Title	The paradox of curriculum goals
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The Paradox of Curriculum Goals

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STUDENT-CENTRIC LEARNING

While Singapore might have achieved its goal of academic excellence, educational researchers, policymakers and teachers alike are concerned about the next goal of preparing our learners to face and overcome future challenges and uncertainties by attaining 21st century competencies. However, these two sets of goals are seen to be parallel and do not complement each other; there seems to be a tension between the respective hard skills and soft skills involved in achieving the different goals. Many of our pre-existing pedagogies do not seem well-equipped to build both performative excellence and 21st century competencies.

Nevertheless, 12 research projects that were able to bridge the gap between these two opposing aims. These pedagogies shared a few common salient features:

► a shift from monologic to dialogic pedagogies

► more process-oriented learner-agentic types of assessment.

► seamless learning between learning inside and outside of the classroom environment

► assessment tools that cater to both 21st century competencies as well as academic goals

One signature project in particular was *WiRead*. It was a very tight collaboration between a school as well as the Principal Investigator of the project. The project made use of multimodal social-dialogic learning as a platform for students to learn English, which engaged them in critical discussion over multimodal texts and helped them learn in a dynamic and visual way while developing critical thinking. The use of a learning activity profile was also helpful for the students.

These trials have shown an increase in learner engagement, emotional engagement, student-teacher relationship and also critical thinking. Despite the paradox between pursuing 21st century competencies and traditional academic excellence, it is possible to reconcile the two disparate goals.