

Early childhood curriculum policies and practices in Singapore: The case of glocalisation ^[1]

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EXCERPT

Globalisation has been widely observed in the field of early childhood care and education (ECCE) since the turn of this millennium. Many governments are increasingly concerned about the ranking and global competitiveness of their country's early education and development system. Singapore is no exception. The LIEN Foundation, a Singapore charity organisation, commissioned and released the first international ECCE ranking report in 2012 – *Starting Well: Benchmarking Early Education Across the World*. In this first world ranking, Singapore was regrettably ranked no. 29, far behind the other 28 OECD countries. This unexpected result has accelerated the Singapore government to take timely actions to augment the situation of ECCE. Accordingly, several significant measures have been launched by the government to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of ECCE in the last decade.

First, the Nurturing Early Learners Kindergarten Curriculum Framework (NEL Framework) published in 2003 was further revised in 2012 to reflect the new developments of education for 4–6-year-olds in the country. Second, the Early Years Development Framework (EYDF) was launched in 2013 by the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) to guide quality infant–toddler care for younger children from 2 months to 3 years of age. Third, the national framework for quality assurance has been developed and established: the Singapore Preschool Quality Assurance Framework (SPARK) and the Quality Rating Scale (QRS) for ECCE programmes (Tan, 2017). All these reform measures are vigorous, resolute and immediate.

However, the implementation and impact of these policies have not been theoretically or empirically explored. Given the fact that ECCE in Singapore is a primarily privatised market (Sum et al., 2018), these new policies would have encountered some resistance from the field. As such, the current praxis in Singapore's multicultural and globalised context, such as the early childhood curriculum, pedagogy and preschool provision and their associated challenges, deserves evidence-based research and academic debates.

This is especially true when we recognise that curriculum as a cultural practice reflects societal values and expectations that will determine the future of younger generations via its design and implementation (Ang, 2014; Yang, 2018). There is a trend that early childhood leaders and teachers leading and implementing curriculum are encouraged to consider local cultures and values in fostering culturally sensitive practices (Yang, 2019; Yang and Li, 2018). Owing to the interactions with globalisation, Singapore's early childhood curriculum is hybrid in nature, reflecting traditional Asian cultures and values and absorbing ideas and good practices from other countries (regions) such as Australia, Hong Kong, China, UK and USA (Bull et al., 2018).

Gladly, this special issue has obtained a quality collection of studies that have provided critical, cross-cultural, and cross-disciplinary perspectives and evidence on the evolving policies and praxis of Singapore's ECCE (early childhood curriculum in particular) against the background of globalisation and internationalisation.

Region: Asia ^[3]

Tags: curricula and pedagogy ^[4]

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