Abstract

This dissertation attempts to explore Singapore’s conception of education through an examination of key government documents and speeches in order to show the impact and influence of education progressivism and constructivism in Singaporean classrooms. I describe the conception of the (ideally) educated citizen that underpins Singapore’s “ability-driven” model of education and more recently, the “student-centric, values-based” phase of education. I also explore the dichotomy of individual versus community, and citizen as object to be created and subjects to be realised in the Singapore narrative. How limiting a particular conception of education is, in this case progressivism, and how it may run counter to the government’s ideally educated citizen, are the main questions this dissertation attempts to address.

In the case of Singapore, by disregarding the individual in a fundamental sense, yet projecting a concern for the individual in an education premised on the constructivist paradigm, the conception of the “ideally” educated citizen is fairly easily theorised, conceived and implemented. However, the realisation of this ideal rests on unstable ground due to the lack of attention paid to questions on the purpose of education and the citizen as subject not object. While constructivist principles are adopted sincerely, the implementation has been somewhat simplistic and unrealistic in the realm of the predeterminist nature of society and politics in Singapore, creating a disconnection between the ideal and actual educated citizen.