Citizenship Education in Singapore 1950s – 2020s:
From "Ideal Citizen" to Moulding every "Citizen Leader"

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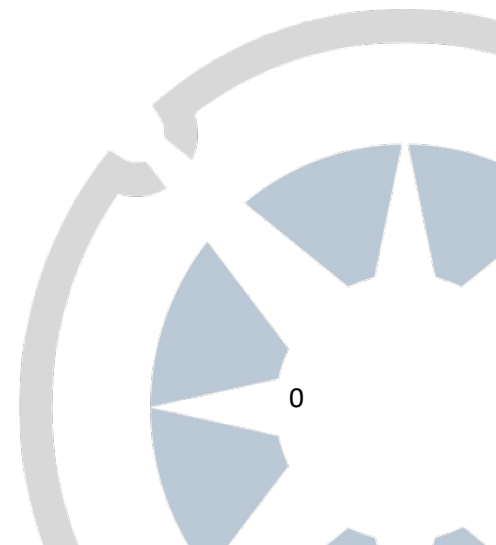
Citizenship Education in Singapore 1950s – 2020s: From "Ideal Citizen" to Moulding every "Citizen Leader"

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Abstract

Few governments have pursued compulsory citizenship education with as much tenacity and vigour as that of Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP) government. Its 1959 manifesto, *The Tasks Ahead*, clearly identified the national school system as "the principal media through which the values of the nation and of society are imparted to the young child" (PAP, p. 4). Its leader, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, asserted in 1966 that "there are two factors in the formative influences of a young man or a young woman's life: one is the home; the other is the school." This belief in shaping citizens through education has remained unchanged over the decades. Today, citizenship education appears to be more student-centric and intentional, with "values and character development systematic and pervasive" (Heng, 2011).

This paper traces the evolution of citizenship education in Singapore, from a piecemeal to systemic approach shaping the individual student. It argues that the education system has progressed beyond just creating the "ideal citizen", but now also moulding students to be leaders into the future. Referencing Perreault's (1997) "citizen leader" approach to community service, this paper discusses how Singapore's emphasis on values and skills equips students to be active citizens of good character, who are resilient and future-ready (MOE, 2020, p. 8).

Keywords: *Citizenship education, evolution, ideal citizen, citizen leader, Singapore*

1. Introduction

Few governments have pursued compulsory citizenship education with as much tenacity and vigour as that of Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP). Its 1959 manifesto, *The Tasks Ahead*, clearly identified the school system as "the principal media through which the values of the nation and of society are imparted to the young child" (PAP, p. 4). Its leader, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, asserted in 1966 that "there are two factors in the formative influences of a young man or a young woman's life: one is the home; the other is the school." This belief that education can shape citizens has remained unchanged over the decades, as Singapore's Ministry of Education (MOE) reviews and revises its citizenship education curriculum to stay relevant to changing times. The government's prioritization of education in producing good citizens for the nation, through the transmission and socialization of norms, rules and culture continues to this day (Ho, 2010).

MOE, as the state regulator for education, produces Singapore's citizenship education curriculum - and thereby controls the direction and construction of truth (Apple, 1993). Regular curriculum reviews ensure that the knowledge, values and skills embedded in the citizenship curriculum would enable students to "participate effectively in the society and environment in which they live" (MOE, 1981), while still enforcing the state's view of society (Sim & Print, 2009). Today, citizenship education is conducted

through Character & Citizenship Education (CCE) and Social Studies in mainstream schools. While non-examinable as a subject, CCE is a student-centric, intentional, "systematic and pervasive" programme implemented to better inform the total curriculum – including Social Studies – in shaping students thorough "values and character development" (Heng, 2011). CCE is taken so seriously by the PAP that the party's 2020 election manifesto highlighted its role in "prepar[ing] our young to be upright and compassionate individuals, imbued with mental resilience and sound values" (PAP, 2020).

This paper traces how citizenship education in Singapore evolved from a piecemeal to systemic approach in shaping the individual student. It argues that the education system has progressed beyond creating the "ideal citizen" to moulding students into future leaders. Referencing Perreault's (1997) "citizen leader" approach to community service, this paper discusses how Singapore's emphasis on values and skills equips students as active, resilient and future-ready citizens of good character (MOE, 2020, p. 8). We will first discuss citizenship education in Singapore to provide conceptual and contextual grounding to the topic. This is followed by an overview of Perreault's "citizen leader", which supports our overarching argument. We will then trace the evolution of citizenship education in Singapore's context and show how the government's vision of student leadership has parallels with Perreault's concept of "citizen leader".

2. Citizenship Education in Singapore's National School System

Singapore's unexpected independence in 1965 following self-government in 1959 and a tumultuous merger with Malaysia from 1963 to 1965 meant that right from the beginning, survival became the sole aim of the Singapore government. The odds seemed stacked against Singapore in 1965 with high unemployment rates, the lack of a hinterland, and being Chinese-majority in a region of Muslim-majority states (Chia, 2015). The largely migrant population, restive communal sentiments and fear of communist activities led the PAP to quickly establish a narrative of "survival" which required the pragmatism of the government supported by a multiracial, multi-religious and meritocratic society (Chan, 1971). Developing the economy to ensure survival and creating a Singaporean identity that would supersede the primordial ethnic identities within the society became critical areas of nation-building in Singapore (Gopinathan, 2007; Kho, 2013).

The PAP has long identified education as "the principal media through which the values of the nation and of society are imparted to the young child" (PAP, 1959, p. 4). Using the rhetoric of nation-building, the fragmented colonial system of English and vernacular schools was centralized into a unified system in 1973 under MOE, emphasizing meritocracy and bilingualism and "moulding" young Singaporeans with the values, attitudes and dispositions deemed suitable for the new nation (Gopinathan, 1974). In such a system, teachers play the critical role of shaping their charges into a "national pattern" (PAP, 1959, p.5), the construction of which continues to this day, where the cultural transmission of state-prescribed values through the school curriculum reproduces the "ideal citizen" (Apple, 1993).

In this light, citizenship education in Singapore is fundamental in creating the "ideal citizen". McCowan posited that citizenship education which aims to develop "a 'good'

or 'effective' or 'empowered' citizen", is contingent upon "fundamental understandings of the nature of the polity, the balance of liberty and equality and so forth" (2009, p. 5). There is no definitive or universal objective of citizenship education, since its function depends on the histories and political agendas of different contexts. Scholars however have discussed the different purposes of citizenship education, namely in terms of the rationales, content and pedagogy found in Social Studies as the foremost subject for citizenship education (see Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977; Martorella, 1996; and Ross, 2006 as examples). Most scholars converge on three main purposes of Social Studies (and by extension, citizenship education), namely: (i) socialisation into society's norms; (ii) transmission of disciplinary concepts; and (iii) critical thinking (Ross, 2006). This, however, begets the question if citizenship education should "transmit or transform the social order" (Stanly, 2015). If transmission of social order is prioritized, the curriculum would likely emphasize social stability and status quo, and focus on the reproduction of prevailing practices and norms, as well as the knowledge, skills and values already embedded in society. Should citizenship education focus on transforming society, then critical thinking would be emphasized along with training students to question the governing social order, norms and practices (Stanley & Nelson, cited in Ross, 2006). Schugurensky and Myers (2003), as well as Clark and Case (2008) further suggest that the purposes of citizenship education curricula can lie on spectrums, where the intended (and thereafter the enacted and experienced) curriculums lie between the conservative (i.e. cultural transmission) and progressive (i.e. social transformation or reformation) orientations.

In the case of Singapore, where its citizenship education curriculum lie on the spectrum is determined solely by MOE. Subjects related to citizenship education such as Civics and Moral Education, History, Social Studies and Character & Citizenship Education (CCE) are directly developed, managed and monitored by MOE to align with wider national goals. In addition to the formal curriculum which emphasizes critical inquiry and 21st century competencies, National Education (NE) which was introduced in 1997 to "instill national identity and the spirit of togetherness in our young" constitutes a significant component of citizenship education (MOE, 2018). Concerns that younger Singaporeans were ignorant of Singapore's tumultuous road to independence led to consolidated efforts within the education system to "mould the future of [the] nation by moulding the people who will determine our future" (MOE, 2020). Through commemorative events such as Racial Harmony Day, daily routines of flag raising and recitation of the National Pledge, and co-curricular experiences (MOE, 2018), the transmission of social order and national values were prioritized. Over the decades, Singapore's citizenship education curriculum has slowly progressed from transmission of norms towards transformation of society. In recent years, there emerged within the intended and planned curriculums a new added emphasis on moulding the student – the "ideal citizen" – into a *leader*, a shift that could be considered using Perreault's (1997) concept of "citizen leader".

3. Perreault's "Citizen Leader"

Perreault's (1997) "citizen leader" suggests a scenario where students are educated "for leadership and working for changes [shaping] a common future" (p. 151), to address apathy, individualism and varied issues within society. By starting to serve their communities early, young individuals cultivate service as "habit of the heart"

(Bellah et al, 1985, as cited in Perreault 1997, p. 148), begin to view others as fellow "concerned citizens" (Boyte & Breuer, 1992, as cited in Perreault, 1997, p. 151), and learn accountability and responsibility. Citizenship therefore requires the "democratic public citizen to deliberate with other citizens about the nature of the public good and how to achieve it" (Newmann, 1990, p. 76-77), and the very institutions that are crucial in producing such citizens during their "very critical formative years" (see Morse, 1989, as cited in Perreault, 1997, 151) are the schools and colleges.

Here, the centrality of the citizen as leader is significant. Citizens are expected to be "active and creative" in defining the problems to be resolved, and engage with others for solutions (Perreault, 1997, p. 151). Citizen leaders steer community- and society-based efforts, with the authorities and government being only "supplements and adjuncts" to the work they do (Boyte & Breuer, 1992, p. 11). Importantly, citizen leaders view others within society (including beneficiaries) in an egalitarian manner, to encourage "constructive change" with fellow citizens for a common future (Perreault, 1997, p. 152). Therefore from a young age, students must learn to assess and address the root causes of the social issues they have been tasked with, and cooperate with each other "ameliorate its effects or change the conditions" (Perreault, 1997, p. 152). Schools must educate their students by providing training in "leadership concepts, skills building and reflect[ion]" (Perreault, 1997, p. 152), to equip them with the perspectives and capacities to be effective citizen leaders in their communities.

Community Service: Three Approaches

Dimensions	Charity	Service Learning	Citizen Leader
Operational value:	help	learn	shape the future
Primary outcome:	met needs	awareness	constructive change
Secondary outcome:	awareness	see leadership need	leaders emerge
View of constituent:	client	peer	fellow citizen & citizen leader
Power relationship:	doing for	doing with	doing with
Learning design:	none or byproduct	structured	structured
Learning relationship	helper	reciprocal learning	reciprocal learning

Figure 1. Perreault's (1997) three approaches to community service (p. 153).

Figure 1 shows three approaches to community service, of which the "citizen leader" approach is the most proactive and developed. Unlike "charity" which is limited to merely helping clients (i.e. beneficiaries) meet their needs and gaining awareness of

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their issues, "service learning" and "citizen leader" is focused on structured learning to "discover the reasons" behind the social issues of society (Perreault, 1997, p. 152). However, what differentiates "service learning" and "citizen leader" is the latter's objective of "constructive change which helps shape the future" and the "explicit education of the students for leadership" (Perreault, 1997, p. 153). Citizen leaders, having been trained to develop goals and strategies to alleviate the needs of their fellow citizens, will then manage and execute their plans. The overall aim of educating students to be "citizen leaders" into the future is to produce socially healthy individuals who are invested, willing and able to lead their communities proactively.

The next sections offer an overview of the evolution of citizenship education in Singapore, showing how the education system has progressed beyond just creating the "ideal citizen", but now seeks to mould "citizen leaders". This is observed from the citizenship education curricula and programmes in Singapore over the years.

4. From "Ideal Citizen" to Moulding Every "Citizen Leader"

Introducing the "Ideal Citizen": 1950s – 1970s

In the years following self-rule and independence, the Singapore government explicitly laid down the behaviours and dispositions expected from citizens. With no other resources but its people, it was necessary to bridge communal differences and create a common identity and to emphasize values and attributes that contributed towards the economy. To align citizens to national objectives, values and moral education was introduced via subjects such as "Ethics" (1959-1966) and "Civics" (1966-1972) in schools. As obvious from the names, these subjects focused on moral and civic education and aimed to produce honest and kind citizens, loyal and patriotic to Singapore (Ong, 1979). "Civics", in particular, was designed to impart lessons on "character formation, good habits, moral development and citizenship responsibilities", which would develop into "patriotic feelings and aspirations in the young to make them staunch citizens" (Fang, 2002, p. 47).

"Education for Living" (EFL), an interdisciplinary subject combining Geography, History and civics, taught in Mother Tongue (Chinese, Malay and Tamil) language classrooms, replaced Civics in the primary schools in 1974. Similar to its predecessor, EFL aimed to instil loyalty and patriotism, and to create law-abiding, dutiful citizens (Ong, 1979, p. 3; Fang, 2002, p. 49). In this regard, Ethics, Civics and EFL were mainly "transmitting" culture, norms and values regarded as integral to nation-building. The emphasis on communitarianism, hard work and loyalty became the basis of the "national pattern" which looked towards traditional Asian cultural norms. For example, the EFL curriculum described how citizens must be "guided by universal values with focus on Asian values", namely "equality, justice and brotherhood in our multi-racial society" (MOE, 1977). The student, as a citizen of Singapore, must also recognise the "nation more than the family and the group more than the individual" (MOE, 1977). During this period, citizenship education in Singapore was very much focused on transmission of acceptable values and norms that formed the "ideal citizen". Consequently, educating students about the democratic rights of a citizen "were all but ignored in favour of dutiful obedience to the state" (Sim & Print, 2005, p. 62).

The "Ideal Citizen" 2.0: 1980s – 1990s

Rapid industrialisation in the 1980s required the "ideal citizen" to fulfil their obligations in two particular ways. First, citizens were expected to contribute to the burgeoning economy. Second, citizens should be dutiful towards family and society, amidst the changing nature of society abetted by the openness of Singapore's economy. State rhetoric emphasising Singapore's "Asian-ness", "Asian Values" (Hill & Lian, 1995), the "sense of public duty" (Lim, 1982) and communitarian principles appeared as ballast vis-à-vis the corrupting "ills" of Western individualism. As a result, citizenship education was reviewed to emphasise the communitarian responsibilities of the Singapore citizen, using "Asian" values and concepts, particularly "Confucianism" (Chua, 1995; Chua 2005).

The review of citizenship education curriculum led to "Good Citizens" and "Being and Becoming" replacing Civics and EFL in the primary and secondary schools respectively in the early 1980s. Pedagogically, "Good Citizens" maintained the didactic approach while "Being and Becoming" adopted the deliberative approach which encouraged students to assess and decide their own stances on issues surrounding values or moral behaviour. Both subjects continued to focus on cultural and social transmission with their emphasis on shaping students' behaviours, attitudes and dispositions. This, along with the unfamiliar dialogic approach, resulted in difficulties enacting "Being and Becoming", as the emphasis on communitarian "Asian Values" worked against the demands of independent and individualistic thinking and deliberation. Citizenship education therefore did not focus on the development of critical thinking skills (Chia, 2011). The government's concern with Western values also surfaced through the introduction of Religious Knowledge (RK) or Confucian Ethics as mandatory subjects for upper secondary students in 1984.[1] Intended originally to supplement shaping the "ideal citizen's" morals and values, the two subjects became optional in 1989, due to fears of religious revivalism within the secular system (Tan, 1997; *The Straits Times*, 1989). The government's eagerness to "stem what was perceived to be serious moral decay" in society did not consider the "heightened religious antagonism" it was faced with (Tan 1997: 620, *The Straits Times*, 1989). RK had also "given the impression [that the government] favour[ed] certain religions" (Henson, 1989), since not all religions in Singapore were represented in the options available.

Despite these moves to buttress the moral foundations of the young in Singapore, the government continued to express concerns that, as Singaporeans "become more exposed to Western lifestyles and values, they risk losing certain core values such as hard work, thrift and sacrifice, and the erosion of their Asian values" (Goh, 1988). In 1992, "Civics and Moral Education" (CME) was introduced to both primary and secondary schools, replacing "Good Citizens", "Being and Becoming" and RK (Fang, 2002). Grounded on the five Shared Values "… as part of a proposed National Ideology" (Tan, 1997, p. 618; Clammer, 1993; Goh, 1988), CME sought to augment "aspects of nation-building" (Henson, 1989) by appealing to the common values across racial groups in Singapore (*The Straits Times*, 1989). A National Ideology was also thought to be necessary to "encapsulate the core values of Singapore society and

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[1] Students were allowed to choose from Bible Knowledge, Islamic Religious Knowledge, Buddhist Studies, Hindu Studies and Sikh Studies – and Confucian Ethics, even though Confucianism was not a religion.

develop a Singaporean identity" (Goh, 1988).[2] In "reflect[ing] the aspirations, attitudes, *prevailing way of life of a people*" (*The New Paper*, 1990, p. 7), CME enabled the moral and political socialisation of its citizens from young (Han, 1997). While it did not emphasise the deliberative approach adopted by "Being and Becoming", CME lessons were reported to be "more than just chalk and talk" with the use of "colourful workbooks" to encourage student reflection on their personal experiences (*The Straits Times*, 1992, p.12). Its main objective – with the incorporation of the Shared Values – however remained the transmission of "various aspects of the nation's multicultural heritage with the attitudes and values that had contributed to Singapore's success" as Singapore progressed into the 21st century (Government of Singapore, 1991).

Up until this point, citizenship education had focused primarily on shaping the values and morals of the "ideal citizen" (Sim & Print, 2005). The introduction of Social Studies for upper primary students in 1981 thus signified a renewed form of citizenship education in Singapore. It worked alongside the government's rhetoric on Asian Values and Shared Values, but also focused on socialising citizens who could participate effectively and adapt into the existing social order – within Singapore and beyond. By adopting a "concentric and expanding approach" (Fang, 2002, p. 59), there was an emphasis on "enabl[ing] pupils to understand their social world and to develop the *knowledge, skills and attitudes* necessary to participate more effectively in the society and environment in which they live" (MOE, 1981). Early primary Social Studies curricula (1981 and 1994 syllabi) focused largely on Singapore's history and issues of national concern, in a bid to provide young children with an understanding of their shared past and identity. It also concentrated on the challenges and limitations of Singapore as a small state with no hinterland, highlighting for instance, the need to develop responsible attitudes towards "the environment, the people, their heritage and needs and progress" (MOE, 1994, p. 5). In this regard, Social Studies still attempted to socialise students into the "national pattern", where "ideal citizens" are disciplined and obedient individuals who have a responsibility for Singapore's well-being and the stability of its nation.

"Ideal Citizen" and the 21st Century: 1990s

Singapore, like many other states, experienced the swift effects of globalisation in the 1990s. This included a worsening Gini coefficient that indicated a widening income gap, and the volatility of global economic crises. There were increased concerns of apathy and disengagement amongst its citizens who had grown up in relative comfort, and the stress and expense of living in a high-cost, high-pressure environment was increasingly manifested through lowering birth-rates and emigration numbers. These threatened Singapore's social and political stability, and necessitated a thorough review of the education system to ensure that Singaporeans were adept enough to be cosmopolitan while staying rooted to the nation (Goh, 2010; see Green, 1997, p. 150).

To strengthen the Singaporean identity and to address the erosion of values and youths' lack of concern for Singapore's "survival", National Education (NE) was introduced by MOE as part of its Thinking Schools Learning Nation (TSLN) reform.

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[2] The five Shared Values are: 1) Nation before community and society above self; 2) Family as the basic unit of society; 3) Community support and respect for the individual; 4) Consensus, not conflict; and 5) Racial and religious harmony.

Described as a "state-led curriculum intervention infused with [a] discourse of nationalism" (Koh, 2010, p. 145), NE aimed to develop the "cultural DNA" (Lee, 1997) and "national cohesion" as well as "cultivate instincts for survival and instill confidence in … Singapore's future" in young Singaporeans (MOE, 2007, p. i).[3] The intended learning outcomes of "Love Singapore" (Primary), "Know Singapore" (Secondary) and "Lead Singapore" (Pre-university) however still point to a strong emphasis on cultural transmission of essential values and dispositions, reinforcing the need for "a loyal and patriotic citizenry in the tides of globalization" (Koh, 2010, p. 153), aligning citizens into the "national pattern" already decided.

This makes NE at odds with the objectives of TSLN that focused on honing students' critical thinking skills, touted as the "key source of economic growth" (Goh, 1997). For NE to be effective, a level of non-questioning "docility" was necessary to produce citizens who would conform to existing social order and strengthen the Singapore government's nation-building project in the face of globalisation. This tension extended to Social Studies, where students were expected to become critical thinkers for the future economy, but yet "have a strong feeling for home [and] remain Singaporean in heart and mind and being" (Fang, 2002, p. 70). Social Studies at the primary level was reviewed and extended to Primary 1, and it was also introduced at the Secondary level in 2001. Since NE's learning outcomes for the primary and secondary levels were to "Love Singapore" and "Know Singapore" respectively, the Social Studies curricula tended towards socializing students into having a deeper sense of belonging and identification to the country. The "knowledge", "values" and "skills" components were largely kept at surface level, or directed towards issues which were "sensitive to the discursive framework and salient discourses that structure the political and material conditions of Singapore" (Koh, 2002, p. 263). Any inclusion of "critical literacy" was specifically intended "to serve the instrumentalist ideology of producing a generation of thinking work-force to support the Singapore economy" (Koh, 2002, p. 263). Nevertheless, this was the point at which citizenship education in Singapore gradually shifted from just shaping "ideal citizens" with expected morals and values, but also formalised critical thinking and other competencies to bring the nation into the 21st century.

Consolidating the "Ideal Citizen": 2000s – 2020s

Two significant changes in the Singapore education curriculum marked a more consolidated and systemic approach to shaping the individual student. Firstly, the NE programme underwent two reviews – in 2007 and 2017 – that tightened and refined the ways in which the young are guided to become concerned citizens and active contributors. The review in 2007 refined the extant learning outcomes of "Love, Know and Lead Singapore" into the "Head, Heart, Hands" framework where students are expected to "think critically", "connect emotionally" and to "give back … and be

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[3] The NE messages:

• Singapore is our homeland; this is where we belong.

• We must preserve racial and religious harmony.

• We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility.

• No one owes Singapore a living.

• We must ourselves defend Singapore.

• We have confidence in our future.

 (MOE, 2007, p. 7)

empowered to contribute, create and lead Singapore's future" (MOE, 2017, p.10). The second review, a decade later, engaged with key stakeholders on possible approaches to move NE forward, leading to the expressed desire for NE to be more "aspirational and empowering" for students to "explore and examine their identity as citizens in relation to society and the world, and arrive at a common set of ideals and values" (MOE, 2017, p. 11). The 2017 review sought to develop "concerned citizens and active contributors" who would "co-construct the next chapter of Singapore" by grounding them in "Citizenship Dispositions", namely "a sense of belonging", "a sense of reality" and "a sense of hope" (MOE, 2017, p. 11). There was now an explicit expectation for citizens to be more proactive, and "realise their part in the flourishing of their community and nation" (MOE, 2017, p. 11). Significantly, the citizenship dispositions culminate in "the will to act", encouraging students to be "active citizens who have a collective resolve and a sense of shared mission towards building a Singapore for all" (MOE, 2017, p. 11).

Secondly, the Desired Outcomes of Education was revised into the 21st Century Competencies (21CC) Framework in 2010. This supplemented NE by identifying the values *and* skills citizens needed to acquire for the future. The 21CC was embodied within MOE's Character & Citizenship Education (CCE) which replaced CME as both a subject and in the total curriculum in 2011. The goal of CCE is to "inculcate values and build competencies in our students to … be good individuals and useful citizens" and to "learn to be responsible to family and community, and understand their role in shaping the future of our nation" (MOE, 2012, p. 1). In many respects, CCE maintains the "central place of values and character development" in the Singapore education system (Heng, 2011), but streamlines all citizenship education programmes – including NE and Social Studies – towards "a common purpose" (MOE, 2012, p. 1). A reviewed CCE curriculum was released in 2021, which emphasised the teaching of moral values in primary schools, and facilitating regular discussions on contemporary issues in secondary schools (MOE, n.d.), to encourage critical thinking and sense-making. It is now a "distinct cross-disciplinary field of knowledge", connecting "concepts of values, character, *citizenship dispositions*, social-emotional competencies, well-being and resilience and future-readiness" (Singteach, 2023).

In this regard, the latest Social Studies curricula reflected these changes in the NE and CCE programmes, most particularly in the secondary level syllabi. The 2016 curriculum emphasizes critical inquiry and the intended learning outcomes has shifted to students becoming "informed, concerned and participative citizens, competent in decision-making with an impassioned spirit to contribute responsibly to the society and world they live in (SEAB, 2016, p. 2; MOE, 2020, p. 5). In short, the desired citizen is one who makes responsible decisions by evaluating information, considering different viewpoints and exercising discernment, is aware of the "ethical considerations and consequences" of decisions, and who feels "empowered to take personal and collective responsibility" in effecting change for good (MOE, 2016, p.3). The most recent 2023 syllabus has updated its knowledge, skills and values outcomes to align even closer with the Desired Outcomes of Education, 21CC and the revised NE (MOE, 2023, p. 10). Importantly, the syllabus clearly stated that Social Studies today concentrates on "education *for* citizenship rather than about citizenship" (MOE, 2023, p. 11), corroborating with the objectives of NE and 21CC to produce more thinking and discerning citizens who are "empowered to develop their responses as citizens to

societal issues … prepar[ing] them for responsibilities they need to exercise judiciously as adults in future" (MOE, 2023, p. 11).

5. Moulding Every "Citizen Leader"

The evolution in citizenship education over the years highlighted how MOE prioritised both values – and now, skills - in building the "ideal citizen". A significant priority today for CCE, as Singapore's overall strategy for citizenship education, is the intentional and student-centric nature of its curriculum. This is especially so with its alignment with NE, 21CC and Social Studies which are all focused on the fundamental dispositions and capacities MOE deems necessary in today's diverse and complex world. More specifically, MOE understood that globalisation – its technological advancements and the criticality needed to take part on the global stage – needs capable individuals who were not passive followers. Citizenship education in Singapore shifted gears at the turn of the century, by directing the curriculum to focus on students' character and skills development to produce active "citizen leaders". This was clear from the first introduction of NE in 1997 that focused on preparing pre-university students to "lead Singapore" and with the revised NE in 2007, where the "Hands" in the "Head, Heart, Hands" framework encouraged students to contribute and lead for Singapore's future. The most recent NE revision in 2017 highlighted the need for students to have "the will to act" for the betterment of Singapore society. Today, NE (together with 21CC) has fused into the CCE and Social Studies curricula that provide students with the values and skills to navigate their own "identities, relationships and choices" in society (MOE, 2020, p. 26), and become "informed, concerned and participative" citizens (MOE, 2016, p. 3; MOE, 2020, p. 5).

One important observation is that this shift to turn "ideal citizens" into (citizen) leaders became prominent with the 2007 NE revision. The "Head, Heart, Hands" approach did not differentiate between the academic levels of students, unlike the previous NE curriculum. NE thus "move[d] beyond [just] raising the level of awareness and appreciation for Singapore, … to giving greater focus to engaging and empowering our students to make a positive difference to society" (MOE, 2007). To encourage leadership in students across levels, "Hands" expanded on the original "Lead Singapore" outcome for post-secondary students, emphasising that "*all* students have a role in contributing to and creating Singapore's future" (MOE, 2007). This revision therefore views "Head, Heart, Hands" as a continuum, in terms of the dispositions, values and skills that must be developed within each student as he or she goes through the Singapore education system. Leadership here therefore emphasises all students' "sense-making" at the self, community and national levels (MOE, 2020, p. 12 & 27-33). This is maintained until today, through the latest NE review as well as the Social Studies and CCE curriculums.

Here, Perreault's "citizen leader" is applicable in the Singapore citizenship education context, with its focus on creating every student a leader. As shown in Figure 1, there are several corollaries between her conceptualisation of the "citizen leader", with the intended curriculums for citizenship education in Singapore today. There is specific political will for the "explicit education of the students for leadership", and for "constructive change which helps shape the future" (Perreault, 1997, p. 153). This is clear in Singapore, where citizenship education aims to produce "active citizens" with a "collective resolve and a sense of shared mission towards building a Singapore for

all" (MOE, 2017, p. 11). This suggests that each student cooperates with and learns from fellow citizens and "citizen leaders" in working towards a common future and for Singapore's "survival". Singapore's emphasis on student's dispositions, values and skills therefore equips "citizen leaders" of good character, who are resilient and future-ready (MOE, 2020, p. 8) – and capable of leading the nation.

Additionally, there is clear structure in the design of the curriculum, as observed with the consolidated and systemic nature of CCE as an overall programme for the total curriculum. Here, key Student Development Experiences such as Student Leadership Development (SLD) Programmes, Values in Action (VIA) for community service, together with school-based initiatives, encourage the honing of students' "leadership competencies, as well as a sense of belonging to their school community and the motivation to make a positive difference" (MOE, 2020, p, 18). Other programmes within the Singapore education system also exist to encourage "holistic education" and development of students. This includes LEAPS 2.0 at the secondary level which assesses students based on their co-curricular participation, service to the community, achievement in co-curricular activities outside the classroom, and also leadership in these activities and beyond (MOE, 2023). Thus, these show how citizenship education in Singapore has progressed from just creating the "ideal citizen", but now also moulding students to be "citizen leaders" into the future.

6. Conclusion

This paper has traced the evolution of citizenship education in Singapore, from the piecemeal approaches of Singapore's earlier years, to a more systematic one in shaping the individual student. Building upon past curriculums which were more focused on moral and values education, citizenship education today has expanded to prepare students with the necessary values and skills for future challenges. The intentional and student-centric nature of the CCE curriculum today was a product of the consolidation and coherence of NE and 21CC, together with an alignment with the Social Studies curriculum. The current citizenship education programme in Singapore has parallels to Perreault's work through the aim of developing students as leaders. Singapore's emphasis on values and skills equipping students as leaders and active, resilient and future-ready citizens of good character (MOE, 2020, p. 8) coheres well with her conceptualization of the "citizen leader" approach to community service. This points to the progression of citizenship education in Singapore from simply creating the "ideal citizen" to moulding leaders of the future.

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