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‘Simple Ideological “Dupes” of National Governments’? Teacher Agency and Citizenship Education in Singapore

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Introduction
Popular mythologies about education in Asia, according to Nozaki et al. (2005, p.2), are often characterised by extreme and misleading simplicity. Pedagogy is commonly perceived to be ‘exclusively rote learning’ and ‘teachers are simple ideological “dupes” of national governments’. The last decade has seen a growing body of academic commentary and comparative studies on citizenship education in the Asian region (Cogan & Derricott, 2000; Cogan et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2004; Lee & Fouts, 2005; Grossman et al., 2008; Sim, 2008), some of which are beginning to challenge these myths.

The growing interest in citizenship education is a response to global threats and trends. In Asia, several countries have witnessed political turmoil as a result of change in regimes. Others, including Singapore, have been hit by economic recession, intensified competition, and economic liberalisation from China. Much of the work in citizenship education has focused on the policy level, while less attention has been given to pedagogy. However, these policies, while clearly articulated, still have to be implemented by teachers in the classroom. Unless we focus specifically on the tangled contexts of the classroom, it is difficult to get a sense of the most viable contexts of citizenship education, particularly given the value-laden nature of the citizenship curriculum. This article offers empirical insights into the issue of classroom pedagogies in Singapore, which has a reputation for strong political rule, a tightly controlled education system, and a highly prescriptive citizenship education.

The Singapore Hegemonic State
Independent nationhood was thrust upon Singapore when it suddenly
separated from Malaysia in August 1965. A tiny, newly independent island-state with an almost total lack of natural resources, it then experienced racial tensions and social unrest brought about by struggles against communists, communalists, labour unrests, and economic recession. Singapore was not supposed to be politically and economically viable. However, within three decades or so, Singapore propelled itself from the material difficulties of a Third World ex-colony to a First World economy. Its rapid economic transformation, successful and transparent market economy, and political stability, are the envy of many. Not surprisingly, Singapore has become ‘something of a role model for those who challenge the idea that the Western path to modernisation is the only one on offer’ (Boisot, 1997, p.1025).

For the People’s Action Party (PAP) that has run the government since independence, the issue of the economy is arguably the source of its political legitimacy. Accordingly, good government is one that creates wealth as this indicates a serious commitment to ‘consistent improvement in the living conditions of the population’ (Mahbubani, 1992, p.9). In governing Singapore, the PAP’s philosophy is that the citizens favour the right to a better life over political ideology. The logic is that a strong economy is the basis to a good life for Singaporeans. Citizens have thus come to expect the PAP government to provide and care for their economic welfare, and to a very large extent, the PAP has delivered (Singh, 2007). Consequently, the common adage in Singapore is that as long as the PAP can provide Singaporeans with jobs, homes, and security, they will continue to accept PAP rule (Low, 2001; Singh, 2007).

On this account, the PAP developed a tight system of political control that allowed few opportunities for dissent in order to maintain the social order necessary for economic development (Tremewan, 1994; Tamney, 1996; Ho, 2000). Owing to this, Singapore has been described as undeniably authoritarian because power is overwhelmingly in the hands of the PAP, as opposition parties are inconsequential and civil society is weak (Chua, 1995; Tamney, 1996; Rodan, 2004; Sim, 2006). Yet, Heng (1994) observed that the very powerful PAP is freely elected, opposition parties are legal, and public opinion is becoming livelier. Sim (2006) noted that popular support for the PAP seemed unshakable even during the 1997 Asian economic crisis.

Singapore, therefore, is not an ordinary authoritarian country. Castell (1998, p.78) pointed out that ‘although clearly authoritarian, Singapore is not a dictatorship but a hegemonic state, in the Gramscian
sense...it is based not simply on coercion, but also on consensus'. Hegemony is commonly understood to mean leadership based on the consent of the led secured through ideological means (Bates 1975; Femia, 1981; Martin, 1998; Kong & Yeoh, 2003; Yao, 2007). Ideological hegemony involves persuading the governed to adopt the ruling group’s set of ideas and values as their own. This attempt, as Clammer (1993) explained, is to bring ‘real reality’ and the ruling group’s version of it together so that they appear identical. As former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong noted, Singapore's 'leaders and the people must share the same broad ideas, the same core values, the same vision of what they want their society to be' (cited from Chong, 1991, p.110). As such, the ideas and values are portrayed as ‘natural’ and ‘logical’. Once accepted, the ideological order will be sustained through the production and reproduction of these 'commonsensical' practices, providing the ruling group with the power to shape the political and social system (Chua, 1995; Kong & Yeoh, 2003). More importantly, hegemony must be supported by the ruling group’s ability to improve the material life of the governed in order for extant ideas and values to retain ideological currency (Chua, 1995).

**Education and the Ideological Cause**

The importance of education in the achievement of political and social goals is familiar (Kelly, 2004). Plato drew our attention to recognising educational provision as the key to achieving the kind of society one wished to see established. The task of socialising the next generation to the directions of the nation-state has been so important that schools, directed by many governments, have been specifically assigned that duty. While citizenship education can occur through a variety of sources such as family and the media, schooling remains the main source of citizenship education for young people and the one avenue over which governments can maintain high levels of control and accountability. Thus, it is in Singapore that education is the primary instrument for citizenship education, focused on cultivating national loyalty, patriotism, a sense of belonging, and the commitment to participate actively in the goals of national development (Green, 1997).

Education is concerned with matters of ideology, particularly in developing what are considered appropriate values in society and in establishing a sense of national identity (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). For instance, the PAP leaders' ideological beliefs can be seen in the educational policies, such as the bilingual policy and the National Education
Programme, which are designed to inculcate particular values and to channel social change and patterns of behaviour amongst the populace (Mauzy & Milne, 2002). Significantly, Apple (2004) argued, that the hegemonic influence and the capacity of education are to represent and shape the discourse of how individuals define themselves as citizens. Indeed, schooling, teaching and curriculum are always about the construction of knowledge and truth (Apple, 1993). Official knowledge, as Apple called it, grows from what is included and excluded from the curriculum, and, eventually, what is selected to be included and what is rejected actually creates reality for students. What is selected is never ad hoc but intentional. The selection process emphasises certain meanings, practices, and events and results in the neglect and exclusion of others. Consequently, the curriculum is a construction, inescapably political and ideological, reflecting a dominant worldview that serves the interests of certain groups.

The PAP government consolidated Singapore’s independence through the ideology of survival, emphasising economic pragmatism and instrumental rationality built on multiracialism, meritocracy, and multilingualism (Chan, 1971; Chua, 1995). They have stressed Singapore’s vulnerability as a small state with physical and resource constraints wedged between two large Malay-Muslim states, giving significance to its ethnic diversity and acknowledging the Chinese as a majority population. For them, the overriding priority has been economic growth linked to national survival. Survival thus became a recurrent theme in the exhortations of political leaders, and it became a goal of their exertions as reflected in the school curriculum.

The PAP government very early turned to schools as allies to construct a unified national system of education from the ethnically divided and politically contested provision inherited from the English. Economically, such a move was also necessary to build skills and attitudes necessary for industrialisation (Sharpe & Gopinathan, 2002). The education system was centralised and brought under government control, putting into their hands an important ideological apparatus. The population, Chua (1995) stated, had to be transformed into a tightly organised and highly disciplined citizenry, all pulling in the same direction with a sense of public spiritedness and self-sacrifice in the national interest. Early on, the government implemented policies for inculcating values in schools and the economic imperative of education. Effectively, citizens should leave politics to the PAP while they undertake economically productive activities. Civic virtue is mainly defined as grassroots volun-
teerism, in which people organise to help each other without having political ambition or ideology (Goh, 1979). Consequently, pragmatic policies led to an increasingly disengaged citizenry characterised as self-centred and materialistic, with a general mindset to defer to the government.

**National Education**

In recent years, however, the PAP government has become increasingly concerned about the engagement of young people in society, particularly their participation in Singapore’s future. They have been concerned that the younger Singaporeans were ignorant of Singapore’s recent history. ‘Our young must know the Singapore Story – how Singapore succeeded against all odds to become a nation’, declared then Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Lee Hsien Loong in 1997 during the launch of the National Education programme in schools (Lee, 1997). It placed an unprecedented priority in disseminating history lessons to rescue the young from their ignorance and the resultant lack of ‘the right instincts to bond together as one nation’. The issue was how to develop and deepen national consciousness among an increasingly materialistic, mobile, and globally oriented Singaporean youth (Sim, 2008).

It is not just any history lesson, but National Education forms citizenship education in Singapore as it focuses on a particular Singapore Story – a straightforward tale adopted by the ruling elite that charts out how an independent Singapore overcame the odds to become a peaceful and prosperous country that is held in high regard by the international community. An adequate historical knowledge, according to DPM Lee, was essential to instil values and imparts convictions for Singapore so that young people would be committed to the nation and to the ideals and shared values such as meritocracy and multiracialism. Students are taught the significance of historical events, Singapore’s vulnerabilities and its multiracial makeup, and the importance of staying united and harmonious. The right social values as deemed by the government are inculcated into the students, teaching them to put nation before oneself (Singh, 2007). Implicit in the tale is the central role of the PAP government in leading Singapore from a Third World ex-colony into a successful First World nation.

National Education, therefore, is the latest nation-building initiative aimed at shaping positive knowledge, values, and attitudes of the younger citizenry towards the nation in order to develop national cohesion, the instinct for survival, and confidence in the future (MOE, 2008). National
Education is not taught as a subject in school but rather infused into the curriculum through subjects such as social studies, history, civics and moral education, and geography. Social studies is a major vehicle for National Education, an integrated subject that is compulsory and examinable with the subject matter organised around a number of National Education messages. It was newly introduced to all schools at upper secondary level in 2001 when students were generally 14-15 years old. Social studies basically teaches that Singapore is our homeland, this is where we belong, and we must preserve racial and religious harmony, uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility, and ultimately defend Singapore. No one owes Singapore a living, and we have confidence in our future (MOE, 2008). Social studies focuses on an enhanced awareness of national issues pertaining to the historical, economic, and social development of Singapore, as well as the regional and international issues affecting it.

In Singapore's centralised education system curriculum, development begins at the highest level of government. Social studies, as a vehicle for National Education, is a carefully planned subject with clearly delineated aims and objectives to reproduce culturally the elites' view of the Singapore society. The elites possess the ideal concept of society and citizenship. These are to be transmitted to students in terms of salient knowledge and values to help them become loyal believers in the particular set of truths necessary to guarantee the survival of society. However, as curriculum writers have long suggested, (Stenhouse, 1975; McCutcheon, 1988; Cornbleth, 1990) there are large gaps between what it is intended to happen and what actually happens in the class.

Although teachers are 'always ideologically called upon to form certain identities', they are nonetheless "readers" of curriculum and pedagogical texts and practices and, as such, they possess an ability to make their own meanings' (Nozaki et al., 2005, p.8). Similarly, Thornton (2005) characterised teachers as curricular-instructional gatekeepers, reflecting their well-known role as controllers of what is taught and how it is taught in classrooms. Teacher gate-keeping implies that there are many educational possibilities within a social studies curriculum. Consequently, a curriculum is not merely a product developed by distal experts as a script for teachers but a classroom enactment where the same curriculum can be arranged and taught in countless ways, enabling teachers to interpret even a prescribed curriculum. However, is this the case in a tightly controlled system in Singapore?
Methodology
A case study was conducted, drawing on multiple sources of information rich in context (Yin, 1994) to provide depth and insight into teachers' practices of citizenship education. Eight teachers, shown in Table 10.1, were purposively selected as instrumental cases from four secondary schools. As social studies teachers major in a range of social science disciplines, teachers with different disciplinary backgrounds were selected, as this variable was expected to make a difference to how citizenship is understood. Race is an important element in Singaporean identity. Singapore has four official races (Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Eurasian), with Chinese as the majority and the rest falling under the 'other' category. Teachers of different races were selected to reflect Singapore's multiracial population. Age and gender were two other criteria given that there were concerns that younger Singaporeans were mobile and apathetic. Furthermore, Singaporean men and women may think differently about citizenship given the fact that men undergo a two-year mandatory national military service that may enhance male political socialisation and attitudes to the duties of citizenship. Of course, the sample is neither representative of all secondary social studies teachers nor of the different social groups in Singapore. The teachers were selected precisely because they were seen to have different combinations of the above-stated criteria and provided the basis for good cases in case study research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Disciplinary Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vind</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Political Science and Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Geography and Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leong</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Political Science and Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frida</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Political Science and Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Asian Studies and History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ying</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Political Science and Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Maths, Economics, and Sociology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The eight teachers were invited to participate in the study by four government secondary schools in Singapore wherein the principal of each school was allowed access. The teachers participated in the study voluntarily, and data were collected from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentary study. Forty-three interviews
were conducted, each lasting an average of 90 minutes, and 84 lessons of approximately 45 minutes were observed. Analysis was data driven and inductive, shaped largely by the notion of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method was used by unitising and categorising the data. Where new categories emerged from the data changes the analytic categories were refined. The data were scrutinised many times over, and trustworthiness came from the amount of time spent in the field. Methodological triangulation of data from multiple sources also provided validity check. Reliability was increased through adherence to case study protocol (Yin, 1994, p.64) and a development of the case study database.

Citizenship Pedagogy in Singapore
The study revealed that the citizenship pedagogies employed were not homogenous across the eight teachers, even though they were government employees in a tightly organised state with a highly prescriptive citizenship education. Instead, four pedagogical approaches were identified: expository and highly controlled, rationalistic and persuasive, interactive and participative, and constructive and experiential. These four approaches were related to how the teachers conceptualised citizenship. Teachers held varied orientations to citizenship and a number of conceptualised citizenship in ways different from the official discourse. These orientations were characterised by three dominant stances: nationalistic, socially concerned, and person-oriented. Each stance is shown in Table 10.2. These were important distinctions for the teachers, reflecting their views on the subject matter as well as the concept of citizenship.

Four of the eight teachers, Peter, Vind, Leong, and Carolyn, were classified as predominantly nationalistic. While the four teachers shared many salient features of the nationalistic stance, they also differed in the intensity and manifestations of this particular orientation to citizenship. There were two distinct sub-groups within the nationalistic classification. One sub-group that included Peter and Vind could be described as conservative. The other, made up of Leong and Carolyn, could be described as progressive. The conservative stance was top-down in nature, with teachers urging the interests of the nation. By contrast, the progressive stance emphasised reasoning to reinforce conviction and progress for the nation. The conservative teachers combined an expository and highly controlled approach to teaching citizenship, while the progressive pair adopted a rationalistic and persuasive approach. Two
teachers, Marcus and Frida, were characterised as predominantly socially concerned in their stance to citizenship and taught citizenship education using an interactive and participative approach. The final pair of David and Ying presented a person-oriented instance and used the constructive and experiential approach to teaching citizenship.

Table 10.2: Orientation and Pedagogical Approach to Citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation to Citizenship</th>
<th>Pedagogical Approach</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationalistic:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Nationalistic</td>
<td>Expository and Highly Controlled</td>
<td>Peter, Vind Leong, Carolyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peter, Vind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Nationalistic</td>
<td>Rationalistic and Persuasive</td>
<td>Leong, Carolyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially Concerned</td>
<td>Interactive and Participative</td>
<td>Marcus, Frida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-oriented</td>
<td>Constructive and Experiential</td>
<td>David, Ying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nationalistic Pedagogical Approaches to Citizenship**

The four nationalistic teachers, Peter, Vind, Leong, and Carolyn, conceptualised citizenship in terms of and with constant reference to the nation. ‘Citizenship is tied to the nation’, Leong explained, ‘If the nation is there, we are citizens. The nation validates us and gives us our identity’. Identity is being Singaporean, exclusive, geographically located, and defined in terms of national identity. The nation was their primary reference, with the dominant theme of nationalism running through their conceptualisations of citizenship. Nationalism meant support for the nation by members of that country. These teachers had a sense of national consciousness in terms of knowing about and having affection for the nation. Their understanding involved a sense of unity of the nation, sharing collective memories and myths and acceptance of core societal values. In practice, teachers sought to sustain the nation by emphasising and achieving national interests and goals. ‘The aim in teaching citizenship education is of national interest’, Peter neatly summarised. ‘These interests are purposefully and consciously taught’. Additionally, he stated, ‘Getting students to understand the issues at stake for Singapore is extremely important and I will make that come out clearly’.

The nationalistic stance is conceived of in terms of a continuum. On
one end is a conservative stance and on the other end is a progressive one. Peter and Vind were conservative, where such a stance was top-down in nature, with teachers urging the interests of the nation. Students were envisaged to be passive and accepting, storing up information and skills for later use. In contrast, Leong and Carolyn were progressive with their emphasis on reasoning to reinforce conviction and progress for the nation. Students were envisaged to be more participative in order to build capacity for bottom-up support for the nation-building process. Their pedagogical approaches varied according to where they stand along the continuum. They emphasised the transmission of the Singapore Story, with national values and attitudes to be transmitted explicitly and instilled to commit students to national loyalties. The subject matter was viewed as an authoritative fixed body of knowledge, skills, and values to be learnt by students.

The Expository and Highly Controlled Approach

Underlying the expository and highly controlled approach to teaching citizenship education is the idea of control over what and how to think about national issues. Peter explained,

'It's putting together a package to direct students to feel nationalistic, a prescribed tablet to take to make them react in a certain way. It has to be taught as our students have not gone through difficult times and do not have ideas and experiences that can pull them together as a nation. We need to shape how they are to understand and respond to what happens in Singapore and their role as citizens'.

Such control was exercised by treating citizenship education through social studies as a considerable subject at the national examination. It is in this context that students became the captive audience motivated to take the subject seriously in order to pass. In this instance, the conservative teachers were the source of epistemic authority, and they often reminded students to 'listen to me, you won't go wrong', 'this is the way to learn, follow the method, you will answer correctly and score well', and 'I will teach you how, there is always a strategy and technique'.

Consistent with such a view, teaching was teacher-centred and didactic, using whole class instruction and discussion. Typically, a lesson began with the teacher presenting an issue to the students, which was often painted in binary terms and in point form and where arguments
could easily be constructed to support or oppose each point. Arguments were simplistically presented to accentuate the rightness and wrongness of each point, where the correct ones were those that justified the decisions of the government. Afterwards, the students were, in Vind’s words, ‘drilled and grilled’ for the appropriate responses about the issue through whole class discussion. Although students were told they could challenge their teachers’ arguments, particularly by Peter, the issue was framed with an accompanying tone imbued with moral conviction of the rightness of what Singapore had done. His authoritarian demeanour always cowed and cornered students into accepting his point of view. Subsequently, templates were given to help students organise their answers coherently for the examination. For example, in a lesson on racial conflicts in Sri Lanka, the causes and consequences were stripped of the complexities, lending themselves to being easily packaged into what Peter described as ‘bite sizes’ to be learnt by students for the correct responses. The issue was not presented in a way that encouraged students to question and discuss as the message was explicit. The government’s emphasis on racial harmony was a correct one, without which Singapore could deteriorate into another Sri Lanka. For both the conservative teachers, national interests were not to be questioned but transmitted to ‘pull us together’ and ‘align us to the government’s vision for the country’. Knowledge and values were not regarded as problematic but to be accepted as truth.

Such a method reduces teaching to a series of fixed steps and list of points that can be mechanically learnt. The purpose was not for students to understand issues in their complexities and as contested in nature but to reduce issues to simplistic points for easy control. Similarly, teachers avoided controversial issues. There was always a right versus wrong answer to learn, and it was evident that the conservative teachers did not trust students to be able to construct their own understandings of these issues. The assumption was that students lacked the intellectual capacity to handle the complexities and thus must be told and disciplined on what and how to think with regard to national issues. This thus resulted to socialising them into the set of core societal values.

The Rationalistic and Persuasive Approach

In the rationalistic and persuasive approach, citizenship and national ideals were stress through the ability to rationalise and to understand the reasons for national policies. The characteristic of this approach is the
employment of reason as a guide for decision and action on national issues, and this is apparently in contrast with the 'force feeding' of the conservative teachers. Leong explained that if students do not think and rationalise the issues confronting them, they will be complacent. 'In a crisis, they won't know how to respond and it will threaten our survival as a nation'.

Rationalising policies by questioning and understanding the reasons for them was intended to deepen the conviction for the nation. As explained by Leong, 'Question and test the robustness of our national values and NE messages. If you find no fault, then accept them with conviction'. Reasoning, however, was to be done within the nationalistic framework where teachers would not accept monosyllabic answers, hence encouraging students to explain, elaborate, support, and justify how what they said would work for the good of the nation.

Unlike the conservative teachers, the progressive teachers were not unduly worried that citizenship education through social studies was an examinable subject. They focused on getting students to think and reason well, as many issues require citizens to decide. If citizens do not know how to evaluate issues and jump into hasty conclusions, this will be dire for the nation. Naturally, these skills would help students in the examination as well. As such, Leong and Carolyn seldom lectured because the tendency was to feed information.

'We don't tell them the points, won't give notes, nor craft the arguments for students. They have to do these themselves, but we guide them. They have to think through the issues and own their learning. Only then will they understand the reasons for the decisions, and with understanding comes a greater willingness to accept'.

The progressive teachers preferred more active learning on the part of students where small group work was used to engage students in thinking about the rationales and issues for decisions and policies. Group work provided students with opportunities within a smaller group of classmates to talk about issues in greater depth, co-construct their understandings, and relate their experiences to otherwise distant national issues. This approach therefore made it easier for students to see they had a tangible part to play in ensuring the well-being of the nation. It was noteworthy that while both teachers listened to different student perspectives of how the final decisions and conclusions were predetermined,
the teachers always persuaded students to see why certain decisions were more ‘right’ for Singapore than others. Students arrived at an understanding of why Singapore could not do certain things and focused on how they could help make it better by working within the given circumstances.

In tandem with persuasion, Leong and Carolyn role modelled desirable values. Respect and cooperation underlay the classroom climate where both teachers cared about their students as individuals. They made it a point to thank students for answering questions, raising issues, or just for trying. By doing so habitually, they did not just help students imbibe such values but also build a trusting relationship that facilitated persuasion. This proved to be effective when teachers wished to convince students that only one understanding is correct or true, such as that Singaporeans have to be self-reliant and responsible, and to not expect the provision of welfare. In this sense, the progressive teachers were also the source of epistemic authority. However, unlike the conservative teachers, authority was subtly exercised. Essentially, citizenship education was practised as persuading students towards an acceptance of the status quo, ‘socialising them into the set of correct knowledge and values to function in society’.

**Socially Concerned Pedagogical Approach to Citizenship**

The pair of socially concerned teachers, Marcus and Frida, conceptualised citizenship in terms of active participation in the civic affairs and social life of the community. ‘It is people coming together’, Marcus explained, ‘to solve problems, work on improving, and bonding the community’. It is important to participate actively in the community as ‘the more one participates, the more one feels belonged’, he adds. Active citizens are concerned citizens. Such individuals are conscious of the welfare of others and the wider society, acting accordingly to further the common good. The teachers’ ideas of the common good and social awareness did not indicate a nationalistic commitment but were expressions of obligations and responsibilities towards others because that was how people should behave towards one another.

Society was their primary reference, defined as a group of people with mutual concerns, a network of relationships, shared institutions, and a common culture. The terms ‘society’ and ‘community’ were used interchangeably. References to communities emphasised cooperation and reciprocity, respect for differences, and the pursuit of the common
good. These characterised the socially concerned stance. Teachers believed that society could be reformed by nurturing social responsibility through trustworthiness, care, initiative, and reciprocity among its members. Citizens are to stay informed of social issues and should recognise they have the responsibility and right to redress them to improve society.

Social issues were the crux of citizenship education, where issues were complex and dynamic. In the same way, there were multiple perspectives to events, where both teachers problematised the construction of the Singapore Story. While the national agenda was important, multiple perspectives to issues were, as Marcus noted, 'just as important in helping us better appreciate the circumstances'. Frida added, 'The diversity of perspectives helps counter propaganda'. The aim of citizenship education was to help students understand issues and enhance their capacity to participate. In practice, they provided students with the educative experiences that develop their knowledge, skills, and dispositions for meaningful engagement with society.

The Interactive and Participative Approach
The socially concerned teachers want students to feel they can take initiatives by being informed and knowing how, making concern and engagement become habits of the mind. The thrust of the interactive and participative approach is to stimulate students' interest in societal issues and to develop their skills and dispositions to address these issues collectively. Marcus and Frida did not see a subject-based, classroom-bound citizenship education as a constraint. Instead, they saw social studies as a good platform to teach participation (issues-driven, current, and open-ended) and get students to articulate their opinions (discuss, deliberate, and write letters). They learned to interact in class, build on these experiences and gain enough confidence to move outward to less familiar grounds.

Both teachers also encouraged students to extend their learning in school widely. When students complained about having too many tests, Frida discussed other options, such as taking action and referring them to the lessons about citizens who use a platform to voice out their needs. One response to this was that students wrote a petition expressing their views, gave suggestions, collected signatures, and sent it to the Principal. 'That's what addressing issues means', Frida said. She also added, 'Citizens must take responsibility for their own lives and say how they
are affected. We can't assume the authority knows everything'. Similarly, in a lesson on the British welfare state, Marcus brought to the attention of the class a group of needy students in the school. Subsequently, students discussed why and how they could help this group of students. The students then wrote a proposal to set up an interest-free loan scheme for the school management committee. It was presented to the committee and was finally approved for implementation. It is not surprising then that Marcus and Frida consciously taught beyond the examination. 'We don't want students to do badly for the exams, but there is also no need to always drill them. We have to think of their development as active citizens in the long haul'.

Group discussion was the pedagogical preference of the socially concerned teachers. The structure of discussion is 'natural to how people come together to resolve issues important to them'. This form of group talk facilitates interaction and interdependence within the class community, as well as fosters the skills of communication, listening, negotiating, valuing, and respecting diverse viewpoints. It takes effort 'because people naturally have different agendas and different takes on matters', they explained. Teachers, however, emphasised the platform it provided for students to 'be open to different views, when there are no clear cut right or wrong, consider alternatives and not hasty decisions, learn to handle differences with respect, give-and-take, negotiate and eventually come to a consensus'. In one lesson, students in ethnically mixed groups deliberated on whether or not there should be separate television channels for each of the minority ethnic groups in Singapore. This discussion took place against the background of a multi-racial policy that ensures all races in Singapore are equal regardless of size. Not surprisingly, students struggled to communicate their views, argued with reasons to defend their stand, and then disagreed respectfully. 'It's hard but they are actively trying to learn to work with others on issues'.

Given that knowledge was regarded as tentative and problematic, Marcus and Frida emphasised multiple perspectives. For example, in a lesson on the separation of Singapore, Frida encouraged students to take different perspectives on the issue. She reminded students, 'Do you think the Malaysian textbook would say we kicked Singapore out? The tendency for students was to accept the textbook as the truth as she wanted students to realise that knowledge was constructed. Consequently, the socially concerned teachers seldom forced fed closures to issues and were accepting of the views students came up with. As Frida
defended, ‘Because we don’t have complete knowledge of issues, there are no fixed answers. Students need to learn to handle tentativeness, that’s the way things are. As long as what you say is logical and can be substantiated, it is alright. We have different views on things due to the different perspectives and the incompleteness of knowledge, thus the varying interpretations’.

Hence, they also encouraged students to be sceptical and to adopt a more questioning, open-minded, and exploratory attitude towards the subject matter presented in the textbook or in any publication. Unlike the nationalistic teachers, they did not promote a single dominant source of epistemic authority. Students were encouraged to verify truth claims from multiple sources. They were encouraged to interact with others within the class community and participate in the co-construction of knowledge and understanding of issues. This way, students would learn to be active agents and not compliant members of society. Ultimately, they would not just obey laws or avoid crimes but also take initiatives to do something for society.

**Person-oriented Pedagogical Approach to Citizenship**

David and Ying, the remaining pair of person oriented teachers, held a concept of citizenship based on personal responsibility. The individual, not the society, was the primary referent for both teachers’ conceptualisations. In this regard, the idea of the good person rather than the dutiful citizen was emphasised. Good citizenship, if it occurred, was a payoff for being a good person with a good character. Accordingly, the good person is the one who is well adjusted, has a good character anchored on strong and positive values, and is self-disciplined and responsible. The good citizen does what is best for his nation and the community.

David and Ying emphasised personal development. They were primarily concerned with opportunities for individual growth and self-fulfilment. Thus, they considered societal or national interests as secondary. This rationale should not be mistaken for self-seeking. Rather, it is a different approach to citizenship, the basis of which was the development of positive self-concept and personal efficacy (Martorella et al., 2005). Such a concept of citizenship was a response to their perception that citizenship in Singapore was elitist. Both teachers saw that citizenship was polarised with active citizenship confined to the selected elites, while the rest were to ‘listen and follow what they tell you’. The state, they explained, was paternalistic and authoritarian, constantly disciplin-
ing the masses through its harsh laws and strict rules, intending to socialise them to be accepting and acquiescent citizens. Thus, citizens were therefore reduced to a state of passivity and disempowerment. Consequently, David and Ying felt society would be better served with people who were confident and more self-governing, but responsible and of good character.

In practice, the person-oriented teachers helped students develop a positive, can-do attitude to break out from conventions and not be limited by established views of who they could become. For them, personal development was a way to transcend the constraints faced within given contexts. Rather than confronting the system, the reference was turned inwards – to self locating the locus of control within the person. Both teachers argued for the need to consider the Singapore Story from more than one point of view. They were keen to enlarge the scope to many Singapore stories to include the ordinary voices. David explained that the official history always attributed Singapore's success to 'The wisdom of the government. But without the will of the people to carry the policies through, it's not possible. We need to show that ordinary people are critical to the success of policies'. He said that if ordinary people were shown to be involved in social change, then citizens would feel that they were valued individuals within the society.

The Constructive and Experiential Approach
Personal development is broad in scope, as anything can be the subject matter used for such learning and its application. Characteristic of the constructive and experiential approaches are multiple pathways to learning, emphasising experiences and opportunities for meaning-making. The person-oriented teachers were careful not to dominate and impose on students' learning. Instead they provided sufficient scope and space for individuals to explore within the constraints of an examination subject. The guiding principle, as David explained, was to 'create the opportunities, then help them to discover on their own. There is no need to nitpick and insist on a single way of understanding'.

Diverse ways of learning were evident in David and Ying's classes, such as the use of role plays, storytelling, mind maps, songs and raps, art, exhibition, and field trips. David explained, 'Reading the textbook is not the only way to learn. People can come to know in different but equally powerful ways'. For David, the field trip is his 'pet thing'. He explained,
Jasmine Boon-Yee Sim

'If you have visited the parliament, you bring the experience to bear upon the understanding of what you read. You made sense of that and owned the learning. It is meaningful to you and you remember better. It is not just textbook knowledge'.

He took students on two overseas and four local fieldtrips in a year. On the Korean field trip, he shared,

'Students saw a divided Korea, guards carrying guns, patrolling the border, one country but separated. They saw the consequences of ideological differences. This is not easily understood by reading about it. Going there, talking to the people, seeing how they live all add up to deepen understanding'.

Both teachers preferred to engage students in authentic experiences whenever possible. This was to encourage students to construct their own understandings and meanings rather than be mere consumers of the conclusions of others. Ying explained, 'If you don’t develop your own understanding of things, you can be easily controlled by others'.

The recognition of meaning-making and subjective realities is important because through them, the individual realises him/herself and reclaims his/her agency in a context perceived to be 'Very paternalistic. – I’m always right, you listen to me, I know what is happening, you follow, it’s good for you. – We are like kids growing up, needing discipline'. Hence, teachers constantly assured students of the validity of the subjective perspective. They were often heard asking students for their personal take on issues, encouraging students to draw personal relevance to what was studied.

Consistent with such a view, David and Ying’s lessons were noticeably more inclusive of students’ voices, wherein students were given greater freedom of deciding together with teachers how they wanted to learn particular topics instead of being always told what to do. Teachers were to guide and trust them and be open to what they came up with. This gave students the experience of exercising agency and initiative and taking control of the circumstances. It is a process of working towards being more self-governing and confident in their meaning making and eventually being less reliant on being told what to do by the government. In one lesson observed, students discussed with David if they could research on international diplomacy, as this was a topic of interest to
many in the class. David divided students into groups, and they chose aspects of international diplomacy to work on. In the next lesson, the groups came together and taught their respective parts to the class. David reflected,

“They joined the different aspects together and constructed their own understanding of it from their research. Their slides, explanations, and personal reflections were good. It was satisfying to see them taking initiative for their own learning. They made good use of the freedom given to them’.

Similarly, it was not sufficient to read what the textbook had to say about the Central Provident Fund (CPF) that could be used for medical purposes even with their national forced saving schemes, Medisave and Medishield. ‘The textbook presents the government’s view of a scheme they set up’, Ying argued. ‘But people have to understand how it really affects them, not just what they tell you’. Ying gave students the experience of studying different kinds of medical and hospital bills to make sense of what, who and how much can be claimed from Medisave and Medishield. Students called up the CPF and the hospital to enquire. Such experience helps to counteract the sense of powerlessness by developing the capacity for meaning making. As Ying explained, ‘If you don’t understand how these things work, how would you know what is available to you? Then you are at the mercy of what others tell or not tell you’.

Clearly, there is not a single source of epistemic authority; instead, the authority is distributed among different individuals. Knowledge is viewed as personal and subjective, and it becomes meaningful only when living, experiencing, and understanding it. In this way, individuals are producers of knowledge and meanings for themselves. As personal knowledge is subjective and individualised, multiple truths and realities can exist. A main source of epistemic authority, therefore, lies within the self, where confidence in one’s agency is stressed. From this perspective, both teachers believed that ‘everyone has a story, a personal one within the shared history of our nation’. Thus, there is not just one official Singapore Story; it must be inclusive and must recognise personal histories. Ordinary persons should be encouraged to draw personal relevance from the events that shaped the nation.

Conclusion
This study contributes to broadening the understanding of citizenship
pedagogies used in the Asian region. Teachers in Asian schools are often characterised as emphasising traditional expository approaches in their classrooms that stress passivity in students and transmission of knowledge (Nozaki et al., 2005). In Singapore, close attention has been given to citizenship education in the form of National Education at the highest political levels, with additional concern that the social studies curriculum is perceived to be high-stakes learning (Sim & Print, 2005). However, this study did not identify a homogenous understanding and practice of citizenship education through a prescribed social studies curriculum. Instead, the study reinforced Thornton’s (2005) concept of the teacher as the curricular-instructional ‘gatekeeper’ within the social studies curriculum, even in a tightly controlled education system as in Singapore.

Singapore teachers are employees of the state and are therefore explicit recipients of citizenship education. According to Lee and Fouts (2005), as recipients, teachers are expected to do what is required of them by the education body, the official curriculum, and the school. Specifically, the teachers were expected to deliver the National Education messages through the teaching of social studies, with citizenship education oriented towards nation-building. The aims, purposes, and objectives of the social studies curriculum were explicitly stated, the subject matter prescribed, with MOE-developed instructional materials to ensure fidelity of use. Yet, the teachers were not mere transmitters of external knowledge (Clandinin, 1986), but were, as Lee and Fouts argued, key figures in putting the curriculum into classroom practice, where what they saw as important was taught. The teachers conceptualised citizenship from varied stances, namely, the nationalistic, socially concerned, and person-oriented, with the latter two being different from that of the official discourse. Consequently, a range of pedagogical approaches were related to the nationalistic, socially concerned, and person-oriented stances. Respectively, they were expository and highly controlled, rationalistic, and at the same time persuasive, interactive and participative, and constructive and experiential.

While the nationalistic conceptualisations and practice conformed to the prescribed social studies curriculum, both the socially concerned and person-oriented conceptualisations and practice took alternative perspectives. The socially concerned and person-oriented varieties of citizenship education were divergent and increased the meanings that students acquired. They were workable alternatives that were progressive, which emphasise thinking and participation, and yet are sensitive to
the conditions in Singapore. They provided, to varying degrees, positive moments and possibilities for personal growth and active citizenship, working towards incremental changes through reforms and renewal. This is important because, overall, they contributed to a less parochial view of citizenship in Singapore.

Clearly, the teachers in this study were not passive implementers of the curriculum but exercised agency in enacting citizenship education in ways that did not threaten the official social studies curriculum. The eight teachers showed that their conceptualisations of citizenship were integral to an understanding of what they did in the name of citizenship education within social studies. Their conceptualisations varied and influenced the approaches to citizenship education, the experiences students would be exposed to, the types of skills they would develop, the kind of messages they would receive about their collective lives, the ways in which they would interact with others to address social issues, and the understandings they would develop about citizenship.

The socially concerned and person-oriented teachers in particular were not ideological ‘dupes’ of the national government. More than the nationalistic teachers, they took a stand on what type of knowledge was most worthy for citizenship education and, consequently, the pedagogies employed. Their pedagogical approaches were not apolitical, dispassionate, or divorced from the world outside the classroom. They were actively engaged in deciding the subject matter and what they decided, and are hinged on how they conceptualised citizenship. Different emphases were placed on the foundations for curricular decisions, namely, the concerns for community and individual. They broadened the perspective of citizenship superseding national loyalty and challenged citizenship education in Singapore to go beyond a nationalistic perspective, and yet not dismissing this vital aspect all together. They sought to expand the understandings and practices of citizenship for students to acquire and to take account of civic realities.

Finally, the study contradicted the perception of a controlled citizenry and showed that there are Singapore teachers who were well disposed towards citizenship education, even in the context of a hegemonic state. These teachers were neither disinterested nor dispassionate citizenship educators. Despite social studies being a high-stakes examination subject, a majority of the teachers in this study continued to understand the larger citizenship aims and sought to translate them into practice. While generalisations from such a small group cannot be made,
this study has provided an insight into how citizenship education through the vehicle of social studies has not been as successful as a controlling mechanism for these eight teachers and not as effective in regulating their behaviour as might be expected within Singapore.