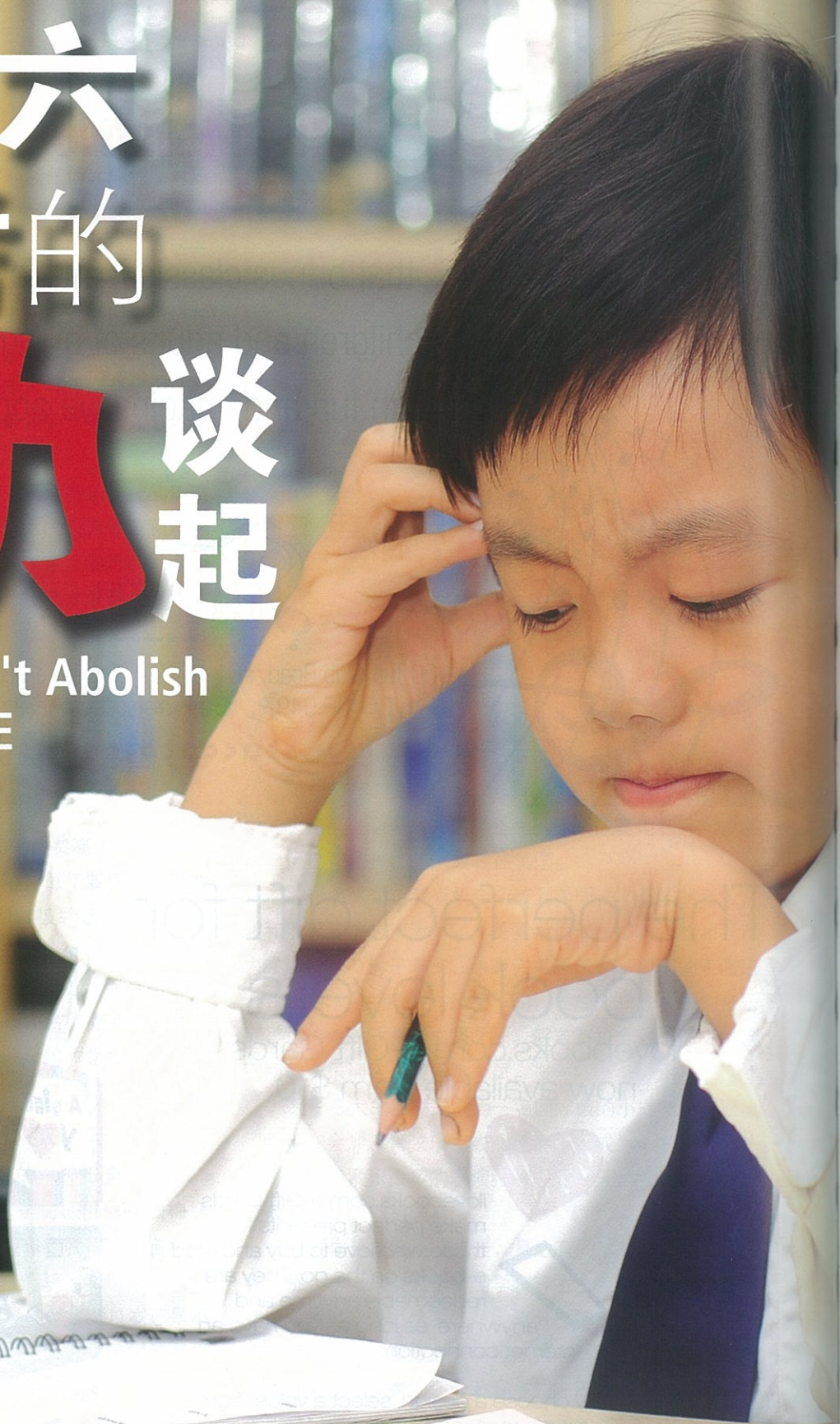


# 从小六 会考的 压力谈起

Why We Shouldn't Abolish  
the PSLE

李宏珉博士 博思书院院长

James Li (Dr) Principal of GreatMinds School



有关教育课题的讨论，一直是新加坡整个社会最关心的课题之一。从几年前的是否要降低母语在小六会考中的比重，到不久前是否要把幼儿教育纳入教育部统一规划，再到最近如何减轻小六会考带给孩子和家长的压力等等，都是大家关注的。

如何减轻小六会考的负担？有人建议降低成绩在会考总积分中的比例，有人建议采用较宽松的等级制而非现有的积分制，有人甚至建议取消小六会考，认为这样可以最大限度地减轻压力。

小六会考带来的压力是确实存在的。所有建议都有道理，可以讨论。但我认为十年树木，百年树人，教育政策不宜大变，只宜微调。本文从两方面谈谈个人的看法：一是为什么要考试？取消小六会考可能带来的负面影响；二是学生和家所面对的压力究竟来自何处？教育政策如何调整才是积极和有长远效益。

首先，之所以有考试是因为它是一个相对而言最公平的选拔制度。每次统一考试就提供了一次公平的机会，在大学里才有来自各个不同阶层的优秀青年，政府才能实现一直以来倡导“任人唯能”的制度。

试想一下，如果没有小六会考，一个来自普通家庭的孩子要怎样才能进入莱佛士书院或华侨中学？能通过O水准考试进入这两所名校的高中部吗？机会很小，因为高中名额大部分都被这两所中学的中学部学生占去。久而久之，类似于印度的种姓制度那样的阶层分化也许就在新加坡出现。

很明显，小六会考的压力不来自会考本身，而是来自于它的重要性。如果学生能通过O水准考试有多一次机会进入名校的高中部，小六会考的压力自然就会减轻。所以，小六会考压力的根源来自六年直通车课程，因为它降低了学生进入名校高中部的机会。小六会考成绩考得不好，进不了开直通车的名校，O水准毕业，要进这些名校高中部的机会更渺茫。

所以，我认为正确的做法不是取消小六会考，而是大规模减少名牌中学开直通车的比例，恢复从前让大部分学生有机会通过O水准考试进入名校初院的机制。

其次，学习的压力究竟来自哪里？我认为压力来自两个因素：高的期望值和低的学习能力。因此减轻压力的方法也是两个：降低期望值或提升能力。降低期望值，考A就可以了，为什么一定要A\*？又或者，考B就可以了，为什么一定要A？可又有多少家长愿意降低期望值呢？

新加坡惟一的资源是人力资源。建国总理李光耀很早就说过，新加坡必须远远走在区域国家的前面。拿什么做到这点？拿的是高质量的人力资源。如果家长都降低期望，10年20年后，新加坡会有什么样的教育水准？答案是很明显的。那并不是大家所乐见的。

所以提升学生的能力是惟一的办法。但如何提升学生的能力呢？每天要孩子花大量时间做作业并不是好办法，因为孩子需要全面发展。所以重点是提升孩子能力的方法，而方法不外乎从三方面入手。

### 提高教师的地位和尊严

从政府方面而言，只有尽一切可能提高教师的地位和尊严，才能吸引大批优秀年轻人加入教师队伍。只有拥有优秀的教师队伍，提升学生的能力才有可能。另外，与其花大力气提升学校的质量，不如让名校到邻里开分校。南洋小学可以在新加坡东西北中到处有分校。

同时要尽一切可能鼓励教师提升教学水平，减轻教师的行政负担，让教师专心上课。至于行政工作，可以增聘人手，设专人负责。班级人数也可以减少，以增加上课的效率。

从教师方面而言，首先必须具有对教育的热情和对孩子的爱心。笔者儿子在本地名校就读，有教师不顾学生健康，在几乎每个学生都要穿夹克上课时，还经常把冷气机的温度调低至16度。笔者儿子就因为这个原因而多次感冒。试想一下，这样的教师能帮助学生减轻学习的压力吗？

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## 教师应该深入研究教学大纲和课本，提升本身的专业水平。

### 我发现现在小学科学试题就有大量在概念方面的错误。

其次，教师应该深入研究教学大纲和课本，提升本身的专业水平。我发现现在小学科学试题就有大量在概念方面的错误。教师应该花大量的时间和精力研究一些非常纯粹的专业教学课题，比如如何提升上课的效率，如何吸引学生学习的注意力。又比如如何处理班上不同程度的学生。学生做题粗心的原因是什么？学生不愿意做作业的原因又是什么？当硬件已经很现代化时，软件的提升就尤其紧迫了。

我举一个好教师的例子。也是笔者儿子的学校，数学科老师所给的作业是所有科目中最多的，他的要求也是所有科目中最严格的。但是，所有的学生都喜欢他，也感觉数学科压力最小。因为他和蔼可亲，能理解学生，教得又好，学生做作业不困难，平均成绩也是所有科目中最高的。当学生都学会了，压力何来呢！

从学生方面而言，家长的任务不是家庭教师，不是下班后教导孩子某个科目，而是做回家长的角色：帮助孩子养成好的学习习惯，提高孩子做作业的专注力，培养孩子正确的价值观，以及引导孩子对学习有一个正确和积极的态度。在孩子的学习生涯中，良好的学习态度发挥了一个非常重要的作用，因为它不仅影响孩子当下的学习，也可能影响孩子一生的学习。

总之，改进教育政策应该着眼于增加社会的公平性，增加学生升入名校的机会；鼓励学校和教师进行教学研究，提升整个教师队伍的素质和教学水平；减轻家长和孩子的学习压力，让家长做回家长的角色，让孩子快乐的学习，快乐的成长，让新加坡成为一个幸福的家园。📖👨🏫

Education has always been a hotly discussed topic in Singapore. A few years ago it was whether the weighting of the mother tongue language score in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) should be reduced; then it was whether pre-school education should come under the Ministry of Education and be included as part of formal education, and now it's about how to lighten the burdens on students and parents due to the PSLE. Some favour lowering the weighting of examination results in the total aggregate score calculation, others lean towards implementing banding instead of the current raw score system, and others still want to scrap the PSLE altogether, on the assumption that this would reduce pressure overnight. The pressure that PSLE brings with it is very real, and any suggestion that may help to reduce it should be welcomed and discussed. However, educating a person takes a long time, and education policies that have resulted from years of planning and improving should not be altered drastically – they merely need fine tuning. I will justify this by looking at the issue from two different angles: firstly, the reasons why we need examinations and the adverse effects that abolishing the PSLE will have; and secondly, the sources of pressure for students and parents and how these can be lessened in the long run.

First of all, the examination system has been adopted because it is the fairest method of assessment. Every national examination provides an opportunity for a fair contest, which in turn provides better achieving students a chance at tertiary education. This is meritocracy in action. Imagine, without PSLE, the chances of a child from an average family being admitted into Raffles Institution or Hwa Chong Institution – the top schools in Singapore. For a start, there would only be a slim chance of the child getting into Nanyang Primary School via the current ballot system because of the proximity of his or her house to the school. And of course, the houses in that area are extraordinarily expensive. Also, it would be difficult for the child to be admitted through his or her O level results as most of the vacancies are taken up by the feeder students from the Integrated Programme (IP). As time went by, social stratification of quite worrying proportions could develop. Therefore, the pressure does not come from PSLE itself but from the unacceptably crucial role it plays in determining a student's future. If the O levels really were another way to get into the top schools then the pressure exerted by the PSLE would naturally lessen. Hence, the root of the problem lies with the implementation of the IP as it has lowered the chances of the good students getting into the top

schools. The solution is not in scrapping the PSLE but cutting the number of through-train places available in years 5 and 6 in the best schools in order to allow proportionately more students entry via their O level results.

The next issue concerns the source of the pressure in the system. Two factors contribute to this — high expectations and low learning ability. There are therefore two ways of solving the problem — either lowering parents' expectations or enhancing students' learning abilities. Lowering parental expectations and freeing students from the need to score an A\* rather than an A, or even a B might ameliorate the problem, but no parent will accept this. Former Minister Mentor Mr Lee Kuan Yew once said that Singapore has to be ahead of her neighbours. The only resource Singapore has is human capital so quality human resource is the only way to realise Mr Lee's aspiration. If parents were to lower their expectations, the standard of education in Singapore would obviously be jeopardised. Hence it is clear which course to take, and that is to enhance students' learning ability. But making them do endless homework tasks every day is not a smart method to achieve this as children require a holistic education. I suggest working on it from all three sides — the government, the teachers and the parents.

The government should explore all possibilities to implement policies that will raise teachers' social status and restore their dignity in order to attract more outstanding graduates to join the teaching fraternity. Improvement in the students' ability is only possible when the teachers are themselves excellent. Extra effort should also be put in to raise the quality of schools. For example, setting up branches of top schools in the neighbourhood. Nanyang Primary School could then have branches in the West and in the North.

Also, they can play a part in encouraging teachers to raise their teaching standards by relieving them of their administration workload so that the teachers can concentrate on their lessons. The number of administrative staff handling paperwork should be increased. With teachers concentrating purely on teaching, class sizes can be reduced to raise the level of effectiveness of lessons.

For the teachers, they first need to have a passion for teaching and a love for children. My son is in a top boys' secondary school yet some of his



teachers do not seem to care about the students. For instance, they keep the air-conditioning at 16°C, and the entire class has to wear jackets during lessons. My son has caught a cold several times already. If teachers neither notice nor care that their students are freezing, is it likely that they will be interested in relieving these same students of the pressure of learning?

In addition, teachers should research the syllabus and textbooks in order for them to grow professionally. At the moment there are many conceptual errors in primary level Science examination questions – and these oversights can only come from the teachers themselves. Besides academic knowledge, teachers should also spend an extensive amount of time and effort improving their pedagogy so that they can be more efficient, retain interest better and manage mixed ability classes more effectively. Teachers should also look into the careless mistakes that students make, find out the reasons for them and investigate the causes of students' reluctance to do assignments. When our hardware is updated, it is imperative for the software to be upgraded in tandem. I know the sort of teacher I have in mind – and just to prove that things are not all bad, such a teacher also teaches in my son's school. Of all the various subject teachers, he gives the most homework assignments and has the highest expectations of his students. However, all his students love him and think Math is the least stressful subject.

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The reason is because he is kind and approachable, and understands his students and teaches them well. This makes homework an easy task for the students, and Math is the subject with the highest average score. Clearly, when the students understand their lessons, there is neither stress nor sweat.

As for the parents, they should not be tutors, and after having worked the whole day their job is not to teach. As parents, they should help their children cultivate good learning habits and be more focused on completing assignments. At the same time, they should instil the correct values in their children, and guide them to adopt more positive and proactive attitudes towards learning. In every child's learning journey, the attitude towards learning plays a vital role. It not only has an immediate impact on his or her progress but it will also influence him or her in years to come.

In conclusion, changes in education policies should enhance fairness in Singapore's society, increase the chances of students getting into top schools, encourage schools and teachers to study teaching methods in depth in order to improve the quality and teaching standard of the teaching community as a whole, reduce the pressure for parents and children and allow parents to resume their role as parents – which is to allow their children to have fun learning and growing. With these things – and the PSLE – in place, Singapore will be transformed into a happy homeland for us all. 🇸🇬

Translated by: Chu Luo Jun

## 李宏珉博士 / James Li (Dr)



作者是博思书院的创办人兼院长，专长于小学教学研究。1986年在上海复旦大学完成物理化学本科，留校任教11年。曾是复旦大学第一届资优班的导师，并获得复旦大学、上海市教育局以及中国教育部的三项教学奖。在2001年考获新加坡国立大学物理化学博士学位。

他也是教学方法的国际讲师，曾在上海和菲律宾开课，指导当地的数理科教师。曾出版两本著作：《爸爸教现代科学》以及《物理化学学习指导》。

Dr James Li is the founder and principal of GreatMinds School. His area of expertise is primary level education research. Aside from teaching in GreatMinds, he is also an international trainer

for teaching methods and has conducted training for Math and Science for teachers in The Philippines and Shanghai.

Dr Li taught in Fudan University for 11 years after he received his bachelor's degree in Physical Chemistry in 1986 from Fudan University. He was the form teacher of the 1<sup>st</sup> gifted class in Fudan University. He was also the recipient of three awards for excellence in teaching from Fudan University, Shanghai Education Bureau and Ministry of Education of China, respectively. In 2011, he attained his PhD in Physical Chemistry from the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Dr Li is the author of two books: *Dad Teaches Modern Science* and *Guidance to Problem Solving in Physical Chemistry*, both published in 1996.