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DRAFT

**Globalisation, the Singapore State and Educational Reforms:
Towards Performativity**

Abstract

In response to the challenges of globalisation, the Singapore government has introduced an array of neo-liberal educational strategies to promote two goals: greater diversity and choice in the educational landscape; and greater autonomy and innovation at the school level. This paper argues that the Singapore government uses the tactic of performativity as a means of state control even as it implements an education policy of decentralisation. Accompanying the strategies to deregulate the education system are processes of reregulation introduced by the government to monitor and influence the thinking and behaviour of key educational stakeholders. What makes the case of Singapore interesting in the international literature is that it illustrates the tactical changes made by a small and ‘vulnerable’ state in Asia in an era of globalisation and convergence of educational reforms.

Introduction

Globalisation is commonly understood as “the rapid acceleration of cross-border flows of capital, goods, services, people and ideas” (Green, 2007, p. 23). It is a process of growing inter-connectedness aimed at creating a world system that shifts many former national concerns to the world geopolitical stage (Moten, 2005). Some major effects of globalisation, though vary widely from country to country, include internationalisation, denationalisation of economies, weakening of the nation state, and commodification of education (Ohmae 1995; Green, 1997, 2007; Gopinathan, 2007). Given the value of intellectual capital in a globalised economy, many states are attempting to upgrade their human capital through promoting access to a range of skills, especially the capacity to learn (OECD, 1996). They aspire to develop citizens who are linguistically competent in English, effectively multi-cultural, adept at critical and creative thinking, and well-versed in information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The ideal citizen should also be an expert problem-solver who has the drive to innovate, learn continuously, think globally but is rooted locally.

Convergent education reforms across countries include neo-liberal measures and the trend towards decentralisation and performativity in education (e.g. see Green, 1999; Marginson, 1999; Angus, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004; Tan & Ng, 2007). Gopinathan (2007) notes that “all reform proposals stress the need for greater attention to process, higher order thinking skills, better utilisation of technology in education, changes to assessment, greater devolution of power to principals, etc, in tandem, it must be said, in some developed economies, with moves towards greater central control over

curriculum and pedagogy, more frequent assessment and on meeting specified academic outcome targets” (p. 56). In response to the challenges of globalisation, the Singapore government has introduced an array of neo-liberal educational strategies to promote two goals: greater diversity and choice in the educational landscape; and greater autonomy and innovation at the school level. This paper argues that recent educational reforms are introduced by the Singapore government as part of its move towards ‘performativity’ as a means of state control. It demonstrates the tactic used by a strong interventionist state to promote and sustain national economic development in an age of globalisation.

The Singapore State, Education and Performativity

The Singapore government is acutely aware of the impact of globalisation on a small state such as Singapore. For example, the Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew stated that small states will always be vulnerable to global events due to the highly interconnected globalised environment: “They are not masters of their own destiny. They perform no irreplaceable functions in the international system because if they do not exist, the world will carry on as before” (cited in Peh, 2008). The Singapore government’s solution, he added, includes “optimising its limited manpower through education” (cited in Peh, 2008). In response to the challenges of globalisation, the Singapore government has introduced education reforms under the banner of ‘Thinking Schools, Learning Nation’ since 1997. The government has introduced an array of neo-liberal education strategies in four main areas: critical and creative thinking, the use of information technology in education, citizenship education, and administrative excellence. They serve to encourage greater flexibility, choice and innovation in the educational programmes; and greater autonomy, marketisation and inter-school competition at the school level. But the adoption of neo-liberal education strategies does not mean that the Singapore state has weakened its control due to pressures brought about by globalisation. On the contrary, the opposite is true: the Singapore state has remained strong and highly interventionist in its economy and social reform (Green, 2007; Gopinathan, 2007; Koh, 2007, Tan, 2008). The justification of state power is the government’s ability to promote and sustain economic development (Hill & Lian, 1995; Wee, 2001; Tan, 2008). Given the overriding goal of the government to ensure continuous economic growth for Singapore, all aspects of social life are open to state administrative intervention. Chua (1995) observes that “no sector of social life, no matter how ‘private’, cannot be so administered as to harness it to serve the goal itself” (p. 68).

In other words, Singapore has continued to be successfully ‘developmentalist’ – a term that refers to a state gaining legitimacy through its ability to promote and sustain development; this is achieved through “the combination of steady high rates of economic growth and structural changes in the productive system, both domestically and in relation to the international economy” (Castells, 1997, p. 276; also see Castells, 1992; Johnson, 1982; White & Wade, 1988). The Singapore government consistently uses its public policies to anticipate, influence and take advantage of globalisation (Bellows, 1995, cited in Koh, 2007). These education reforms in Singapore are best read as “tactical changes made by a strong state” (Gopinathan, 2007, p. 66). Koh (2007) describes tactics as “forms of governmentality” (Foucault, 2000) which are “disciplinary measures to regulate and script the Singaporean habitus for the necessary conditions of capitalising on the ‘good’ but castigating the symbolic ‘ills’ of globalisation” (p. 197). He notes that

governmentality is deployed not only through administrative apparatus such as the use of laws but also a range of multiform tactics that are carefully re-worked and translated into rationalised practices. This paper argues that the Singapore government uses the tactic of performativity as a means of state control even as it implements a neo-liberal education policy of decentralisation. Accompanying the strategies to deregulate the education system are processes of reregulation introduced by the government to monitor and influence the thinking and behaviour of key educational stakeholders.

According to Ball (2003), performativity, together with the market and managerialism, is a policy technology of education reform:

Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change - based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

Ball (2003) notes that performativity contributes towards a 'devolved environment' where there is less centralised control and more freedom and flexibility given to local authorities. Schools are to take responsibility for transforming themselves by making themselves different from one another, improving themselves and competing with one another. However, the reform processes of de-regulation are actually processes of reregulation where the state establishes a new form of control. The state employs monitoring systems for the school leaders and teachers through the mechanics of performativity such as League Tables, the appraisal meeting, the annual review, report writing, site visits, inspections and peer reviews. Within a performative culture, teachers "are no longer encouraged to have a rationale for practice, account of themselves in terms of a relationship to the meaningfulness of what they do, but are required to produce measurable and 'improving' outputs and performances, what is important is what works" (Ball, 2003, p. 222). In other words, they are expected to organise themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations under state regulation.

The simultaneous move towards decentralisation and centralisation has been described as "decentralised centralism" by Karlsen (2000). He distinguishes four dynamics processes in decentralised centralism: the dynamics of initiation, the dynamics of content, the dynamics of levels and the dynamics of simultaneity. The dynamics of initiation refers to the practice where decentralisation reforms are initiated from the top by the authorities at the central level but implementation and accountability are local duties. These reforms have often led to new central legislation and regulations and can in reality be a strategy for strengthening central power. Passivity and even resistance have been observed on the local level in response to these reforms. There is also a two-way process between centralisation and decentralisation in the dynamics of content. The decentralisation of content and power to set the curriculum at the local level is the reason for and legitimates standardisation and central control. Consequently there is a balance between standardisation and diversity of school content and curriculum. The third process

for the decentralisation process is the dynamics of levels. While there is the decentralisation of tasks and administrative responsibility to the local level, this does not necessarily mean a shift of power from a higher to a lower level. In fact, the decentralisation of authority from central to lower levels can have a legitimising function for the central level to set national standards and to develop national assessments. Finally, the dynamics of simultaneity rejects the model of decentralisation and centralisation as waves following and replacing each other. Rather, there is the simultaneous practice of centralisation where the central level set central goals and standards for outcomes, and decentralisation where the means and the responsibility for implementation are local duties. Paradoxically, decentralisation is countered by a good deal of regulatory re-centralisation.

Educational Reforms in Singapore

A quick survey of the educational reforms in Singapore is helpful to demonstrate the Singapore government's predominant concern with using education to promote and sustain national economic development. There are three phases of educational reforms in Singapore. The first phase was 'survival' stage (1959-1978) when the aim was to produce trained workers in the early years of Singapore's independence and industrialisation. Up to 1955, Singapore was under the British colonial rule and was socially divided along ethnic and religious lines. The 1956 All-Party Report on Chinese Education advocated an education system that valued and propagated the cultures and languages of the major ethnic groups. With self-government in 1959, the concern for social cohesion, together with the establishment of national identity, was of paramount importance. This was attempted through the introduction of a uniform curriculum and locally produced textbooks to give schools a common identity. In terms of moral education, a fixed curriculum was adopted for all students with an emphasis on the history of Singapore. The aim was citizenship education where students were taught civics duties and secular ethics for them to be good citizens. When Singapore became a sovereign state in 1965, the educational system was further refined with the introduction of bilingualism in 1966. Technical education was also emphasised with the development of post-secondary technical and vocational education at the polytechnics to educate students for the workforce through linguistic and technical skills.

The next phase, 'efficiency' stage (1979-1996), fine-tuned the system in order to produce skilled workers for the economy in the most efficient way. In other words, the government projected the manpower demands in various sectors of the economy and trained people to fit into jobs in those sectors. Students were assessed primarily on their level of languages and mathematics, and streamed into different courses at the primary and secondary schools. Changing economic factors in mid 1980s necessitated further educational changes during that decade. The recession in mid 1980s affected Singapore and revealed that its labour force was under-educated compared to those in the US, Taiwan and Japan. In 1987, the report, *Towards Excellence in Schools*, put forward a number of policy initiatives to produce students who would be educated, creative and innovative. All students were encouraged to complete at least ten years of education in primary and secondary schools before they specialise in different areas of study. Consistent with the view that higher ability students study the arts and sciences, and weaker students learn vocational training, the government worked towards having 20% of

a school cohort receive technical-vocational education at the Institute of Technical Education, 40% receive polytechnic education and another 20% university education. It is evident that political, economic and social considerations strongly influenced the development of education in Singapore. Sharpe and Gopinathan (2002) observe that “the education system was used as a major vehicle in nation building, with the state acting as ‘strategic trader’ to align provision with the needs of the economy and social cohesion” (p. 154).

The most significant educational reforms occurred from 1997 under the ‘Thinking Schools, Learning Nation’ vision. This vision aims to develop creative thinking skills, a lifelong passion for learning and nationalistic commitment in the young. In elucidating the concept of ‘thinking schools’, the former Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, stressed the urgency for Singapore schools to nurture thinking and for committed citizens to keep Singapore vibrant and successful in an age of globalisation. He explained that ‘thinking schools’ are ‘the crucibles for questioning and searching, within and outside the classroom, to forge this passion for learning among our young’ (Goh, 1997). In a knowledge economy, students need to have a passion for learning, and not just study for the sake of getting good grades in their examinations. Admitting that this passion is generally lacking among students in Singapore, he cautioned that their knowledge would be fragile unless they had the desire and aptitude to continue discovering new knowledge after they graduate. This vision is driven by an educational paradigm known as an Ability-Driven Education which was officially introduced in 1999. This paradigm aims to identify and develop the talents and abilities of every child to the maximum, whether the talent is in the intellect, arts, sports, or community endeavours. Through such a paradigm, the Ministry of Education (MOE) hopes to inculcate in the students the conviction of being committed to the nation and contributing their talents for the good of the society. The education policy initiatives under the ‘Thinking Schools, Learning Nation’ vision serve to promote two goals: greater diversity and choice in the educational landscape; and greater autonomy and innovation at the school level. First, diversity and choice are provided in the different types of schools and programmes now available to students. For example, students may choose to attend schools that offer the Integrated Programme where they skip the General Certificate in Education (GCE) ‘O’ levels and head straight for the GCE ‘A’ levels or the International Baccalaureate diploma. Or they may opt to study in specialised schools in sports, the arts, or mathematics and science. The school curriculum, assessment and pedagogy have also changed to encourage higher-order thinking and student-centred learning. Information Technology has been used widely to develop the students’ communication skills and habits of independent learning. Teachers are exhorted to expand their repertoire of teaching and learning strategies under the Teach Less, Learn More (TLLM) initiative so as to encourage their students to learn more actively and independently beyond the formal curriculum.

More choices are given to students to take subjects such as physical education, drama and computer studies, from a total of 50 GCE ‘O’ level subjects available in Singapore. Students are more involved in project work, community involvement and overseas cultural interactions. The MOE has also adopted a more flexible and differentiated approach to school and university admissions. For example, secondary students may also study hands-on electives such as game design, online entrepreneurship and electronic gizmo design, and use these grades for admission into a junior college or

polytechnic. Shifting away from a centrally controlled admission system, schools are now given more leeway in admitting their own students. The government claims that increased flexibility will enable the schools to be more responsive to their strategic objectives and changes in market demand, compete for the best students, and move away from a fixed formula of success. To complement the diversity and choice in the educational landscape, the MOE has given schools more autonomy and encourage them to move towards innovation. The government stated that greater autonomy will lead to “greater innovation and variety in the programmes offered in our schools, especially our secondary schools: schools with strengths and emphases in different fields, schools trying out new ideas in different areas, all adding to the richness of our education system” (Teo, 2000). School principals are entrusted with the responsibility to manage their schools like companies, with their own vision statements and plans specific to the needs of their schools.

A number of schools have developed specialty areas based on their strengths and student interests. For example, some schools are now offering Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme as a part of their English lessons. Schools are encouraged to identify and develop their niches under the Niche Programme. Schools awarded the niche-school status will receive generous grants from the MOE and have the discretion to admit up to 5 per cent of their intake to build up their niche. Examples of niche areas are bicultural studies, performing arts, national education, and chess. To cultivate an attitude of innovation through a system-wide approach, “Innovation and Enterprise” (I&E) was launched in 2004. The I&E initiative aims to spur schools in Singapore to experiment with new types of learning for their students. Good I&E projects are show-cased among schools and members of the public through an annual MOE festival, both as a form of professional sharing as well as encouragement to the students. For example, pupils in one school experimented with Orchid hybridisation which was integrated into their curriculum, while another school introduced an initiative to expose their students to the concept of financial planning.

Towards Performativity

It is evident that performativity has contributed towards a ‘devolved environment’ where there is less centralised control and more freedom and flexibility given to local authorities in Singapore. Instead of one-size-fits-all decisions made by the MOE for all schools in Singapore, schools are now much more active in decision-making for themselves. At the level of headquarters and schools, there is indeed a strengthening of democracy as Singapore schools have a greater power than before in shaping the local education landscape. However, the primary motivator to decentralisation in Singapore is not to promote democracy but to improve efficiency and effectiveness of governance. This means that there may not necessarily be greater democracy in the school itself. Under the decentralisation framework, the school management, not the teachers and students, is given more power in decision-making. Within a school, it is up to the principal to decide on the preferred management style. Therefore, while distributed leadership and student voice have been widely discussed in Singapore schools, major school decisions generally are still taken at the school management level. Thus, unlike the decentralisation process in countries such as Norway that is associated with the democratisation process to

promote active political and civil participation among the citizens, Singapore's decentralisation process is more associated with a pragmatic consideration to facilitate reform to meet economic challenges.

It is also true that Singapore schools are now responsible to transform themselves by making themselves different from one another, improving themselves and competing with one another. Schools are striving to be more innovative in providing a variety of education opportunities and choices to the students such as through their niche programmes and innovative projects. Decentralisation is also introduced to strengthen local culture, business and community through the local school's programmes and activities (Karlsen, 2000). Indeed, MOE has highlighted the need for schools to be part of the community and to partner with stakeholders in education such as the local business and community through student-initiated community-based projects and service learning. The phenomenon of marketisation in education is already evident in the Singapore education system. This not only leads to the setting up of private schools and the influx of international students, but also a rationalisation of resource allocation and utilisation in existing schools to compete in the market. Principals are encouraged by MOE to think of themselves as Chief Executive Officers of their schools, and to manage their schools like companies – articulating vision statements, deploying and utilising resources strategically, producing results, answering to “shareholders” and “customers”, talking about service, marketing, and watching the bottomline (Tan & Ng, 2006). A number of Singapore institutions are also extending their reach to markets abroad while world renowned institutions are tapping on Singapore's infrastructure and strategic position in Asia to set up operations here (Tharman, 2006).

Despite the practice of decentralisation, the reform processes of de-regulation, within a culture of performativity, are actually processes of reregulation where the state establishes a new form of control. The major education policy initiatives are introduced from the top by MOE but implementation and accountability are left as local duties to the schools. But the autonomy given to the school leaders does not mean that they are free from central control. The Singapore state employs monitoring systems for the school leaders and teachers through various mechanics of performativity. The first monitoring system for the government maintain quality assurance is the School Excellence Model (SEM) introduced in 2000. The SEM is a comprehensive quality management system and is a significant part of the move by MOE to embrace a broader notion of success (Ministry of Education, 2000; Ng, 2003). The SEM describes an “excellent school” as one in which the leaders lead staff, devise strategies and deploy resources. These goals and plans should be systematically fed into clearly identified student-focused processes for which targets are set and performance monitored and managed. These “enablers” then produce results in staff and stakeholder satisfaction as well as impact on society, which in turn contribute to the achievement of school results and excellence. It is noteworthy that results in SEM go beyond academic achievements since an excellent school is defined as one that provides a quality and holistic education. Accent is placed on valueaddedness, leadership, staff management and strategic planning, rather than just on academic results. Results are deemed “excellent” when they meet the target, are sustained over a number of years and show positive trends. All schools are required to do self-appraisal using the new model and an external team from MOE validates the self-assessment results using the same criteria approximately once in five years. The assessment process is explicit in

requiring evidence from the school to justify a certain score as well as evidence to show continuous improvement through trend analysis. Therefore, schools have to accumulate evidences to show to the validation team how they have been doing under the SEM criteria.

Related to the SEM is a national award system for schools known as the Masterplan of Awards which consists of three levels. The first level comprises the Achievement Awards given to schools each year for current year's achievements. The second level comprises the Best Practices Award which recognises schools with good scores in the "Enablers" category, and the Sustained Achievement Award which recognises schools with sustained good scores in the "Results" category. At the apex of the awards is the School Excellence Award, which gives recognition to schools for excellence in education processes and outcomes. Schools may also apply for the Singapore Quality Award just like any other industrial or commercial sector organisation. To qualify for these awards, schools may request for additional external validations, other than the once-in-five-years mandatory external validation. Another indicator of a school's performance is the School Achievement Tables which was introduced in 2004 to replace school ranking. The School Achievement Tables band schools based on their academic results as well as highlight the school achievements in academic value-added and non-academic domains. These results, together with the Masterplan of Awards, are made available to the public so as to "guide the schools in their journey towards excellence" and to help parents and students "make decisions when selecting schools" (Ministry of Education, 2006).

While the SEM and the Masterplan of Awards are used to hold the school leaders accountable, the Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS) was introduced to appraise the performance of all teachers in Singapore. Officially launched in 2001, it aims to provide teachers with "greater clarity in the competencies and behaviours expected of them ... will help them to actively reflect on their capabilities and achievements, and chart their own professional development" (Ministry of Education, 2002, quoted in Hairon, 2004). Under the EPMS framework, each teacher (known as the Jobholder) must undergo three Work Reviews per year with a supervising education officer (Known as the Reporting Officer). The first Work Review is for the Jobholder to establish targets, expected results, competencies and training and development plans with the Reporting Officer; the second Work review is for the Reporting Officer to give developmental feedback on work performance and progress to the Jobholder; and the third is for the Reporting Officer to evaluate the performance and potential of the Jobholder based on the first and second Work Reviews (Hairon, 2004). Based on the appraisal of Jobholder's performance and professional development, he or she will be ranked (A, B, C, D or E) in comparison to his or her colleagues with similar substantive grade. The performance of the Jobholder will in turn affect his or her salary increment, performance bonus and career development opportunities. The EMPS framework is therefore a comprehensive system where the rewards of teachers are tied to their "performances" which are defined in terms of targets, indicators and evaluations under state regulation. Taken together, the SEM, Masterplan of Awards, School Achievement Tables and EPMS are the means for the state to exert control over educational outcomes and hold the school leaders and teachers accountable for their performance. Given the above mechanisms, the question is how much autonomy the school actually has since the

government still exercises centralised control.

The above shows that there is a paradox of deregulation and reregulation of education in Singapore. While the educational reforms are initiated from the top by the authorities at the central level, implementation and accountability are local duties. Schools in Singapore are encouraged to innovate, improve themselves and compete against one another through their niche programmes, “Innovation and enterprise” (I&E) projects and other activities. But the move towards greater diversity of school content and curriculum is balanced by standardisation and central control. Although students can choose different types of schools, programmes and subjects to take, the syllabuses and national examinations are still set by the government, and schools are still assessed based on the annual league tables. Schools must also keep to a curriculum of core subjects as their students have to sit for the standardised national terminal examinations. The autonomy given to the school leaders does not necessarily imply a shift of power from a higher level to the local level; the government still sets the national standards for schools and encourage inter-school competition through the mechanics of performativity: the School Excellence Model (SEM), the Masterplan of Awards for schools, School Achievement Tables, and the Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS). In short, there is the simultaneous practice of decentralisation with flexibility and autonomy for the schools, and centralisation with central goals and standards for the outcomes. On one hand, the government attempts to decentralise power, give autonomy and devolve responsibilities to the schools. On the other hand, the government has introduced a robust quality assurance system to maintain central control and managerial scrutiny.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that recent educational reforms in Singapore are part of performativity through the co-existence of deregulation and reregulation in an age of globalisation. On the one hand, decentralisation of education is advocated to encourage diversity and choice in the educational landscape and greater autonomy and innovation at the school level. It is believed that such neo-liberal education strategies will help the government identify and develop the talents of the students so that they can contribute towards the national economic developments. On the other hand, the state maintains central control through reregulation and monitoring systems within a performative culture.

However, the move towards performativity appears to contradict the desired outcome of ‘Thinking Schools, Learning Nation’ to promote greater innovation at the school level. School leaders are expected to take the lead in innovation and be role models for their teachers and students. Innovation needs a culture of risk-taking and experimentation, rather than risk-avoidance and rule compliance. Already, the Singapore brand of leadership has been described as “too data-driven, too cautious, too little gut feel, fairly risk-averse” (Long, 2004). Within a performative environment, the struggle faced by school leaders and teachers is how to promote innovation in schools while producing good academic results in an examination-driven environment. Innovative programmes, projects and lessons will remain superficial and peripheral as long as schools in Singapore still rely on academic performance as a measure of success. Also, students, their parents and other key stakeholders in education may not favour a school

that is innovative but does not help their students to get to the university or win a scholarship. Although the government has attempted to incorporate a spirit of innovation into the school curriculum through subjects such as project work and Knowledge and Inquiry (KI), students are still immersed in an environment where knowledge is gained mainly from standard textbooks and “correct” answers from the teachers are sought (Deng & Gopinathan, 1999; Tan, 2006). The focus by many teachers is still on testing and drilling, and they tend to interpret a “thinking school” as one where thinking skills are taught explicitly with the help of “thinking worksheets” and “thinking programmes” (Nathan, 2001). Against this backdrop of conservatism, the challenge is whether the initiatives to promote innovation delve deep beyond the surface level to change the traditional philosophy and approach to education in Singapore. A performative climate is therefore unlikely to promote diversity and innovation, and will instead aggravate the problem of uniformity and conservatism; school leaders and teachers are likely to stick slavishly to strategies that best produced the outcomes demanded in the School Excellence Model (SEM), Masterplan of Awards, and Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS).

A performative culture is also antithetical to the promotion of educational equity in Singapore. The tendency is for school leaders to exercise their autonomy by investing in areas that promise the greatest measurable returns, such as attracting talented students to join the school’s niche programme, or preferring students from wealthier and English-speaking homes since they are more likely to perform well academically. More and better resources may also be directed to help this group of students excel and win awards and honours for the school. In other words, the school may be more concerned about “tactical improvements which result in short-term improvements” (Ball, 2003, p. 224), rather than genuine diversity, innovation and equity which will only reap results in the long run.

The trend towards performativity of education is not unique to Singapore as it is evident in European countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. But what makes the case of Singapore interesting in the international literature is that it illustrates the tactical changes made by a small and ‘vulnerable’ state in Asia in an era of globalisation and convergence of educational reforms. The trend towards performativity in the Singapore educational landscape is not a consequence unintended and unforeseen by a weak state that has caved in to neo-liberal rhetoric. Rather, it is a tactic used by a strong interventionist state that attempts to turn the tides of globalisation to its advantage. Looking ahead, we can expect the trend towards performativity in education to persist in Singapore. Just as certain will be interventionist responses from a strong state that is resolved to be successfully developmentalist.

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