CABINET C STUDY GUIDE - THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Topic 1: Should the admission system into Primary schools be modified

Introduction

The Singapore primary school admission system has been fundamental in facilitating access to essential primary education. Established in 1972 (Wong., 2021), this system was created to provide a structured and transparent approach to enrolling children, aiming to balance accessibility, fairness, and the allocation of limited resources.

The primary objective of Primary 1 (P1) Registration, the process by which students are admitted to a primary school, is to facilitate an organized process that enables children to secure a place in an appropriate educational setting. It strives to uphold inclusivity, fairness, and compliance with the Ministry of Education's (MOE) educational policies. Nevertheless, the system has encountered criticism over the years, with ongoing discussions regarding its efficiency, fairness, and ability to adapt to evolving demographic trends.

Throughout its brief history, the system, while successful, still has areas for improvement. It has successfully streamlined the enrollment process and enhanced transparency for both parents and educational institutions. However, in recent years, issues have arisen, including accessibility difficulties for disadvantaged families, geographical inequalities, and the stress experienced by parents during the registration period (Wong, 2021).

Representatives should aim to propose a resolution that preserves the strengths of the existing system while addressing these areas for improvement, ensuring that the primary school admission process effectively serves the needs of all stakeholders involved.

Historical Overview

Post-independence, education has been a key pillar in Singapore's rapid development, fostering social cohesion and economic growth. This addressed the challenges Singapore was facing at the time, specifically, a lack of skilled manpower.

A key facet of the Singaporean education system that has remained constant is emphasis on Meritocracy, where ability and talent are rewarded. Over the years, the primary school admission system in Singapore has undergone several changes, eventually evolving into the system we have today. Many changes have been made to this system from 1972 onwards (Wong, 2021). Due to stiff competition for admission into the more popular schools, the government introduced a system to make admission into primary schools more organised and transparent. A quick summary of some of the changes over the years to the system is as follows:

Graduate Mothers' Scheme: In 1984, priority admission to primary school was granted to the children of better educated mothers with university degrees. This scheme was scrapped in 1985 as it was unpopular among the general public.

Compulsory Education Act (Singapore Statutes Online, 2023) From 2003 onwards, primary education became compulsory in Singapore. This policy is in line with the government's aim to ensure that children of all socioeconomic backgrounds have access to quality education.

Priority for Singapore Citizens (SCs)

SCs were given priority over Permanent Residents (PRs) in any case of balloting during the admissions process, starting from 2012. This priority of SCs over PRs still exists today.

Current Situation

Primary school admission is carried out through the process called P1 Registration (MOE, 2024). It takes into account several factors, such as citizenship and home address. This exercise also accommodates students with unique circumstances, such as intellectual disability, returning SCs, and international students.

There are three main phases to P1 Registration. Students may apply for any phase as long as they meet at least one of the requirements for the phase.

Table 1: P1 Registration Phases

P1 Registration Phases	**Eligibility**
Phase 1 - Sibling Priority	For a child who has a sibling studying in the primary school. All eligible Phase 1 applicants will be granted a place.
Phase 2A - Alumni priority	For a child: - Whose parent or sibling is a former student of the primary school, including those who have joined the alumni association of the primary school as a member. - Whose parent is a member of the School Advisory or Management Committee. - Whose parent is a staff member of the primary school. - From the MOE Kindergarten under the purview of and located within the primary school.
Phase 2B - Volunteer priority	For a child:

	- Whose parent has joined the primary school as a parent volunteer not later than 1 July of the year before P1 Registration and has given at least 40 hours of voluntary service to the school by 30 June of the year of P1 Registration. - Whose parent is a member endorsed by the church or clan directly connected with the primary school. - Whose parent is endorsed as an active community leader.
Phase 2C - Open admissions	For a child who is not yet registered in a primary school. 40 places in each Primary school will be reserved for Phase 2C to take place. Additionally, intake of PR children will be capped in a few primary schools to prevent the concentration of PR students in primary schools.
Phase 2C (Supplementary)	For a child who is not yet registered in a primary school after Phase 2C. Intake of PR children will be capped in a few primary schools to prevent the concentration of PR students in primary schools.
Phase 3 - International students	For a child who is neither a SC or a PR. Prior to registration under Phase 3, International Students' (IS) parents must first submit an online indication of interest form. They will then be notified via email October of that year whether their child is offered a P1 place.

	If their child is offered a place, they may register with the designated school under Phase 3.

Case Study of Finland

Flexibility of age requirements

Children can begin primary school at the age of 7, but parents have the option to postpone enrollment for up to a year, giving them more freedom to select when their child is ready (Norden, 2024). The child's welfare is given priority in this individualised decision, reflecting Finland's emphasis on the child's development and overall well-being. On the other hand, Singapore has a stricter policy with regards to enrolment as children at the age of 7 must begin their primary school education. This could hinder the learning experience of children who may not be ready for primary school.

School allocation

School distribution in Finland is largely based on proximity, which means that children are typically assigned to schools in their local area or neighbourhood. Parents can choose between schools located in their municipality to guarantee that their child's learning needs are satisfied. This decentralised approach ensures that all children have equal access to quality education (Norden, 2024). Similarly, students in Singapore are typically allocated to schools located within 2km of their house. This reduces the cost and time of commuting, keeping education accessible and affordable to lower-income families.

Challenges

Although Finnish parents are expected to play an integral part in their child's educational journey, varying degrees of engagement can exist due to factors such as socioeconomic status or

education levels (Padrón, 2024) This can include assessing whether their child is ready to enrol in primary school, and determining which primary school is suitable for their child. Lack of parental engagement can hinder or derail a child's admission process as the parent does not know or care about the importance of their child's education and thus does not take a keen interest in selecting the most suitable school for their child. Singaporean parents also have opportunities to be involved in their children's education and primary schools admission process by volunteering at the school they would like to enrol their children in. This would boost their child's chances of attaining entry into their desired school.

Benefits of Singapore's current system

Priority for children of alumni strengthens family traditions and strengthens alumni-school bonds.

Alumni priority in Phase 2A of the P1 registration process allows children of alumni to secure seats to their parents' alma maters. This allows them to share similar experiences growing up, forging a deeper bond and understanding between parent and child. At the same time, these shared experiences shape common values and perspectives which strengthen and reinforce the bond. However, some may argue that this system breeds elitism and perpetuates the hoarding of opportunities. The merging of phases 2A1 and 2A2 has reduced the advantage of children whose parents are alumni making the system fairer to children without such privileges. (Ng, 2023)

Prioritising students from MOE kindergartens also allows for greater diversity in a school with regards to socioeconomic background

This system helps to reduce inequality in terms of access to quality education by providing educational opportunities to students from middle- or lower-class families. This is particularly crucial in Singapore, where educational success is seen as a key pathway to social mobility. Furthermore, by mixing students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, schools are able to cultivate a sense of understanding between students from different social classes, ensuring that

the so-called elite and lower class do not simply end up mingling amongst themselves and intermingle (Ng, 2023).

Disadvantages of the current system

Socioeconomic disparity

The priority phases of P1 Registration tend to favour children of more privileged socioeconomic standing (Johari, NUS).

Phases 2C and 3 take into consideration students' geographic distance from the primary school. With most elite schools located within more affluent neighbourhoods, children of more privileged backgrounds gain easier access to schools that are in greater demand, perpetuating cycles of inequality. These perceived 'elite' schools often have a wider variety of better-developed Co-curricular Activities (CCAs), better facilities, such as laboratories, classrooms, and canteen facilities, etc. (The Independent Singapore, 2014).

Furthermore, Phase 2A takes into consideration alumni connections. As affluent parents are much more likely to have attended elite primary schools (CNA, 2023), their children are more likely to also gain admission into these 'elite' primary schools, and gain access to better resources to go even further than their peers of lesser means.

Phase 2B also favours students whose parents have contributed a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer work to the primary school. Parents of lower socioeconomic status would have less leisure time, and are more likely to experience 'time poverty', a phrase coined by C Vickery to refer to their lack of time to do all the things they want or need to do due to all of their other more pressing work commitments that allow for the purchase of the daily necessities. As a result, they

would not have the time and ability to fulfil that many volunteer hours, causing their child to not have priority admission to the primary school of their choice. Comparatively, more affluent parents would have more time to be able to fulfil the required volunteer hours, allowing their child to be able to attend their desired primary school.

Marginalisation of certain groups

There are no specific phases or guidelines for children with severe disabilities, making it difficult for parents to discern which primary schools have the facilities and are better equipped to manage their children. As a result, parents of a lower socioeconomic status may experience greater difficulty in selecting a suitable SPED school for their children.

International students may also face greater difficulty in the P1 registration process. As there are no designated spots reserved for them, they may only attend primary school if there are slots available after SC and PR children have all gained admission. Due to the very limited options available to international students, they may not receive a place in a primary school at all (todayonline, 2017). Even if they do, it may be very far from the children's home, making the commute challenging.

Conclusion

Throughout the years, the government has introduced changes to the primary school admissions process to refine it into the system we have today. The system is not without its disadvantages- while Singapore's P1 registration process is a thorough system that promotes the attainability of education for all, it may potentially disadvantage children who lack the social cultural capital or do not live near their preferred school. The preferential admission of children of alumni creates questions of opportunity hoarding and class stratification. Additionally, some call for more transparency in the process. Overall, Singapore's primary school admissions system is a complex process that attempts to balance the needs of the various stakeholders, with both pros and cons.

Questions a Resolution must answer:

1. Should priority admissions (e.g. alumni priority), be reduced, eliminated, or left as is?
2. How can the system address claims that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not have equal access to perceived better schools that are located in certain districts?
3. What measures can increase transparency in the allocation of places and prevent exploitation of the system (e.g., false address claims)?
4. What steps should be taken to ensure the revised system fosters long-term equality and does not unintentionally create new inequities?

Bibliography

1. Channel News Asia (2021). The Big Read: Not for the faint-hearted — parents jump through hoops, go great guns to secure Primary 1 spots. https://www.channelnewsasia.com/today/big-read/primary-school-registration-moe-parents-children-schools-education-2142121

2. Kheng, Chua, Swee (2023). Primary 1 Registration: Where alumni privilege and distance rules can accelerate inequality. The Straits Times. https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/primary-1-registration-where-alumni-privilege-and-distance-rules-can-accelerate-inequality

3. MOE (2024). Primary 1 (P1) Registration. https://www.moe.gov.sg/primary/p1-registration

4. Navigating the Finnish Education System (2024). Rethinking the Role of Parents in Finnish Education. https://www.navigatingthefinnisheducationsystem.com/blog-1/rethinking-the-role-of-parents-in-finnish-education

5. Ng, Abigail (2023). In Focus: Should children of alumni get priority for Primary 1 registration. Channel NewsAsia.

   https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/primary-1-registration-phases-alumni-priority-distance-3414341

6. Nordic Cooperation (N.D.). Norden: Basic education in Finland. https://www.norden.org/en/info-norden/basic-education-finland

7. NUS (2022). Snippet | NUS Social Service Research Centre | Issue 3 2022. https://fass.nus.edu.sg/ssr/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2022/10/Snippet_Oct-_Issue-3_2022_TimePoverty_PoorSleep.pdf

8. The Independent Singapore (2014). Elitist schools? So what? https://theindependent.sg/elitist-schools-so-what/

9. TodayOnline (2021). How the Pri 1 registration system evolved over almost 5 decades. https://www.todayonline.com/big-read/how-pri-1-registration-system-evolved-over-almost-5-decades#:~:text=1972%3A%20The%20Government%20introduced%20a,in%20a%20few%20popular%20schools

10. Toh, Ee Ming (2017). Limited public school places for foreign students, 1,800 rejected in latest exercise. TodayOnline. https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/limited-public-school-places-foreign-students-1800-rejected-latest-exercise

11. Wong, P.T. (2021). How the Pri 1 registration system evolved over almost 5 decades. TodayOnline. https://www.todayonline.com/big-read/how-pri-1-registration-system-evolved-over-almost-5-decades

Topic 2: Should all single-sex schools be replaced with co-educational schools?

Introduction

Single-sex education has played a significant role in Singapore's schooling landscape, with many single-sex institutions boasting rich histories and long-standing traditions. As of now, there are 24 single-sex schools at the primary level and another 27 single-sex schools at the secondary level (Tan, 2024). Among these single-sex schools are some of Singapore's most prestigious and sought-after schools (Lee,2017), Raffles Institution and Hwa Chong Institution being among them. Many of Singapore's most successful businessmen and most influential politicians studied in these schools, and thus many have gained a reputation for churning out the leaders of the past, present and future (Lee, 2017). It is this academic excellence and the storied history of single-sex schools which form the driving force behind calls to keep them. However, there have also been some concerns about the continued operation of single-sex schools in a so-called gender-neutral society, where we strive to give equal opportunities to both boys and girls. Principally, these concerns relate to whether single-sex schools adequately prepare boys and girls for the mixed-gender environment of the world of work, and whether or not they can potentially be hotbeds for cultivating sexist and prejudicial attitudes (Cheng, 2017). Representatives should consider whether converting single-sex schools to co-educational schools is truly the best idea taking into account the role that single-sex schools play in the schooling environment of today, and how these schools should be converted to co-educational schools. They should also consider if there is a strong argument for such co-educational schools.

Historical Overview

Single-sex schooling in Singapore traces its roots far back to a pre-independence era, with Raffles Institution being the first boys' school (Raffles Institution, n.d.) established in Singapore and Saint Margaret's School being the first girls' school established (Saint Margaret's School (Secondary), n.d.). Many other single-sex institutions followed suit, including Nanyang Girls' High School and Maris Stella High School. These institutions, among others, have played significant roles in shaping Singapore's educational landscape, each contributing to the development of academic excellence and the nurturing of successful students (Seah, 2019).

To empower girls

In a precolonial era where education for females was deemed secondary, many single-sex schools were established as safe institutions that provided basic education and literacy, a privilege that was denied to many girls at that time. For example, Singapore Chinese Girls' School was opened by Chinese businessmen and philanthropists to provide girls with an opportunity to receive education and broaden their horizons (Singapore Chinese Girls' School, n.d.). With a similar aim, many missionaries and charitable bodies established a number of single-sex schools with the hope of empowering disadvantaged girls by equipping them with education to improve their circumstances. Saint Margaret's School, for example, was founded by a British missionary with the objective of aiding and nurturing underprivileged girls (Saint Margaret's School (Secondary), n.d.). The provision of education for girls in Raffles Institution was also brought about by a ladies committee which sought to provide refuge and schooling (Chee, 2021).

To prepare both genders for their respective expected societal duties

Historically, education was deemed necessary for boys while girls were trained in religious, moral and domestic duties. Even after the establishment of single-sex schooling, the prominence of gender roles was reflected in their curriculum. Many girls' schools prioritized homemaking skills.

Subjects like cooking, sewing, and childcare were emphasized to prepare them for roles as wives and mothers (Saint Margaret's School (Secondary), n.d). Moral and spiritual education were central in girls' curriculums, with formal education regarded as secondary (Chee, 2021). Meanwhile, boys' education highlighted competitiveness and excellence. This was to prepare them for their roles as breadwinners and the head of their households, mirroring broader societal expectations where men were largely regarded as the primary decision-makers and providers within their families (Women's Action, n.d.).

Current Situation

Modern shifts

Singapore's landscape has steadily shifted towards a preference for co-educational schools. Since the mid-1960s, the establishment of new single-sex schools has ceased, and many single-sex schools have transitioned to accepting both sexes. In 2019, Canossa Convent Primary School started admitting its first boys (CatholicNews, 2018). Maris Stella High School (Primary) recently announced its plans to convert to co-ed in 2027, which parallels Anglo-Chinese Primary School's decision to do likewise in 2030 (Asiaone, 2024).

This shift is spurred by the belief that a co-educational (co-ed) education would better prepare them for 'the real world' as co-ed environments mimic the social dynamics found outside school, equipping them with the necessary skills and experiences to navigate diverse social dynamics (EuroSchool, 2024). Additionally, the rise of co-ed schools simplifies the primary school admission process, as sibling priority is a factor in the school admissions system (Parentology, 2025). The lack of new single-sex schools can also be attributed to the need to meet the demands of both sexes in the community, which co-ed schools are more able to do (Today Online, 2023).

Parents' sentiments

However, a complete phase-out is unlikely. Many parents associate prestige and academic excellence with single-sex schools and hence favour them. Children are thought to flourish intellectually in single-sex settings because they provide a more disciplined education, which is evident in many single-sex schools like Methodists Girls' School and Raffles Institution which have produced many of the nation's top scorers (Seah, 2019). Additionally, especially in the early years of schooling, parents believe their child is less likely to encounter distractions from the other sex. Single-sex schools like Anglo-Chinese School (Primary) have deep historical roots and strong alumni networks, making them symbols of tradition and cultural legacy. Parents often choose these schools not only for their academic reputation but also for their unique identity, which may be affected by a switch to co-ed (CNA, 2023). Advocates for single-sex schooling also maintain that single-sex provides education tailored to the specific needs of each sex (Anderson, 2024).

Literature Review: Benefits of single-sex schools

Single-sex schools are known for their academic excellence

In Singapore, a large majority of the most prestigious schools which are known for their academic excellence are single-sex. This may suggest that single-sex schools are innately better than co-ed schools in producing academically skilled and more accomplished students. However, this does not tell the full story, as many of these single-sex schools have this track record of academic excellence due to their highly selective admission criteria, requiring near-perfect test scores.

However, studies from countries such as South Korea, where students are assigned to schools randomly rather than based on test scores, have shown that single-sex schools do improve students' grades and increase their likelihood of getting admitted into universities (Park, Behrman,

and Choi, 2012). Furthermore, studies have also shown that converting single-sex schools into co-educational schools in South Korea is associated with a decline in academic performance and test scores for both boys and girls (Seah, 2019). As such, it may be wise to maintain the status quo for single-sex schools given Singaporean society's obsession with test scores and academic performance. Furthermore, some also prefer single-sex schools because they eliminate the 'distractions' posed by the opposite sex, enabling students to focus more on their studies, contributing to the supposed better academic performance that students who attend single-sex schools attain (Hughes, 2007).

Single-sex schools allow for the exploration of non-traditional subjects or spaces

In schools, certain subjects are viewed as either more "masculine" or "feminine subjects." Subjects which are traditionally considered more masculine are Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects while arts subjects are viewed as feminine, for example the languages, literature and the arts (Thibout, 2012). Single-sex schools provide an opportunity for girls to explore traditionally "masculine" subjects and vice versa, as they are freed from the stigma and societal pressures that could be present in co-educational schools that deter them from pursuing interests commonly associated with the opposite gender (Park, Behrman and Choi, 2018). Studies have shown that girls in single-sex preschools in Sweden showcase a greater interest in STEM subjects compared to their peers in co-educational schools (Shutts, Kenward, Falk, Ivegran, and Fawcett, 2017), and they continue to study STEM subjects at institutes of higher education at higher rates (Institute of Physics, 2012). Programmes such as the Art Elective Programme, which caters to students which have a passion for art, are also implemented in boys schools such as Hwa Chong Institution and Victoria School, providing an environment where boys can pursue their interests in the arts without the pressure of gender stereotypes preventing them from doing so (MOE, 2024). Single-sex schools also allow boys and

girls to relate to role models of the same gender in these fields, increasing the likelihood that they will pursue those careers.

In recent years, governments around the world, with Singapore being one of them, are attempting to get as many women in STEM fields as possible, in order to bridge the current gender gap that exists in these professions (The Straits Times, 2024). Single-sex schools encourage girls to develop keen interests in STEM subjects, continue them at the tertiary level, and enter related careers. This helps break barriers, close the gender gap, and strengthen the workforce with a more balanced supply of professionals, ensuring its growth and sustainability.

Single-sex schools provide environments that cater to the different learning needs of boys and girls

Studies have shown that boys and girls actually learn differently. More areas of a girl's brain are dedicated to verbal functions, and the regions of the brain critical to verbal memory storage develop earlier in girls than boys (Zamosky and Benaroch, 2011). Boys also require more stimulation than girls, tending towards visual and symbolic texts. Furthermore, boys possess less hormones that promote a sense of calm than girls, which could explain why they act more impulsively (Army and Navy Academy, n.d). As such, proponents of single-sex schools suggest that curricula should be tailored to account for these learning differences between boys and girls which lets them maximise their potential (Gurian, 2017). For instance, a greater emphasis on physical activity may stimulate boys' brains and mitigate their impulsive tendencies. A review by Regis University suggested that educators should use "boy-only groups wherever possible" (Army and Navy Academy, n.d.). For girls, an all-girls environment may assist them in navigating the complex challenges that puberty brings about, helping them get through this sensitive period with the safety and solidarity that a single-sex setting gives them.

As such, single-sex schools are able to adjust their teaching strategies and classroom environments best suited for the gender which they serve. This leads to more positive outcomes for both genders - whereas in a mixed-gender classroom a certain teaching method may benefit boys more than girls and vice versa, in single-sex schools, teachers can adopt methods that are tailored to boys while not negatively impacting girls, and vice versa.

Concerns of single-sex schools

Lack of interaction between boys and girls

Tertiary education institutions in Singapore, be it junior colleges, polytechnics or The Institute of Technical Education are all co-educational, and so is the world of work. Since habits are formed during one's early years, some posit that by depriving boys and girls of the chance to interact with each other, single-sex schools may cause students to not know how to act around the opposite gender (Saunders, 2017). Studies (Pahlke, Hyde and Allison 2014) by the American Psychological Association have shown that those who have studied in single-sex schools experience higher levels of anxiety in mixed-gender environments and refrain from forming close friendships with the opposite gender. This increased awkwardness with interacting with the opposite gender may even hamper their academic performance (Ozdere, 2023). This may even seriously impede their social and interpersonal skills in the future, rendering them unable to work efficiently with the opposite gender and perhaps even jeopardizing their job prospects. School is preparation for adult life after all, and not knowing how to interact with the opposite gender could potentially derail relationships formed in the workplace, resulting in possible losses of productivity and these children growing up to become a liability at work (Saunders, 2017).

Not only does the lack of interaction between boys and girls fail to prepare them for the world of work in the future, it also negatively impacts their mental health (Wong, W. I., Shi, S. Y., & Chen,

Z., 2018). An increase in anxiety in forming mixed-gender friendships, termed as heterosexual anxiety (Wong, W. I., Shi, S. Y., and Chen, Z., 2018), results in poorer performance in mixed-gender interactions as well as greater difficulty forming romantic relationships for heterosexual individuals. Furthermore, heterosexual anxiety also contributes to poorer physical and psychological well-being, lower self-esteem and assertiveness, as well as increased incidences of depression and loneliness. With the mental health crisis in Singapore's schools reaching a tipping point as of late (Goh, D., and Koh, A, 2023), the continued existence of single-sex schools may only serve to worsen this endemic problem. Studies conducted in Hong Kong comparing single-sex and mixed-gender schools found that males and females in single-sex schools experienced far higher heterosexual anxiety than their peers in co-educational schools, with boys in particular experiencing more mixed-gender anxiety than girls (Wong, W. I., Shi, S. Y., and Chen, Z., 2018).

Potential fostering of sexist attitudes

Research by Janet Hyde at the University of Wisconsin (Hyde, 2014) has shown that those who attend single-sex schools may endorse in-group preferences more strongly, which could perpetuate and exacerbate gender biases. The single-sex environment and the lack of interaction between genders that it creates can also result in misconceptions about the opposite gender forming (Tenenbaum, 2014). This is especially pervasive in today's environment, where children spend most of their time online, and thus have next to no opportunity for interaction with kids of the opposite gender since they attend single-sex schools. As such, their only exposure to the opposite gender is often only through online spaces, where they may be exposed to harmful, sexist mischaracterizations which breed prejudice. With no interaction with the opposite gender to counteract these online-infused tropes being fed to students in single-sex schools, these prejudices may worsen, a problem that some say is only getting worse due to the relative popularity of misogynist online influences such as Andrew Tate (The Guardian, 2023). These

prejudices which are embedded into children are hard to dislodge, and may translate into discriminatory actions if left unchecked. Other studies have shown that sex-segregated classrooms and schools cause students to wrongly believe that one gender is better than the other, and that single-sex schools promote sexism in both boys and girls (Saunders, 2017).

Some evidence of the benefits of single-sex schools are inconclusive.

Despite studies showing that students in single-sex schools outperform their peers academically in co-educational schools, it is often hard to attribute this improved academic performance solely to the fact that these students attend single-sex schools, or even to cite single-sex schools as a main contributing factor to these students' superior academic performance (AERA, 2017). In Singapore's case, single-sex schools are prestigious institutions with stringent entry requirements (Seah, K, 2019). As such, the stellar academic results that these schools churn out may be a result of the additional resources that their students receive rather than the innate superiority of the single-sex learning environment. Also, while studies suggest that girls do indeed benefit academically from single-sex schools, boys benefit very minimally in some cases and not at all in others (Jackson, 2012). As such, it may be worth pondering whether the relatively minute benefits that boys enjoy from single-sex schools are enough to outweigh the rather significant handicaps that they encounter from the lack of heterosexual interaction and its associated consequences.

The fact that single-sex schools are not very commonplace means that studies examining the academic benefits of these schools have a very small sample size, adding on to the difficulty in conclusively proving that single-sex schools cause improved academic results. Additionally, some studies also suggest that single-sex schools may result in lower uptake of gender-atypical subjects for both boys and girls. This is because single-sex schools reinforce traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, thereby promoting gender saliency. Gender saliency in this case refers to the awareness of gender in categorisations, or to put it simply, how people associate various categories with a specific gender. As such, boys and girls may feel more pressure to fit

into their traditional gender roles in single-sex schools, and may thus take subjects that are commonly perceived as ‘masculine’ for boys and ‘feminine’ for girls (Wong, W. I., Shi, S. Y., and Chen, Z., 2018). In some cases, girls in single-sex schools are less likely to take up STEM-related subjects than their counterparts in mixed-gender schools, questioning whether single-sex schools really enable students to venture into areas of study not typically associated with their gender, and suggesting that it may even have a counterproductive effect (Ozdere, 2023).

Conclusion

Despite the fact that no new single-sex schools have been established in decades, and the fact that many single-sex schools have been converted to co-educational schools over the years, the remaining single-sex schools have continued to survive and even thrive with distinct identities and maintaining their storied histories. Regardless, advocates of co-education have voiced their discontent with the continued existence of single-sex schools, asserting that the benefits of single-sex schooling are not big enough to outweigh their drawbacks. Single-sex schooling seems to be here to stay in Singapore, with no plans by the government to convert them to co-educational schools (Ong, J. ,2023), and unless the political willpower is harnessed to do so, it appears as if said plans will not be drawn up in the immediate future.

Questions a resolution must answer

1. Do single-sex schools bring about more benefits than drawbacks?
2. How will the transition, if any, from single-sex school to co-educational school be done?
3. How can we continue the original purpose of single-sex schools, with or without abolishing them?

4. How can we address the concerns of various stakeholders when making changes to these schools - parents, students and alumni?
5. How can we address the lack of mixed-gender interaction in single-sex schools for now, with or without abolishing them?

Bibliography

1. Andersen, G. (2024). Exploring the advantages of single-sex education for university applicants. Moldstud. https://moldstud.com/articles/p-exploring-the-advantages-of-single-sex-education-for-university-applicants

2. Army and Navy Academy. (2024, December 6). Students can thrive in single-gender education. https://armyandnavyacademy.org/blog/students-can-thrive-in-single-gender-education

3. Berger, M. W. (2017). Single-sex schools and unexpected STEM outcomes. Penn Today. https://penntoday.upenn.edu/features/single-sex-schools-and-unexpected-stem-outcomes

4. Bhavya, R. (2023). It's only right: Community, parents support Maris Stella High boys' school admitting girls for the first time. AsiaOne. https://www.asiaone.com/singapore/its-only-right-community-parents-maris-stella-high-boys-school-admit-girls-first-time

5. Cheng, F. (2017, November 24). Single-sex schools do not benefit students. The Straits Times. https://www.straitstimes.com/forum/letters-in-print/single-sex-schools-do-not-benefit-students

6. Clarice, C. (2021). Girls in RI: 1800s to 1930s. https://www.ri.edu.sg/highlights/story/girls-in-ri-1800s-to-1930s

7. Goh, D., & Koh, A. (2023, September 24). The youth mental health crisis and the subjectification of wellbeing in Singapore schools. Taylor & Francis Online. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09518398.2023.2264247

8. Guardian News and Media. (2023, January 7). "Vulnerable boys are drawn in": Schools fear spread of Andrew Tate's misogyny. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jan/07/andrew-tate-misogyny-schools-vulnerable-boys

9. Gurian, M. (2017, December 21). Ask Dr. Gurian: Are single-gender schools better than co-ed schools, or vice versa? Gurian Institute. https://gurianinstitute.com/ask-dr-gurian-are-single-gender-schools-better-than-co-ed-schools-or-vice-versa/

10. Heartlander Tourist. (2014). 7 century-old all-boys schools in Singapore. https://heartlandertourist.wordpress.com/2014/07/19/7-century-old-all-boys-schools-in-singapore/

11. Hughes, T. (2007). The advantages of single-sex education. National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED492000.pdf

12. Institute of Physics. (2012). It's different for girls. https://www.iop.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/its-different-for-girls.pdf

13. International Postgraduate Certificate in Education. (n.d.). Gender equality in Singapore education with an IPGCE: 5 key points. https://www.ipgce.com/gender-equality-in-singapore-education-with-an-ipgce-5-key-points/

14. Jackson, C. (2012). Single-sex schools, student achievement, and course selection: Evidence from rule-based student assignments in Trinidad and Tobago. Journal of Public Economics, 1-2(96), 173-187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2011.09.002

15. Lee, J. (2017, December 2). Single-sex schools have educated generations of S'poreans, including some S'pore leaders. Mothership.SG. https://mothership.sg/2017/12/single-sex-schools-st-forum-shut-down/

16. Ministry of Education (MOE). (n.d.). Art Elective Programme (AEP) for secondary. https://www.moe.gov.sg/education-in-sg/our-programmes/aep-sec

17. National Institute of Education. (n.d.). The economics and emotions as single-sex schools become mixed. https://www.ntu.edu.sg/nie/news-events/news/detail/the-economics-and-emotions-as-single-sex-schools-become-mixed#:~:text=Before%20the%20advent%20of%20co,

18. Ong, J. (2023). No plans to 'proactively' convert single-sex schools, but new schools are co-ed as they cater to community's needs: MOE. Today Online. https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/no-plans-proactively-convert-single-sex-schools-new-schools-are-co-ed-they-cater-communitys-needs-moe-2118451

19. Ozdere, M. (2023). Single-sex schools vs mixed-gender schools: Comparing impacts. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377432458_Single-sex_schools_VS_mixed-gender_schools_comparing_impacts

20. Pahlke, E., Hyde, J., & Allison, C. (2014). The effects of single-sex compared with co-educational schooling on students' performance and attitudes: A meta-analysis. Psychological Bulletin, 4(140), 1042-1072. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035740

21. Park, H., Behrman, J., & Choi, J. (2012). Causal effects of single-sex schools on college entrance exams and college attendance: Random assignment in Seoul high schools. Demography, 2(50), 447-469. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-012-0157-1

22. Park, H., Behrman, J., & Choi, J. (2018). Do single-sex schools enhance students' STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) outcomes? Economics of Education Review, 62, 35-47. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2017.10.007

23. Saunders, J. (2017, November 22). The disadvantages of schools segregated by sex. Education. https://education.seattlepi.com/disadvantages-schools-segregated-sex-2074.html

24. Seah, K. S. K. (2019). Single-sex schools are linked to better student performance. The Straits Times. https://fass.nus.edu.sg/ecs/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/11/single-st-16mar-p34.pdf

25. Shutts, K., Kenward, B., Falk, H., Ivegran, A., & Fawcett, C. (2017). Early preschool environments and gender: Effects of gender pedagogy in Sweden. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology. https://socialkids.wiscweb.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/153/2018/10/Shutts-et-al-2017.pdf

26. Single-sex schooling and academic attainment at school and through the lifecourse. (2017). SageJournals. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0002831209350106

27. Tenenbaum, D. (2014, February 3). Study challenges claims of single-sex schooling benefits. University of Wisconsin-Madison. https://news.wisc.edu/study-challenges-claims-of-single-sex-schooling-benefits/

28. Thibout, C. (2012, October). School grades and impact on educational choices. International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. https://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/longV4_0.pdf

29. Women's Action (n.d.). Singapore and the Women's Movement. https://www.womensaction.sg/article/overview

30. Wong, W. I., Shi, S. Y., & Chen, Z. (2018, December 7). Students from single-sex schools are more gender-salient and more anxious in mixed-gender situations: Results from high school and college samples. PLoS One. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6286141/