national identity for a multi-ethnic society lies in ensuring the right of all individuals to equality of opportunity, and legal and political rights for minority communities. Beyond this, the creation of a multi-racial society must involve an element of volunteerism, with the choice of assimilation or retention of separate cultures. Bell (1976) and Rex (1986: 120) see equality of opportunity as vital to the solution of ethnic conflict. In fact a multi-ethnic society has the problem of ensuring both equality of opportunity and tolerance of cultural differences. Rex (1986), like Smith⁴, suggests a separation of society into the public domain consisting of the economy, law, politics, and social rights, and the private domain of religion, family, language, and cultural arts. Equality of opportunity would apply in the public domain while multi-culturalism and the right to be different can be aspired to in the private domain⁵.

Decisions of nationhood involve the state. Its decisions over the role of ethnicity in nation-building through legal, structural, administrative, and ideological means set the boundaries of ethnic identities and ethnic relations, while its policies towards national integration and issues of economics, culture, language, and religion affect the positions of the majority and minorities. In its policies, its own position may vary between that of close association with the interests of a particular, usually dominant, ethnic group and that of negotiation between groups. In general, the state in multi-ethnic societies plays a crucial role in the structuring of ethnic and interethnic possibilities (Lai, 1995: 14).

Ethnicity and Nation-Building in Singapore

Right from the beginning Singapore sought to totally debunk the “ideology of a mono-cultural, mono-lingual and mono-racial people ruled by an authoritarian state”⁶ (Lee, K.C., 1967). Singapore repudiated the assimilationist approach of requiring the minorities to discard their traditional cultures and adopt the culture of the majority group, including attempts to make members of the minority groups change their names and surnames⁷. Singapore was determined to establish a cultural democracy and to make it the paramount founding principle of independent Singapore. Cultural democracy⁸ was considered the most realistic way of dealing with ethnic realities. Singapore rejected the notion of cultural uniformity and upheld the ideal⁹ of equal freedom for minorities and majorities alike in language, culture, religion and way of life.

Mindful of the ethnic complexities of its own population and in the region, Singapore has evolved a national identity and culture based on an ideology of pragmatism that is consistent with its primary concern for survival and success (Lai, 1995:184). This ideology has three components: (a) an economic ideology of meritocracy; (b) a political ideology of Singapore style democracy (non-liberal, democratic socialist); and (c) a cultural ideology of CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others) multi-racialism.

Multi-racialism allows for two identities – the national and the ethnic – and sees no conflict between them. One can have a Singaporean identity and an ethnic identity at the same time, so long as the latter is politically non-threatening to the former and subsumed under it. The dual identity is reflected in Singaporeans identifying themselves as Singaporean-Chinese, Malay, Indian or Eurasian. In line with the

founding principle, the first generation leaders also took a practical view even of the notion of loyalty to Singapore. They did not insist that their nationals shed or dilute their separate ethnic identities and attachments for the sake of a common national identity, culture and language. The commitment of the different ethnic communities to their own distinctive identities, cultures, heritages, languages and ways of life was not seen as being disloyal to Singapore.

Loyalty to Singapore (and national identity) has to be promoted through other means. The Singapore government has always been and continues to be committed to nurturing a Singaporean identity among the population, which will surmount all the chauvinistic and particularistic pulls of the various ethnic groups. The government has relied on many instruments to promote national integration, to build a nation of Singaporeans out of the disparate groups. These include the promotion of economic development¹⁰, public housing¹¹, national service¹², educational policies (e.g. policies on religious education¹³ and bilingualism¹⁴), the mass media, periodic national campaigns and grassroots organizations.

To deal with the competing loyalties and other primordial ties exerted on the local population by their countries of origin, the citizens must be given a stake in Singapore (Quah, 1990: 46). Therefore from the beginning, economic advancement and growth were considered to be the core element of Singapore's strategy for the management of ethnicity and was given the necessary priority. Singapore's economy has achieved spectacular progress over the past 35 years and unprecedented opportunities were created for making money. This created such a high level of contentment with their material existence for a significantly large part of Singapore's citizenry that few of them would be willing to indulge in destructive ethnic disharmony and confrontation.

The Singapore government also made sure that ethnic minorities secured fair representation at the highest levels of decision-making. Since independence, the composition of the cabinet, the ministry and the parliament has reflected the multi-ethnic character of Singapore. There was always a reasonable number of Malays and Indians in highly visible positions as ministers. There were willingness at times to compromise the strong commitment to the system of meritocracy to ensure some ethnic balance in public service personnel.

Having committed themselves to a multi-racial Singapore that allowed its diverse ethnic groups the freedom to retain their distinctiveness, and in consequence their separateness, the first generation Singapore leaders considered the creation of an English-speaking Singapore as vital to facilitate communication and intermingling among the different races. An English-speaking Singapore would also project Singapore as a cosmopolitan international city and help disguise its distinctive Chineseness, thereby making it less unacceptable to its powerful Malay neighbours¹⁵.

In creating an essentially English-speaking nation, Singapore's leaders were not unmindful of its possible negative, deculturising influence on the Singapore people. "... If you deculturise a person, erase his own culture when you have not got something as relevant to put in its place, then you have enervated him." (Lee, K.Y., 1969). Singaporeans must have this "cultural ballast" and a multi-racial cultural democracy will ensure that this negative effect will be reduced if not prevented. Bilingualism¹⁶ was introduced as a cornerstone of Singapore's educational policy. It

was believed that this policy of bilingualism would enable the different peoples to understand each other and develop respect for their distinctive cultures and heritages.

The English-stream schools had begun to widen the spread of western values, way of life and attitudes rapidly among the young Singaporeans and caused considerable erosion in their commitment to their different languages, cultures and heritages. The government began to be concerned with the adverse effects of heightened individualism and the erosion of moral and ethical values on the one hand and on the other the loss of cultural identity¹⁷. There was a fear that young Singaporeans might lose their cultural moorings or worse, fall victim to morally unhealthy influences emanating from the West. Between 1979 and 1990, the government introduced a number of initiatives to restore the Chineseness of the Chinese. This does not mean that the government was turning the clock back and undoing entirely the making of an essentially English-speaking Singapore. The founding principle of cultural democracy was not only left unchanged but instead became enhanced!

The initiatives include: the speak Mandarin Campaign¹⁸; the introduction of Religious Knowledge curriculum¹⁹; and the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools project²⁰. Although these initiatives were only "balancing move(s) to reassure the Chinese community that their cohesiveness, cultural identity and language claims still remained a primary concern of the government" (Gopinathan, S., 1993), they created considerable suspicion and concern among the non-Chinese minorities. These measures were seen by many English-educated Chinese as measures seeking to appease the Chinese-speaking. Many non-Chinese²¹ feared that these could eventually lead to an erosion of the equality of status accorded to the different racial groups under the founding principle of a multi-racial cultural democracy and allow the Chinese to dominate.

In October 1988, Goh Chok Tong (who was already designated to succeed Lee Kuan Yew) proposed that Singapore should formalise its own values in a national ideology and then teach them in schools, workplaces and homes as Singaporean's way of life. It will be a set of principles to bind the people together and guide them forward. He believed that Singapore is a high performance country because it shares the same cultural base as other successful East Asians, that is, Confucian ethic. Singaporeans must have the same core values²² which made the Japanese, Koreans and Taiwanese succeed especially if Singapore wants to continue to prosper.

But the government has to be seen not to be promoting a Confucian model because this will not be acceptable to the non-Chinese Singaporeans. Singapore must also have a broader choice of ingredients to make up the National Ideology. According to the then Minister of State for Finance, Singapore must avoid "framing a narrow nationalism that cuts out the global outlook so essential to Singapore's economic development" (ST, 18 Dec 1988). It must combine the best of East and West. "Each religion or culture encompasses many enduring values, but unfortunately we cannot use any single one of them as the basis for building a common Singaporean identity, without alienating the other groups" (White Paper on Shared Values, 1991). The way out of the dilemma was to identify "a few key values which are common to all the major groups in Singapore, and which draw on the essence of each of these heritages (ibid.: 3). All communities would share these values²³ "although each will interpret²⁴ and convey the same ideas in terms of their own cultural and religious traditions. ...

this way, in time, all communities will gradually develop more common, distinctively Singaporean characteristics." (ibid.: 3).

Huntington's view is that "the requisites for cultural coexistence demand a search for what is common in most civilizations" (1996: 318). Singapore's effort is an attempt to identify the core values which the different ethnic and religious communities had in common and which capture the essence of being a Singaporean. It also demonstrates that at least at a basic "thin" morality level (Waltzer, 1994: 1-11), some commonalities exist between the East and the West.

Not many in the general public showed a special interest in the introduction of integrative policies by the government that brought about further blurring of the ethnic differences and created a common, distinctive Singaporean identity and way of life. In Singapore, the issue is not that of integration. The real question is how Singaporeans can be made to retain their distinctive identities, cultures and heritages as equals and showing understanding of each other.

In terms of interethnic relations, Singapore's language and culture policies enhanced separation and suspicion as minorities feel threatened and alienated by what appears to be Sinicization or cultural dominance. These policies also have the unintended consequences of encouraging the assertion of ethnic identity and ethnic competition. This potentially disturbing problem is compounded by the fact that despite the national ideology, the education system, which next to the family is the main agent of socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), does very little to create shared knowledge and understanding of each other's culture, ethnic traditions or languages. For a highly plural society, inter-cultural knowledge and communication, is of a disturbingly low level. A common socio-psychological expression of this is stereotyping. Stereotyping which is a close cousin to prejudice²⁵ is clearly an inadequate basis for genuine social equality, mutual respect and tolerance based on understanding rather than ignorance.

The absence of racial conflicts for many years in Singapore has been largely due to the growing economic pie and its consequent generation of full employment, generally rising standards of living, improving infrastructure, better housing and so on. However, good race relations cannot be constructed on the basis of economic success alone. The Government's direct intervention has also contributed to Singapore's racial harmony. Government control inhibited grassroot involvement, impeding cross-community initiatives. The Government has dictated policy and management in almost every aspect of community life. Racial peace in effect was managed by the state.

Progress in inter-racial communication and understanding were seriously impeded by the lack of a full cultural dimension. Singaporeans became ignorant of and indifferent to the extraordinary richness and complexity of their numerous races. Cynics say that Singapore's multi-racialism has been more like "an exercise to keep the different communities peacefully apart than to draw them dynamically together" (Kuo, 1998: 53). Beyond asserting peace, the administration of ethnic relations must have a deeper mission of developing new and better relations among people of diverse backgrounds. It requires programmes to remove barriers, dissolve tensions, and create new attitudes and understandings. Singapore's multi-racialism lacks this mission and vision.

Critiques of Singapore's multi-racialism has remarked that "in peace, the communities have drifted further apart" (ibid.: 52). They also feel that even though the economic gap between the communities has narrowed, their cultural gaps have actually widened. Apart from symbolic gestures, there are no in-depth education programmes in schools or society to make the communities understand each other's customs and practices, culture and religion, their deeper emotions, and higher aspirations (ibid.).

Ethnic Relations and National Identity Surveys

Singapore's political leaders believe that there are still deep faultlines in the multi-racial and multi-religious society and it will be a grave mistake to believe that the dangerous primeval forces, driven by religious and racial feelings, cannot erupt again. Singapore will always be vulnerable to racial, religious and language pulls. A recent race survey by the Straits Times (26 Feb 2000) revealed the stark truth that Singaporeans see good race relations prevailing only in good times²⁶, but are far less confident that those ties can survive conflict if it ever breaks out. This being the reality, it appears that a vibrant economy, which makes the good times possible, and public education, which builds bridges among the communities, must remain the keys to racial harmony. The proportion of those who can trust someone from another race to protect them or their families is only 48 per cent, a figure which is marginally higher than the 46 per cent who have no such trust²⁷. Among the Chinese, 21 per cent profess to have no friends of another race, compared to 10 per cent among Malays and 7 per cent among Indians. Compared with the statistics of similar surveys conducted by Chiew (1990: 76) in 1969 and 1989, race relations have only marginally improved.

In a study²⁸ by the Institute of Policy Studies on Loyalty and Willingness to Sacrifice for the country, face-to-face interviews were conducted in first half of 1999 (ST, 19 Feb 2000). Three in four Singaporeans said they would not turn their backs and flee in the event of war while two in three said they would defend their country even if it meant losing their lives. Ninety-seven per cent said a Singapore citizenship meant a lot to them. Ninety-five per cent said they were proud to be Singaporeans and that, all things considered, they could say they loved their country. Nine in ten said that they felt a sense of belonging to Singapore. Generally the positive feelings towards Singapore cut across race, gender, education and income groups.

Before concluding too quickly that there is an increasing sense of rootedness and loyalty among Singaporeans, the study found that one in three would be willing to give up their Singapore citizenship, given the right opportunity elsewhere. A larger number (43 per cent) said they would emigrate if they were given a better offer, such as a higher paying job in another country. One in two said they thought of themselves as citizens of the world and not of any country in particular and about half felt that it did not matter which country they were citizens of, as long as they could enjoy a high standard of living. Such sentiments appear to contradict²⁹ the high scores of national pride and positive feelings towards the country.

The race and national pride surveys involved only very small samples of the population; only 602 Singaporeans were involved in the race survey and only 1,451 people were interviewed in the national pride survey. The surveys included citizens between the age of 15 and 60, and the profile of those surveyed reflected the ethnic

composition of the population. Despite the small sample sizes, these surveys do provide some indications of the feelings of Singaporeans regarding ethnic relations and national pride.

Globalization and Intercultural Communication

Singapore wants to plug into the global economic system because its very viability as a sustainable economic state depends on it. This means pushing through the publicly sensitive idea of attracting a constant inflow of foreign labour. The Prime Minister first floated the idea of opening its borders to more talented foreign labour in his 1997 National Day rally speech. Later he spelt out the government's vision of Singapore as an "oasis of talent"³⁰ (ST, 16 Oct 1997, p 2). In defending the negative feedback on the government's proposal, the Prime Minister argued that the country's future viability would require the country "to draw foreigners to help us compete against others" (ibid.).

Since 1990, the growth rate of the total population has been higher than the resident population's. This reflects the large inflows of foreigners into Singapore (Cheung, 1999: 200). There are two main streams of foreigners entering Singapore. The first group comprises those who are granted permanent residence in Singapore and has become part of the resident population. The number of new permanent residents has increased 3-fold from 9000 in 1988 to an average of about 25,000 over the past 5 years. The current level is about 30,000. The second group of foreigners comprises skilled and unskilled workers as well as dependants and students who are allowed temporary stay in Singapore.

With the increased inflow of the expatriates, foreign workers and other foreigners on short-term visit passes, Singapore's foreign population³¹ has doubled from a total of 311,300 in 1990 to 633,200 in June 1997. The figure grew to about 700,000 at the beginning of this year (ST, 14 March 2000). Singapore's experience is similar to that of Switzerland where a high proportion of the population is from foreign sources (17 per cent in 1990). Whereas Switzerland's foreign workers are engaged in economic activities in the corporate and business sectors, a large segment of Singapore's foreign workforce are employed in domestic work in the household sector³².

Singaporeans tend to build their own sense of moral superiority by projecting their own shortcomings onto outsiders, by creating scapegoats out of "strangers" (Simmel, 1908/1971) who are considered a source of moral pollution. Crime, prostitution, drug-smuggling and corruption are considered characteristics of, and blamed on, foreign workers³³. Singaporeans are also culturally insensitive and are on occasions referred to as "the barbarians of Southeast Asia", the least sensitive and least subtle people in the region (Koh, 1998: 84-85). It is therefore important for Singaporeans to learn enough about the culture of their adversaries to at least avoid simple errors of speech, behaviour, attribution and body language.

The influence that foreigners has on family life is seen in the large number of foreign maids and increasing incidence of marriages with foreign spouses³⁴. With the influx of foreigners in recent years, the Singapore society has become increasingly cosmopolitan and culturally diverse. Like the capitals of many developed countries, Singapore has attracted people of different nationalities to live and work here. The

impact of foreigners on Singapore's value system and way of life is apparent. The question that remains, and one that the government is asking more often is, whether the core values of Singapore would remain intact in the next century in the cosmopolitan city-state.

It is the government's open door policy and its wholehearted embrace of globalization that created its own fear and concerns with Singapore's national identity. The government seems more preoccupied with the worry of Singapore unfolding as a state, its cultural base eroded, its national identity fragmented, and its society less than cohesive socially (Savage, 1999:163). Some believe that Singapore's current national and cultural identity is not a strong enough glue to initiate new foreigners into the Singaporean ethos. The only cement that binds Singaporeans so far seems to be material issues, monetary rewards and incentives, good salaries and a comfortable standard of living. The real test of Singaporeans' loyalty and commitment is when the economy turns downward and when government subsidies in education, housing and health have to be reduced or terminated.

Globalization, while erosive of the Singapore nation-state, is paradoxically also the perfect vindication of the Republic's founding philosophy -- that this island republic shall thrive and prosper using the entire world (instead of just depending on Malaysia) as its hinterland and market. Implicit in this vision is the global free flow of products and services, capital and technology, information, and people. By its own logic, global aspiration denies nationalism. If one is serious about nationalism, one would deem it inappropriate, if not criminal, to encourage others to desert their motherlands for Singapore. Singapore's aggressive immigration policy threatens to consign its own nationalism to history (Kuo, 55).

Singaporeans, on the other hand, are also venturing into foreign territories to do business and seek their fortunes. Given the small size of the domestic market, the government has since 1993 led the private sector (both foreign and local) into regionalizing and globalizing³⁵. Singaporeans do have problems working and investing abroad. A study conducted by the National University of Singapore (ST, 11 June 1999) found that Singapore businessmen in China understand Chinese culture and business practices least compared to their counterparts from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, the United States and Europe. It is a therefore misconception to think that Singaporean Chinese understand China just because they are ethnic Chinese and speak Mandarin. Westerners assume they know nothing about China from the start and are prepared to work hard to learn what it takes to succeed there.

With globalization, Singapore's education should also begin to actively evolve a global awareness and understanding. Shifting to a global perspective would make it necessary for every student to internalise an overview of the cultures of the world. It would no longer be sufficient to survey only the local cultures. Education must move on to the study of cultures beyond Singapore's current natural heritage. It requires a shift in syllabus and allocation of resources to a international perspective. The study of culture(s) is an important core element. More time is needed for the acquisition of the expanded cultural knowledge and this possibly involves an extension of the length of education. This may even be more important than extending the education period by 2.5 years of National Service for all male citizens (Kuo, 1998:100).

For Singapore, maintaining a cohesive society within its multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-linguistic setting is a great challenge enough without having to deal with global-local cultural dialectics. Yet it is the global-local relationships that are likely to pose the major challenges for maintaining the Singaporean spirit in the future. The key challenge ahead, according to the Brigadier General George Yeo, is trying to retain the "sense of being Singaporeans" no matter where Singaporeans were (ST, 25 Oct 1997 : 54).

Education for Democratic Citizenship

Governments see citizenship education as a means of addressing problems of nation building in ethnic societies discussed in this essay. It is also a means of promoting values and producing 'good' and 'active' citizens. Citizenship education is considered vital in the preparation of democratic citizenship and providing a foundation for the creation of a civil society. For some, it is the study of government, constitutions, institutions, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. For others, it emphasizes the processes of democracy, active citizenship participation and the involvement of people in the civil society. Included in citizenship education is normally a set of skills related to desired knowledge, such as active citizenship, critical reflection, inquiry and cooperation. Citizenship education also includes a set of values that underpin democratic citizenship including social justice, democratic principles and intercultural understanding. To be able to participate and to be active, citizens should be competent. Before Singapore's approach to citizenship education is presented and evaluated, a theoretical discussion of citizenship and citizenship education is necessary.

Bottery (1995) advocates citizenship education for a strong democracy in which the citizen is more active than passive, more participative than representative and who believes in the possibility of change because he/she feels sufficiently empowered to engage in and effect change. This type of citizenship education³⁶ is what Singapore citizens should have if the country wants to become a learning nation. To Bottery (ibid.), one crucial consideration in the development of future citizens is the professionalism and values³⁷ of teachers themselves since they have strong influence in the way children think and act. Waltzer's (1995) view is that while students in schools should be taught something about the "others" (their fellow citizens), it is more important that they be taught, first of all, about citizenship³⁸ itself. The state has to do what it can to guarantee its survival, to produce and reproduce citizens, and to ensure that the various particularist identities co-exist with a more general identity.

Mendus (1995) suggests that the fundamental aim of education is to enable students to understand themselves first. It means that they should understand themselves as the kinds of people for whom critical reflection, autonomy and self-fulfilment are central. By understanding themselves, they revise their own estimation of themselves, see that their own interest in self-fulfilment as partial or even misplaced. They may be more willing, not merely to acknowledge other values, but also to see the constraints of their own value system. If this happens, the contest between citizen identity and cultural loyalty will become less acute, since "cultural loyalty will both inform and transform citizen identity" (ibid.: 199). Delors (1996) has stated that individual development, which continues throughout life, is "a dialectical process which starts with knowing oneself and then opens out to relationships with others". It is about

"learning to be", to develop one's personality and to be able to act with autonomy, judgement and responsibility. It is also about learning to live together and learning to live with others (ibid.: 85-97). A form of education³⁹ has to be devised which might make it possible to avoid conflicts or resolve them peacefully by developing respect for other people, regardless of their race, language or religion.

To Crick, citizenship education is necessary to develop "good citizens" and "active citizens". It is not just knowledge of citizenship and civic society; it also implies developing values, skills and understanding" (Citizenship Advisory Group, 1998: 13). Effective education for citizenship⁴⁰ in a parliamentary democracy means three things: social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. The essential elements to be reached by the end of schooling are listed under three broad headings: values and dispositions; skills and aptitudes; and knowledge and understanding (ibid.:44). Crick emphasises the notion of voluntary service and active participation in one's community. Citizens must be equipped with the political skills needed to change laws in a peaceful and responsible manner. Preparation for voluntary work and community involvement, which are the necessary conditions of civil society and democracy, should be an explicit part of education. Crick also raised the issue of national identity in a culturally diverse society⁴¹, a not unfamiliar situation that Singapore is facing. Crick suggests that the whole community should find or restore "a sense of common citizenship", and the importance of "learning to know about each other" (ibid.: 18).

Audigier (1998) defines the citizen as a person who has the rights and duties in a democratic society. Democratic citizenship implies the autonomy of the individual but this is moderated by "appealing to the sense of responsibility and knowledge of the legal and moral obligations implied by living together and respecting the other person, other groups" (1998:6). For the Council of Europe, the adjective "democratic" means that citizenship should be based on the principles and values of pluralism, the primacy of law, respect of human dignity and cultural diversity as enrichment. The concepts of participation, democracy or participatory citizenship are recognised as being vital for the future of our living together. Audigier (1998) provides two classifications of competences required of democratic citizens. The first classification⁴² divides the competences into three broad categories: cognitive competences, affective competences and social competences⁴³.

Civics, moral and values education in one form or another has taken place in Singapore since the country acquired self-government in 1959. During the last five years two major sets of changes were introduced that have had implications for the conception of citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore. The first has to do with the introduction of National Education and the other with the notion of active citizenship.

Citizenship Education in Singapore

The main purpose of National Education⁴⁴, introduced in 1997 by the Ministry of Education, is to develop national cohesion, the instinct for survival and confidence in the future by: (a) fostering a sense of identity, pride and self-respect in being Singaporeans; (b) instilling the core values of our way of life and the will to prevail, all of which will ensure Singapore's continued success and well-being.

The approach taken in National Education in general is that of socialization of children into a particular set of values and views. Children are expected to develop specific key beliefs and feelings at each stage of their education. Very little emphasis is being given to help children to think about social, political and controversial issues and to arrive at their own conclusion about these. Where emphasis is given to this aspect of citizenship education, it would appear that the primary target group is the more academically able students. However if all Singaporeans have the right to vote, they should be given the preparation that would help them to think independently about social and political issues (Han, 2000: 71). There is concern that some Singaporeans may not have the political maturity to discuss sensitive social and political issues and may easily fall prey to chauvinistic instigators or unscrupulous manipulators. If this is true, then there is all the more reason to equip future citizens with the skills to think rationally, as well as to think for themselves.

The National Education programme is seen by some as "traditional" citizenship education. This is one in which the knowledge of the country's history is taught and which encourages the development of loyalty and patriotism. While there is nothing wrong in teaching young people to love their country, this approach is grossly inadequate to develop thinking citizens who have the skills to think rationally and independently about national issues, and to act effectively in the social and political contexts.

In October 1997, the Prime Minister announced the appointment of a Singapore 21 Committee comprising a panel of ten members to suggest new ideas to make Singapore a "global city and the best home for Singaporeans" (ST, 20 Oct 1997). Specifically the committee looked at the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, cultural and social needs of Singaporeans. The committee focused on the "heartware of Singapore" and explored amongst other things issues dealing with patriotism, rootedness, sense of community and nationhood (ST, 20 Oct 1997, p 1). The Singapore 21 programme seems to challenge Ohmae's (1995) thesis that national identity and the preservation of a distinct sense of Singaporean community cannot be maintained with globalization.

The Singapore 21 report⁴⁵ which contains the vision of the Singapore of the 21st century was released in April 1999. The five main key ideas identified from these dialogues, which would guide Singapore into the next century are: (a) Every Singaporean matters; (b) Strong families: our foundation and our future; (c) Opportunities for all; (d) The Singapore heartbeat; and (e) Active citizens: making a difference to Singapore (Ng, 1999a). Of the five ideas, the last two have the most direct implications in terms of citizenship education in Singapore. "Singapore heartbeat" refers to the need to develop individuals who feel a sense of belonging to the country, while "active citizens" refers to the notion that Singaporeans should contribute to the community (Ng, 1999a, 1999b).

The concept of "active citizenship" in Singapore is more closely related to "volunteerism"⁴⁶ than "active citizenship" defined elsewhere. In discussing the recommendations of the Singapore 21 report, Lee Kuan Yew regretted the fact that, unlike the USA, grassroots volunteerism⁴⁷, in which people organized themselves to help each other, was not part of Singapore's culture (ST, 27 April 1999: 28-29).

"Active citizens", as defined by the Advisory Group on Citizenship in Britain, are those who are "willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting" (Citizenship Advisory Group, 1998: 7). Some see the active citizen in more radical terms. Janoski describes the active citizen as one who "is often engaged in conflict with established elites and most often approaches problems from the grassroot level" (1998: 96-97). In Singapore, the notion of citizens actively engaged in conflict with the establishment is unlikely to be acceptable; active citizenship in the sense meant by Britain's Advisory Group on Citizenship might be more acceptable if this were restricted to the better educated, the elitists.

The Singaporean of the 21st century is a cosmopolitan Singaporean, one who is familiar with global trends and lifestyles and feels comfortable working and living in Singapore as well as overseas. He will retain strong ties with Singapore and will continue to have an active interest in developments at home. His children will grow up with an international perspective and have a love for Singapore in their hearts. A number of recommendations were made in the Singapore 21 Report with regards to the "Singapore heartbeat". Greater inter-racial understanding will have to be promoted. Beyond just tolerance, Singaporeans need to develop a better understanding of fellow citizens from races and cultures other than their own. Singaporeans should welcome new citizens and help them grow emotional bonds with the land and people. Employers, colleagues, teachers, parents, schoolmates, friends and neighbours can all play a part in helping these new Singaporeans sink roots and make Singapore their home.

Singaporeans need to think global from a young age. Schools can foster a spirit of international adventure in their students, so that they grow up feeling comfortable with peoples and cultures from around the world. They should be encouraged to explore foreign languages, literature, geography, history and cultures throughout their school years, so that they will grow up "world ready" and able to face the global economy with confidence. Working overseas should be seen as valuable experience, and part of career development. Singaporeans working abroad should be regarded as members of the wider Singapore community. Efforts should be made to help them keep in touch with developments in Singapore. More Singapore schools should be set up where there is a critical mass of Singaporeans. Singaporeans who have lived and worked abroad will have experiences which could enrich the country, both in their workplaces as well as the community at large. They should be welcomed home and given every assistance for them and their children to fit back into the society.

There are indeed international as well as domestic imperatives for developing intercultural competence. Internationally and domestically, in business, education and in personal lives, competence in managing intercultural differences in interpersonal communication is expected. There is a need for citizens to have intercultural competence.

Democratic Citizens with Intercultural Competence

Byram (1996: 19) has proposed the integration of the teaching of intercultural communication into education for citizenship. People will have even more opportunities to be engaged in interactions where both interlocutors will have

different social identities and will have a different kind of interaction than they would have with someone from their own country speaking the same language. The success of such an interaction can be judge not only in terms of the effective exchange of information but also in terms of the establishing and maintenance of human relationships. Byram has suggested that appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills are required for successful intercultural communication and relationship, and these factors are reflected in his model of intercultural competence (1997: 31-55).

When a person interact socially with someone from a different country, he needs to have knowledge of about social groups and their cultures in his own country, and similar knowledge of the other person's country. He also needs to have knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels. Attitudes frequently characterised as prejudice or stereotypes (Allport, 1979) are often negative, resulting in unsuccessful interaction. Even positive prejudice and stereotyping can hinder mutual understanding. There need to be "attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief⁴⁸ and judgement with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours" (Byram,1997: 34). The nature of the intercultural communication processes is a function of the skills which a person brings to the interaction (Byram, 1997: 33). There are two broad categories of skills: (a) skills of interpretation and establishing relationships between aspects of the two cultures⁴⁹; and (b) skills of discovery and interaction⁵⁰. The individual involved in intercultural communication "needs to draw upon their existing knowledge, have attitudes which sustain sensitivity to others with sometimes radically different origins and identities, and operate the skills of discovery and interpretation" (Byram, 1997: 38). If education is the development of the individual in all their facets and to their fullest potential, then intercultural competence cannot be ignored.

Conclusion

The national ideology of multi-racialism appears to have worked in Singapore. During the past thirty five years, Singapore has been free from racial discord and disharmony. Singapore's economy has achieved spectacular progress and tremendous opportunities were produced for making money. This created such a high level of satisfaction with their material existence for so many Singaporeans that it would be silly for them to be engaged in destructive ethnic disharmony and confrontation. However, time and again, Singaporeans have been warned by their leaders that they cannot be complacent about the ethnic peace that the country is currently enjoying. Communal-religious feelings could be worked up again since there are deep faultlines in the multi-racial and multi-religious society. There must be programmes to remove communication barriers, dissolve tensions and create new attitudes and new understandings. In-depth education programmes in schools or society should be introduced to make the communities communicate effectively and to understand each other's customs and practices, culture and religion, their deeper emotions, and higher aspirations. Globalisation will also see Singaporeans going abroad to encounter other people and cultures. The government's effort to attract more foreign talents will also bring into Singapore, people with different cultures and origins. There are therefore domestic and international imperatives for Singaporeans to have intercultural communication competence. Because of its importance for the survival of the nation, this competency should be incorporated into citizenship education in Singapore.

Endnotes

¹ "National values" is "a set of values, principles, and conventions, which may conveniently be described as common to the nationals of a particular country without necessarily implying that these values are exclusive in some chauvinistic sense of the word" (Ho, 1989: 674). Integration refers to the "minimum value consensus necessary to maintain a social order" (Weiner, 1965: 54.) They are the values needed to sustain the nation and ensure its survival. "National values" is used here instead of "national ideology" because of the derogatory meaning and negative connotation associated with the term "ideology".

² Emerson (1960) has also stated that the mature nation is a "single people, traditionally fixed on a well-defined territory, speaking the same language and preferably speaking a language all its own, possessing a distinctive culture, and shaped to a common mould by many generations of shared historical experience."

³ The pledge that every Singaporean child recites daily : "We the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united people, regardless of race, language or religion, to build a democratic society based on justice and equality so as to achieve peace, prosperity and progress for our Nation."

⁴ Smith's (1986: 151) suggestion of a "dual attachment" is similar: on one hand, loyalty to the political unit in terms of citizenship rights and obligations, i.e. the public and political myth-symbol complex; on the other hand, a sense of affiliation and solidarity with one's own ethnic community, i.e. the semi-private and cultural myth-symbol complex for each ethnic community.

⁵ According to Goldwin (1992: 49), the things that are the government's business are in the public realm and the rest are in the private realm; "the private realm is the realm of personal freedom".

⁶ This is in sharp contrast to certain countries where their rulers who represent the racial majority insist on one exclusive language and culture. Singapore refused to subscribe to the strongly held view in newly decolonised countries that in order to create and enhance national unity, cultural, educational and linguistic diversity had to be reduced, if not to be eliminated altogether.

⁷ This is in fact practised in Thailand and Indonesia.

⁸ They were especially influenced by the success of this approach in Switzerland. The merit of this concept to them was that it regarded cultural diversity as a source of vitality for a nation and as a stimulus to cultural advancement rather than a threat to unity.

⁹ This ideal included:

...an appreciation and respect for one another's cultural heritage, and a conscious effort by all diverse communities to fuse some of their elements into a national cultural pattern rather than complete repression of the culture of the minorities. Cultural democracy is based on equality, tolerance, justice and harmony. (Lee, K.C., 1967: 5)

¹⁰ According to the 1997 study by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Singapore's GDP per capita at US\$31,140 had for the first time surpassed Germany and the United States at US\$28,780 and US\$28,540 respectively. A 1997 survey by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun rated Singapore top in the overall infrastructure and therefore is the ideal place to do business. The Fraser Institute of Vancouver has in its 1997 study on The Economic Freedom of the World ranked Singapore as the second freest economy in terms of economic activities. In the 1997 Global Competitiveness Report, Singapore was rated the most competitive country, best governance and with least organized crime.

¹¹ In addition to solving the housing shortage, the HDB's public housing programme also had a nation-building role because it brings Singaporeans of different ethnic, linguistic or religious groups together and thus provides them with more opportunities for interacting with and understanding one another. Before the advent of the HDB, the population was concentrated in "relatively homogeneous ethnic enclaves". "Public housing is playing a important role in the desegregation of these ethnic enclaves. The conditions of obtaining a public housing flat are citizenship, income, family size and not ethnic or racial affiliation. The public housing estates are, thus, desegregated communities where Chinese, Malays, Indians, Pakistanis and Eurasians live side by side, and in many instances, for the first time." (Hassan, 1969 : 24). The Home Ownership for the People Scheme was later introduced to allow those eligible Singapore citizens to own their flats. The government's rationale for promoting home ownership was simple: it wanted as many of its citizens to become property owners as possible as it believed that their loyalty to Singapore would be strengthened if they were committed to and given a stake in the country (Quah, 1977: 215). Currently, over 80 per cent of the population live in home ownership flats. Because Singaporeans could buy and sell their flats in the open market and there was no restrictive allocation policy as such, it was soon realised that some housing estates were attracting a disproportionate number of people of a particular race (Wee, Agnes, ST, 1989). In 1989, measures were introduced by the HDB to ensure a good racial mix in the housing estates and to foster racial tolerance and harmony. Limits were set on the proportion of races in every HDB neighbourhood and block of flat. These measures have the unavoidable and undesired effect of not only heightening the racial consciousness of every Singaporean, but also making it difficult for three-tier families to live together in the same neighbourhood or block.

¹² National service was introduced in July 1967 for two reasons: to serve the defence needs of the country, and to act as a tool for nation building. The contribution of national service to nation-building in terms of bringing together young male Singaporeans from diverse background was indicated by the then Minister of Defence, in Parliament on 13 March 1967:

“Nothing creates loyalty and national consciousness more speedily and more thoroughly than participation in defence and membership of the armed forces... The nation-building aspect of the armed aspect of defence will be more significant if its participation is spread over all strata of society. This is possible only with some kind of national service.”

A former Minister for Defence, Lim Kim San, has contended that national service is "a key factor in nation-building" because it "gives the youth of our multi-racial nation a common experience and a common objective, binding potentially-divisive strands" (ST, 19 June 1990: 26).

¹³ Ethnicity and religion are closely related in the Singapore context because almost all the Malays are Muslims, most of the Indians are Hindus, and the Chinese are mainly Taoist or Buddhist. Accordingly, to promote nation-building in Singapore, religious education in schools should contribute towards a better understanding of the different religions and also promote religious tolerance and harmony. In 1984, Religious Knowledge was made a compulsory subject for the higher secondary students. The *raison d'être* of the programme was to anchor the moral values learnt by the students during their first eight years in school by means of studying one of the six alternative religious traditions offered. In 1982, Confucian Ethics was made available as one of the options in the Religious Knowledge curriculum. Professor Hsu Cho Yun, a visiting Confucian scholar acknowledged that the non-Chinese Singaporeans worry that Confucianism may be used by the government to displace other religions. They are also concerned that Chinese chauvinism may eventually dominate other groups. Hsu assured them that Confucianism was a "universal system of ethics and a universal way of life and that Singapore by adopting it "might well become the seed of a future global culture looked to by other parts of the world" (Trevor Ling, 1993: 702). Obviously, the problem was, as with the government's earlier policy of bilingualism, that it was difficult to serve two different, but equally important purposes that it had in mind. One, to help pupils, the future citizens, to understand and adhere to the traditional values and precepts of their own community through the study of its religion; and two to promote an understanding and tolerance of all the different religions in Singapore for the sake of ethnic peace and harmony. The Religious Knowledge curriculum had expanded to six different options and pupils were required to choose any one of them. The result was that it served only the first of the two above-mentioned purposes considered crucial by the government. It was not surprising that the government decided in 1989 to discontinue the teaching of religious knowledge as a compulsory subject and instead sought to widen and strengthen the more general civics or moral education programme to take its place. The government felt that given the worldwide trend of "heightened consciousness of religious differences and a new fervour in the propagation of religious beliefs" the government should adopt a "scrupulously neutral and evenhanded" approach to religious issues so that no strain was placed on religious tolerance and ethnic harmony (Quah, 1990: 55). Even though the aim of Religious Knowledge programme was to encourage students to study religion as a classroom subject, without converting them, the actual effect was that it had encouraged the latter to some extent. Moreover, the absence of a course on various religions further reinforced the tendency for students to study the religion of their parents. Instead of enhancing the students' understanding of the various religions, the programme has had the opposite effect of emphasizing the differences between the major religions in Singapore. Accordingly, the government decided to scrap the Religious Knowledge programme six years after its original implementation in view of this unintended consequence.

¹⁴ To contribute towards nation-building, the education system in Singapore must impart to students not only those skills required for sustaining economic growth, but also inculcate in them those values that will ensure their loyalty and commitment to the nation. For the latter, more difficult objective of nurturing those values required for nation-building, the government has relied on its policy of bilingualism to foster racial harmony and integration. The rationale for adopting the bilingual policy in schools was the assumption that a bilingual person would be able to communicate and interact not only with his own community but also with members of another linguistic group. Lee Kuan Yew provided the justification of his government's bilingualism policy in the following way:

“...the monolinguist is more likely to be a language chauvinist and a bigot. He only sees the world through one eye... Bilingualism gives a more balanced and rounded view of the world...The bilingualist sees both sides ... If we are to modernize and industrialize, we must be bilingual.” (K.Y.Lee, 1978: 2)

Originally every pupil learnt the national language, Malay, and either English, Mandarin or Tamil, depending on the language stream of the school. The bilingualism policy introduced in 1966 substituted the national language with English and made the study of Mandarin, Tamil or Malay compulsory depending on which represented the mother tongue of the pupil. In English stream schools, English is the first language and each pupil will have to study their mother tongue as the second language. It was believed that this policy of bilingualism would enable the different peoples to understand each other and develop respect for their distinctive cultures and heritages and in doing so, has also enhanced the cultural ballast of Singaporeans. But it is not known how this policy has made them appreciate their friends, be they Chinese, Indians, Malays or Eurasians and their cultures better.

¹⁵ Geopolitics demanded that Malay was adopted as the National language and the national anthem is in Malay. But Malay has no international value. It is therefore not compulsory to learn Malay in schools. An essentially English-speaking Singapore would inevitably offer a much less fertile ground for the growth of Chinese chauvinism, which they considered as the most dangerous threat to the future of the new nation. English would also give Singapore a level of access to modern knowledge, science and technology necessary for it to achieve continuing economic growth and prosperity. In 1984, the government officially designated English as the sole medium of education at all levels.

¹⁶ Originally every pupil learnt the national language, Malay, and either English, Mandarin or Tamil, depending on the language stream of the school. The new bilingualism policy introduced in 1966 substituted the national language (Malay) with English and

made the study of Mandarin, Tamil or Malay compulsory depending on which represented the mother tongue of the pupil. In English stream schools, English is the first language and each pupil will have to study their mother tongue as the second language.

¹⁷ The special attention given to this issue of declining traditional Asian values in the late 1980s seemed to have been reinforced by George C. Lodge and Ezra F. Vogel (1997) in their analysis of the ideology and national competitiveness of nine countries. Their thesis is that the national competitiveness of a country is affected by whether its people are "communitarian" or "individualistic". Every society has both these elements but each differs in how much one has dominance over the other. In Japan, Korea and Taiwan, communitarianism dominates individualism; this has allowed them to catch up economically with the West. Japan, because of its communitarian value was unbeatable and was *Number One* (Vogel, 1979). The communitarianism that had worked in the case of Japan, Korea and Taiwan was Chinese communitarianism based essentially on Confucian ethics.

¹⁸ Lee Kuan Yew attended one of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences in the Bahamas during the seventies and was deeply affected by the position of the natives he saw. "They spoke only English, even though in their own distinctive way. They did not know who they were. They had no language of their own and they had little left of their own culture, heritage and values." Upon his return, Lee was determined not to have that happen in Singapore. This was the setting for the inauguration of the speak Mandarin campaign, a measure that heralded the beginning of the attempt by the government to Asianise Singapore. In the prestigious Report on the Ministry of Education in 1978, the then Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Goh Keng Swee cautioned that: "With the large-scale movement to education in English, the risk of deculturisation cannot be ignored." The chief purpose of the campaign was to promote the use of Mandarin as the common language by the Chinese in place of the many different dialects. In 1984, Lee Kuan Yew said that English could not be emotionally acceptable to the Chinese as their mother tongue. He argued that to have no emotionally acceptable language as the mother tongue is to be emotionally crippled. Mandarin is emotionally acceptable as the mother tongue for the Chinese. It can also unite the different dialect groups. (There are at least 12 Chinese dialects spoken in Singapore.) Through Mandarin, their children can emotionally identify themselves as part of an ancient civilisation whose continuity was because it was founded on a tried and tested value system. Clearly the chief objective of the campaign was to promote Mandarin as a common language among the Chinese so that they were able to have renewed and fuller access to their culture, heritage and values and that, as a result, they were able to retain and enhance their Chineseness. The minority groups felt threatened and perhaps even alienated by the repeated exhortation to speak Mandarin, and they also become more aware of their minority status as a result (Quah, J., 1990). In the case of the Malays and Indians, their culture, heritage and values did not come under any similar threat and therefore the government did not feel that any remedial action was needed. Their mother tongue and traditional values are as important to them as Mandarin is to the Chinese. It was felt that all races should have a clear sense of where they come from, and why they were here. Each community should take pride in its heritage, retain it and develop upon it.

¹⁹ In 1982, Confucian Ethics was made available as one of the options in the Religious Knowledge curriculum. Professor Hsu Cho Yun, a visiting Confucian scholar acknowledged that the non-Chinese Singaporeans worry that Confucianism may be used by the government to displace other religions. They are also concerned that Chinese chauvinism may eventually dominate other groups. Hsu assured them that Confucianism was a "universal system of ethics and a universal way of life and that Singapore by adopting it "might well become the seed of a future global culture looked to by other parts of the world" (Trevor Ling, 1993: 702). Obviously, the problem was that it was difficult to serve two different, but equally important purposes that it had in mind. One, to help pupils, the future citizens, to understand and adhere to the traditional values and precepts of their own community through the study of its religion; and two to promote an understanding and tolerance of all the different religions in Singapore for the sake of ethnic peace and harmony. The Religious Knowledge curriculum had expanded to six different options and pupils were required to choose any one of them. The result was that it served only the first of the two above-mentioned purposes considered crucial by the government. It was not surprising that the government decided in 1989 to discontinue the teaching of religious knowledge as a compulsory subject and instead sought to widen and strengthen the more general civics or moral education programme to take its place. The government felt that given the worldwide trend of "heightened consciousness of religious differences and a new fervour in the propagation of religious beliefs" the government should adopt a "scrupulously neutral and evenhanded" approach to religious issues so that no strain was placed on religious tolerance and ethnic harmony (Quah, 1990: 55).

²⁰ As part of its overall objective to Asianize Singapore and restore Chineseness to the Chinese, the government initiated the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools project. These are elite schools and enrolment was restricted only to the top 8 per cent of those successful in the Primary School Leaving Examination. Students in these schools will be proficient in both Mandarin and English. The main aim of course was to preserve the traditional character and ethos of Chinese schools. The schools have an essentially Chinese ambience, in both linguistic and cultural terms.

²¹ The problem of deculturisation was seen by the government as a problem affecting mainly the Chinese, and thus it believed that they alone needed special assistance to help them to recover and enhance their Chineseness. The government did not believe that the Malays and the Indians required any special assistance in this regard.

²² The Government was able to convince the great majority of the people that they should not discard their traditional values, such as belief in hard-work, thrift, honesty, self-discipline, regard for education, respect for enterprise and concern over family stability. But curiously these virtues are not only eastern values -- "These are the values that made America rich and strong. And they are what in Singapore have been advocating all these years in the face of resentment of the foreign press and opposition from our more feeble-minded intellectuals." (Goh Keng Swee, ST, 24 June 1976:5).

²³ The following formed the basis for developing Shared values among Singaporeans: (a) Nation before community and society before self; (b) Family as the basic unit of society; (c) Regard and community support for the individual; (d) Consensus instead of contention; and (e) Racial and religious harmony.

²⁴ According to Miller, the values of each cultural community must be "re-interpreted" in a way which lessens the tension between it and the common identity; the interpretation must be selective or biased and therefore malleable (1989: 291). Miller's argument is that national identity must take priority over cultural loyalty.

²⁵ Prejudiced people ignore evidence that is inconsistent with their biased viewpoint, or they distort the evidence to fit their prejudices (Allport, 1958). Everyday life in the multi-ethnic community is characterized by two simultaneous processes: ethnic boundary maintenance and ethnic interaction. The former is necessitated by the need to maintain ethnic distinctiveness and identity in the midst of multi-ethnic living; the latter by the need to maintain the viability of multi-ethnic living itself (Lai, 1995: 62). According to Berger and Luckmann (1966: 33-8, 43-5), everyday life, among several realities, is "reality par excellence" in which tension and demand on consciousness are highest. Ethnic interaction inevitably raises the complex issues of prejudices and stereotyping. These are expressed at both societal and interpersonal levels in which selective and exaggerated perceptions of group traits take place. Besides prejudices and negative stereotyping, ethnic boundary maintenance and ethnic interaction in local everyday life also pose problems like misunderstandings, discrimination against minorities, ethnic politics, the use of ethnic expletives and derogatory language. While the ethnic is continued to be emphasised, the interethnic needs to be constantly dealt with in Singapore.

²⁶ The contrast could hardly be greater with the comfortable multi-racialism apparent in patterns of employment, friendship and sports during peacetime. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the economy makes all the difference to the degree of peaceful co-existence prevailing among the races. The opportunities which economic growth generates across racial lines gel the communities together; once the glue is gone, the inter-racial stake in multi-racialism will be diluted (Asas Latif, ST, 26 February 2000: 53).

²⁷ As many as 46 per cent of non-Malays/Muslims respondents cannot trust Singapore's Malay/Muslims to fight for them if the country goes to war with a Muslim country. No less than 63 per cent feel that the background of Malay officers should be checked before giving them positions in the Singapore Armed Forces. Almost one in five say they have not even one friend of another race.

²⁸ The strength of ties between Singaporeans and their country was captured in an index drawn up by the Institute of Policy Studies to quantify feelings of loyalty and willingness to sacrifice for the country. The index is made up of 24 statements such as "My Singapore citizenship means a lot to me" and "I will not defend Singapore if it means losing my life". People were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The questions used in the survey were developed by the well-known National Opinion Research Centre in Chicago, which has used them to draw up a scale for ranking 23 countries.

²⁹ According to sociologist and survey consultant, Dr Tan Ern Ser (ST, 19 Feb 2000), it is reasonable for people to balk at making sacrifices while expressing strong feelings of patriotism. The survey was conducted during the economic crisis when Singaporeans have taken cuts to help out their country. Most had their pay cut and their employers' contribution to the Central Provident Fund reduced. It is therefore not surprising that nearly half the respondents said 'no' to pay cuts and heavier taxes.

³⁰ This concept embraces the idea that the city state will serve as a hub for business, talent, knowledge and information with global networks linking the world's three economic growth engines of Asia, Europe and the Americas (ST, 16 Oct 1997, p 2).

³¹ Singapore's diversified economy is very much based on international markets whether it is banking and finance, high-technology industrial, transportation services, trade, mass communication service or tourism sectors. There are currently 5000 transnational corporations in Singapore with about 2500 handling regional markets and 850 manufacturing for the global market (ST, 16 Oct 1997, p 2). In addition, there are 220 banks that deal with regional and international finance. Foreign manufacturing investment commitments in the third quarter of 1999 alone amounted to \$2.1 billion (MTI, 1999: 21), the United States being the largest investor. Economic linkages with the world and the establishment of multinational corporations have led to a growing number of expatriate managers and professionals working in Singapore. A large number of foreign workers on work permits have also been entering Singapore on a revolving, short-term basis to meet persistent labour shortages in certain critical sectors of the economy.

³² There are more than 100,000 foreign maids here or about one-sixth of the total foreign population. The availability of foreign maids has enabled married women to continue with their careers and ease the burden of household work among dual-career families. But the massive reliance on foreign maids has become more a reflection of Singapore households' purchasing power than their needs for domestic help. The maids have become very much a status symbol for Singapore's growing middle class. There are significant sociological implications of the heavy dependence on foreign maids. Reliance on the foreign maids as primary socialization agents may minimize the influence the parents may have over their children. Familial roles and division of labour, caring and socialization responsibilities and other familial tasks will be re-configured to accommodate the presence of the maid as a permanent member of the middle-class household.

³³ Thais, Filipinos, Indonesians and Malaysians and in that order.

³⁴ The proportion of marriages of Singaporeans with non-citizen spouse is on the rise. From 14 per cent in 1985, the proportion of foreign marriages rose to 28 per cent in 1995. Among the younger Singaporeans (husband below 40 years old) in 1990, about 11 per cent had foreign spouses compared with 6 per cent in 1980. The increase is largely due to the influx of permanent residents in Singapore and the large number of Singaporeans who travel and work abroad. As these trends are likely to continue, one can expect to see a sizable number of foreign marriages in the future. The foreign spouses will significantly affect Singapore family life.

³⁵ Since its policy of going global, 5,200 Singapore firms have increased their total direct foreign investments from S\$13.6 billion in 1990 to S\$36.9 billion in 1995 (ST, 30 Jan 1998, p 23) and S\$70.6 billion in 1997 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 1999: 2).

³⁶ Education to promote cognitive and affective qualities necessary for a rounded conception of citizenship should include: (a) awareness of limits of individual judgement, tolerance; (b) solving problems rationally, critical awareness of deficiencies; (c) awareness of personal limitations, or other's contributions; (d) respect for other's viewpoints, acceptance of one's own limitations; (e) empowerment (Bottery, 1995: 21-35).

³⁷ A teaching profession committed to truth-searching, appreciation of subjectivity, reflective integrity, humility and humanistic education is much more likely to be able to equip a future citizenry with the kind of skills and attitudes necessary for a more active involvement in their society.

³⁸ Waltzer suggests three critical requirements for the civic curriculum. First, a history of democratic institutions and practices since ancient Greece should be covered. The second critical requirement of the course is a philosophy or political theory of democratic government, with all the standard arguments, critically reviewed. Students should study not only the alternatives to democracy but also the different versions -- and the arguments for and against each one. The third requirement is a practical political science of democracy; a "how-to-do-it" for citizens. Students should be taught to think of themselves as future participants, not merely as sophisticated spectators. They should be encouraged to offer new or different ideas about how things might be done and taught how to defend them in front of their peers (1995: 186-187).

³⁹ Schools must teach from early childhood the diversity of the human race and an awareness of the similarities between, and the interdependence of, all humans. To have acceptable social behaviour throughout life, children must be helped to discover who they are and to adopt the point of view of other ethnic or religious groups. Encountering others through dialogue and debate is one of the tools needed by 21st century education. Formal education must provide enough opportunity in its programmes to introduce the young to co-operative undertakings through participation in sport or cultural activities and through participation in social activities like community service. They must learn to work together on rewarding projects, have a shared purpose, so that differences and even conflicts between individuals will disappear.

⁴⁰ Firstly, children should learn from the very beginning self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, both towards those in authority and towards each other. Secondly, they should learn about and become helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community. Thirdly, they should learn about how to make themselves effective in public life through knowledge, skills and values (Citizenship Advisory Group, 1988: 11-13).

⁴¹ Crick's view is that citizenship education should create common ground between different ethnic and religious identities. He recognised that matters concerning national identity in pluralist society are complex and should not be taken for granted. He suggested the importance of "learning to know about each other", and also about "the European, Commonwealth and global dimensions of citizenship with due regards to the homelands of the minority communities and to the main countries of British emigration." (Citizenship Advisory Group, 1998: 18).

⁴² Audigier provides another classification which has four dimensions of citizenship: political and legal, social, cultural and economic. The political and legal dimension covers rights and duties with respect to the political system and the law. It requires knowledge concerning the law and the political system, democratic attitudes and the capacity to participate, to exercise responsibilities at all levels of public life. The social dimension covers relations between individuals and requires knowledge of what these relations are based on and how they function in society. However these are very general interpersonal communication competencies. The economic dimension requires knowledge on how the economic world functions, including the world of work. The cultural dimension refers to collective representations and imaginations and to shared values. It implies historical competence, recognition of a common heritage with its varied components, a mobile heritage and a heritage to exchange with others. Education for democratic citizenship is aimed at all individuals regardless of their role in society.

⁴³ Cognitive competences include knowledge of the legal and political systems; knowledge of the world with a historical dimension and a cultural dimension; intellectual capacities for analysis and synthesis, the ability to speak and argue, and the ability to reflect; and knowledge of the principles and values of human rights and democratic citizenship. Citizenship cannot be reduced to a catalogue of rights and duties, it also means belonging to a group or to groups. It thus requires a personal and collective affective dimension. The values of freedom, equality and solidarity are important. They imply the recognition and respect of oneself and of others, the ability to listen, reflection on the place of violence in society, and how to resolve conflicts. They demand the positive acceptance of differences and diversity; they require placing confidence in the other. It is necessary to go beyond tolerance. "Tolerance is not limited to acceptance of difference, an acceptance which is sometimes indifference." (Audigier, 1998:10). The social competences ("capacities for action") include the capacity to live with others, to cooperate, to participate in joint project, and to take on responsibilities; the capacity to resolve conflicts in accordance with the principles of democratic law to arrive at the truth; and the capacity to take part in public debate, to argue in real-life situation.

⁴⁴ The Ministry of Education also suggested six messages to be conveyed by National Education:

- "Singapore is our homeland: this is where we belong". Singapore's heritage and way of life must be preserved.
- Racial and religious harmony must be preserved. Despite the many races, religions, languages and cultures, Singaporeans must pursue one destiny.

- Meritocracy and incorruptibility must be upheld. This means equal opportunities for all, according to ability and effort.
- No one owes Singapore a living. She must find her own way to survive and prosper.
- Singaporeans themselves must defend Singapore. No one else is responsible for the country's security and well being.
- Singaporeans must have confidence in our future. United, determined and well prepared, Singaporeans shall build a bright future for themselves. (Ministry of Education, 1999a)

⁴⁵ It was put together by a committee, chaired by the Minister for Education who have had consultations and discussions with six thousand Singaporeans from all walks of life over a period of a year.

⁴⁶ There are similarities between the notion of active citizenship in Singapore and that proposed by the Conservative government in Britain in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Conservative ministers in Britain also suggested that active citizens should participate in voluntary welfare or community work. The Conservative notion of active citizenship emphasized citizen's contribution to the community through voluntary work.

⁴⁷ Thomas Jefferson described the direct participation by Americans in the New England town meetings as the wisest invention ever devised by man (1903, Vol 8 : 203). According to Tocqueville, who was so impressed by the community spirit he observed when he visited American in 1831, "the health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens." (Alexis de Tocqueville, 1956 : 201). The ancient Greek polis, which was *not* based on the primacy of the rights of individuals, start with the community and derived the duties of citizenship and what they called rights from the nature and needs of the community. The so-called rights were more like benefits bestowed by the government on the condition of performance of civic duties. They could be withdrawn if there were dissatisfaction with the citizen's behaviour (Goldwin, 1992: 47). John Locke believed that civil society is not the natural state -- people are not prepared by nature to be citizens; the attributes of citizenship must be acquired. A democratic citizenry, required by Thomas Jefferson (1903), should be well educated and informed on the issues of the day, with the necessary skills to participate. Citizens must feel that they hold office in the country and have mastered a set of skills and competencies. Participatory democracy requires first and foremost active citizenship participation. It also requires the civic skills of public talk, public judgement, thinking, imagination and courage to act (Morse, 1989). What citizens learn from talking with each other are new ways of relating and working with others. Public talk is prerequisite for public judgement, which requires both thinking and imagination. Political judgement requires the ability to think together with others what the right public course of action should be. It requires the ability to share different viewpoints and perspectives with others about collective lives and actions.

⁴⁸ The willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviours, and to analyze them from the viewpoint of others with whom one is interacting is an advanced stage of psychological development which is fundamental to understanding other cultures (Byram et al., 1994: 20-24). It can lead to "re-socialization", which Berger and Luckmann call "alternation" (1966: 176) where an individual re-constructs his structure of subjective reality according to new norms. It involves the learner challenging the norms of earlier socialization and his undergoing a process called "tertiary socialization" (Byram, 1997: 34) where the value system and concepts of another mode of thinking and acting (another culture) is integrated into the learner's own concepts and value system.

⁴⁹ The skill of interpretation need not involve interaction as such but may be confined to work on documents. The individual is therefore able to determine his own timescale for interpretation, not constrained by the demands of social interaction. The ability to interpret a document from one country for someone from another country, or to identify relationships between documents from different countries is dependent on knowledge of one's own and the other environment. The interpretation or translation of a document necessarily includes handling dysfunctions and contradictions in order to solve them where possible, but also to identify unresolvable issues.

⁵⁰ The skill of discovery may also be operated in the individuals own time if social interaction is not required. It is the skill of building up specific knowledge as well as understanding of the beliefs, meanings and behaviours. It is the ability to recognise significant phenomena in a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations, and their relationship to other phenomena. The skill of interaction is above all the ability to manage the constraints (time, mutual perceptions and attitudes) in particular circumstances with specific interlocutors.

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