

# **Committee on National Education**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

1. The Committee on National Education, chaired by Minister of State for Education RAdm (NS) Lui Tuck Yew, was formed in August 2006 to look into how National Education (NE) could be improved to better engage our young and encourage them to shape the character and life of our society.
2. The Committee consulted a wide cross-section of stakeholders that included school leaders, teachers, students from secondary schools and Post-Secondary Education Institutions (PSEIs), parents, management of PSEIs, and representatives from non-government organisations, including voluntary welfare organisations and Uniformed Groups. The consultations comprised 24 focus group discussions, a web-chat, a panel discussion with a student taskforce on NE and two NE symposia for secondary and post-secondary students organised by students from the taskforce. A total of 1200 stakeholders were consulted.
3. The Committee also drew insights from a literature review and comparative study of civics and citizenship education in different countries. These countries included Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.
4. The Committee has completed its study. Its recommendations are presented in this report.

### **Background on National Education**

5. NE in schools was launched on 17 May 1997. The objectives of NE were to develop national cohesion, cultivate instincts for survival and instil in our students, confidence in our future. Singapore had come through a protracted period of relative stability and good growth. There was a need, then, to remind our youth, about how Singapore became an independent nation, and about her vulnerabilities, constraints and hard-won success amidst an increasingly competitive environment, to prevent a sense of complacency and entitlement. The objectives of NE were captured in six NE messages: (1) Singapore is our homeland; this is where we belong (2) We must preserve racial and religious harmony (3) We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility (4) No one owes Singapore a living (5) We must ourselves defend Singapore, and (6) We have confidence in our future. These messages are still relevant today.

## **Phase I: In the Beginning**

6. Since its launch, NE has been established in both the formal and informal curriculum. Its aims are: 'Love Singapore' at the primary level, 'Know and Believe in Singapore' at the secondary level, and 'Lead Singapore' at the post-secondary level.

7. To reinforce the key outcomes of loving, knowing and leading Singapore for the respective levels, common NE experiences that catered to the different levels were introduced. In particular, the NE Show (a preview of the National Day Parade) was introduced for all Primary 5 students, Social Studies<sup>1</sup> for all secondary school students, and Dialogue Sessions with senior civil servants for Junior College (JC) students.

8. In the formal curriculum, Social Studies was introduced to upper secondary Express, Normal (Academic), and lower secondary Normal (Technical) students. In addition, all other subjects, especially History and Civics and Moral Education, had the NE messages infused in them.

9. In the informal curriculum, four events regarded as NE core commemorative events (Total Defence Day, International Friendship Day, Racial Harmony Day and National Day) were commemorated for their significance in showing how Singapore coped with strife internally, and her role and place in the world. The Community Involvement Programme (CIP) and Learning Journeys programme contributed to the students' NE experience by allowing them to reflect on how they can improve their community. Co-curricular activities, especially the Uniformed Groups, also incorporated NE in their programmes, thus allowing students to better understand the six NE messages.

10. The PSEIs also put in place NE programmes for their students. These range from formal courses to experiential, hands-on activities like community service projects. In NUS, for example, national and global issues are discussed through a module called Singapore Studies. In the polytechnics and ITE, NE is infused in modules on national/global issues, life skills and/or core values. As part of the NE programme, students are also involved in Learning Journeys, community service projects, fora and seminars.

## **Phase II: Consolidation and Customisation**

11. An important step in encouraging a more ground-up approach to NE was the introduction of the NE Awards for schools. The awards recognised schools' efforts in customizing and delivering NE. The award criteria gave emphasis to the structures and processes for the implementation of NE, and served as a useful self-evaluation tool in helping schools structure their NE programme more effectively to meet the needs of

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<sup>1</sup> Through Social Studies, all students are taught the importance of principles of governance and how values embedded in the six NE messages, such as multi-racialism, meritocracy and incorruptibility, are fundamental to Singapore's success.

their students. So far, 74 schools have attained the NE Awards. Among these, 13 schools have attained the Outstanding Development Award (NE). More significant than the number of awards is the impact these schools have had, in spurring other schools along in their NE journeys. In addition, schools with outstanding programmes have taken the lead, in championing NE among other schools in the cluster and zone through active sharing and collaboration.

12. The NE Cluster Prototype, launched in 2004 and spearheaded by the North 5 Cluster, provided a structured channel for schools to come together to explore new and innovative ways to customise their NE approach. The prototyping provided the stimulus for cluster schools to reframe and refine their NE structures and programmes to engage their students more effectively. Through the prototyping, several learning outcomes surfaced for the participating cluster schools. For example, in North 5 Cluster, NE programmes were refined to take a more integrated approach instead of an activity-based one. The capacity of school leaders, NE coordinators and teachers was also enhanced as a result of continued NE conversations within the cluster. The success of the NE Cluster Prototype in the North 5 Cluster led to three other clusters from different zones taking up the challenge of starting their own prototyping journeys.

13. To enhance the quality of the CIP experience and allow for more student-initiated and student-led CIP activities, the Service-Learning pedagogy was introduced in 2001. Today, about 70% of primary schools, 75% of secondary schools and 100% of JCs employ the Service-Learning approach to varying extents, in their CIP. Another policy change was the removal of the six-hour Community Involvement Programme (CIP) requirement for JC students in 2005. The shift has encouraged students to take initiative and to focus on the quality of their community involvement. Today, over 99% of JC students are still actively participating in CIP even though there is no longer a 6-hour requirement. In addition, 8 out of 18 JCs have over 60% of their students taking greater ownership of their learning through initiating their own CIP projects.

14. In terms of NE outcomes achieved, data from MOE's NE Perception Study<sup>2</sup> for 2005 indicates that almost all students across the educational levels are proud to be Singaporean<sup>3</sup>. However, there is an increasing percentage of younger students who are prepared to "live anywhere in the world" rather than Singapore if they had the choice<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The NE Perception Study is a biennial survey of students' feeling and perceptions about what it means to be Singaporeans and their confidence in Singapore's future.

<sup>3</sup> The results for the measure 'I am proud to be a Singaporean' have been consistently above 90% for all levels from 1999 to 2005.

<sup>4</sup> The percentage of Primary 6 students who disagreed with the statement "If I could live anywhere in the world, I would still choose Singapore as my home." rose steadily from 8% in 1999 to 14% in 2005. This percentage for Secondary 4 students has also risen from 14% to 20% over the same period. For JCs, ITEs and Polytechnics, this percentage has fluctuated within the range of 19% - 27%. In comparison, the figures for University students remained fairly stable at around 23%.

In other areas, data over the years shows that we have made good progress in the area of knowledge and awareness building. For example, more students appreciate the importance of racial and religious harmony as they grow older<sup>5</sup>.

### **Findings from consultations**

15. With the backdrop of systems and structures for NE that have been established, the work of the Committee sought to find out through consultations with the different stakeholders how NE could be refined further so that NE is felt more and enhances 'heartware and rootedness' among young Singaporeans. The stakeholders were consulted about what has worked well in NE and what has not.

16. The findings confirm that NE has made good progress since its launch in 1997. In general, stakeholders agree that NE is important and the core NE programmes are sound. There is better awareness among students of the NE messages and the attributes that make Singapore unique as a country. However, the findings also show that NE programmes have been unevenly implemented in schools and PSEIs, resulting in differing student experiences and levels of satisfaction. Where schools and institutions have been holistic in their approach to NE, and proactive and engaging in delivering their NE programmes, NE has been well-received. The variance in implementation has meant that some students could not appreciate the relevance of, and rationale for, NE. Students gave feedback that they were unexcited about NE and disengaged in the NE process, with some expressing cynicism at what they felt was 'propaganda'.

17. Other specific feedback and areas for improvement suggested by the stakeholders relate to:

#### **a. NE programmes**

The different groups of stakeholders recognised the value of NE programmes such as the Community Involvement Programme (CIP), Learning Journeys and the commemoration of core NE events. In particular, some students gave feedback that they enjoyed initiating and participating in CIP activities (such as fund-raising for tsunami victims), as that gave them a strong sense of ownership, and allowed them to contribute meaningfully to the community. There were students who cited overseas CIP and immersion programmes as enriching experiences that broadened their horizons and helped them to better appreciate Singapore. Students also gave feedback that for CIP and Learning Journeys to be meaningful, there could be greater reflection on the

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<sup>5</sup> In the NE Perception Study from 1998 to 2005, the average percentages of students who agreed with the statement "I value the multi-racial characteristics of our society" by level, have increased from 78% for the Primary 6 students to 92% for Secondary 4 students, respectively. This was further increased to 95% for the JCs/CI and 94% for the Polytechnics. This represents a more than 10% rise in the number of students (between the Primary 6 and Secondary 4 cohorts) who indicated they value multiracialism.

relevance and value of each activity in developing good citizenship, as well as greater student involvement in planning and leading NE programmes. The feedback also suggests there could be better coordination in the planning of Learning Journeys so that students are not taken on repeat visits to the same places. Similarly, students felt that commemorative activities marking core events, such as Total Defence Day and Racial Harmony Day, could be less repetitive and more meaningful.

**b. Student voice and leadership**

Students would also like to have more say in what they would like to do for NE in school and more avenues to express themselves and to form their own opinions. Older students would like more opportunities to initiate, organise and lead NE-related activities such as CIP, Learning Journeys, and school-based celebrations and events. This would make them feel they have a stake in NE and in the future of Singapore.

**c. Involvement with the community**

Different stakeholders consulted also agreed there could be more opportunities for students to learn from, and serve in, the larger community beyond their school. For example, hearing first-hand accounts of events in Singapore's history from those who have lived through the Second World War and from SAF veterans could bring to life facts learnt from history textbooks. Students also welcomed opportunities to interact with leaders in government, business and community sectors.

**d. Social Studies**

Students had differing experiences with Social Studies. Those who enjoyed the subject attributed it to passionate and skilful teachers. Those who did not like the subject gave feedback that the preoccupation with scoring good grades in examinations detracted from the objectives of understanding Singapore better and of developing a greater sense of belonging to the nation. Older students felt that Social Studies and History textbooks could include different perspectives of Singapore's history and that NE could move beyond knowledge of Singapore's past to include discussions about current affairs and social issues, and envisioning possible scenarios for Singapore's future.

**e. Educators**

Students viewed educators as instrumental in shaping their NE experiences through the latter's enthusiasm and commitment to NE, the way they planned and conducted NE programmes, involved community partners, and interacted with students on a day-to-day basis. Educators consulted expressed the view that they would like to be better equipped with the knowledge and skills to engage their students in discussions on sensitive and controversial issues. They also felt the support of school leaders and PSEI

management is critical in providing a conducive culture and environment for NE in their organisations.

18. Moving forward, it is clear there is a need to rethink how NE is delivered in schools and PSEIs to make good practices more pervasive, and to address shortcomings in existing programmes. These would be necessary if NE were to succeed in nurturing 'heartware and rootedness' among the young, enhance their appreciation of the shared values which underpin our society, and inspire them to write the next chapter of the Singapore Story.

19. Singapore is not alone in these efforts to improve, and place greater emphasis on, NE. Other societies, both Western and Asian, are increasing their focus on citizenship education as well. For instance, in UK, in response to concerns about growing extremism and division in the society following the terrorist bombings in London, the government commissioned an independent review of Citizenship education. A key recommendation of the report, released on 25 January 2007, is to focus more on British history as a means to building a cohesive community and of stressing democratic values. In Australia, there is a refocus on the value of teaching Australian history as a distinct subject. In China, schools are working harder on developing moral and social responsibility in the young, as a means to countering the burgeoning middle class, and the concomitant rise in individualism and materialism.

## **The next phase of National Education: Ownership, Engagement and Empowerment**

20. Changes brought about by globalisation have made it essential to build on our experiences with NE. Singaporeans now have greater opportunities to live, work and study abroad and it is an increasingly important outcome for NE to grow the emotional attachment to Singapore in our young so that even if they leave Singapore for work or study, they will still regard Singapore as home. This need to strengthen 'heartware and rootedness' among Singaporeans was a theme in Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's National Day Rally speech in 2006.

21. Beyond the existing three objectives which are retained, the next phase of NE will see a stronger emphasis on cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional rootedness to Singapore. To reach students' hearts, we will need to customise the NE experience to engage students' minds better, and get them to contribute in ways that are more meaningful to them.

22. As part of a customised approach in engaging the minds, students should gradually progress from understanding basic facts of our nation's history to understanding how Singapore is evolving in the present and current challenges. As students move into post-secondary levels, the engagement should deepen their grasp of the multi-faceted and complex challenges facing Singapore as they ponder the possible futures for Singapore.

## Framework for NE

23. To guide the next phase of NE, the Committee recommends the **“Head, Heart, Hands” framework**. The framework encapsulates the objectives, spirit and approach of the next phase of NE while the recommendations are specific strategies which guide the refinement of NE.

24. The framework includes and expands on the current desired outcomes of “Love, Know and Lead Singapore”. In the original paradigm, “Love, Know and Lead Singapore” have been articulated as the main outcomes for primary, secondary and post-secondary levels respectively. The Committee believes that this segmentation of outcomes by level has unwittingly led to an over-emphasis on one particular outcome at each stage to the exclusion of others. So as students progressed from ‘love’ in primary school to ‘know’ in secondary school, instead of having their love for Singapore deepened by the knowledge they acquire, some of them became more apathetic or cynical. While there would still be varying emphases as appropriate to the age and maturity of the students, the new framework stresses that engagement of Head, Heart and Hands should be regarded as a *continuum*, i.e. it must continue across different levels of the school system, building on concepts and knowledge imparted at the earlier stages.

25. The new framework also expands on the outcomes of “Love, Know and Lead Singapore”. The concept of ‘Heart’ encapsulates the outcomes of *Love, Appreciate* and *Belong*; the concept of ‘Head’, *Know, Think* and *Understand*; the concept of ‘Hands’, *Contribute, Create* and *Lead*.

26. These expanded outcomes are important to capture the essence of what it means to engage Head, Heart and Hands. In engaging the **“Head”**, we want students to be actively involved in their own learning; beyond *knowing*, we want them to *think* through issues and arrive at a deeper *understanding* of the challenges facing Singapore and what it means to be Singaporean. In engaging the **“Heart”**, we want students to connect emotionally with the Singapore story; their *loving* should be the outcome of them *appreciating* Singapore and having a deeper sense of *belonging* to this place as home. In engaging the **“Hands”**, we want students to have opportunities to give back to society in various ways, and be empowered with the realisation that everyone has a part in *contributing* to and *creating* Singapore’s future, and, where possible, to *lead* in different fields of society.

27. These three aspects of NE – Head, Heart, Hands – should be viewed as intertwined and mutually reinforcing. For example, knowledge of the facts surrounding Singapore’s past, and the understanding of current issues and future challenges cannot be an end in itself. It must capture their imagination and lead to students feeling deeply about it and owning it such that they would then want to contribute to writing the next

chapters. While this concept is not new, it is an important framework to ensure that all aspects are attended to in charting the future direction for NE.

Figure 1: “Head, Heart, Hands” Framework



28. The “Head, Heart, Hands” approach for NE also draws on the **guiding principles** of the current educational paradigm, namely (i) emphasis on quality, (ii) greater ownership by schools and PSEIs, and (iii) the need to customise and differentiate programmes to cater for varying needs, interests, talents and maturity levels of students.

29. MOE will retain the familiar term ‘National Education’ (NE), similar to what is used at the national level but recognises and accepts that schools may choose to use an alternative term for their NE programmes if they feel that it is relevant. For example, Admiralty Primary uses the term ‘Citizenship Education’ in place of NE. In Anglo-Chinese Junior College, NE is known as Responsible and Active Citizenry Education or RACE.

30. The Committee has 16 recommendations to enhance NE and strengthen the sense of belonging to Singapore in our students. These recommendations are captured in three key thrusts:

- A. **Enabling and Equipping Educators**
- B. **Engaging and Empowering Students**
- C. **Enhancing NE through Strengthening School-Community Linkages**

### **Enabling and Equipping Educators**

31. As teachers and education leaders directly influence the quality of NE students receive and the values and attitudes they imbibe, emphasis needs to be given to deepening educators’ convictions about NE, building their capacity for innovation, and

fostering a culture of collaboration and sharing among them. In addition, it is important to equip educators with the necessary skills and resources to customise and refine NE programmes. Then only can improvements to NE be felt throughout our education system. This strategic thrust underpins the other two thrusts.

**Recommendation 1: Deepen the conviction and commitment of educators to nurture Singaporean citizens with a strong sense of belonging for Singapore**

32. Conviction and commitment are crucial to bringing NE to a higher level. There are numerous examples of school leaders and PSEI management whose direction and policies have fostered a conducive NE culture. There are also teachers who have shaped the values and perceptions of our young towards Singapore in a positive way through their actions and words, and teachers who have openly championed NE efforts in their school community and beyond.

33. To effectively communicate the increased relevance of NE in the next lap, it is important to frame NE in the context of Singapore's rapidly changing circumstances, both domestic and external, and draw on educators' desire to deliver a holistic education. Outreach efforts to educators could be through engagement workshops, existing communication channels between MOE and schools and within schools, and pre-service and in-service courses, particularly the Leadership in Education Programme and Diploma in Departmental Management.

**Recommendation 2: Enhance the knowledge, skills and interest of educators in delivering NE through professional development, starting at pre-service training**

34. The quality engagement needed to take NE to the next level would require educators to have the requisite knowledge, skills, and ease in exploring with students, issues beyond the textbook. Educators would need to be comfortable with allowing greater space and leeway for discussion and for self-directed learning and projects, where necessary. Equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, and commitment they need should start from pre-service training at NIE, where greater emphasis could be placed on the teacher's enhanced role as facilitator and mentor in delivering NE. It should extend to in-service training conducted by MOE and NIE, where professional development could be customised according to the teacher's experience and role in schools and PSEIs (such as NE coordinator or school leader).

**Recommendation 3: Encourage greater teacher ownership of NE programmes and more ground-up NE initiatives through sustained innovation and experimentation in the content and delivery of NE, as well as the sharing amongst educators**

35. The Committee recommends that MOE, schools and PSEIs should encourage educators to take greater ownership of NE programmes and bring about more ground-up NE initiatives to engage students continually. This could be achieved through

innovation and experimentation in the content and delivery of NE as educators explore more effective ways to engage their students, refining their pedagogies and assessment methods as they go along.

36. To promote innovation and experimentation, networks and professional support among educators should be strengthened. This could be achieved through sharing platforms initiated by MOE, cluster and schools, as well as through the cultivation of vibrant Communities of Practice in NE where educators collaborate to improve their teaching. Such Communities of Practice could nurture a sense of shared purpose among teachers in developing young citizens with a strong sense of rootedness and commitment to Singapore. They could also lend support and guidance to teachers' hesitant about discussing sensitive issues with students. Finally, they could spark innovation and change when teachers passionate about NE lead peers to improve the content and delivery of NE.

**Recommendation 4: MOE to enhance the development and accessibility of resources to support educators in delivering NE**

37. As teachers would need a variety of resources to engage students in interesting ways, MOE should establish a one-stop online repository of NE resources for educators and students. The repository could also allow educators and students, including external partners with a stake in NE, to contribute their NE resources for sharing, resulting in an ever-growing pool of rich, varied and high-quality NE resources for teachers and students. In addition, MOE could also work with think tanks, news and government agencies to support teachers with 'just-in-time' resource packages, on significant events around the world, for example, developments in the region, and on current issues and their impact on Singapore. With these ready materials, teachers will be better equipped with updated resource materials to have meaningful discussions and conversations with students as events are unfolding, and in so doing reinforce the relevance of NE.

## **Engaging and Empowering Students**

38. NE would need to move beyond awareness building to engage the heart more deeply and empower students to contribute to shaping the future of Singapore. It should involve students in discussing what they want Singapore to be, to caring deeply for what happens to the country and to doing what they can to better society. There could be greater cognizance of the continuum of past, present and future dimensions of NE and the three dimensions of engaging head, heart and hands which should apply to all educational levels.

**Recommendation 5: Provide a more effective guide for the customisation of NE programmes for students of different age groups and inclinations**

39. To guide the customisation of NE programmes in schools and reduce unnecessary repetition in students' NE experience, a developmental framework for educators should be drawn up to articulate in detail the desired outcomes of NE for primary, secondary and post-secondary years. These desired outcomes would encompass the outcomes outlined in the "Head, Hearts, Hands" framework. It could detail the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour students should acquire and display at each educational level, and reflect the general approach educators could correspondingly take in incorporating the elements of past, present and future in their NE programmes. Finally, it could include clear baseline activities to be carried out at the different educational levels to prevent duplication of NE experiences for the students as they progress through the system.

40. The framework would enable teachers to better understand how the students' experience at each level builds on the learning at the previous level and anticipates the learning at the next level. It would also guide the evaluation of NE outcomes and refinement of NE programmes.

**Recommendation 6: Create more space for students to explore different perspectives before coming to their own reasoned conclusions about issues concerning Singapore**

41. There is a need to allow students, especially older ones, more opportunities to explore different perspectives and viewpoints and to analyse the gains and trade-offs involved in resolving conflicting needs in society, before coming to their own reasoned conclusions. These discussions could be founded on a common set of fundamental values, even as students arrive at a multitude of legitimate possibilities. In such discussions and reasoning processes, the educator is important in guiding students towards informed, rational and balanced views and in ensuring the classroom remains a safe and supportive environment where students may hear one another's views respectfully and be able to voice their views responsibly.

**Recommendation 7: Enhance skills for active citizenry and encourage more student involvement and action**

42. Social responsibility is key to citizenship. It is important that schools continue to develop the social and cognitive skills needed for active citizenry through school-based projects, CIP or student-initiated projects. For instance, the service learning approach of reaching out to, and interacting with, the community to understand its needs before coming up with a suitable programme, has been quite widely understood and practised in many schools, to good effect. Further support could be given to strengthen and make this more pervasive, along with other good practices such as teacher-facilitated reflection before and after a CIP activity, to reinforce important values and lessons.

43. Besides CIP, student action could also extend to being more involved in shaping school life. School management could engage students in open discussions on students' concerns and seek their collaboration in resolving issues. Interested students could also set up project teams to explore issues of national interest and to propose ideas for improvement. It is when the learning and practice of social and cognitive skills go hand in hand that students see the impact of their contributions on beneficiaries, and assimilate the values and lessons learnt.

**Recommendation 8: Create different experiences to spark students' imagination about Singapore's past, present and future**

44. Various mediums, including local and foreign Arts and Media, can play a part in teaching citizenship in a scintillating way. The interplay of message and medium can add new meaning to the message. Schools have employed local films such as Singapore Dreaming and Singapore Ga Ga to help students empathise with the struggles of, and appreciate the realities of life for, an ordinary Singaporean. In a re-enactment of the Japanese Occupation, Anderson Junior College students operated a 'black market' so that they could experience the war-time constraints and the breakdown in the rule of law that could happen when survival is at stake. Different mediums could also help students better relate to, and identify with, the Singapore story by seeing and experiencing it, not just through the more academic perspective, but also a personal one, where the story of Singapore parallels the stories of change and progress of their families, schools, and people they know.

**Recommendation 9: Review Social Studies to bring about engaged learning for secondary students**

45. A positive learning experience in Social Studies can do much to heighten students' interest in Singapore's development and progress. MOE will review upper secondary Social Studies to ensure its content is kept up-to-date, and that the level of difficulty and content coverage (including process skills and case studies) better cater to the students' range of ability and the demands expected of them. It should explore alternative modes of assessment to better achieve the objectives of cultivating understanding and commitment to shared values. MOE should also review its delivery to promote the use of pedagogies that engage the hearts and minds of students. It could also examine the feasibility of continuing Social Studies for Normal (Technical) students, at the upper secondary levels.

**Recommendation 10: Make Learning Journeys more meaningful for students**

46. First-hand encounters through Learning Journeys offer immense potential for engaged learning of the Singapore Story. This potential has been unevenly tapped because the rationale for them may not have been fully understood by educators and

students, and because the quality of Learning Journeys provided by external agencies and guides has been uneven. MOE and schools should clarify the purpose and structure of Learning Journeys so that their objectives are clear to all and there is no unnecessary repetition of visits to the same places for students. This would involve working closely with schools and government agencies. Where commercial operators are involved, audits could be conducted and clearer guidelines given to help them design more effective programmes. Schools and PSEIs could also plan trips to build on past learning in meaningful ways (by, for example, being aware of the places students have visited in their primary and secondary school years), allow older students more say in the places to visit, or even allow them to design and lead younger students on Learning Journeys.

**Recommendation 11: Post-Secondary Education Institutions to engage students more actively in NE**

47. Students in the Post-Secondary Education Institutions (PSEIs) are an important group who should be engaged more actively in NE. As young adults getting ready to transit into the workforce, they may be more practical, vocal and sceptical about NE. PSEIs could leverage on existing platforms for NE and capitalise on their students' maturity, capacity for independent thinking and action, and aspirations for the future.

48. With the increased number of foreign students in our polytechnics and universities, some of whom would eventually stay on to work and live in Singapore, more could be done by PSEIs to help them understand Singapore society, heritage and way of life and integrate into the local community. The perspectives of foreign students in NE discussions could also help local students make informed comparisons, understand and appreciate Singapore better.

49. While there are good programmes in the academic curriculum which allow students to discuss issues of the day and the challenges facing Singapore, PSEIs could give greater encouragement to students to be involved in community service projects and special projects such as international events of which Singapore is a part. The recent International Monetary Fund/World Bank meetings are an example of such an international event. Such involvement could give students a heightened sense of purpose and excite them about how they could contribute to Singapore.

**Enhancing NE through Strengthening School-Community Linkages**

50. In many ways, NE is not taught but caught. It is through encounters and interactions with people from different backgrounds, young and old, at home and abroad, that students learn about life and themselves as Singaporeans. Thus, there is merit in making schools more porous, so that more of the community may be involved in school activities, and more of our students may be involved in the community here

and overseas. This affirms the role of community partners in the larger ecosystem of NE, and reinforces the fact that NE is a process owned by all Singaporeans.

**Recommendation 12: Strengthen the Singapore identity through meaningful opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges and international exposure**

51. Our schools and PSEI can meaningfully make use of cross-cultural exchanges and international exposure to spark awareness of cultural differences about Singapore's uniqueness, thus deepening the sense of Singapore's identity. These cross-cultural exchanges and international exposure could take the form of overseas study trips, community service trips, or tie-ups with Foreign System Schools in Singapore. On a day to day basis, foreign students could also be invited to share their perspectives in classroom discussions. Moving forward, MOE could also provide more opportunities for students to have an overseas experience.

**Recommendation 13: Enlarge the ecosystem of NE providers by strengthening links with alumni and the community**

52. Schools could also strengthen links with their alumni and the community. The knowledge and experiences alumni and community bring with them could add a different perspective to students' views about Singapore. For example, Singaporeans who have contributed to the country in various ways could be invited to speak to students. Their personal stories could help students realise it is people from all walks of life who collectively make the Singapore story a precious one.

53. The alumni and community have the potential to connect with and enthuse younger students about NE in a different way from teachers. Schools and PSEIs could initiate strategic tie-ups with community-based agencies and societies, from both the government and private sector, to provide diverse opportunities for meaningful engagement that also cater to students' diverse range of interests and talents.

**Recommendation 14: Involve families in complementing schools' efforts in NE**

54. Families play an important part in shaping the child's values and perceptions about the roles and responsibilities of a citizen and attitudes towards other races and religions. MOE's 2005 NE Perception Study shows that where the influence of teachers declined with age, the influence of parents remained more constant throughout the child's schooling years.

55. Schools, especially primary and secondary schools, could engage parents more in the NE effort. This would help to reinforce important values in our young, as well as help parents appreciate the importance of NE. Many schools already involve parents in activities such as heritage tours, commemoration of NE events such as Racial Harmony Day and fund-raising activities. However, beyond chaperoning students, cooking for

funfairs or for Racial Harmony Day celebrations, parents could, wherever possible, be meaningfully involved in aspects of NE, such as in reinforcing values and lessons learnt, in guiding pre- and post-reflection for an event, or in planning NE activities. Such involvement allows parents to understand more about, and complement, the schools' NE efforts more effectively. It would also serve as a positive influence on other parents, in modelling commitment to NE. Schools may even involve grandparents, siblings and relatives where appropriate.

**Recommendation 15: Create opportunities through stronger inter-school partnerships for students in schools with more homogeneous student profiles to bond with peers of different social and cultural backgrounds**

56. Schools with more homogenous student profiles could seek opportunities outside their school for their students to interact and bond with peers from other social, cultural, economic and academic backgrounds on a more sustained basis. Interactions should be meaningful and sustained for students to truly appreciate each others' strengths, uniqueness, concerns and aspirations. Currently, sports and games and various Uniformed Groups in schools have been providing such opportunities through inter-school camps, training workshops and overseas expeditions, for students to build relationships with their peers from different backgrounds. These short-term projects and activities and small-scale tie-ups are a start to having schools with more homogenous student populations establish richer and longer-term partnerships with other schools.

**Recommendation 16: Give greater support to Uniformed Groups (UGs) for their contributions to NE**

57. Among the CCAs, the Uniformed Groups (UGs) most complement schools' NE effort, with their focus on community and service. Their extensive network of dedicated volunteers and alumni provides a constant stream of good role models, and their structured skills-based curriculum in real-life contexts helps NE come alive. For example, the National Civil Defence Cadet Corp cadets contribute to Total Defence when they go on house visits to raise residents' awareness of fire hazards. Similarly, training provided by cadets from St John's Ambulance Brigade and Red Cross Youth supplement their schools' emergency preparation. MOE and schools should continue to provide strong support to UGs, to improve public perception of their role, ensure adequate recognition to UG alumni, and encourage new initiatives that raise the profile of UGs. One possibility is a joint commemoration that celebrates the long tradition of UGs in Singapore's Total Defence.

## **Conclusion**

58. Our current NE programmes have achieved the objectives of NE to a certain extent. Students are aware of the key principles our society values and the key facts

about our country's development. However, to meet the country's changing needs and the changing profile of our students, NE needs to step up to a higher level in order to strengthen our students' sense of belonging and inspire in students a commitment to contribute to the next chapter of the Singapore Story.

59. The "Head, Heart, Hands" framework is a guide for the next phase of NE. Three principles of our current educational paradigm underline the recommendations. These are emphasis on quality, greater ownership by schools and PSEIs, and the need to customise and differentiate programmes to cater for varying needs, interests, talents and maturity levels of students. Together with the three key thrusts -- enabling and equipping educators, engaging and empowering students, and enhancing NE through strengthening school-community linkages -- they frame the proposed efforts to improve NE and to nurture young citizens who are proud to be Singaporean, and who would rally as one united people to bring the nation forward.

**Committee on National Education**

**Ministry of Education**

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