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Abstract

Schools in the Singapore education system have traditionally served two key functions: economic sustainability and social cohesion. Even though the desired outcomes of Singapore education have given greater emphasis to values-based and student-centric education, maintaining social cohesion remains to be fundamental to a small multiracial nation state. This chapter thus focuses on the latter—describing the evolution of policy initiatives pertinent to nation building. The introduction of the new Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum to all schools in 2014 marks the most recent system-wide policy initiative that emphasises character and citizenship development. Three school leaders from different school contexts were interviewed to elicit their views and roles concerning CCE implementation, and the challenges and lessons learnt in their leadership roles in CCE are elaborated in this chapter. Among others, it is essential that CCE is not another add-on to educators' work profile—rather something that is pervasive throughout students' experiences in school. Hence, building communities within schools that truly value character and citizenship.

11.1 Introduction

Nation states require citizens for defensive purposes, and to pursue and sustain policies aimed at the common good. Schools have a part in the moral development of the young, and to socialise them into values necessary for the survival and growth of the country. Moral and character formation would seem to be an integral

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part of citizenship education (Althof and Berkowitz 2006; Halstead and Pike 2006). As societies become increasingly pluralistic and complex with economic globalisation, more governments have taken greater interest in character and citizenship education (Arthur 2003; Berkowitz and Bier 2007). Economic progress has led to concerns about selfish behaviour and declining moral standards (Arthur 2005; Law 2006). On the other hand, there are increasing concerns that communities are being divided along socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and religious lines (Keddie 2014; Fleming and Lovat 2014). Schools clearly have a vital role to play in helping to unify people of different backgrounds and beliefs to live and work together (Halstead and Pike 2006). And although much has been said about the character/moral and citizenship education, there is a gap in the research on the role that school leaders play in promoting it (Xu and Law 2015).

11.2 The National Education

Since Singapore's independence in 1965, character and citizenship education has always been an area of national concern. However, in 1997, a watershed period for Singapore education, the National Education (NE) was introduced as one of the several policy initiatives. It is considered especially necessary for a young country with a multi-ethnic population, and as an essential component of the country's nation-building project. It was also formed in response to official concerns about students' lack of knowledge of Singapore's history. The objectives of NE is to develop national cohesion; to raise awareness of challenges and constraints on the country's development; cultivate in students the instincts for survival; and instill in them confidence in the future of the country. At the same time, NE has become an increasing challenging topic to teach. In 2007, the then Minister of State for Education Lui Tuck Yew reported that while students enjoyed NE in primary school, "they became somewhat skeptical of NE at the secondary level and beyond. A good number found Social Studies, which they equated most with NE, as burdensome, boring or worse, relegated it to 'propaganda'" (MOE 2007). As students progressed from primary to secondary school their attitude towards NE became "more apathetic and cynical" (MOE 2007).

Since Singapore's independence, the curriculum for character and citizenship education was reported to have undergone as many as 12 changes (Lee 2013). Notwithstanding the various developments that had taken place pertaining to character education (e.g. Civics and Moral Education, Social and Emotional Learning) and citizenship education (e.g. NE curriculum), the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum, introduced in 2014, seeks to integrate both character and citizenship education together. The CCE curriculum was developed partly in response to changes in the external environment. Economic growth not only brought about a widening wealth/income gap, it was also accompanied by a large influx of foreign workers resulting in greater sociocultural diversity in the country. This, together with increasing complexity in economic and political

developments in the country, has contributed to an urgent call for a national curriculum that not only addresses the role of educating the young about the nation's history (as in the case of NE), but also to help shape students into “good persons and responsible citizens” (Heng 2011).

11.3 Character and Citizenship Education

One prominent feature of the CCE curriculum is that it is designed for learning to pervade all levels and aspects of the school system. The CCE syllabus is underpinned by six core values (Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Integrity, Care and Harmony) and three overarching ideas (Identity, Relationships and Choices). These three overarching ideas are covered in six domains, starting with (i) Self (Being who I am and becoming who I can be) and extending to the (ii) Family (Strengthening family ties), (iii) School (Fostering healthy friendships and team spirit), (iv) Community (Understanding our community and building an inclusive society), (v) Nation (Developing a sense of national identity and nation building) and the (vi) World (Being an active citizen in a globalised world).

The CCE curriculum comprises the following components (MOE 2014):

1. *CCE lessons*: Time is set aside for the explicit teaching of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.
2. *Form Teacher Guidance Period (FTGP)* (in primary schools only): This is dedicated to the teaching of social and emotional competencies and building teacher–student relationship.
3. *School-based CCE*: This can be featured in any school programmes such as Co-curricular Activities (CCAs), Values in Action (VIA)¹ programmes, school-wide commemoration of the four key NE events and any assembly programmes linked to CCE.
4. *CCE Guidance Module*: Here, specific programmes such as Education and Career Guidance, Sexuality Education and Cyber Wellness are undertaken.

School leaders are required to customise the national CCE curriculum to their specific contexts. They have to design and implement school-based programmes to achieve the objectives of CCE in a holistic manner. Teachers, under the leadership of their school leaders and management team, play a pivotal role in the effective implementation of the new CCE curriculum. They are responsible for breathing life into the new CCE curriculum, making the plans meaningful in the lives of each child. Teachers are constantly reminded on the four key principles in implementing the CCE curriculum:

1. “Every teacher a CCE teacher”
2. “Values are both taught and caught”

¹VIA programmes focus on the development of students' civic consciousness and often involve participation in community-based projects.

3. “Engage students through varied modes of delivery”
4. “Parents as key partners”

CCE is expected to become the culture of every school. Every adult in the school environment plays an important role, directly or indirectly, in educating each child. Besides the primary roles of school leaders, teachers and parents, other stakeholders in the larger community are also enlisted to help enrich the teaching of CCE. The new curriculum includes platforms for schools to engage and develop close partnerships and collaboration with community groups such as the National Heritage Board, National Parks Board, Health Promotion Board, Ministry of Defence, other educational institutions, as well as private institutions to promote character and citizenry values.

Bearing in mind the growing importance of character and citizen education along with challenges that bear upon it faced by leaders and teachers in schools, it is therefore important—as much as interesting—to have a greater sensing at what is taking place at the ground level. This chapter attempts to offer a perspective on character and citizenship education from the perspective of Singapore school leaders.

11.4 Method

To understand how Singapore school leaders interpret and drive the CCE curriculum, the interviews were carried out with three school leaders, one each from a primary school, a secondary school and a junior college. They were purposively selected because they have in place a CCE framework. The difference in the different school types serves to uncover similarities and differences, if any. Once informed consent was given, data was collected from one-to-one interviews. The collected data was analysed according to the questions outlined below.

1. What are your general views of the CCE curriculum?
2. How do you interpret and implement the CCE in your school?
3. What role do you play in the implementation of the CCE?
4. What are the problems and challenges you face in implementing or enacting the CCE?
5. What leadership and management lessons did you learn from your experience in the implementation or enactment of the CCE?

11.5 Principals’ General Views of CCE

One common view among the three principals is that the CCE policy initiative is not “new” as all schools have been carrying out lessons and school programmes on values inculcation and citizenship education. One principal noted:

Character development and citizenship education has always been important in Singapore schools. In this sense the recent CCE curriculum is not new. We already had in place various national initiatives such as Civics & Moral Education (CME), National Education (NE) and Co-curricular Activities (CCA), as well as the more recent 21st Century Competencies Framework (21CC)...What is essentially new here is the consolidation of these existing national initiatives under a single framework and to build upon current good practices so that CCE remains relevant to prepare our students for the future.

On the other hand, the new CCE policy is a welcome gesture as there is a clear focus on the holistic development of the child. Furthermore, the principles underlying the new CCE curriculum are clearly aligned to the “Student-Centred, Values-Driven” initiative introduced by Education Minister Heng See Kiat (Heng 2011). The principal further noted:

There’s this clear focus on holistic development of the child, and it’s also in alignment with what the Ministry is advocating - students being values-driven in education.

Another principal added:

The new 21st C competencies framework is a timely and effective way to renew the purpose and direction of CCE, as it is anchored on R³ICH (Respect, Resilience, Responsibility, Integrity, Care, Harmony) values and SEL (Social Emotional Learning) competencies ... Such clearer sense-making and stronger signalling of the importance of CCE affirm the commendable efforts of schools in providing a holistic education, and helps to motivate them to continuously explore innovative and effective pedagogies to customise CCE for their students.

The principals also found the integration of several civics and nation-building initiatives into a single integrated framework timely and beneficial. One principal summarised the benefit:

More and more parents and teachers are recognising the importance of having the right values and commitment to the wellbeing of the country. So when the CCE policy was rolled out, it reinforced what we have been doing and provided further support as well. It deepens the conviction, the commitment level.

In the secondary school, entrepreneurship values are integrated into the CCE curriculum. Students are encouraged to develop sustainable social enterprises, and are empowered to select any charitable organisation to help. Through these activities, they learn a variety of skills—planning and budgeting, product pricing, branding, marketing, accounting—in line with the school’s Learning for Life Programme. The principal observed that,

By creating all these entrepreneurship programmes, the teachers found that the students were talking about their (social enterprise) activities during their oral exams. So we’re actually giving them things to think about, content for their orals as well as for their writing.

Delivery of CCE lessons at the post-secondary levels is generally student-led and theme-based to inject CCE with an element of fun. In the case of the post-secondary school, the implementation of CCE programmes has led to improved results in the school’s key survey indicators such as the Quality of School Experience (QSE) and MOE NE Study. For example, in the MOE NE study, the

school performed above the national junior college average. The secondary school principal attributed this to the approach taken in CCE implementation:

These results reflect the success of our CCE in providing a holistic education that enhances the quality of school experience for our students. Involvement in meaningful VIA (Values in Action) projects have helped to shape positive perception towards national education.

The secondary school principal also reported improvement in the school's staff engagement scores, which he attributes partly to the holistic approach required by the CCE framework:

Our main driver for Staff Engagement was Innovation, which scored a high 81%. These results could be attributed to the successful way the college engages staff in terms of role modelling, clear communication, staff ownership and capacity building that was partly inspired by the implementation of CCE.

11.6 Interpretation and Implementation

It is evident that the CCE policy initiative is about revisiting current practices in the teaching and learning of values in schools. It is a call at the systemic level for all schools to review and rethink the context of providing a holistic education in schools. As one principal pointed out:

The CCE policy is not new. To me, it is about a sharper focus. So I look back at what we have, why we have that, and that is why we must be very clear about our own vision, and how CCE fits into that vision.

This notion of alignment and “fitting” into the existing school vision is a pragmatic one. As each policy initiative is rolled out to schools, the principals need to interpret and make sense of the policy before communicating to the others in the school community. In situations where there is a “perfect fit”, implementation would be less cumbersome.

The primary school principal shared:

When we talk about CCE, every teacher is a CCE teacher. So there's no such thing as English teacher, Maths teacher, Science teacher. Every teacher is a CCE teacher...And with regard to “student-centric, values-driven”—we kept linking it back to our vision, to the strategic thrust so that the teachers didn't see it as an add-on work. It was already in existence in the school. So now we only need to convince teachers that the quality of implementation can be worked on and improved

The secondary school principal said,

In my school, the alignment (between CCE and the school's values) is clear. Service to community is part of nation-building. We're preparing our kids here to love their country, to serve the people, not just serve Singaporeans but the community. We embrace visitors, guests, people who come into Singapore. So it fits into our frame, and with that, we very quickly adopted CCE in our creative way.

The junior college principal said the following:

Many current practices in terms of CCE learning objectives, approaches, processes and programme are aligned to the previous initiatives such as CME, NE and CCA which are under the new CCE Framework. Yet we know that beyond the MOE-based CCE Syllabus, we can better leverage CCE to support academic excellence for the unique profile of our students who need to strive hard to achieve academic excellence and balance other non-academic commitments, as well as to differentiate CCE for students of varying abilities.

We ask ourselves questions like, after 10 years of education (in primary and secondary school), when they come to our doors, what do we have to give them in terms of CCE? One would imagine that they've gone through many, many assembly talks, and CCAs and leadership camps, and many things. So we want to build on the good work, and still ask, so what more can we offer them?

So our core focus will be to give them leadership so that they can become leaders. Then the next part of this will be to say, so how does this relate to the Vision? Basically we're talking about championing change, we're talking about developing leaders and advocates. That's where the three tiers come in—first you lead yourself, then lead others, and finally become leaders of leaders.

The responses of the school leaders reflect their efficacy in understanding and interpreting the intent of policy initiatives. Their constant reflection and sense-making of the CCE curriculum within the framework of their respective school's vision and values ensure that the overall school programmes and structures to support these initiatives are comprehensive, integrated and implementable by the staff.

11.7 Role of School Leader in Implementing CCE

School leaders play a pivotal role in the effective implementation of the CCE policy. They lead as strategic thinkers, people developers, curriculum leaders and network partners. Their roles are multifaceted and demanding. They have to strategically identify the appropriate key personnel to drive the CCE policy initiative. This has to be further supported by the school leader in numerous ways so as to engage the staff and stakeholders in the effective delivery of the school-wide CCE programmes.

The following are the principals' responses about their leadership roles:

As a leader, a very important thing is to establish the goals and vision concerning CCE. Why is that important? We have to make things clear. This also helps to build trust - people know what is expected of them. There is less fear of change because you are transparent about what you expect from your staff. My role is also to work with the relevant people, so we work towards a plan that is owned by everyone, because if that plan is not owned by everyone, the rate of success will not be at a desired level. But it's also about resourceing strategically, because there are so many things to do at a school level. So how do we resource strategically? How do you mobilize the team here in such a way that you get

maximum impact? And finally, my role, be it for CCE or for anything, I always believe in getting my staff to reflect the 'Care to Learn' principle.

I see myself as a facilitator. MOE has good intentions. They have a task force that looks into what is urgently needed; they have the overview, the wide perspective. On the other hand, our teachers are occupied with the knowledge-based things, focused on academics for the kids. As school leaders we need to make sure other aspects of schooling are attended to. So if directives from MOE come down in chunks, and even if MOE trains our middle managers, we cannot be sure that they will be able to advocate these policies. So it's up to me, as principal. I take what the Ministry says and filter it down. I have to reflect on it and unpack it. I think about what I have to do to move it into the school, and translate it so that it is strategic, innovative, and that there can be tangible outcomes so that students and teachers can experience success and achievement.

School leaders also play key roles in strategic deployment. A top priority is to identify appropriate internal leaders at various levels amongst the middle management team to help in spearheading the implementation of CCE. One principal explained:

When you want to do something major, you need a driver; sometimes you need more than one driver. When there is no specific driver, there will be a lot of gaps. So we have to hand-pick drivers. So for each of the components, I match the personality of the person to the job. If you talk about the Community Outreach, I pick a person whose HR is very strong, and who's willing to go beyond the call of duty at all times, because if you're talking about working with the community, you're talking about interacting with parents, residents, and businesses. When you talk about leadership, you're talking about somebody who is very interested in the development and enhancement of kid. So we have to find someone who is absolutely good with promoting children's growth and development.

Strategic deployment may require internal reshuffling of job responsibilities and even changes in job descriptions. The principal used the term "re-choreographing" to describe how she reorganised key personnel in the school to support the implementation of the CCE:

We found one HOD who is very interested in social enterprise, but he is heading another department. As a leader, I don't want second best. So what we did was to ask him to surrender his second-in-command, and groom that second-in-command to take over his department so that we can have this person for the Social Enterprise programme. So we are looking for the best match and we will not compromise. That means that if we have found a suitable leader, we will work at morphing and re-choreographing our team.

In Singapore schools, the overall organisational structure is designed and defined by school leaders. Vice-principals support the principal and oversee the work of a team of middle leaders that include the Heads of Department (HOD), Subject Heads (SH), Level Heads (LH), Senior Teachers (ST), Lead Teachers (LT). The team of middle managers, in turn, oversees the work of teachers under their respective purviews. In the implementation of the CCE policy, one overriding principle is that "All teachers are CCE teachers". A cross-disciplinary approach is adopted at a strategic level to mobilise the entire management team and encourage ownership and participation by as many staff members as possible. For example, the secondary school leader explained:

We have to collapse the departments. As the Humanities and Student Management teams work very closely, we decided to merge them into one to handle the CCE. Then we felt, this is still not enough, because it's really very broad. So we talked about it and appointed a Level Head who also happens to be Subject Head for Partnership, because we see Character and Citizenry very much a part of the Partnership framework. Next, we shifted a HOD from another department to head Innovation, because now we need someone to connect with industries and community organisations outside... We like to reach out to everyone so that no one is left behind, and in order to do that we have decided that we will do CCE via CCAs (Co-curricular activities).

In the context of CCE, school leaders have to ensure that national messages and symbols are taken seriously. For example, a school leader shared how she approached the challenge of making the national anthem meaningful for students:

One of the very basic things that we need to instil is national pride in the students. If we are not proud enough, not willing to sing the National Anthem, then how can we go on from here? So we started off with giant, humongous displays of the translation of the National Anthem at the parade ground.² So when they stand there, they sing and they look up and see the English translations of the anthem. So for the next four years that they spend at school, they will remember the translation and when they go out, when people talk about the National Anthem, they know what it means.

School leaders need to “walk the talk”, and be role models who live the values of character and citizenship. They role model to the management team on how to deliver clear communication, build up staff ownership and facilitate capacity building so that the management team can in turn engage other staff members. They have to be more conscious about the symbolic dimensions of their actions as leaders. This was aptly expressed by the junior college principal:

The college has a policy for all staff and students to ensure that work is not compromised. Using the Learning Organisation concept of creative tension, the college sets high expectations, and ensures that there is “high care” in managing the creative tension. As principal I must ensure that all of us are not only acting in alignment with our values, but must be seen to be doing so. This may create more work for staff, so it's important for school leaders to provide even greater support such as creating time and space for discussions on CCE teaching and learning. The bottom line is to ensure that all things are considered in an integrated way and that all the various aspects of school programmes are synergistic and sustainable over time.

In engaging parents, school leaders ensure that they communicate with them on a regular basis by organising briefings, disseminating letters and providing information that directly or indirectly addresses school values to garner support from parents as partners in values and citizenship education. In the primary school CCE curriculum, MOE has made available textbooks and workbooks to engage parents. In addition, schools develop their own resources to encourage parental

²A distinctive feature of Singapore is that it has four official languages: English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil reflecting the dominant ethnic groups in the country. Malay is the national language of the country. At the daily flag-raising ceremony, students sing the national anthem and recite the national pledge. The national anthem is in Malay, a language that is not familiar to the majority of non-Malay students.

participation; for example the primary school has developed a booklet to persuade parents about the importance of a holistic education:

It's a booklet of values. But we try to be subtle about it. When briefing parents, certain key messages will be inserted...let's say a P6 briefing, one of the key things I'll always say before I speak, is, 'Yes, PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examination) is important, but what must always come first? The character of the child. He may end up with 4 A stars, but if the child is not resilient, he is not able to work with others, then we have failed as parents and we have failed as a school.

The primary school principal also shared:

I've ensure that these values that we are trying to inculcate in the children are reflected in the letters I write to parents every term. I will get input from my KP and teachers on some of the things that are happening in school and link them to the different platforms for PSG (Parent Support Group). So it's our conversation to create that buy-in and that awareness.

11.8 Problems and Challenges

One challenge that school leaders face is the issue of beliefs and mind sets of teachers and parents. At the primary school, a perpetual challenge is one of overemphasis on academic pursuits at the expense of values inculcation:

At the end of the day, in the primary school, the PSLE is the most important thing. So it's that perpetual challenge. I always have to convince teachers that if the pupils get these values right, it helps them in their learning. Let's say, for example, that they get the value of resilience right, this will have a positive impact on teaching and learning, we need to see this connectivity. EL (English language), Maths, Science and Mother Tongue subjects are important but that linkage to values is as important. So it is a perpetual challenge in schools. I feel that principals really have to talk about this constantly, and the words we use are critical. We have to convince and pull at their heartstrings and let them see that if we can get a child to overcome some setback. Isn't that preparing him to do better?

She continued:

So I always say: every teacher is a CCE teacher, every child is your child. Teachers must be very alert to children's' behaviour and wellbeing. They must always be on the lookout for teachable moments either to correct certain behaviors or to reinforce good ones. So these are things that we don't take for granted.

The second set of challenges has to do with parents. Children often observe or experience tensions between the values at home and those promoted in school. In addition, principals often have to support and guide teachers in handling the few "difficult and unreasonable parents".

The numbers (of difficult and unreasonable parents) are rising, that's one. Number two, I think it demands a lot of school leadership, you really need to have more interaction with the parents. Having said it all, that's how I also provide support to my staff. One difficult case with such parents can really deplete the teacher's energy.

Younger, less experienced teachers are usually less confident and even fearful in tackling issues of values conflict involving parents. The principal's presence, support and assurances become even more important during such times. With regard to these situations, one principal's constant message to teachers is: "do not fear, do what is right". She would also remind teachers:

Let me just ask you all one question, which I always ask myself: What percentage [of difficult parents] is this? Perhaps 1% or 2% at worst. Why we are allowing these to drain us? Let us look at the other 98%. Are they not appreciative? We have so many emails from appreciative parents. So doesn't that tell you that we have been successful? We are building partnerships; we are winning the support of the parents. So I said look at the cup - half full or half empty? The choice is ours.

It has also been said that it helps to remind teachers not to lose sight of the "big picture":

I said, "We have got to be very sensitive and alert, the environment has changed, so let us respond accordingly". We now have more and more challenging parents. It's very difficult, even personally for me. But I say, we walk in calm, and ask, "What is her [parent] goal? To support her child. What is our goal? To support the child." So let's start with that common understanding." So it helps us, otherwise it gets very tough because the teachers get very fearful, and I can see that they are very upset too.

The third set of challenges relates to the skill set of teachers. One of the school leaders offered the following incident as an example:

Last week when I walked around to monitor, I found that the teachers misunderstood the intent of the CCE journals. We introduced the journal reflections a year ago, and they still need a reminder. Last term we did House Practice. So this term we had to go back to CCE journals. The linkages are not as strong as I wanted them to be. So for the 1 or 2 CCEs that I observed, I wondered whether the teachers remembered the underlying rationale of the exercise. So I called in my KP and the CCE Head Department and said, "Alright, what happened here? Why did I hear this? What's happening on the ground? Did we communicate this adequately?" So we had a meeting this morning before assembly. My key message to teachers is, 'What is our end goal? Character and Citizenship Education – is it just the values and SEL? So what should I be seeing? I should see you facilitating, and students' responses should be coming in.' So this is our way of providing support.

While CCE is important, school leaders are also mindful of the demands on students' time in both the academic and co-curricular domains. A case in point is shared by the secondary school principal:

We are at the stage where we're trying very hard to motivate students to a higher platform and encouraging them saying, "You can do better. You're capable of leap-frogging into the next band." We take up more of their time, when I say more time, I literally mean more time because we're creating a lot of platforms for them to do all these things. It means everybody is fighting for time, for these kids' time. And this is a challenge in itself, a real challenge for us.

Her concern for the less academically inclined students is another challenge faced in school. She continued:

To me, the challenge now is to find that right balance for our kids so that they will not lose out in any way. The character building and their academic results pose a challenge to us. With good character building, we hope that they will be responsible people, and therefore they will study, right? They will prepare for their exams, they will prepare their work, and they will learn, and we believe that if they do well, their confidence is up, and they feel that they're more ready to contribute to the community—a virtuous cycle. We find that certain cohorts are very receptive, and they are going forward at full speed. But then what about those who are falling behind? That means they are grappling with their academics. So now it's time after one and a half years, to sit back at our next strategic planning session, to do a lot of review and ask ourselves very pertinent questions as to, even though it's CCE, can it be customised? We can't do everything by mass.

11.9 Leadership and Management Lessons

Through their experiences in leading in the implementation of the new CCE policy, the three school leaders have learned many lessons. The following summarise their learning:

1. *Principal as Chief Learner, Role Model and Being Present*

One principal personally involved in the entire process of CCE implementation shared that one key lesson for her is to lead and role model as a learner. She noted that the presence of school leaders at platforms where teachers are attending, for example, at CCE training or any MOE events that involved teachers is important for the principal as a symbolic leader carry powerful symbolic meaning to her staff. She said:

While leading, I'm learning alongside with my staff. So it is important for me to be present as a learner, and to share with them that I too am learning, and I don't have all the answers. It is very important that even when I'm not there, that my presence is felt. I do this by sending out emails, to check on certain things, or to encourage them and to show them that I'm involved, I'm aware of what's happening, so that they feel my presence.

Another principal came to a similar conclusion:

I've learnt with my people, with my team, that CCE becomes even more powerful when the hard sciences are integrated with the Humanities. And that's why we're using the Sciences, the Math, the Principles of Accounts (POA), especially POA, to drive the Community Outreach Programmes. So as a principal I'm actually learning, and new possibilities are opening up even more. I realise that my perspective has to expand each year. Each school that I go to, my thinking has to be revised. And I must be ready to do that, and as a principal if I keep on relying on my past experiences it's not going to work. I have to keep on embracing what is new, and always be prepared to learn.

2. *Accept Messiness While Managing Change*

Change is often messy. The impact of new policies, like CCE, can be a positive or negative experience for staff, depending on the mindset and perspective of the school leader. The principal's attitude towards change determines how things will pan out in the process of implementation. As one principal noted:

If you want to create a culture of change, it's not only about establishing structures. You have to accept that there will be messiness, there will be people disagreeing. All these cannot be fully controlled. So how do you manage this? That's where I feel relationship-building comes in ... Use existing structures, like my PLC, to support personal development, build programme coherence. Your people must help and care for one another, respect each other for the organisation to grow. So knowledge-creation and sharing also impacts some of these structures, because knowledge is about people, right? And finally, we must always have trust in the dynamics of change, so that the initially chaotic situations will eventually give way to something more stable. And I think as a leader, if I don't have the answers, I should not feel afraid to say, I don't have the answers, but I'm learning and make that conscious effort to find out.

3. *Shared Leadership and Management*

As experienced school leaders, their past successes may not always be useful or relevant with respect to new initiatives, as one principal observed:

I find that my cohort teachers, majority are very young, and this is something that I really need to think very carefully about whenever I disseminate information, when I communicate with them. Because of my background and experience, I harbour certain assumptions that have served me well. But even though they are dear to me, I may have to discard them. In the past I had not been able to discard them in a timely manner. Consequently, I was caught in situations where I could not move in the direction I had planned and I had fallen back a little bit in such cases... So now I have learned to suspend judgment, to put more effort into getting to know people, and to share openly. As I get to know the people, it's become easier to convince the management team to be on board with me. I realise that things move better, faster, when my drivers are more committed, willing and keen to steer the school with me.

4. *Build Human Capital*

School leaders as people developers are strategic in planning for their staff to be continually developed professionally. In the case of CCE, building human capital is a natural step following strategic deployment of team leaders and teams to implement the CCE programmes. This is essential for a stronger sense of ownership and empowering staff to be effective enablers of the new CCE policy. One principal shared:

As a principal, I was there also, to make sure that they were free to go down, learn and then to give them that structure for follow-up, and to ensure that there's collaboration when they come back, because very importantly I'm grooming that human capital. As principal you've got to be very mindful of the human capital, and you have to consciously build that human capital in your school for things to happen. ... It's when your people are able to make sound decisions,... this is still work-in-progress, because you find that decisional capacity—the

teachers are still not very confident. A lot of things they come back to you, so we're trying to make that happen more and more.

5. *Clarity in Communication for Sustainability*

Embedded in the verbatim quotes above is the lesson about communications in a clear and timely manner in supporting change in the school. Experienced principals who have been effective and successful in their previous schools sometimes do run the risk of making assumptions about the state of readiness of people of the new school. Hence, these principals have to continually check with staff if there is a common understanding of the problems encountered in the process of implementation.

Also, building new initiatives into existing values and routines of the organisation in such a way that teachers do not see it as additional work is helpful for sustainability. Effective, open, trusting two-way communication to engage staff of various levels and at appropriate timings are crucial.

11.10 Discussion

It is evident from the interviews that the three school leaders do not regard the CCE policy initiative as a major policy innovation. The core purpose and intent of values inculcation and citizenship education have not changed since independence. This is a systemic refocus on what really matters beyond the narrow definition of the purpose of schooling. Expectations about the appropriate content, pedagogical approaches and methods of assessment are clearly spelt out in the repertoire of the CCE resources, which are made accessible to all teachers. School leaders further appreciate the training provided to teachers by MOE. In addition, the CCE policy initiative has sufficient space for schools to customise. MOE's new approach in inviting and encouraging schools to co-create their own unique CCE curriculum is a step in the right direction. Each school with its unique student and staff profile has the autonomy to develop its own teaching and learning materials using MOE resources as a guide. Schools will need to invest time and effort to customise the available resources to meet the specific needs of individual schools. Here is where leadership comes into play. The challenge for them is to "sharpen the focus", help staff to understand the intent and rationale, and see the alignment to their school vision and mission. Hence, school level conversations on what really matters in their schools and how best to meet the needs of their students have to start with the school leaders.

As key drivers of the CCE curriculum, school leaders have to ensure that they are doing the right things in the right way. They need to be creative, flexible, and reflective to come up with new ways of doing the same thing. They have to be sensitive to feedback and be ready to review and make amendments and adjustments where necessary. They need to monitor and support the delivery of the CCE

curriculum to ensure fidelity to the intent of the policy. While there are systems and structures in place for distributed leadership, school leaders need to ensure that teachers engage students through varied modes of delivery. CCE lessons and programmes ought to demonstrate the 5Ps, namely Clarity of Purpose, Focus on Pupils, Create a holistic ExPerience, Professional Development and Partnerships.

As CCE is focused on behaviours underpinned by values and attitudes, it is not easily measurable (or should it be “measured”?). There are few authentic yardsticks or rubrics to gauge what good moral or good citizenship really is. It is difficult to know if students are truly learning or imbibing the right values, or if teachers are effectively conveying the intended message. Hence, it is all more important for school leaders to constantly remind teachers to uphold the teachers’ vision (Lead. Care. Inspire.) and the Singapore Teachers’ Pledge. The Pledge exhorts teachers to “bring out the best in our pupils... to be exemplary in the discharge of our duties and responsibilities...to guide our pupils to be good and useful citizens of Singapore...[and] to win the trust, support and cooperation of parents and the community so as to enable us to achieve our mission” (MOE 2009).

These exhortations are ideals to aspire to. In practice, however, school leaders must be ever mindful of the many challenges that teachers have to face. There is, of course, the perennial problem of workload, coupled with the fact that teachers today assume multiple roles in order to manage a more demanding and complex educational environment. As for CCE, not all teachers fully appreciate nor subscribe to its values and purposes. The teaching of CCE is also made more challenging by growing numbers of teachers and students who are not citizens.

To ensure effective CCE lessons, teachers have to become good role models. This implies that teachers must possess sound moral values and hold the desired citizenship views. However, research has shown that while teachers encourage students to participate in community work, many teachers do not do so (Sim and Low 2012). Indeed, teachers may be unduly stressed by expectations that they constantly manifest the values that they teach in school. Some teachers lack the confidence, maturity, or experience to be effective CCE teachers and this can give rise to other issues. There may be topics that are controversial and teachers may lack the skills to facilitate discussions of these topics. School leaders therefore have to address the anxieties of teachers in the midst of these changes and expectations.

The findings above are consistent with contemporary literature on school leadership especially in terms of instructional and distributed leadership. The literature is increasingly showing that education reforms are well supported if leadership is dispersed throughout the organisation. Hence, the school principal, although has the primary influence to change, requires the support of other leaders such as middle leaders and teacher leaders to help in the implementation. The distributedness of leadership has been strongly espoused in the local context (e.g. Hairon and Goh 2015; Hairon et al. 2015). The findings also point towards the importance of instructional leadership. For education reforms to be implemented successfully, school leaders who are competent providing clarity of the policy initiative and goals to the rest of the staff members are required, along with appropriate role modelling. These two aspects have been recognised as aspects of instructional leadership

(Hallinger and Murphy 1985, 1987, 1988). Finally, it is also worth noting that school leaders—across the school organisation—needs to be able to work well in contexts of complexities (Ng 2017).

In summary, it is worth reiterating that Character and Citizenship Education is most impactful when it is pervasive in a student's education experience. The whole school has to be committed in values education for it to be sustainable (Oulton et al. 2004). The school leader plays a critical role in ensuring that there is integration of learning across disciplines and in every aspect of the school curriculum. There is a constant need to work with staff and stakeholders to refresh the rationale behind CCE and the learning outcomes to be achieved. Ultimately, it is the school leader who plays a key role in setting the school as a community that nurtures “the values, competencies, and dispositions in our pupils to enable them to become good persons and responsible citizens” (Heng 2011).

11.11 Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What leadership competencies and skills do school leaders require to facilitate effective implementation of the CCE curriculum?
2. What roles and responsibilities do school leaders have in promoting a healthy and positive teacher-student relationship?
3. Regarding the diversity of views and changing dynamics of citizenship: How can school leaders take the lead in a discourse with staff and students on these issues? What are some difficulties that school leaders may face in carrying out this conversation?
4. What focus or foci should future researchers investigate pertaining to school leadership and citizenship education?

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