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*University of Notre Dame Australia*

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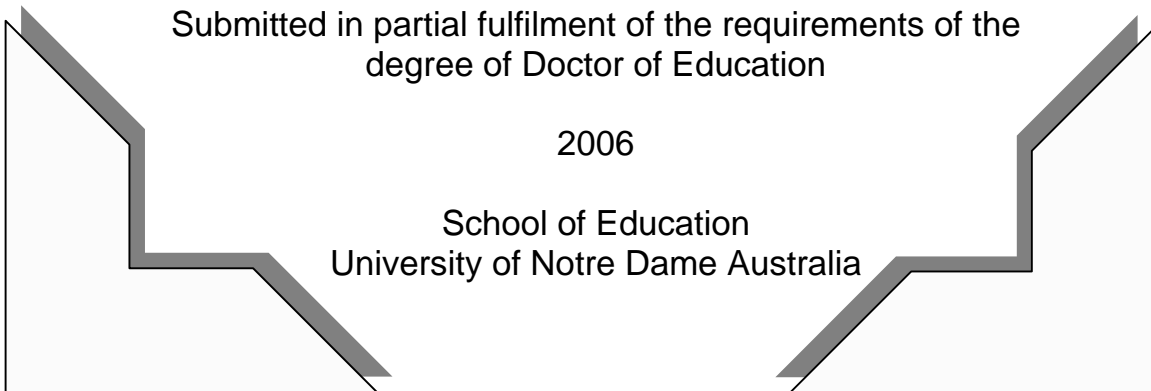
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**The Effectiveness of a Literature-Driven  
English Programme in Improving the  
English Language Skills of Secondary  
One Students in Singapore**

**Mary Delfin Pereira**



Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
degree of Doctor of Education

2006

School of Education  
University of Notre Dame Australia

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the research was to discover whether an integrated Literature and English curriculum would be effective in enhancing the English language skills of students in schools. The curriculum initiative project was conducted as multiple site case studies in four secondary schools in Singapore over a span of five to six weeks during 2004. These schools included a girls' only school, a boys' only school and two co-educational schools. These schools were also of different types: independent, government-aided and government schools. The sample within and across the schools provided: different levels of performance in a graded situation; multiple teachers and classes; and control and experimental conditions for the curriculum implementation. Thus, the curriculum was tested in naturalistic conditions with all the variables of an operational education setting.

The experimental curriculum was a Literature-Driven English Curriculum which was adapted to suit the local circumstances of each school. Though the curriculum utilised a literature text as a tool to teach language skills, it did not require a specific text. Therefore, the lesson duration and textual material were adapted according to the requirements of each school. The multiple site case studies were selected to test if the Literature-Driven English Programme could be an effective means of equipping diverse students with relevant skills to write a piece of narrative and to comprehend a given text. The teaching methods included explicit and implicit modes of teaching.

In the analysis of the findings, it was found that the Literature-Driven English Programme was effective in improving the narrative writing and reading comprehension skills of students across a wide range of variables. It is anticipated that these findings would inform a wider use of a Literature-Driven English Curriculum.

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## Declaration of Authorship

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Selfe". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line. A vertical red line is drawn to the right of the signature, extending from the top of the signature down to the horizontal line.

---

Candidate's Name

12/10/06

Date

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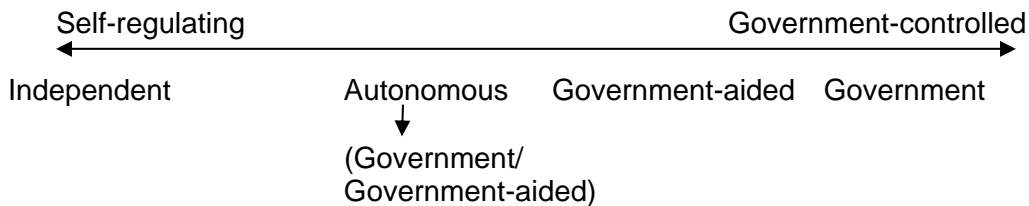
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## Glossary

This section consists of a glossary of terms that may be unfamiliar to those who are not versed in the lingua franca of the educational system in Singapore.

- ✎ MoE – Ministry of Education, Singapore. All schools, including private schools, are regulated by the MoE. Private schools have the most autonomy. In recent years, the MoE has given some public schools autonomy in the running of the schools with the degree of autonomy dependent on whether the school is independent or autonomous. All major changes, however, have to be approved by the MoE.
  
- ✎ Primary Schooling – Years 1 to 6 (seven to twelve years of age)
- ✎ PSLE – Primary School Leaving Examinations
- ✎ Secondary Schooling – Years 1 to 4/5 (thirteen to sixteen/seventeen years of age)
- ✎ Streams: Special – English and Mother Tongue Language (MTL) studied as 1<sup>st</sup> Languages; 4 years of secondary education  
           Express – English studied as 1<sup>st</sup> Language, MTL as 2<sup>nd</sup> Language; 4 years of secondary education  
           Normal (Academic) – English studied as 1<sup>st</sup> Language, MTL as 2<sup>nd</sup> Language; 5 years of secondary education
- ✎ GCE `O' Level Examinations: Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Examination at Ordinary Level; students take these examinations at the end of secondary education.
  
- ✎ Independent Schools – have the least funding from the government. Students in these schools pay higher fees and other sources of funds include sponsorship from the alumni and rental of school facilities.
- ✎ Government-aided Schools – mostly Christian schools, with a few Buddhist schools.
- ✎ Government Schools – completely funded by the government.
- ✎ Autonomous Schools – can be government-aided or government schools; these schools were allowed to become autonomous because of their students' good academic track record. Though they are funded by the government, they are allowed some autonomy in the running of their schools.
- ✎ Special Assistance Plan Schools – students learn English and Mandarin as 1<sup>st</sup> Languages.

*Degree of autonomy granted by the MoE in the running of the schools is as follows:*



- ✎ Literature text – novel, play, or compilation of short stories or poems.
- ✎ Literature – literary analysis of the literature text.
- ✎ English Language text – used in many schools to teach Comprehension, Composition and Grammar, though some schools, such as the independent schools, develop their own teacher-generated materials to teach English Language.