



## CHAPTER 9

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# The Power of Life-Long Wellbeing for Academic Learning: The Singapore Model

This chapter explores how wellbeing can be successfully enacted for enhancing learning and development within school communities. The quality physical education (QPE), wellbeing and academic learning cycle (cf. Table 1.1, p. 17) aligns QPE to optimising academic learning through wellbeing. Literature and research throughout this book has clarified the wellbeing benefits as a result of QPE. Furthermore, QPE acts as the foundation for life-long engagement in physical activity and sport and therefore, enhances children's life-long wellbeing and holistic health (cf. p. 7). Subsequently, physical education provides a platform for wellbeing and wellbeing provides a platform for children's learning and development. Using the Singapore education system as a model, this chapter's purpose is to investigate how schools can enact wellbeing through the use of values, to optimise academic learning. Hence, this chapter relates to various elements of QPE (cf. Figure 1.2) including Curriculum, teaching and learning; Whole child development; School implementation; and Strength-based community partnerships.

## SINGAPORE MODEL: TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY LIFE-LONG LEARNING WITH PURPOSE

When it comes to academic learning, development and performance, Singapore is of particular interest for further investigation, not only because they are strong performers (world leaders) in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) but because they have been successful reformers in education.

When Singapore attained statehood in 1965, most of its two million people were illiterate and unskilled. The government moved fast to raise education standards. By the early 1970s all children had access to lower secondary education.

In 2009, Singapore participated for the first time in PISA. Its students scored an average 526 points in reading, putting Singapore in the top eight performers. In math, they scored an average 562 points, surpassed only by students in Shanghai, China. And in science, they scored 542 points, putting Singapore in the top four. (EduSkills OECD, [2012](#))

Hence, Singapore is “one of the very few countries in PISA that show consistent improvement over time; this is even more remarkable in light of the fact that Singapore is one of the highest-performing countries in PISA” (OECD, [2023](#)). Singapore is currently ranked first in the world for PISA results, scoring significantly higher than all other countries/economies in Mathematics (575 points), Reading (543 points) and Science (561 points) (OECD, [2023](#)).

Singapore has adopted a constructivist approach to education. This reasoning is explained by Professor Tan Oon Seng, former Director of National Institute of Education (NIE) (2014–2018) and Dean of Teacher Education (2008–2013).

In the early 1990s the teachers really were the monopoly of knowledge and they came to class to deliver that knowledge... but today knowledge is no more a monopoly among teachers because students can get knowledge from a myriad of sources. There is still a component of knowledge imparting but there is also a very large component of facilitation. That means facilitating the students, where they could get the right knowledge, how they could synthesise and discern the information they get. (Seng—EduSkills OECD, [2012](#))

Moreso, there are some salient characteristics and/or priorities embedded within the constructivist approach that have enabled Singapore's success. They are:

- A. Teachers are valued and respected—teachers are selected according to ability and application, education qualifications are highly regarded and prospective teachers are paid to study.
- B. Physical Education (PE) is offered and prioritised as a specialist learning area and is developmentally appropriate for the children in schools.
- C. Teacher education (NIE) researchers and Ministry of Education (MOE) Directors are passionate about children's development and are actively involved in schools and with children.
- D. School community members are identified as life-long learners and can evidence this through professional development. Teachers, like the children, are acknowledged and pride themselves as models, using values such as being curious, creative, collaborative, passionate, resilient, courageous and reflective.

### *Teachers are Valued and Respected*

In Singapore, the teacher was prioritised and perceived as the most significant stakeholder in developing the education system. “In Singapore and Finland, for example, nations that have been regarded as world leaders in education over the last 25 years, teachers are highly valued” (Lynch, 2022, p. 6). In Finland, for general basic and upper secondary education, all teachers are required to have a master's degree (Eurydice, 2024). Professor Christine Lee, Head of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at NIE (2006–2015), shares:

We deeply believe that the teacher is the key in bringing about changes. You can have all kinds of reforms, [at] the end of the day it is the teacher who has to deliver that, in the classroom and who will make a real difference to the learning of the pupils whom they are in touch with every day. (EduSkills OECD, 2012)

The Singaporean education system is built on the belief that no education system can be better than the quality of its educators. Hence, the

quality of educators is given the highest priority and great emphasis is placed on recruiting the right teachers.

Our teachers are recruited from the top one-third of every cohort of students and from that top one-third, go through a series of tests and interviews to ensure that we recruit teachers who are passionate about teaching and who care about students. Then they go through rigorous training [Initial Teacher Education] at the National Institute of Education. (EduSkills OECD, 2012)

The academic standard for teacher recruitment in Singapore is very high and prospective teachers evidence academic ability and application. It must also be taken into consideration that teacher recruitment is from the top one-third of student's academic achievements in a cohort within the world's highest nation for PISA results (2023) across maths, reading and science. "If you look at the status rankings of teachers in Singapore, they are accorded enormous social status by the community at large, so they're right up there with doctors, lawyers, judges" (EduSkills OECD, 2012).

A strong education system has enabled Singapore to develop from what was in the early years of independence, a very poor country, to a modern vibrant one with a strong economy. Well-trained and highly motivated teachers are acknowledged as being central to its success in nation building. This is shared by Ho Peng, former Director General of Education, Singapore Ministry of Education (2009–2015).

Teachers are extremely, extremely committed in Singapore. The teachers I speak with really want the best for their kids. There's a deep sense of pride, there's a deep sense of commitment and so education is seen as a means to build a nation. Since Independence, education has been a means by which we could forge a national identity, have Singaporeans come together as one. (EduSkills OECD, 2012)

Using the PISA results, there is a clear correlation globally between the quality of Initial Teacher Education and higher education of teachers within countries and the learning and development of students. "The tests explore how well students can solve complex problems, think critically and communicate effectively. This gives insights into how well education systems are preparing students for real life challenges and future success" (OECD, 2023). Education generally is important but for the

same reasons so too is Initial Teacher Education, setting a strong platform for future teachers.

*Physical Education (PE) is Offered and Prioritised as a Specialist Learning Area*

To become a teacher with the Ministry of Education in Singapore, teaching in Primary and Secondary schools, Junior Colleges and Centralised Institutes, there are a number of programmes and schemes available. The Diploma in Education (DipED) enables candidates to specialise in Physical Education, prospective teachers are specifically selected and are paid during their trial teaching stint and if selected, during their two years of intense study:

However, prior to admission into the DipEd programme, it is necessary to undertake a compulsory contract teaching stint. The stint allows the candidate to affirm their interest in teaching, and for the Ministry to further assess your suitability for the teaching profession. Only after successful completion of the contract teaching stint, will the candidate be enrolled in the DipEd programme at National Institute of Education (NIE). (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2024)

The second option is the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE); a full-time programme designed for degree holders who would like to become teachers. There are two types of PGDE programmes, one to teach in the classroom (or academic subjects) and one specifically for teaching PE.

The PGDE training programme provided by NIE aims to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach school subjects and better understand the teaching profession in Singapore's educational context... The teaching levels include Primary, Secondary or Junior College and each is 16 months in length. Candidates assigned to be teachers at the primary level are trained to teach in two subjects to develop stronger mastery of content and pedagogical skills. (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2024)

The second PGDE programme offered specialises in physical education, the PGDE (PE): "The candidate is trained to teach PE at both the primary and secondary levels. Dual-level training helps candidates to

understand growth and motor development across the school years, and their implications on teaching and learning" (MOE Singapore, 2024). The philosophy for all teachers including specialists is described by Professor Tan Oon Seng (NIE):

First of all we prepare a teacher to be first a teacher of the learner [quality and holistic teacher]. Secondly, to be a good teacher of the subject. So the essential foundation is that a good teacher must first of all be very passionate and clear about how to help people learn and how people learn best. (Eduskills OECD, 2012)

Both the DipEd and PGDE students earn money; the course is fully funded by the MOE Singapore and they are guaranteed 3 years teaching. A successful candidate:

receives a monthly salary of \$1,980 to \$2,830 while undergoing contract teaching stint in school and if successfully enrolled, during NIE training as well. Exact salary will depend on: academic training, relevant experience to teaching, time spent on the job, and whether the candidate has completed full-time National Service. (MOE Singapore, 2024)

Furthermore, if a teacher changes teaching levels during their teaching career (e.g. primary instead of secondary), NIE provides necessary training. Also, once they have completed their course, they are deployed in schools where they get further support from experienced teachers as mentors.

NIE is Singapore's national teacher training [Initial Teacher Education] institute. The MOE recruits prospective teachers and sends them to NIE for training. NIE:

play a key role in the initial preparation of Singapore teachers and the provision of teacher professional and school leadership development programmes. The university-based teacher education programmes leverage the strong partnerships that the NIE has with the Ministry of Education and Singapore schools to develop teachers who are grounded in theory and research, and strong in practice. (Nanyang Technological University Singapore, 2024)

***Teacher Education (NIE) Researchers and MOE Directors are Passionate About Children's Development and are Actively Involved in Schools***

Teacher education (NIE) researchers and directors are passionate about children's development and are actively involved in schools. NIE academics are research active and research projects involving children and learning include:

- Beginning Early: Singapore's ongoing study starting in infancy of twenty-first-century skills (21 CS), individual differences and variance in the environment (Be Positive Study).
- CORE Research Programme
- Exploring Creative Processes and Pedagogical Possibilities
- Empirically-Grounded STEM Education

There are student research projects and numerous active research centres/labs. (Nanyang Technological University Singapore, 2024). NIE has Academic Groups (AGs) including Masters and Doctoral degrees. However, AGs include undergraduate, graduate and professional learning working collaboratively:

the delivery agencies for undergraduate, graduate and professional learning courses in the resident programmes for teacher education and teacher development.

The AGs work closely with the Office of Teacher Education (OTE) and Graduate Studies and Professional Learning (GPL) to prepare school teachers and leaders.

They also provide research direction for each subject discipline and accomplish research to create knowledge and impact, which influence educational practice and policy within NIE and beyond. (Nanyang Technological University Singapore, 2024)

AGs represent Asian Languages and Cultures; English Language and Literature; Humanities and Social Studies Education; Learning Sciences and Assessment; Mathematics and Mathematics Education; Natural Sciences and Science Education; Physical Education and Sport Science; Policy, Curriculum and Leadership; Psychology and Child and Human Development; and Visual and Performing Arts.

Miss Ho Peng, former Director General of Education (2009–2015), Ministry of Education Singapore, explains:

We meet with schools and teachers very often. Every director here, in fact, will visit school at least 12 times a year. I went to a school just yesterday; you hear the teachers right, you hear the teachers and you know what the issues are on the ground. What are their concerns? How can we support them better? Teachers are your most precious resource and so I think developing teachers is what we pay a great deal of attention to. (Eduskills OECD, 2012)

*Educators are Identified as Life-Long Learners and can Evidence this Through Professional Development*

The final priority contributing to Singapore's constructivist approach and essential for enacting wellbeing within schools is that educators are identified as life-long learners and can evidence this through professional development. Teachers are acknowledged and pride themselves as being curious, creative, collaborative, passionate, resilient, courageous, explorers and reflective. The late Professor Lee Sing Kong, Director NIE (2006–2014) shared the significance of continuous professional development:

On an annual basis we graduate some 2,000 teachers for the school system. Secondly, we have 31,000 teachers in the education system and our policy rightly identifies that the professional development of the 31, 000 teachers in the school is as equally important as that of preparing new teachers. (Eduskills OECD, 2012)

This priority for professional development is given weightage within the MOE Singapore infrastructure. It offers three career tracks (fields of excellence) for educators to develop and progress. They are the: Teaching, School Leadership and Senior Specialist Track. Professor Tan Oon Seng explains:

There is quite a systematic approach towards developing teachers who are already in the schools. In fact, the ministry supports this professional development of teachers and recognises its importance by allowing every teacher to have an entitlement of 100 hours of professional development time to help her/him to become a better teacher. (Eduskills OECD, 2012)

Furthermore, “The Ministry is committed to supporting and developing each teacher’s potential to the fullest through a variety of professional development opportunities like training courses and conferences” (MOE Singapore, 2024).

Professional development packages and leave schemes, including scholarships and sponsorships, that support teachers in strengthening and upskilling themselves professionally in different areas of educational specialisation.

Teachers’ work attachment programme allows our teachers to take part in work attachments at organisations to broaden perspectives, create new learning experiences for professional development and to enrich their students’ learning.

Management and Leadership in Schools programme and Leaders in Education programme are milestone courses for high-potential Education Officers to prepare them for leadership roles.

There are also various institutes and academies, such as the Academy of Singapore Teachers, that work together in synergy to foster a stronger culture of professional collaboration and excellence.

Professor Christine Lee relates the professional development to the constructivist approach and specifically, life-long learning.

I think we are a deep believer of lifelong learning. At the pre-service level we cannot teach our beginning teachers everything [about] what it means to be a good teacher. We have to encourage our beginning teachers to come by and be involved with continual learning and in-service courses. There’s plenty of professional development opportunities for them and I think that access, and the support is, I think, the envy of many countries. (Eduskills OECD, 2012)

Similar to Finland (cf. p. 63), strength-based partnerships are imperative to optimise the learning opportunities. Finland’s constructivist approach draws many similarities with Singapore’s approach where context is prioritised, the curriculum is closely aligned with twenty-first-century life-long learning skills and innovation in delivery is encouraged. Furthermore, Finland strongly advocates genuine school and community partnerships through curriculum implementation: developing schools as learning communities; emphasising the joy of learning; emphasising collaborative atmosphere; promoting student autonomy in studying and in school life (European Commission, 2019).

In 2009, the Ministry of Education introduced the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to Singapore schools. PLCs provide a forum where teachers share and learn from each other with the specific intent of enhancing student learning. To date, 271 schools have created PLCs. Thanks to continuous dialogue and feedback, teachers improve their classroom skills and stay up to date with professional practice. (Eduskills OECD, 2012)

A study was conducted by Lynch (2015, 2016) investigating the learning environment underpinned by a strengths-based collaborative approach between universities (Initial Teacher Education) and schools. It was found that it did offer extended pre-service teacher learning opportunities and subsequently enhanced preparation. However, it didn't just happen, a 'hybrid space' needed to be created. "Hybrid space describes the ideal environment of shared partnership where knowledge is jointly created, and consequently, as too is collaborative egalitarianism between stakeholders". For collaborative leadership and teamwork:

are built on professional and respectful conversations about practice. Educators engage with different ways of thinking and working to critically reflect on their practice both individually and as a team, and contribute to curriculum decisions and quality improvement plans. Children's learning, development and wellbeing is optimised when educators communicate and share ideas and views about improving practice. (AGDE, 2022, p. 19)

Teacher educators from around the world are challenged to rethink their connections within school communities. Not only do educators benefit from learning communities but most importantly; "children thrive when they, their families and their educators work together in partnership to support their learning, development and wellbeing" (AGDE, 2022).

Ongoing learning can take place in many forms but often involves coming together as a community. life-long learning professional development may include:

professional learning experiences within settings, for example, professional conversations within teams, coaching and mentoring, professional reading, practitioner inquiry and participating in collaborative research projects. It may also include learning opportunities offered by others, for example, pursuing further study, attending professional conferences and completing professional learning programs. (AGDE, 2022, p. 19)

## LEARNING VALUES FOR WELLBEING IN SINGAPORE: ENHANCING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

It was during Ho Peng's time as Director General of MOE that the twenty-first century life-long learning competencies were formulated and holistic learning became a common educational goal. "In 2007 I led a small team to various systems to study the focus of education in these countries. These study trips yielded rich insights. From our scans and study trips, we drew up twenty-first century competencies... this 'Swiss roll' as it came to be known, connected all the pieces" (Academy of Principals Singapore, 2024).

As Director-General of Education, Miss Ho saw her greatest challenge in changing the mindsets of teachers and parents, helping them accept the idea that success in education is defined not so much by the 'A's one gets in examinations, but rather, what the child has gained in terms of intangible, non-quantifiable qualities in his/her character. It became an overriding goal to help schools, teachers and parents see that education goes beyond ensuring students do well academically. With passionate fervour, she believes that developing a child holistically is crucial for the future, "an important responsibility of our work". (Academy of Principals Singapore, 2024)

Holistic learning is supported and evidenced in a number of MOE advertisement videos located on their website and Youtube, which promote PE as an important learning area in their examples to enhance values such as respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care and harmony. (MOE Singapore, 2024)

For example, slogans such as;

- Teach lessons that outlast classes. *Values* that last a lifetime. As a teacher you build the foundation of education, equipping students with essential skills and sound *values* to prepare them for life. You will join the ranks of dedicated teachers who are committed to making a difference in the world, one student at a time.
- Be the one in your generation to shape the next generation.
- Embark on an unmatched leadership journey by shaping the *values* and character of the next generation.

The choice to prioritise PE in Initial Teacher Education and professional development is deliberate within MOE Singapore, as PE is embedded in holistic, life-long learning to develop wellbeing, which in turn optimises academic learning. Physical education is described “as the only curriculum subject whose focus combines the body and physical competence with values-based learning and communication, [which] provides a learning gateway to grow the skills required for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 6) (cf. p. 26). “Children’s personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development” (Department for Education, 2023, p. 9).

To help our students thrive in this fast-changing world, we have identified a suite of core values and competencies that are increasingly important. They underpin the holistic education that our schools provide to better prepare students for the future. (MOE Singapore, 2024)

One definition of values is that “Values are the guiding principles that underpin what people believe to be important when making decisions in all areas of private and public life” (OECD, 2021, p. 7). MOE Singapore’s Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes has, at its centre, the core values which include: respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care and harmony:

which are acknowledged as values that are at the foundation of our shared societal and national values.

- **Respect:** Our students demonstrate respect when they believe in their own self-worth and the intrinsic worth of people.
- **Responsibility:** Our students are responsible when they recognise they have a duty to themselves, their families, community, nation and the world, and fulfil their responsibilities with love and commitment.
- **Resilience:** Our students are resilient when they demonstrate emotional strength and persevere in the face of challenges. They show courage, optimism, adaptability and resourcefulness.
- **Integrity:** Our students demonstrate integrity when they uphold ethical principles and have the moral courage to stand up for what is right.

- **Care:** Our students are caring when they act with kindness and compassion, and contribute to the betterment of the community and the world.
- **Harmony:** Our students uphold harmony when they promote social cohesion and appreciate the unity and diversity of a multicultural society (MOE Singapore, 2024).

The core values sit within the five interconnected Social-Emotional Competencies: Self Awareness, Self Management, Responsible Decision-Making, Social Awareness and Relationship Management.

These are competencies necessary for children to develop healthy identities, recognise and manage their emotions, develop a sense of responsibility, care and concern for others, relate to others and develop positive relationships, handle challenges, make responsible decisions, and act for the good of self, others and the society. (MOE Singapore, 2024)

Emerging 21st Century Competencies “enable students to thrive in and beyond school while living, learning and working in rapidly changing, highly digitalised, and interconnected environments” and involve Critical, Adaptive and Inventive Thinking; Communication, Collaboration and Information Skills; and Civic, Global and Cross-Cultural Literacy. As illustrated in the Singapore model, research suggests that embedding values and attitudes into curriculum has a positive impact on wellbeing and academic development (OECD, 2021).

## GLOBAL VALUES FOR WELLBEING: ENHANCING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

As previously discussed, values for life-long learning and holistic education were not only evolving in Singapore during the turn of the century and/or immediately prior, but were also developing in schools across many parts of the world. Values have been significant and a purpose of most schools since they began. In 1971, Maslow argued; “the schools should be helping the children to look within themselves, and from this self-knowledge derive a set of values” (p. 185). Moreso, going back in history, the ancient Greek philosopher, “Aristotle said that Education is a moral pursuit in which everybody should flourish” (Hawkes, 2018). As shared by a counsellor on the Finnish National Board of Education, “A

curriculum for us doesn't have any standards or lesson plans or anything like that. We talk a lot about *values*, pedagogy and working culture. And the core of the new curriculum for basic education is growing as a human being, as a citizen" (Kantar Public Education Policy Group, 2016, p. 18). Specifically, in schools "Curricula can provide the opportunity for students to develop knowledge, skills, as well as *values* and attitudes that can support them to thrive and shape a better future towards increased well-being at individual, societal, and environmental levels" (OECD, 2021).

Values have been explicitly identified as being embedded in curriculum, including PE and Health, within many countries across the globe (OECD, 2021). The unique 'learning in, through and about movement' nature of HPE enables a focus on the physical dimension. Furthermore, values have always been present in education; predominantly with religious affiliation. Within Christianity, strong support for physical activities has come from many key figures throughout the history of the Catholic Church, including St. Paul; Clement of Alexandria; St Dominic; St. Thomas Aquinas; Pope Pius II; St. Ignatius; Pope Pius XI; Pope Pius XII; Aristotle; Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II (Feeney, 1995). In the Christian tradition such values that enable the development of holistic life-long learning are referred to as gospel values. "In the physical dimension students can be presented with many practical and social experiences that require living and reflecting upon Catholic religious traditions and gospel values" (Lynch, 2004, p. 7).

"The Catholic school has at the heart of the curriculum, the values contained in the gospels" (Kealey, 1985, p. 14). The Catholic Christian tradition provides 2000 years of reflection and teaching on Jesus and requires constant referral as growing and renewing occurs. The four gospels in the bible provide insights into Jesus and his mission, the challenge for Catholics is to live according to the values that Jesus models (Brisbane Catholic Education, 2003).

It is important to identify that values have been given more impetus, especially by secular schools (including international) and educators since the turn of the century, which is consistent with the decline of religious orders (Treston, 1992) and globalisation. Globalisation has involved:

Living in an interconnected world with cultural diversity, respect for others and intercultural understanding necessarily include showing respect to people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations or different

opinions and beliefs, even if it does not imply agreement with the others' views and beliefs. (OECD, 2021, p. 32)

Within Catholic Education schools have similar but different values depending on their denomination or religious order. For example, the Brisbane Catholic Education (Australia) system identifies the values of Excellence, Integrity, Justice and Hope (Catholic Identity, 2024). St. Margaret Mary's Catholic primary school in Sydney Catholic Education, New South Wales (Australia) identifies the Brigidine Sister's values of justice, love, peace, inclusion and stewardship as the cornerstone of their school (Sydney Catholic Schools, 2024). St. Joseph's College (Years 7–12), Geelong (Australia) community "are committed to continue education in the Catholic tradition, through the example of Jesus Christ, our beginning and end. Moved by the story of Edmund Rice and inspired by the gospel values of *love and justice*, we encourage one another 'to strive for the highest', to develop and *use our talents and abilities*, and to *respect and show compassion* towards others" (St. Joseph's College Geelong, 2024).

Padua College (Years 5–12), Brisbane (Australia) educates and inspires young men to live in the spirit of the Gospel following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226).

We provide a Catholic education that develops young men of wisdom, service and quiet strength. Values include *Joy, Courtesy, Humility, Simplicity and Peace*. We draw on these values from the Gospel and our Franciscan heritage to guide and inform our practices. (Padua College, 2024)

The increasingly significant role Catholic schools play in the holistic development is captured by Lynch (2004, p. 10):

For many students today, the Catholic school is often their only experience of Church (Puttock, 2002). Therefore, the role religious education and HPE play and their relationship within the Catholic school has increased in recent times. Subsequently, the HPE specialist teacher has assumed the responsibility of contributing 'hands on' learning experiences that connect the HPE and religious education curriculum. This role occurs often subconsciously by the Catholic HPE teacher and therefore, exists without acknowledgement. The implications of this are that the importance of the HPE specialist teacher and the importance of the HPE curriculum

within Catholic education are often undervalued and the learning and teaching potential of this key learning area is often not fully utilized. (Lynch, 2004, p. 10)

If HPE has strong connections with Catholic values then the same can be said for all religious values; “Throughout history, physicality has been closely linked with religion literally and symbolically” (Macdonald, 1998, p. 86). Hence, values are not evidenced in only Catholic religious schools, rather they have been explicitly advocated in all religious schools. Furthermore, children come to school with diverse understandings of values, some have no understanding of words such as respect and tolerance while others do (Hawkes, 2018). It is argued that religions share common values and

that followers of different religions share common ground at the level of their morality, despite their disagreements over doctrine and metaphysical beliefs... This theory maintains that beneath the varying beliefs and practices of different peoples can be glimpsed natural laws concerning moral conduct, laws grounded in basic facts about common human existence. (Donovan, 1986, p. 368)

This theory is supported by Faith Impact Project’s research; overarching values of Buddhism, Catholicism, Islam, Judaism and Protestantism.

While these five world religions may be distinct from each other in terms of, for instance, creed, belief system, scriptures, law and traditions, they have one important thing in common. Namely, they provide an ethical code or moral guidance for humans to live by, with the aim of ensuring common good and a prosperous existence for all.

Hence, the Faith Impact Project identified five overarching themes that are shared among the religions. These include *Stewardship, Justice, Solidarity and compassion, Balance and Peace* (The Faith Impact Project, 2024).

For example, a Jewish School located in Brooklyn, New York (USA), Hannah Senesh Community Day School, shares that they are guided in all that they do by their values, which are deeply rooted in Jewish teachings:

- Kindness—Chesed—**חסד**—We treat each other with respect and strive to demonstrate compassion and empathy.
- Openness—Elu v’Elu—**אלו ואלו**—We seek to understand and welcome diverse ideas and perspectives.
- Belonging—Shayachut—**שייכות**—We create a culture that honours the dignity and self-worth of each person.
- Responsibility—Areivut—**ערכות**—We support the well-being of others in our community and the world around us.
- Perseverance—Hatmadah—**התמדה**—We approach learning as a continuous journey and persist through challenges. (Hanah Sanesh, 2024).

Another example is The Islamic School of Irving, which is a Pre-k through 12th accredited Islamic school in Texas (USA). Their school mission is “To provide our children an environment which will enable them to achieve their highest potential, founded on Islamic morals, scholastic excellence, and good citizenship”. Their values include: *Committed balanced Muslims, Knowledgeable scholars, Contributing citizens and community builders*. The school prioritises Faith (Imaan), Prayer (Salah) and Strong Moral Character (Akhlaaq). (Islamic School of Irving, 2024).

Avanti House Primary School is a Hindu faith school based in Harrow, London. With the purpose of inspiring spiritually compassionate change-makers. It states it is distinctive because it uses a values-based approach to education.

This encourages students to value self, others and the environment and empowers them to be effective learners as well as good citizens. The school offers a traditional and extensive curriculum, but also offers a focused study of Ethics, Philosophy, Sanskrit, Meditation and Yoga. (Avanti House Primary School, 2024)

The school achieves its purpose through six virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards): *Self-discipline, Respect, Empathy, Integrity, Courage and Gratitude* (Avanti House Primary School, 2024).

Pal Buddhist School is located in Canley Vale, New South Wales (Australia), and their “school ethos, inspired by the timeless teachings of the Buddha, forms the foundation of our [their] educational environment and profoundly influences the experiences of our [their] students” (Pal

Buddhist School, 2024). Pal Buddhist School's values are: *compassion, good-will, selfless-joy, patient understanding, resilient and fruitful*.

There is evidence from across the globe that the implementation of values enhances the wellbeing of children in schools, illustrated by OECD's research report (2021); Embedding Values and Attitudes in Curriculum: Shaping a Better Future. "Despite the variety of values espoused in national curricula, there is an emerging trend in prioritising values that enhance well-being and learning across different countries". However, this report also identifies the difficulties that schools have in implementing values at the deep level required;

incorporating values and attitudes in curriculum design and implementation does not come without its challenges—values and attitudes can be intensely contested constructs. However, it [the report] also examines the desire by authorities to see curriculum reflecting future-focused goals to improve society as a stronger imperative for countries/ jurisdictions than the challenges presented. (OECD, 2021)

OECD identifies aspirational values cited for citizens, across countries, authorities and international bodies. The universal values are Human dignity, respect, equality, justice, responsibility, global-mindedness, cultural diversity, freedom, tolerance and democracy. These values shape shared futures built on the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the planet (OECD, 2021). Subsequently, there are nine competencies (attitudes, values and skills) that are directly related to these values: *Reflection, Collaboration and cooperation, Learning to learn, Respect, Responsibility, Empathy, Self-regulation, Persistence and Trust* (OECD, 2021, p. 48). These nine competencies will be investigated in more detail in Chapter 10.

## REFLECTION

This chapter explores the successful enactment of wellbeing and the impact it has on academic learning. Thinking about the Singapore model characteristics, where do they sit within your context? Specifically, in what ways are teachers valued and respected? How is PE prioritised? In what ways do teachers work collaboratively with Teacher Educators? What are the core values of your community? How do teachers model the core values of your community?

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