
Title	The five paradoxes of effecting change
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This is the published version of the following article:

Kwek, D. (2017). The five paradoxes of effecting change. *OER Knowledge Bites*, 4, 5.

<https://ebook.ntu.edu.sg/20190607-oer-knowledge-bites-volume4/full-view.html>

The Five Paradoxes of Effecting Change

By *Dennis Kwek*

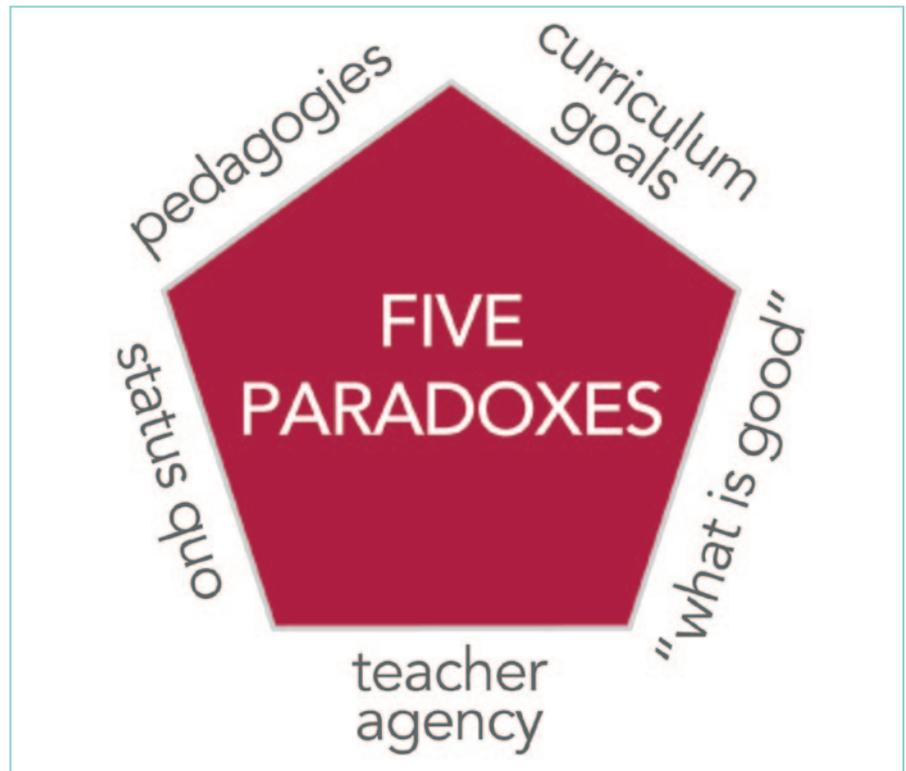
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Since her independence in 1965, Singapore has made remarkable economic progress. Among all the postcolonial nations, only Singapore and Hong Kong have maintained consistent economic growth and subsequently gained the status of developed nations. The book, *Why Nations Fail*, authored by Daron Acemoğlu explains that such economic developmental success can be attributed to one key factor: good public institutions, especially economic, political and educational institutions.

Professor Kishore Mahbubani (2004), Dean of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, however warns us that Singapore's first 50 years of success does not guarantee her continual success going forward. We cannot rely on the same formula for the country's continued success; we have to constantly adapt, improve and improvise in accordance to the changing needs of the nation.

Within the education landscape, there have indeed been adaptations and improvements in recent years. Since the inception of *Thinking Schools, Learning Nation* in 1997, we have seen the introduction of the cluster system, greater autonomy given to schools and better-equipped leaders attached to schools.

Moreover, in 2005, then Minister for Education Tharman Shanmugaratnam pointed out the need for teachers and leaders in schools to generate new ideas (Shanmugaratnam, 2005). Quality in education will occur when schools and



teachers take ownership of the changes and experiments they wish to implement in the classrooms, and when they give students greater agency.

However, the process of educational change in Singapore will have its own set of challenges and tensions. There will also be increasingly the kinds of paradoxes that we are already beginning to see across the entire educational system. The five paradoxes that follows are worth monitoring as we continue in our efforts to better understand and address them.

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