



## SIX

# *Building the 'New' Singaporean and New Elite*

*Singaporean children are over-conscientious, the Minister for Education Dr Tony Tan said yesterday.*

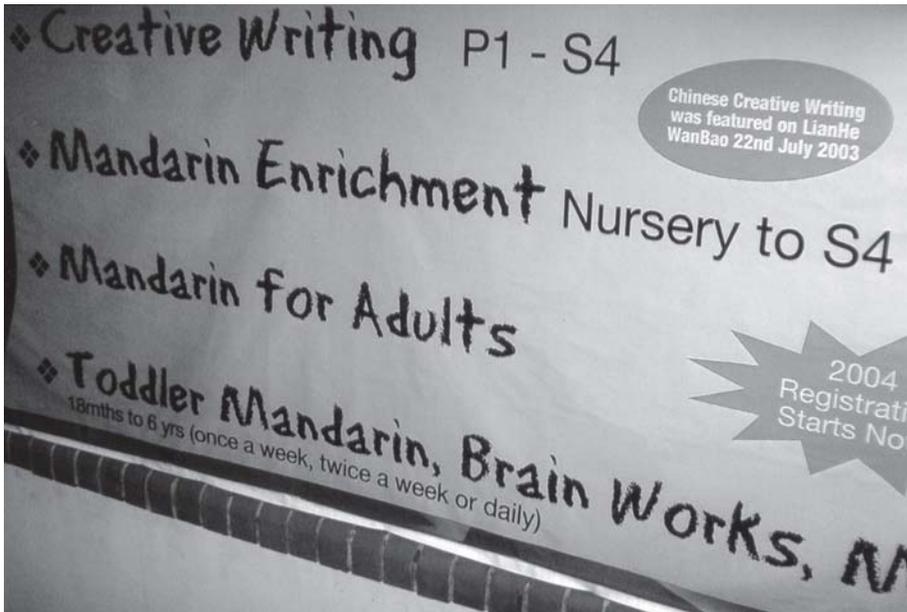
*And Singaporean thinking is such that unless a second language is a prerequisite for further education, schoolchildren will not put in the necessary effort to learn this second language.*

*'Rationale for the second language', The Straits Times, 7 June 1980*

IN THE HISTORY of both nation building and elite formation in Singapore, no institution has had as much impact on the lives and outlook of ordinary Singaporeans as the education system. National Service (NS) (taken broadly to include service in the SAF Reserves) might make a rival claim, but it fails to permeate ordinary life and outlook to the same extent as education – if only because it only indirectly impacts on the female half of the population. In contrast, most generations of Singaporeans living today have passed through the education system of independent Singapore; this has been their primary point of socialisation into Singapore society. The education system, however, has not been a static entity and its impact has not been consistent across generations, classes or ethnic groups. For instance, no adult Singaporean has been socialised into 'the Singapore system' by attending a kindergarten in which examinations, mugging, work sheets, or private tuition had much, if any place. Soon, however, there will be a generation of school leavers for whom this is their reality. The generation that is currently rising to pre-eminence in the military and the civil service is the first to have passed through an education system that bears a strong resemblance to that in place in the mid-2000s. Even so, this generation is still a step or two away from being in positions of full leadership in either of these institutions. In politics the lead time is even longer. There are no candidates for political leadership in the next couple of

decades who were educated in anything resembling the current Singapore education system and it will be half a lifetime before any product of National Education steps up to be prime minister. But at some stage they will take their turn, and they will arrive armed with a reality that was formed in the current Singapore education system. Then the country will reap what it has sown, for better or for worse.

With these temporal parameters in mind, we devote chapters 7–10 to a study of the function of the education system in both nation building and elite formation. Before we launch ourselves into this study, however, we wish to set out a brief account of what we believe to be the three central phenomena that have driven the shape of the current education system: the introduction of streaming in 1979; the concomitant emergence of bilingualism as the decisive feature of Singaporean education; and the unashamed privileging of elite education, beginning in the mid-1980s. Not that we regard any of these as being primary drivers. They were all tools in the kit of Lee Kuan Yew and his closest confidants – notably education ministers Goh Keng Swee and Tony Tan – as they set out to build the ‘new’ Singaporean and the new elite. The remote drivers have been outlined in Chapter 3, but in the rest of this chapter



**Figure 6.1:** Advertising billboard in Singapore, April 2004.

we shall stay with the immediate causes, which are important in their own right, not least because some of their effects appear to have been unintended. The result, towards which this narrative is moving, is the creation of a *kiasu* education system characterised by stratification based on race, grades and wealth; conformist thinking; an obsession with measures of performance; and a culture that regards private tuition as a normal and necessary part of education.

### ***Streaming***

School life in Singapore has been affected by many things, but none of them have struck more profoundly than the document known as *The Goh Report*, being the 1979 report by Dr Goh Keng Swee and 'the Education Study Team' on the education system.<sup>1</sup> This report heralded the introduction of the 'New Education System' and is directly though not solely responsible for the creation of the current Singapore school system's pressure-cooker emphasis on grades and examinations. The express purpose of *The Goh Report* was to eliminate 'education wastage' in the Singapore school system, referring specifically to four phenomena: 'failure to achieve the expected standards, premature school leaving, repetition of grades, and unemployable school leavers.'<sup>2</sup> The particular problem that was causing this attrition was the government's language policy, whereby students were expected to learn both English and their 'mother tongue', and its implications were being made painfully obvious by the failure of 40 per cent of students to 'graduate' into secondary school at the PSLE.<sup>3</sup> It should not be surprising to find that some students did not cope well with learning two languages, but *The Goh Report* was especially concerned that many Chinese students were coping particularly poorly because their designated 'mother tongue' was not the language of their mother or anyone in their family. Most Chinese spoke a Chinese language other than Mandarin (pejoratively referred to as 'dialects' in official Singapore parlance) and were, according to the analogy used in *The Goh Report*, in a position akin to English students receiving their schooling in Mandarin and Russian.<sup>4</sup> This had become a practical problem affecting the defence of the nation, since it was discovered that there were entire platoons in the SAF, known as 'Hokkien platoons', who could not understand orders given in any of the official languages of the country, only in one or other Chinese 'dialect.'<sup>5</sup> The simplistic solution, devised by the team of system engineers that Goh brought over from

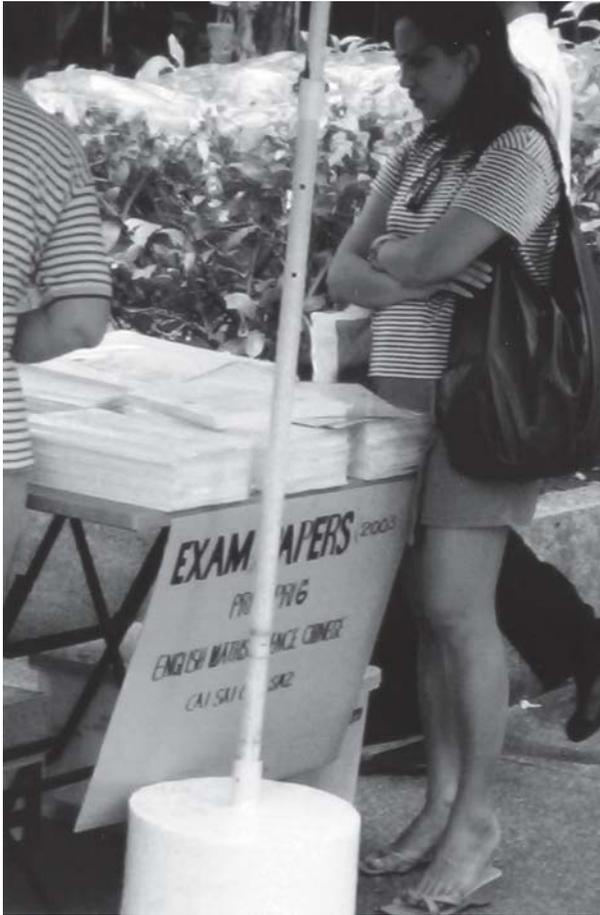
MINDEF where he was minister, was that such students should be identified early and given a less extensive and less expensive education than their peers. An innocuous form of streaming already existed in secondary schools,<sup>6</sup> but Dr Goh's New Education System brought streaming forward to the end of Primary 3 (for children aged nine) and forced it through a rigid prism of Lee Kuan Yew's creation, whereby it was deemed that 'talent' was an indivisible whole, and a person was either good at practically everything, or was good for very little. At Primary 3 those who failed to make the 'Normal' stream would be channelled into either the 'Extended' stream (whereby they would take an extra two years to complete primary school because they were slow learners) or the 'Monolingual' stream (whereby they would not even be eligible to apply for secondary school). Primary 3 streaming was implemented in 1979 and only loosened up in 1992, when, among other reforms, streaming was put back to Primary 4 (age ten) and all students were made eligible to apply for a place in secondary school.

The mechanistic, output-oriented character of the streaming 'solution' to the problem of 'wastage' reflected the absence of professional educationalists on the Education Study Team and the domination of the process by a profession – systems engineering – that thinks purely in terms of inputs and outputs. The fact that these professionals had recently engaged in a review of MINDEF and even based themselves in MINDEF while reviewing the education system<sup>7</sup> seems to have exaggerated these tendencies, since MINDEF was a recipient of the products of the school system – the 'Hokkien platoons' – and so they already considered themselves to be experts on the outputs before they even investigated the school system itself.<sup>8</sup>

The intent and the unintended effects of streaming in Primary 3 are highlighted in an interview given many years later by the then Director of Education, Mr Chan Kai Yau to the Oral History Centre (OHC) in 1995. Chan revealed that the results of streaming were much less significant than had been forecast or targeted. Goh and the systems engineers had assumed that when streaming was introduced everyone would accept it with complete passivity and most people would meekly allow the children in their charge to be streamed downwards, or even out of secondary school. Goh was furious to discover that the introduction of streaming had driven principals, teachers, students and parents to increase the academic standard of the cohort, thus thwarting the objective of the streaming exercise. He put the Director

of Education ‘on the carpet’ and demanded the dismissal of school principals who raised the standard of their school results.<sup>9</sup>

In some societies the introduction of streaming at such an early age might have been of minor consequence, but Singaporeans – especially but not exclusively Chinese Singaporeans – are acutely sensitive to changes in the educational landscape that affect the economic and social opportunities of their children. In fact for most parents it was a much more personal matter than even career prospects. Former teachers remember the angst of parents in the early 1980s who agonised over the humiliation and stigma of their children being labelled as ‘failures’.<sup>10</sup> Many such parents successfully appealed against



**Figure 6.2:** Examination papers for sale, Bedok, March 2004.

streaming decisions and had their children moved up one stream, but then the parents had to take responsibility (at least moral responsibility) for their children's future grades, and ensure that they justified the move upwards.<sup>11</sup> The response of parents in general should have been predictable: a drastic increase in recourse to private tutors, and Japanese-style pressure on children to cram and get perfect results throughout every step of their school careers. The *kiasu* (afraid to fail) parent became the norm and many Singaporean children lost their childhood. One of the anecdotal stories that started circulating in Singapore schools in the aftermath of streaming was conveyed by Mr Rudy Mosbergen, a former principal of Raffles Junior College in a 1994 interview with the OHC: 'The story was told that teachers in some schools would tell the students, "Okay, if you don't understand what I was teaching you during this lesson, you go home and ask your private tutor to explain it to you."<sup>12</sup>

The prevalence of private tutors alongside the official Singapore education system is now ubiquitous and it is unusual to find university students who have not had private tutoring. By the early 1990s, an underground market had developed in examination papers stolen from 'top schools' and sold with correct answers so that parents could help their children to cram even without a private tutor (*ST*, 4 July 1996). Today such examination papers are still sold from fly-by-night stalls in hawker centres and shopping centres (see Figure 6.2.) Alternatively parents could have phoned an anonymous trader on a pre-paid and therefore unidentifiable mobile phone and the papers would have been delivered to their doors, no questions asked. In 2003 the going rate was \$10 for a set of three examinations (English, Maths and Chinese from one school) or \$75 for a bundle of examinations. The black market examinations covered all years, down to Primary 1.<sup>13</sup> Parents who balk at trading in stolen goods can buy packets of 'Monthly Achievement Tests' from mainstream bookshops.<sup>14</sup>

*The Goh Report* was the immediate cause of the development of the cramming/tutoring culture of the 1980s and after, but it can also be seen as part of a longer term historical development. Going back to the mid-1960s most students were still being educated in non-English medium schools as a consequence of the plural education system introduced in the late 1950s. It was part of the colonial legacy that education was loosely controlled by the government and in the main was directed to addressing communal concerns about culture, language and, in the case of the Malays, religion. Few children

learnt English as a main language and so the limited opportunities in the civil service and English business houses were monopolised by the small group of graduates from the elite English-medium schools. Before independence the PAP government had also been reluctant to be seen to promote English education because it was trying to present itself as a good citizen of Malaya-cum-Malaysia, and hence was encouraging the study of Malay. As a consequence the small cadre of graduates from the elite English-medium schools knew that they simply had to pass their Cambridge Examinations to be guaranteed a position in the higher echelons of society; many of them took pride in doing this, but no more.<sup>15</sup> By the 1970s this cosy world was already being threatened because the government had made a conscious decision in the late 1960s to expand English-medium education. Competition increased and schooling became more rigorous. This was not sufficient in itself to transform schools into the pressure cookers of the 1990s and 2000s. Time and time again, people who were school students during the 1970s and went on to civil-service, professional or academic careers, dismissed in interview any suggestion that education was intense or stressful in those days, even in Raffles Institution, which has always regarded itself as the premier school on the island. Yet even so, by the late 1970s this new competition had already edged private tuition into the mainstream,<sup>16</sup> and in a single stroke the introduction of early streaming in 1979 turned it into an obsession.

### ***Bilingualism***

Early streaming also intensified – and was intended to intensify – Singapore’s language policy, which in retrospect should be seen as the most significant driver for the evolution of the *kiasu* education system. After separation from Malaysia, Singapore adopted a policy of emphasising English as the language of Singapore for various reasons, the most significant being its commercial and international utility. English was to be the language of government, justice, international business and technical education. English language was to be the key to worldly success, so the opportunities for an English language education were expanded greatly. By the end of the 1970s, the unofficial but overt encouragement of English-language education had already pushed Tamil- and Malay-stream schools to the brink of extinction, and Chinese-medium schools were facing difficulties in getting enrolments, teachers and good-quality teaching and reading resources.<sup>17</sup> And even in the non-English-

medium government schools, Maths and Science were taught in English.<sup>18</sup> This policy caused a measurable drop in Maths and Science standards among those outside the English-language schools, thus making a full English education even more desirable (*ST*, 7 June 1980).<sup>19</sup> This emphasis on the English language was, however, balanced somewhat by a lesser emphasis on one's 'mother tongue', which was made a compulsory subject for the PSLE in 1968.<sup>20</sup> Lee Kuan Yew believed that learning the ancestral language would enable children to imbibe the 'cultural ballast' of one's racial ethnic group, one advantage of which was to build resistance to Western fads.<sup>21</sup> To this end, from 1968 onwards, Chinese primary students in English-medium government schools were segregated and taught Civics in Mandarin<sup>22</sup> as a prelude to all children being taught Civics in their 'mother tongue'. Government ministers routinely highlighted the importance of 'mother tongue' education for moral education.<sup>23</sup> This device for replenishing 'cultural ballast' was intended to be a central feature of both elite formation and nation building for the embryonic society, yet as of the late 1970s it was substantially a failure and was regarded as such in the Ministry of Education.<sup>24</sup> Hence *The Goh Report* listed 'non-attainment of effective bilingualism' as a 'main shortcoming' in the education system and devoted a lot of attention to concerns about the second language. *The Goh Report* makes it clear that by the late 1970s the government was disappointed that English-plus-'mother tongue' bilingualism had failed to emerge as a basic standard for students in the Singapore school system: that standards of fluency and literacy in both English and 'mother tongue' were low.

Part of the reason for this failure became manifest in Barr's interviews and conversations with people who were school students during the 1970s. They consistently report that the emphasis on the 'mother tongue' was not intense while they were at school. It was taught with the same vigour with which English schools might teach French or Australian schools Japanese. There was none of the nation-building urgency that is evident in *The Goh Report* or a myriad of speeches by Lee Kuan Yew or various government ministers over the previous decade. The government began addressing this shortcoming in 1980 and 1981 with a tightening up of the second-language requirements needed to gain entry into junior college and university (*ST*, 17 January 1980). Other initiatives targeted specifically at the Chinese community also served to underline the new importance being attached to the 'mother tongue': spe-

cifically the initiatives mentioned in the previous chapter, being the launch of the first annual 'Speak Mandarin Campaign' and the Chinese-medium SAP schools. From the consistent pattern of stories told in interview by Chinese Singaporeans who were children in the early 1980s, it seems that very many 'dialect'-speaking parents heeded the pressure to switch to Mandarin at home in order to give their son or daughter the best educational chance in life. Many also enrolled their child in an English-medium school in a deliberate effort to maximise economic opportunity in the new Singapore (*ST*, 8 April and 5 May 1978).

The government's initiatives also had implications beyond language and education policy, since they marked the beginning of government sponsorship and privileging of a tame, government-controlled Chinese cultural resurgence: a *bonsai* version of the wild and energetic Chinese cultural life that the government had successfully razed to the ground over the previous fifteen years. The main point of interest for the current chapter, however, is to note that these initiatives heralded a new era in language policy, where English-plus-'mother tongue' bilingualism was the new basic standard for educational achievement. Whether or not it was intended, the combination of upgraded streaming and bilingualism requirements spurred parents and teachers into a new paroxysm of grades-obsession, a point that was reluctantly but explicitly acknowledged by new Education Minister Tony Tan at the time (*ST*, 22 November 1980). Good grades were needed, even in Primary 3 to merely survive in the education system, so every effort was made in school hours and outside them to achieve good grades.

### ***Stratification and Diversification***

The final cog in the machine that would turn the education system into a factory for the manufacture of 'new Singaporeans' was the stratification of schools and the commensurate re-introduction of a modest amount of diversity into the education system. This process began in 1984 when a small number of 'elite' schools were selected to host a Gifted Education Programme (which would act as a de facto highest stream for the top 0.5% of students in primary and secondary school),<sup>25</sup> but it became overt only in the mid-1980s when the government began encouraging 'elite' schools to go 'Independent' or 'Autonomous' – effectively and openly introducing a new class of privileged schools that would mould the future elite. This initiative is usually considered

by participants and academic commentators to be a development separate from the introduction of streaming, sometimes going as far as regarding it as the beginning of a completely new 'ability-driven' phase in the education policy.<sup>26</sup> We believe that Jason Tan is closer to the mark when he identified the beginnings of the diversification programme as a process beginning in 1982 when the then Director of Schools announced plans to decentralise educational management away from MOE.<sup>27</sup> Yet even if diversification is taken in isolation, Tan's estimate still ignores the introduction in 1981 of rival series of textbooks into schools, leaving individual principals to decide which series to use (*ST*, 7 October 1981). This decision must have been taken in 1980 at the latest, making the beginning of the diversification programme almost commensurate with the introduction of streaming. With the two developments – the stratification programme and the diversification programme – beginning almost simultaneously it does not seem sensible to continue to regard them as unrelated phenomena. It is more reasonable to regard the diversification programme as an aspect of the stratification programme introduced with *The Goh Report*.

Streaming students within schools according to performance in examinations, and the policy of English-plus-'mother tongue' bilingualism – especially the creation of SAP schools – separated them according to a combination of ethnicity, general academic excellence, and excellence in language skills, usually against the will of their parents who nearly universally resisted and resented such stratification.<sup>28</sup> In retrospect the introduction and privileging of SAP schools, combined with the introduction of streaming, was the beginning of a long process of stratification of children and schools that has still not finished in the late 2000s. The key steps in the process were those associated with:

- the 1979 *Goh Report* (streaming and intensified bilingualism)
- the 1987 *Excellence in Schools* report (stratification of secondary schools paralleling streaming within schools),<sup>29</sup> and
- the 2002 *Report of the Junior College/Upper Secondary Review Committee* (the intensification and extension of stratification).<sup>30</sup>

The Independent and Autonomous schools that resulted from the 1987 report took streaming to the next logical step, physically separating the best students from the rest, so that even more special advantages and resources

could be visited upon them. A major impact of these moves was to intensify all the effects of streaming outlined above, but it had ramifications far beyond this. With the future elite herded together into a handful of schools, it became possible to take them in hand and cultivate in them the 'virtues' and characteristics that the government regarded as desirable. This was no less than a programme to turn the education system into a refined system of elite selection and elite formation. Elite regeneration, so the thinking went, would thus be reduced to a controlled, bureaucratic exercise, with measurable inputs and outputs. The elite end of the English-stream education system – basically Raffles Institution, Anglo-Chinese School and St Joseph's Institution – had possessed elements of this purpose for many decades, but now it was being systematised and professionalized to remove the element of chance. The elite stratum in the new hierarchy comprises the Raffles, Anglo-Chinese, and Hwa Chong families of schools, and the new NUS High School for Mathematics and Science.

The most recent set of changes ushered in by the 2002 *Report of the Junior College/Upper Secondary Review Committee* completed the stratification process, placing the top strata of schools under completely different rules to the rest of the education establishment. Beginning in 2004, these schools began plucking about half their students directly from primary school under their own private and variable rules, bypassing the PSLE. They are free to favour students from their feeder schools if they have them, and to take into account 'personal statements' by students (which most do). In the case of 'Integrated Programme' schools they can admit their whole cohort using such discretionary criteria.<sup>31</sup> They have relatively high fees (which is sometimes compounded by an expectation that students will board for a semester to imbibe the atmosphere more fully), privileged funding from the government, and their students can skip their O-levels, proceeding straight to matriculation.<sup>32</sup> These developments subvert the level playing field of PSLE and O-levels and introduce an element of opaqueness to an otherwise transparent (if flawed) system of meritocracy. It seems likely that these recent changes will come to be regarded as the turning point at which the ambiguities in the Singapore system of meritocracy were settled, leaving no doubt that the Singapore meritocracy operates within a broader context of social and economic privilege, allowing socially marginalised children (whether because of socio-economic status, race or some other factor) to rise only

under sufferance and in exceptional circumstances. It is a central argument of this book and of some other scholarly works that this has been the case to a considerable extent for decades anyway,<sup>33</sup> but to date criticism has had to acknowledge that there seems to have been a steady supply of poor children who have risen through the meritocracy. Our concern is that even this modest phase of relative beneficence may have run its course, and that meritocratic stratification may have finally been overwhelmed by stratification based on socio-economic class.

### ***A Study in 'Waves'***

The cumulative result of these three imperatives – streaming, bilingualism and stratification-cum-diversification – has been a climacteric shift that has spurred the transformation of the education system into a factory for producing 'new' Singaporeans and a new elite. Today the production of both starts in pre-school, and this is where we pick up the story in the next chapter. A study of the impact of the school system on both nation building and elite formation is a study of waves of change and perpetual, continuing innovation. This feature is in part due to the nature of modern social phenomena *per se*, which despises stasis; but whereas in many societies the pace of change is sufficiently slow to enable it to hide in the shadows of study, in Singapore the pace of change is so fast and so tightly directed from above that the phenomenon of change must remain a prime parameter of any study. The following chapters are a study of the changing role of the pre-adult education system in the related but distinct processes of nation building, elite selection and elite formation. Their structure mirrors that of a Singaporean child's school life, with consecutive chapters on pre-school and primary school, and one chapter covering secondary school and junior college. The generational 'waves of change', referred to above, are studied in sweeps within the narrative confines of these compartments, with a disproportionate amount of attention being paid to pre-school and primary school, these being the crucial years in character formation.

### ***Notes***

- 1 Goh Keng Swee and The Education Study Team, *Report on the Ministry of Education 1978*, Singapore: [Singapore National Printers], 1979.
- 2 *Ibid.*, Chapter 3, p. 1.

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- 3 Ingrid Glad, *An Identity Dilemma: A comparative study of primary education for ethnic Chinese in the context of national identity and nation-building in Malaysia and Singapore*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1998, pp. 88, 89. Only half of the 40 per cent who failed were diverted from secondary school permanently, since the other half passed their PSLE at a second or subsequent attempt.
- 4 Goh Keng Swee, *Report on the Ministry of Education 1978*, Chapter 1, p. 1.
- 5 Interview with Mr Rudy Mosbergen, given to the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 1994, p. 401 of the official transcript.
- 6 R. Quinn Moore, 'Multiracialism and meritocracy: Singapore's approach to race and inequality', *Review of Social Economy* vol. 58, no. 3, 2000, p. 353.
- 7 Mosbergen, Oral History Centre interview, p. 411.
- 8 The Goh Report states in part: 'The fate of those who fall by the wayside is not generally known. Army Commanders who have to train them and turn them to be effective soldiers are well-informed on this. These school dropouts, especially those who could not pass the PSLE constitute the majority of problem soldiers, those who wind up as court martial cases, summary trials, for disciplinary offences, drug addicts and attempted suicide cases. Case histories of these soldiers have been published recently by a former MINDEF officer. It should be made compulsory reading for senior officials in the Ministry of Education.' Goh Keng Swee, *Report on the Ministry of Education 1978*, Chapter 1, p. 3.
- 9 Interview with Mr Chan Kai Yau given to the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 1995, p. 339 of the official transcript. Also see *ST*, 29 August 1980, for confirmation that the 'systems engineers' who designed the streaming seriously misjudged the results of the exercise.
- 10 Interview with Mr Eugene Wijesingha given to the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 1995, p. 402 of the official transcript; and interview with Mrs Anna Tham given to the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 1994, p. 216 of the official transcript.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Mosbergen, OHC interview, p. 389.
- 13 Barr bought two sets of Primary 1 examinations at Clementi Town Centre in 2003 and saw one mother buying three sets of the \$75 bundles of papers.
- 14 See, for instance, Hoe Hock Hing and See Saw Hong, *Primary 3 Science Monthly Achievement Tests*, Singapore: All-Star Publishing, 2004, purchased by Michael Barr in Popular Books, Boon Lay, July 2005. Also see the publisher's website at <http://www.ASTARpub.com>.
- 15 Michael Barr's interview with Bilahari Kausikan, Singapore, 15 April 2003. Bilahari Kausikan entered Raffles Institution in 1966.
- 16 Mosbergen, OHC interview, p. 389. Mr Mosbergen was a teacher in the first half of the 1970s, then became Assistant Director of Curriculum at MOE.
- 17 Chan Kai Yau, OHC interview, pp. 316, 317.

- 18 Richard Juve, 'Education as an integrating force in Singapore, a multi-cultural society', dissertation for Doctor of Education, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, 1975, p. 79.
- 19 Lim Soon Tae and S. Gopinathan, '25 years of curriculum planning', in John Yip Soon Kwong and Sim Wong Kooi (eds), *Evolution of Educational Excellence: 25 Years of Education in the Republic of Singapore*, Singapore: Longman, 1990, p. 69. Official concern about the skewing of academic results against 'vernacular' stream students can be seen in *ST*, 20 March 1978. Official concern about the poor standard of English-language skills was reported regularly by the end of the 1970s. See, for instance, *ST*, 7 March and 18 April 1978.
- 20 Juve, 'Education as an integrating force', p. 79.
- 21 Michael D. Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Beliefs Behind the Man*, Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2000, pp. 150–57. Also see Lee Kuan Yew's covering letter in Goh Keng Swee *et al.*, *Report on the Ministry of Education 1978*, p. v.
- 22 Juve, 'Education as an integrating force', p. 79.
- 23 See, for instance, Education Minister Lim Kim San's speech at the presentation of prizes at the All Singapore Chinese Essay Competition, where he praised Chinese education for trying 'to inculcate good moral character' and teach 'courtesy, integrity, kindness, civic-mindedness and justice' (*ST*, 25 May 1971).
- 24 Wijesingha, OHC interview, p. 371.
- 25 See Chapter 8 for more details on the Gifted Education Programme.
- 26 Barr's interview with Eugene Wijesingha, Singapore, 11 April 2003; Anne Pakir, 'Singapore', in Ho Wah Kam and Ruth Y.L. Wong (eds), *Language Policies and Language Education: The Impact in Asian Countries in the Next Decade*, Singapore: Eastern Universities Press by Marshall Cavendish, 2004, p. 286; Charlene Tan, 'Driven by pragmatism: issues and challenges in an ability-driven education', in Jason Tan and Ng Pak Tee, *Shaping Singapore's Future: Thinking Schools, Learning Nation*, Singapore: Pearson Education, 2005, p. 5.
- 27 Jason Tan, 'The marketization of education in Singapore: what does this mean for *Thinking Schools, Learning Nation?*', in Jason Tan and Ng Pak Tee, *Shaping Singapore's Future: Thinking Schools, Learning Nation*, Singapore: Pearson Education, 2005, p. 96.
- 28 The early history of SAP schools and streaming was one of overcoming and placating parental resistance to the introduction of the programmes, including the Special Assistance Plan. See, for instance, *ST*, 29 January and 14 March 1982, and 17 March 1983.
- 29 Goh Chi Lan and the principals of the Study Team, *Towards Excellence in Schools: A Report to the Minister for Education February 1987*, Singapore: Ministry of Education, 1987.
- 30 Tharman Shanmugaratnam and the Junior College/Upper Secondary Education Review Committee, *Report of the Junior College/Upper Secondary Education Review Committee*, Singapore: Ministry of Education, 2002.
- 31 Ministry of Education website, <http://www.moe.gov.sg>. Accessed 6 October 2005.

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- 32 Trivina Kang, 'Diversification of Singapore's Upper Secondary Landscape: Introduction of Integrated Programmes, Specialised Independent Schools and Privately-Funded Schools', in Tan and Ng, *Shaping Singapore's Future*, pp. 52–67.
- 33 See Jason Tan, 'Independent schools in Singapore: implications for social and educational inequalities', *International Journal of Educational Development*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1993, pp. 239–251.