

**What role did education play in Singapore's societal development?**

**What challenges await education in the post-development stage?**

## **Post War Singapore (1945-1965)**

- Age of vulnerability and uncertainty
- Resource starved, poor, high unemployment, mistrust within and between communities
- Segmented education system, hostility between English and non-English educated.
- 9 August 1965 - "a reluctant statehood"



## The Post-War Developmental State

- Developmental states privileged economic development as a means of ensuring legitimacy and building resources for infrastructure.
- In education, linking of education goals to economic needs



## 3 Reform Transitions

1. Building a post-colonial system – social cohesion and skill-building issues
2. Building a system for an industrial economy
3. Building a system for a knowledge economy



## **Transition 1: Post Colonial System (1965-1978) (Survival)**

- i. Unifying and centralising the system; establishing a state funded national system
- ii. Expanding educational opportunity; expanding access to English
- iii. Building social cohesion via shared schooling experiences, values and citizenship education



## **Transition 2: Industrial System (1979-1987/97) (Efficiency)**

- System wide emphasis on English, Mathematics, Science and technical/vocational education
- Establishment of VITB and expansion of polytechnics
- Adult Education Board to provide worker education



## Singapore: Challenged by Globalisation

- Singapore is restructuring its economy to focus on high end manufacturing, sophisticated services, to enhance productivity and innovation – a high skills, high wage economy is the aim.
- Our society has become more multi-ethnic, classrooms more diverse, histories and identities more hybridic.
- This has huge implications for Singapore's education and training system, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment  
→ towards ability driven education.



## Key Goals for Singapore's Education Reform (1)

- Schools must be centres for questioning and searching within and outside the classroom.
- Children must be continually pressed to raise questions and accept challenges, to find solutions that are not immediately apparent, to explain concepts, justify their reasoning...

Goh Chok Tong  
(1997)

Thinking Schools, Learning Nation (TSLN)



## Singapore's Education Reforms: 1997 – 2011

- **Teach Less, Learn More (2004)**

A follow up to TSLN, it introduced measures to allow for greater teacher autonomy, to promote a wider range of pedagogies and assessment, and a more student-centred, active view of learning

Lee H. L. (2004)



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## Singapore's Education Reforms

National Education



ICT Master Plan



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## Preparing for a Challenging Future



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## The Developmental State Now

- The educated middle class is now the sandwiched class
- Demand for greater choice, participation, transparency, accountability-
- Aspirations to be a global city pose challenges for nation-centric language and citizenship policies
- Labour shortages and low productivity require drastic restructuring of the economy



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- Fundamental changes are under way in our society. Our demographics and population mix are shifting. Younger Singaporeans have high aspirations yet harbour nagging anxieties... Income distribution is widening... We must find a new balance between self-reliance and social support. Our policy process must adapt to this new landscape...

Lee Hsien Loong  
13.7.2013



## Neo-Liberal Education Reforms

- School Devolution
- School Ranking
- Institutional Differentiation
  - Independent Schools (RI, ACS, HCI)
  - IP Schools (DHS, NJC, TJC)
  - Specialised Independent Schools (SOTA, SSS)
  - Specialized Schools (Northlight, Crest & Spectra)
- Curricular Differentiation at Normal (Tech)



## 2011 – 2014 Reforms

- Every School a Good School
- Student-centric, values driven; Character & Citizenship Education
- Broadening Direct Admission Scheme to reward achievement in a wider range of competencies, and to make elite schools more inclusive
- Greater resources to ensure access to high quality pre-school
- Greater access to university education: Aspire Report



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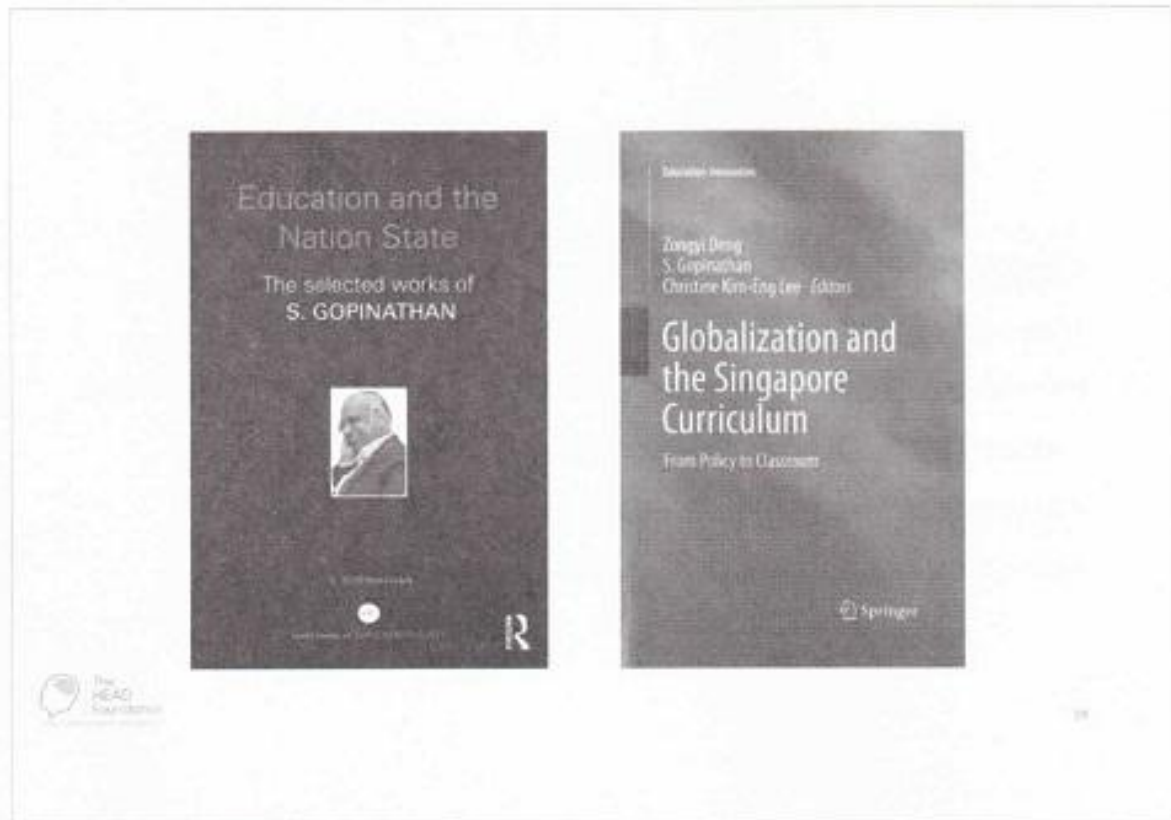
## Social Mobility in Danger

- Gini coefficient moved from 0.408 in 1990 to 0.473 in 2011
- Singapore spent 3.5% of GDP on social protection compared to 8% for South Korea
- University-educated parents had 63% of children with degrees, secondary education 37%, and primary education or lower had 12%  
- emergence of a 'hereditary meritocracy'?



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## Whither the Developmental State?

- Singapore state continues to have legitimacy and credibility
- Has a proven track record of pragmatic policy making and implementation efficiency
- Though the meritocratic ideal is under pressure, commitment to social cohesion and multiculturalism remains strong
- Education will remain central to Singapore's future