

Universal Periodic Review
(24th session, January-February 2016)
Contribution of UNESCO to Compilation of UN information
(to Part I. A. and to Part III - F, J, K, and P)

Singapore

I. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

Scope of international obligations: Human rights treaties which fall within the competence of UNESCO and international instruments adopted by UNESCO

I.1. Table:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)	Not state party to this Convention	<i>Reservations to this Convention shall not be permitted</i>		Right to education
Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989)	Not state party to this Convention			Right to education
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	19/06/2012 Acceptance		N/A	Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)			N/A	Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the			N/A	Right to take part in

Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)				cultural life
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II. Input to Part III. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law to items F, J, K, and P

Right to education

1. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

1.1. Constitutional Framework:

1. The **Constitution of Singapore of 1963**¹ enshrines the principal of non-discrimination in education in **Article 16** of part IV on Fundamental Liberties. It stipulates: “[...] there shall be no discrimination against any citizen of Singapore on the grounds only of religion, race, descent or place of birth — (a) in the administration of any educational institution maintained by a public authority, and, in particular, the admission of pupils or students or the payment of fees; or (b) in providing out of the funds of a public authority financial aid for the maintenance or education of pupils or students in any educational institution (whether or not maintained by a public authority and whether within or outside Singapore).” This Article adds: “(2) Every religious group has the right to establish and maintain institutions for the education of children and provide therein instruction in its own religion, and there shall be no discrimination on the ground only of religion in any law relating to such institutions or in the administration of any such law. (3) No person shall be required to receive instruction in or to take part in any ceremony or act of worship of a religion other than his own. (4) For the purposes of clause (3), the religion of a person under the age of 18 years shall be decided by his parent or guardian.”

2. Besides, according to **Article 152**, “(1) It shall be the responsibility of the Government constantly to care for the interests of the racial and religious minorities in Singapore. (2) The

¹<http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/view.w3p;query=Status%3Acurinforce%20Type%3AAact,s1%20Content%3A%22constitution%22;rec=0;resUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fstatutes.agc.gov.sg%2Faol%2Fsearch%2Fsummary%2Fresults.w3p%3Bquery%3DStatus%253Acurinforce%2520Type%253AAact,s1%2520Content%253A%2522constitution%2522;whole=yes>,

<http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/c987002fec6f27ffc5d2a18b4488280df3c3362.pdf>,
Accessed on 16/03/2015

Government shall exercise its functions in such manner as to recognize the special position of the Malays, who are the indigenous people of Singapore, and accordingly it shall be the responsibility of the Government to protect, safeguard, support, foster and promote their political, educational, religious, economic, social and cultural interests and the Malay language.”

1.2. Legislative Framework:

3. “The legal framework for education in Singapore is defined in the **Education Act**² (1985 Ed) and the **School Regulations** (1990 Ed).

4. The **Childcare Centres Act** of 1988, amended in 2001, stipulates that no person shall operate or take part in the management of a childcare centre except under the authority of and in accordance with the terms and conditions of a licence.

5. The **Private Education Act No. 21**³ was passed by Parliament on 14 September 2009. The Act provides for the establishment of the Council for Private Education as well as for the regulation and accreditation of private education institutions so as to ensure the provision of quality education. Subject to the provisions of the Act, no person in Singapore may: (a) offer to provide or provide private education, whether in Singapore or elsewhere; or (b) award any degree, diploma or certificate (including any honorary degree or other distinctions) in respect of private education, whether offered or provided in Singapore or elsewhere, unless the person is a registered private education institution.

6. The **Compulsory Education Act** (Cap 51)⁴ was passed by Parliament in October 2000 and compulsory education has been implemented from January 2003. According to the Act, a child of compulsory school age is one who is above the age of 6 and who has not yet attained the age of 15. If a child fails to attend as a pupil at a national primary school or a designated school/home-schooled (where exemption is granted), a parent/guardian of the child may be guilty of an offence. The Compulsory Education Act 2000 also provides for the establishment of a body known as the Compulsory Education Board. The duties of the Board include investigations whether the provisions of the Act or any regulations have been contravened and to make recommendations on their enforcement.”⁵

² <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/0cfc88e7d6f180c56f9f2ad67414c8642589faa6.pdf>, Accessed on 16/03/2015

³ <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/af1c472461d4690e852e6520e59a8857d5ee852e.pdf>, Accessed on 16/03/2015

⁴ <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/d2f83f8042d6ad15870cdfb75e228ddde4e1d8a7.pdf>, Accessed on 16/03/2015

⁵ IBE, World Data on Education, 7th ed., 2010-2011, Singapore, p. 3, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Singapore.pdf, Accessed on 16/03/2015

1.3. Institutional Framework:

7. “The **Institute of Technical Education** was established in the early 1990s in response to growing concerns over the education system’s ability to meet the demands of a more productive economy and the needs of the young. It is meant for students who register low scores in general academic education. Courses are designed by government and industry.

8. Companies value its graduates highly: over 90% of students were employed within six months of graduating in 2007. [...] Perhaps the institute’s greatest success has been in combating the stigma associated with vocational education. Successive governments have invested heavily in training teachers, involving the private sector as well, so that the institute’s facilities are comparable to those of the country’s universities. Qualifications from the institute can be used as a route into tertiary-level technical education through polytechnics, or back into academic education through universities. Singapore’s model has succeeded where others have failed.”⁶

1.4. Policy Framework:

i) Teachers

9. “In Singapore, teachers are entitled to 100 hours of in-service training a year, and new teachers receive mentoring for the first few years of their career. Trainers visit schools to identify difficulties teachers face or to introduce new practices, such as approaches to critical thinking or the use of information and communication technology (ICT).”⁷

10. “Singapore provides government funding for experienced teachers to train for a postgraduate degree to become mentors for other teachers.”⁸

11. “In Singapore, teachers need permission to give more than six hours of private tuition per week, and are forbidden to offer it to their own students. However, these regulations need to be rigorously enforced.”⁹

12. “In Singapore, the [teacher] evaluation process is extensive. A planning meeting at the beginning of the school year sets goals for student achievement, professional development and contributions to the school and community. It is followed by a review meeting at mid-year and a

⁶ EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010, p. 93, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf>, Accessed on 16/03/2015

⁷ EFA GMR 2013-14, p 242 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>, Accessed on 16/03/2015

⁸ EFA GMR 2013-14, p 244 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>, Accessed on 16/03/2015

⁹ EFA GMR 2013-14, p 273 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>, Accessed on 16/03/2015

final evaluation based on portfolios of work, as well as input from senior teachers and department or subject area heads who have worked with the teacher (OECD, 2009).”¹⁰

ii) Quality education

13. “The Ministry Of Education (MOE) has introduced a wider range of curriculum in schools through various measures such as allowing schools to offer new ‘O’ Level subjects and elective module as well as alternative curriculum and examinations for instance in through the International Baccalaureate programme.

We also note the establishment of new pre-tertiary and tertiary institutions in the form of School Of The Arts and Singapore University Of Technology And Design.

The curriculum at the Institute Of Technical Education (ITE) has been revamped with a focus on increasing employability. Recognising that graduates do switch between jobs and industries, the ITE curriculum now boasts a “cluster centric” approach whereby students in related fields of study are required to take a common foundation year syllabus to increase the breadth of their knowledge. A new ITE mega campus with new facilities and fresh courses in areas such as floristry and filmmaking is also in the works.”¹¹

2. COOPERATION:

14. Singapore is **not party** to the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.

15. Singapore **did not report** to UNESCO on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1960 UNESCO Recommendation against Discrimination in Education within the framework of the:

- **Sixth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 1994-1999),
- **Seventh Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2000-2005),
- **Eighth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2006-2011).

16. Singapore **did not report** to UNESCO on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms within the framework of the:

- **Fourth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2005-2008),
- **Fifth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2009-2012).

¹⁰ EFA GMR 2013-14, p 264 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>, Accessed on 16/03/2015

¹¹ UPR info, Singapore – Mid-term Implementation Assessment, p. 15, http://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/singapore/session_11_-_may_2011/mia-singapore.pdf, Accessed on 16/03/2015

17. Singapore **did not report** to UNESCO on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education within the framework of the:

- **First Consultation** of Member States (1993)
- **Second Consultation** of Member States (2011).

18. Singapore is **not party** to the 1989 UNESCO Convention on Technical and Vocational Education.

Freedom of opinion and expression

1. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

19. The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in article 14 of the Constitution of Singapore. Restrictions can be made in the interest of national defence; public order etc.¹²

20. According to chapter 21 of the Penal Code defamation is a criminal offense and can lead to punishment by fines or prison terms up to two years.¹³ There is an extra Defamation Act that deals with defamation in detail.¹⁴

21. The suspension of newspapers and publications containing “seditious matters” is subject to Articles 9 and 10 of the Sedition Act; any expression of “seditious tendency” is forbidden under Article 3.¹⁵

2. MEDIA SELF-REGULATION

¹² See constitution of Singapore on the WIPO website: http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=188428.

¹³ See the official website with legal texts:

<http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/view.w3p?page=0;query=DocId%3A%22025e7646-947b-462c-b557-60aa55dc7b42%22%20Status%3Ainforce%20Depth%3A0%20ValidTime%3A19870330000000%20TransactionTime%3A20150306000000;rec=0#pr500-he->

¹⁴ See the official website with legal texts:

<http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/view.w3p?page=0;query=CompId%3Af5d30732-e645-4326-91bb-daf3fa3fa3ad;rec=0;resUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fstatutes.agc.gov.sg%2Faol%2Fbrowse%2FsubjectResults.w3p%3Bletter%3DD%3Btype%3DactsAll>

¹⁵ See the official website with legal texts:

<http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/view.w3p?page=0;query=CompId%3A988b4e89-aae2-4265-ae1e-378b5096c149;rec=0;resUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fstatutes.agc.gov.sg%2Faol%2Fbrowse%2FsubjectResults.w3p%3Bletter%3DS%3Btype%3DactsAll;whole=yes>

22. There is no self-regulatory body in Singapore. The Media Development Authority (MDA) is a regulatory body under the Ministry of Communications and Information.¹⁶ It has passed an Internet Code of Practice which is binding to all Internet content providers and which aims to ensure that no prohibited material will be broadcasted via the internet.¹⁷

23. The Singapore National Union of Journalists represents the interest of journalists and has passed a code of professional conduct.¹⁸

3. SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

24. UNESCO recorded no killings of journalists so far. Journalists operate in a safe environment.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

25. Recommendations made within the framework of the first cycle of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, considered on (please check the date on the following web site: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Documentation.aspx>)

26. In the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of 11 July 2011, various recommendations were made to Singapore.

27. The recommendations formulated during the interactive dialogue and listed below have been examined by Singapore and enjoy the support of Singapore:

- i. **94.1. Continue its commitment to advancing the lives of its people through the provisions of best education, housing and medical care, which has rightfully earned its international recognition (Brunei Darussalam);**
- ii. **94.2. Continue to take positive steps to enhance the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, especially in the areas of health, education and the care of the disabled (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea);**

¹⁶ See its website: www.mda.gov.sg/AboutMDA/Pages/OverviewRolesAndOutcomes.aspx/.

¹⁷ See the Internet Code of Practice on MDA's website:

http://www.mda.gov.sg/RegulationsAndLicensing/Licences/Documents/Properties/mobj.981.Internet_Code_of_Practice.pdf.

¹⁸ See the Code on Professional Conduct on the website if mediawise: <http://www.mediawise.org.uk/singapore/>.

- iii. **94.3. Continue applying programmes and measures aimed at ensuring universal access of its population to its excellent educational and health services and maintain the highest possible quality of these services (Cuba);**
- iv. **94.4. Continue its commitment in assisting the enrolment of poor children in education and ensuring their health care (Oman);**
- v. **94.6. Continue with its plans to guarantee the right to education (Saudi Arabia); continue the programme of the provision of quality education including new investments in the development of education (Zimbabwe); continue efforts in developing and improving the quality of education so as to preserve human dignity and development in the country (Qatar);**
- vi. **94.10. Build on its record and take additional measures to guarantee basic economic and social rights, such as in education and health, in particular for communities such as disabled, lower income persons and people living with HIV and AIDS (Botswana);**
- vii. **94.23. Continue its efforts to increase the representation of women at senior levels within the public administration, including the diplomatic service, judiciary and educational institutions, as well as the private sector (the Republic of Moldova);**
- viii. **96.30. Implement measures adopted to educate foreign workers, in their native languages, of their rights and responsibilities and avenues for assistance (Sri Lanka);**
- ix. 95. The recommendations formulated during the interactive dialogue and listed below have been examined and enjoy the support of Singapore, which considers that they are already implemented or in the process of implementation:
- x. **95.7. Intensify its efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, inter alia, by advocating and promoting women's empowerment, and through capacity-building, gender-sensitivity training, and public awareness raising activities (Indonesia);**
- xi. **95.13. Provide and improve training programmes on human rights for the judiciary and law enforcement personnel (Jordan);**
- xii. 97. The recommendations below did not enjoy the support of Singapore:

- xiii. 97.8. **Put an end to all practices of corporal punishment that takes place in educational facilities and detention centres (Djibouti);**
- xiv. 99. The following recommendations did not enjoy the support of Singapore as Singapore considers that they are based on incorrect assumptions or premises:
- xv. 99.5. **Prohibit corporal punishment and put in place an educational system respectful of the physical and psychological integrity of minors (Switzerland);**
- xvi. 99.6. **Fully incorporate the principles and provisions of CRC into the domestic legal system, especially those regarding corporal punishment (Poland);**

28. Analysis:

Singapore has adopted measures to improve quality in education. However, according to available information, no specific additional measures have been taken to ensure education for all, particularly for poor children, persons with disabilities and persons living with HIV and AIDS; to promote and guarantee gender equality in educational institutions; nor to ensure human rights education and training for the judiciary and law enforcement officers.

29. Specific Recommendations:

1. Singapore should be strongly encouraged to ratify the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.
2. Singapore should be strongly encouraged to further submit state reports for the periodic consultations of UNESCO's education related standard-setting instruments.
3. Singapore could be encouraged to further promote education for all, especially by implementing inclusive education programmes for poor children, persons with disabilities and persons living with HIV and AIDS.
4. Singapore could be encouraged to further provide human rights education and training for the judiciary and law enforcement officers.
5. Singapore could be encouraged to further promote gender equality in educational institutions.

Cultural rights

30. Singapore is encouraged to ratify the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). UNESCO's cultural conventions promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Singapore is encouraged to facilitate the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from the civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, young peoples and peoples with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

31. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), Singapore is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Singapore is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from the civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, young peoples and peoples with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

Freedom of opinion and expression

32. Singapore is recommended to decriminalize defamation and place it within a Civil Code that is in accordance with international standards.¹⁹

33. It is further encouraged to develop self-regulatory mechanisms of the media and to draft a comprehensive access to information law in accordance with international standards.²⁰

¹⁹ See for example, General Comments No 34. of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 2006 Recommendation of the 87th Session Human Rights Committee, the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, and Resolution 1577 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

²⁰ See for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the recommendations of the 2000 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the 1981; 2002 Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the 2002 African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa and the 2000 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression.

**Freedom of scientific research and
the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications**

34. **Singapore**, in the framework of the 2015-2017 consultations related to the revision and monitoring of the Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers is encouraged to report to UNESCO on any legislative or other steps undertaken by it with the aim to implement this international standard-setting instrument, adopted by UNESCO in 1974. The 1974 Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers sets forth the principles and norms of conducting scientific research and experimental development and applying its results and technological innovations in the best interests of pursuing scientific truth and contributing to the enhancement of their fellow citizens' well-being and the benefit of mankind and peace. The Recommendation also provides the guidelines for formulating and executing adequate science and technology policies, based on these principles and designed to avoid the possible dangers and fully realize and exploit the positive prospects inherent in such scientific discoveries, technological developments and applications. **Singapore** did not submit its 2011-2012 report on the implementation of the 1974 Recommendation. In providing its report in 2015-2017 on this matter, **Singapore** is kindly invited to pay a particular attention to the legal provisions and regulatory frameworks which ensure that scientific researchers have the responsibility and the right to work in the spirit of the principles enshrined in the 1974 Recommendation, such as: i) intellectual freedom to pursue, expound and defend the scientific truth as they see it, and autonomy and freedom of research, and academic freedom to openly communicate on research results, hypotheses and opinions in the best interests of accuracy and objectivity of scientific results; ii) participation of scientific researchers in definition of the aims and objectives of the programmes in which they are engaged and to the determination of the methods to be adopted which should be compatible with respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as ecological and social responsibility; iii) freedom of expression relating to the human, social or ecological value of certain projects and in the last resort withdraw from those projects if their conscience so dictates ; iv) freedom of movement, in particular for participation in international scientific and technological gatherings for furtherance of international peace, cooperation and understanding; v) guarantees of non-discrimination in application of rights to satisfactory and safe working conditions and avoidance of hardship; to access to educational facilities, occupational mobility, career development, participation in public life, and vi) right of association, etc.