

# Student and Teacher Well-being: the Singapore Experience

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## Paradoxical Picture...

- Singapore is rather paradoxical.
- Singapore appears to be an academic pressure cooker, but it has also been recognized as a very good place for raising children.
- Singapore teachers will tell you that teaching is hard and they are drained. The paradox is that it is also hard to stop them from working so hard!

## Direct Student Well-being Initiatives...

- Holistic Health Framework (HHF)
- Socioemotional Learning (SEL)
- Outdoor education initiative
- Cyber Wellness Framework
- Mental Health lessons
- Interagency Taskforce for Mental Health and Well-being

## Direct Teacher Well-being Initiatives...

- Schools have nominated staff to be Wellness Ambassadors - receive training on how to provide basic peer support and encourage their peers to seek help.
- Greater flexibility to pace the implementation of selected MOE initiatives
- Establish clear expectations on teachers' availability and work hours

## Helping students with mental health problems...

- Professional services
- Stigma
- Early detection
- Working with parents

## Well-being as a concept...

- There is an element of subjectivity and there are many factors - both personal and environmental - involved.
- Well-being is a complex, multi-faceted issue.

## Who are vulnerable students?...

- Well-being is for everyone; it is a holistic concept.
- Anyone can be vulnerable to mental health problems.

## Well-being is not yet another initiative...

- Promoting well-being is not just another initiative.
- In education, one key aspect of well-being is the "bread and butter" of T&L.



## Well-being and holistic education

- Student (and teacher) well-being is not the result of a direct “wellness” policy. It is an emerging result of education that supports meaningful learning, and wholesome childhood or adolescence.
- Given that children spend so much time in school, do ensure that students truly benefit from and enjoy their time in school!

## Question

- There are people who love wall/rock climbing, even though the sport is tough. They train very hard and fail many times before they succeed.
- When they are climbing, they are tired. They are sweaty. But they are happy. They have well-being. Their being is well. Why?

## Possible reasons

- They love what they are doing.
- They have an aim. They have a challenge.
- It is tough, but there is joy because they are doing what they enjoy!
- They don't want you to make it easier (eg. build a lift). They want to get up there themselves.
- They are doing something tough, meaningful but enjoyable, and their being is well!

## Excellence and Well-being

A good education system creates different pathways for children to experience true joy of learning.

Education is not devoid of hard work, but it has meaning and joy in the process. This is the confluence of excellence and well-being.

## From Quantity to Quality

- Examination grades and paper qualifications are not sufficient for life.
- Education has to be much more holistic, so that children grow up to become wholesome young people with a broad range of thinking and life skills.
- Teach Less Learn More.

## Values Driven

- Central set of core values—respect, responsibility, integrity, care, resilience, and harmony.
- Emphasizes Social and Emotional Competencies as a foundation for students to manage themselves and relate with others.

## Meaningful Learning

- Learning comes alive when students can apply their knowledge and skills in real life.
- Values in Action - contribute to something bigger than themselves.

## Learning for Life

- Emphasize that learning is for life rather than for tests.
- Address a culture that focuses on examination grades.



## A more holistic approach for well-being

- The more we focus on holistic education, the more wellness the students may actually and eventually experience.
- Instead of bubble-wrapping students, create appropriate learning challenges and provide support for them to overcome difficulties.

## Continuous Well-being

- Well-being is a continuous process.
- It should not be a short-sighted "well-be" or a future "well-been".
- If students are shielded too much from challenges now, they become more vulnerable in the future!

## Wholesome education and well-being

- Singapore moves toward holistic education and emphasizes engaged learning so that students find school life meaningful and enjoyable.
- If education itself is more wholesome, student well-being follows as a natural result in a much more sustainable manner.

# Teacher Well-being...

It is about teaching well, seeing the students engaged, and enjoying the process of education.

It is about working hard, but finding meaning, fulfilment, respect, support and encouragement.

## **Invest in our teachers...**

Teachers will receive more professional development support, under a new SkillsFuture for Educators road map so they can meet the evolving needs of students.

**Timeless constants...**

**In Singapore, education  
is investment, not  
expenditure.**

**Timeless constants...**

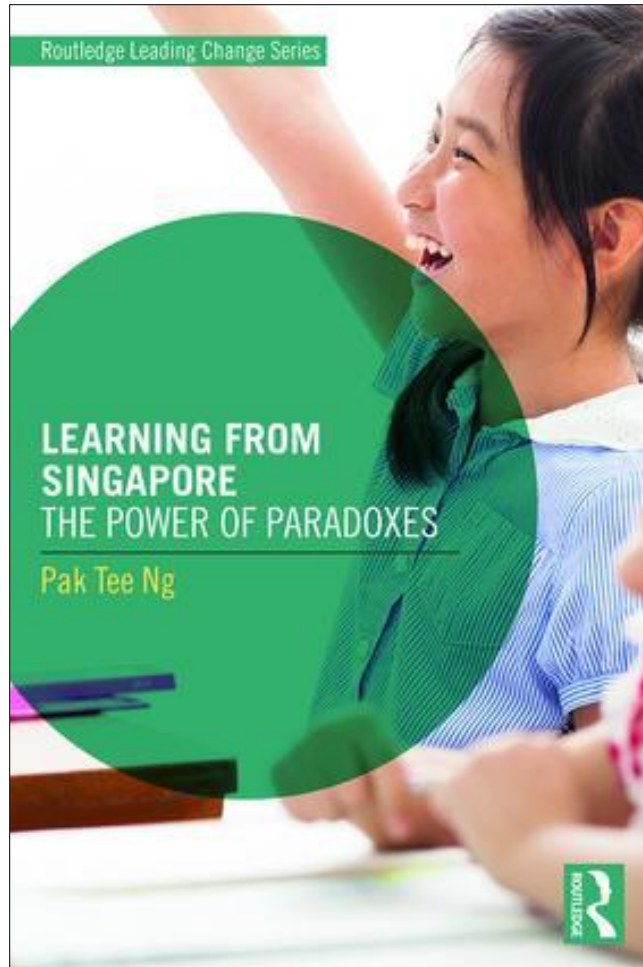
**Schools matter.**

**School leaders matter.**

**Teachers matter.**

**Students matter.**

# The Singapore Story

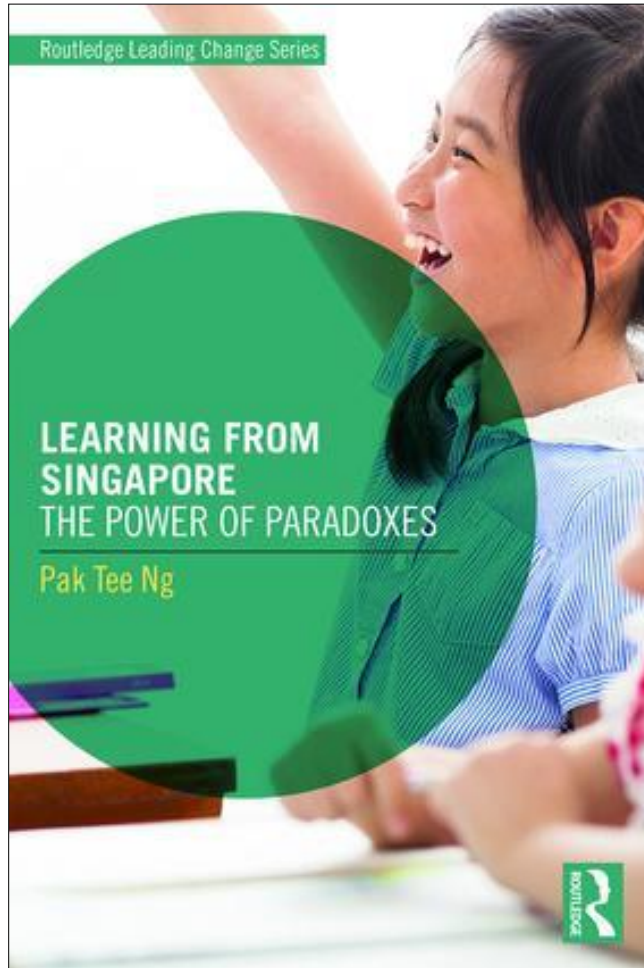


*Learning from Singapore:  
The Power of Paradoxes  
Pak Tee Ng (2017)*

**Education is the  
human enterprise of  
paying it forward.**



# Educators...



People who plant trees,  
so that others can sit  
under those trees ...  
and no one knows who  
planted them in the  
first place.

(Ng Pak Tee)