

*The articles below provide a good overview of the research that have been conducted on citizenship and social studies education in Singapore by scholars.*

**Adler, S., & Sim, J. B.-Y.** (2008). Secondary social studies in Singapore: Intentions and contradictions. In D. L. Grossman & J. T.-Y. Lo (Eds.), *Social education in Asia: Critical issues and multiple perspectives* (pp. 163-182). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

**Baildon, M. (2009).** "Being rooted and living globally": Singapore's imagined communities and identities through the prism of educational innovation. In Ismail, R., Shaw, B., & Ooi, G.L. (2009). *Southeast Asian Culture and Heritage in a Globalising World*. U.K.: Ashgate.

**Baildon, M. & Sim, J. B.-Y.** (in press). The dilemmas of Singapore's National Education in the global society. In Reid, A., Gill, J., & Sears, A. (Eds.), *Globalisation, the nation-state and the citizen: Dilemmas and Directions for Civics and Citizenship Education*. New York: Routledge.

**Baildon, M. C., & Sim, J. B.-Y.** (2009). Notions of criticality: Singaporean teachers' perspectives of critical thinking in social studies. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39 (4), 407-422.

**ABSTRACT.** In this article we explore the ways critical thinking is conceived by a group of Singaporean social studies teachers, what they see as its purposes as well as perceived constraints to critical thinking and teaching critical thinking in Singapore's schools. Using a case study research design and constant comparative method we analysed data from teachers' discussion board entries, observation notes and lesson artefacts from a Master's class. Findings revealed three key tensions involving teaching critical thinking in an exam culture, uncertainty about what constitutes the 'out-of-bound', and the issue of professional identity. Each of these tensions intersected and interacted in dynamic ways for teachers and shaped the way they understand and practise critical thinking.

**Ho, L.C.** (2009). [Global multicultural citizenship education: A Singapore experience.](#) *The Social Studies*, 100 (6), 285-293.

**ABSTRACT.** In a world that is, on the one hand, determined to sustain distinct national and group identities and, on the other hand, becoming increasingly globalized, interconnected and interdependent, social studies educators are regularly faced with the challenge of supporting diversity, creating a unified national community, and promoting global perspectives through education. This paper explores how the Singapore education system addresses these disparate goals through its national social studies curriculum for secondary schools, particularly through its use of international case studies. The Singapore social studies curriculum also serves as an interesting case study of how a national social studies curriculum has been shifted away from an exclusive focus on a nation-centric paradigm to one that is more globally oriented in nature, while still being firmly anchored to the nation-state and its priorities.

□

---

Ho, L. C. (2010). ["Don't worry, I'm not going to report you": Education for citizenship in Singapore](#) . *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 38(2), 298-316.

**ABSTRACT.** This case study examined how Singapore adolescents from different socio-economic, academic, and racial backgrounds positioned themselves as citizens within a highly-regulated centralized educational context. Through interviews, classroom observations, and surveys, the author investigated students' conceptions of citizenship and their perspectives of the official historical national narrative. Despite their different backgrounds, participants from all three schools consistently provided very similar depictions of citizenship and key events in Singapore's history. This shared understanding can partially be attributed to the inclusive nature of the national narrative in the school curriculum, which consistently emphasizes the themes of unity, consensus, and harmony. At the same time, the participants consciously avoided

addressing controversial issues and none contested the central narrative of racial harmony, meritocracy, and progress, largely due to a combination of a climate of censorship and a regime of high stakes tests that stifle democratic discourse within the classroom.

**Nichol, R., & Sim, J. B.-Y.** (2007). Singaporean citizenship, national education and social studies: Control, constraints, contradictions and possibilities. *Citizenship Teaching and Learning*, 3 (1), 17-31.

**ABSTRACT.** This paper examines the relationship between social studies, citizenship education, multiculturalism, and national education in Singapore. In many countries, including the United States and Australia, the social studies curriculum has been given the task of preparing young people to be citizens (Gonzales, Riedel, Avery and Sullivan, 2001; Nichol, 1995; Print, 2000). Social Studies in Singapore is seen as an instrument of nation-building, as a vehicle for inculcating the six National Education (NE) messages concerning a sense of belonging and patriotism, racial and religious harmony, a meritocracy without corruption, economic opportunity, efficiency and prosperity, and developing a secure, confident, forward-looking, cohesive citizenry [1]. While NE continues to be the core, there are initiatives designed to 'open-up' the subject, to make it less focussed on purely Singaporean Studies, more creative, analytical and questioning. It is to "...instil a sense of national identity as well as global awareness" (Ministry of Education 2005a). Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, in 2004, called for empowering youth, "to give them a say in their lives, to make them feel they can make a difference". However, tensions and contradictory messages are surfacing between forms of governance, NE policy, and educational reform and practice. Some of those charged with this responsibility question how education can be opened if society is still relatively constrained. Singapore lacks many democratic processes and is threatened by fraught relations with neighbouring countries. We argue in the paper that, within limits, more empathy, appreciation and respect for other cultures and religions, must be developed. Also, if students are expected to accept ideas uncritically, they will not be prepared, affectively and effectively, to meet Singapore's future cultural and national challenges.

---

**Sim, J. B.-Y.** (2001). The development of social studies in Singapore secondary schools. *Teaching and Learning*, 22 (2), 74-82.

**ABSTRACT.** Social studies is introduced as a new compulsory and examinable subject in all Singapore secondary schools at the upper secondary level in 2001. It will be examined for the first time at both the Singapore- Cambridge General Certificate of Education 'Normal' and 'Ordinary' Levels (GCE 'N' and 'O' Levels) in 2002. Social studies was conceived in the context of National Education. The purpose is to enhance students' understanding of the key issues central to Singapore's survival and success. This article examines the development of social studies in Singapore secondary schools at the upper secondary level. Interviews were

conducted with teachers and students in 20 schools in Singapore on the initial teaching and learning of social studies; the findings and its pedagogical implications will be discussed.

**Sim, J. B.-Y.** (2008). What does citizenship mean? Social studies teachers' understanding of citizenship in Singapore schools. *Educational Review*, 60(3), 253-266.

**ABSTRACT.** One of the challenges of teaching citizenship is that it can be understood in a variety of quite different ways. Singapore has a centralized education system, where political leaders wield direct influence over citizenship education. Social studies is a major vehicle for citizenship education, with a focus on nationbuilding. The official discourse on citizenship, while clearly articulated, has still to be implemented by teachers. In a context made complex by globalizing forces, how do teachers understand citizenship? This article reports on social studies teachers' understandings of citizenship in Singapore schools. The study utilized a qualitative case study approach of eight teachers to provide depth and insight into their understanding. Findings revealed four themes, namely identity, participation, awareness of the nation's past, and thinking citizenry, located within the nationalistic, socially concerned and person oriented stances. This reflected a citizenship education landscape in Singapore that, despite tight controls, was not rigid, prescriptive or homogenous.

---

**Sim, J. B.-Y., & Ho, L.C.** (2010). Transmitting social and national values through education in Singapore. In T. Lovat, R. Toomey & N. Clement (Eds.), *International research handbook on values education and student wellbeing* : Springer.

**ABSTRACT.** There are diverse opinions regarding the place of values in the curriculum and also approaches to be employed when teaching values. In Singapore, values education is accorded high priority. Characteristic of countries with highly centralized systems, the Singapore state expresses the set of national values that emphasizes communitarian principles, consensus and cohesion in detail, and systematically transmits them to students via the formal curriculum. In Singapore, values education is primarily subject-based and is carefully planned, with a clearly delineated list of aims and objectives to culturally reproduce the elites' view of Singapore society. Much of the discourse surrounding the national values, however, is dominated by the state's focus on national interest and pragmatism. In this chapter, the authors take the position that schools in Singapore are deliberately created social institutions that are nested within particular social, political and economic realities, and as such, they serve as a means of maintaining social control and sustaining the status quo. The transmission of the prescribed set of national values through school subjects has mostly been deemed unproblematic and is seldom troubled. Nonetheless, the social, political and economic pressures, brought about by the forces of globalization, have problematized the conception of values education in Singapore. In this chapter, the authors examine how a newly introduced subject in secondary schools – Social Studies – is framed by the national values and ideologies

defined by the state, and discuss the inherent tensions brought about by changing contexts. They argue that such an approach is both constraining and inadequate, when what is needed to ensure student well-being in the current era is an understanding and recognition of diversity, alternative visions of the world and multiliteracies.

**Sim, J. B.-Y., & Print, M.** (2005). Citizenship education and social studies in Singapore: A national agenda. *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education*, 1 (1), 58-73.

**ABSTRACT.** Citizenship education has been, in some form, an overarching goal of public schooling historically in every society, as it is in Singapore today. The introduction of social studies as a compulsory and examinable subject in Singapore secondary schools in 2001 reflects the continuous single-minded pursuit of citizenship education to meet perceived national needs. Social studies has become, therefore, a key subject of the state for citizenship education in the context of national education.

We report on research into teacher understandings and approaches to citizenship education within the context of this compulsory subject and under the umbrella of national education. While still in the early stages of implementation, it is certain that social studies is a departure from past citizenship education programmes. Social studies in emphasizing the development of thinking in students, is an important curricula move in light of the conservative history of citizenship education in Singapore, and this bears implications for citizenship education in schools.