

Chapter 8

Lee Kuan Yew's Thoughts on Talent and Singapore's Development Strategy

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Singapore became a self-governing state in 1959, merged with Malaysia in 1963 and withdrew from the Malayan Federation to become an independent nation in 1965. With its lack of natural resources, the first leaders had to grapple with the question of how Singapore was to survive and develop. In June 1959, Lee Kuan Yew became the first prime minister of Singapore and, over the next 50 years, his ideas and vision were decisive in the formulation and implementation of Singapore's policies. Since independence, Lee Kuan Yew's focus has been on economic development and political stability, both of which require a supply of talented individuals. As a result, Lee Kuan Yew's talent development strategy has stressed the importance of identifying and attracting talent. This article will specifically analyse Lee Kuan Yew's thoughts on talent development and his development policies and strategies over the past years, and assess their impact and effectiveness.

1. Lee Kuan Yew's Thoughts on Talent Development

After the end of the Second World War, Singapore became a British colony once again. However, Singaporeans now sought a greater voice

in government. In 1963, Singapore and Malaysia formed the Malayan Federation along with Sarawak and Sabah and became independent. After the formation of the Federation, economic development was the most urgent need, and talent was needed to drive this development. Lee Kuan Yew's ideas about talent had three core elements: developing higher education, selecting leaders and attracting foreign talent.

1.1. *Developing Higher Education*

Higher education was a necessary element in developing talent, and Lee Kuan Yew initially focused on this area in order to nurture the talent needed for economic development. In 1962, at the Singapore University Students' Union annual dinner, Lee Kuan Yew emphasised what needed to be done:¹

- (i) To establish universities to nurture Singaporean and Malaysian talent so as to achieve the goal of becoming an industrialised society;
- (ii) to expand the Singapore and Nanyang Universities and to coordinate with the development plan for Jurong Industrial Estate; and
- (iii) to draw up appropriate policies to expand education institutions and, over the next 12 years, to attract and groom young people who would help build an industrialised society. This was an aim of every emerging nation.

Singapore was in the Malayan Federation for only two years. Due to conflicts over economic and political issues, Singapore left the Federation in 1965 to become an independent nation. Singapore faced a testing time as there was a housing shortage, natural resources were limited and unemployment was high. In order to survive and develop, the Singapore government launched a series of measures to develop higher education and nurture talent, established the Economic Development Board (EDB), Jurong Industrial

¹Lee Kuan Yew, *The Papers of Lee Kuan Yew: Speeches, Interview and Dialogues (1950–1990)* (Singapore: Lianhe Zaobao, 2011), 435–437.

Estate and the Development Bank of Singapore etc., and successfully propelled the economy to develop quickly. Singapore's rapid development in the 1960s and 1970s caused it to become one of the four Little Dragons of Asia, behind only Japan.

1.2. *Selecting Leaders*

In the early days of nation-building and economic development, political stability was important. Lee Kuan Yew noted the close relationship between talent and politics, and in the 1966 Paya Lebar by-election, he proposed a plan to nurture competent personnel:²

- (i) The People's Action Party (PAP) could not assume that the opposition parties had collapsed and relax their efforts. He pledged to attract even more competent personnel to help launch the government's plans.
- (ii) Long-term political movements could not rely on just one or two people, and more competent personnel had to be sought to carry out the government's plans. This also applied to elections and even more talented people had to be attracted to represent the various constituencies. This would introduce new blood to Singapore politics, and the political endeavour would not run the risk of being interrupted for any reason.

These ideas were constantly reiterated in his recruitment of talent for the PAP. In 1984, at the PAP Party Conference, he expressed the view that the selection of leaders should not depend on luck, and that if the PAP stopped recruiting talent, it would be weakened, and the talented would leave the country or stay and do battle with the PAP. He said that:³

- (i) If the PAP did not select the most talented and most willing to make sacrifices, if Parliament were filled with only the ones the PAP liked best or those who drifted, they would definitely fail.

² *Ibid.*, 438–439.

³ *Ibid.*, 477–479.

- (ii) The PAP had to recruit the most talented, and this would deprive the opposition parties of able people. They should also include intelligent and able people who disagreed with their policies as they could help revise the policies for the good of the people.

Attracting and recruiting talent was necessary, but the definition of talent was also important. In a 1988 speech to National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) students, Lee Kuan Yew described the types of talent needed, “We need people with more than the ability to turn a company around. We need people who can empathise with others’ emotions, feelings and aspirations; to mobilise the people to strive with you to achieve the desired life.” In order to help the government find the required talent, Lee Kuan Yew even proposed competing with the private sector for talent. In a 1989 parliamentary debate on salaries for holders of office, in explaining why ministers should be given higher salaries, he pointed out the necessity of having a stable and honest government, good government policies and economic development. This required that the government take at least 30 of the top 100 students each year into the civil service, whether in administration, engineering, architecture, accountancy, law etc. Without these, the government would not be able to provide individuals and businesses with the conditions for growth. He noted that the government had always been the greatest employer of polytechnic graduates and workers and, in the 1950s, the government employed about 50% of these workers. However, private sector businesses were growing, and if civil service salaries were not competitive, the government would only get leftovers.⁴

While making efforts to attract talented individuals to work in the civil service, there was also a need to ensure smooth leadership succession. This would enable young professionals to make the greatest contribution. Singapore’s second generation leaders began to emerge in the 1980s. In 1982, Lee Kuan Yew spoke at the PAP Party Conference of the leadership transition, “The older generation

⁴ *Ibid.*, 492–496.

will keep watch while the younger generation gain experience.” Lee Kuan Yew went on to explain, “In a completely changed world, in a Singapore which has experienced massive changes, our talented people have to face tests, gain experience, so that the leadership will be able to devise effective and practical measures to solve the virtually insoluble problems. We have to find even more leaders who are able to solve these problems, who are able to transmit the solutions they have devised, and rally and motivate the people to support them to solve the problems.”⁵

1.3. Attracting Foreign Talent

Attracting talent was very important, but Singapore's small land area could only hold a population of a few million people. In addition, fertility rates were falling. It was not sufficient to rely on home-grown talent for social development. Lee Kuan Yew once pointed out that the whole society depended on about 300 people (top civil servants and political elites) who bore the burden of carrying out government policies. If all the 300 were to crash in one jumbo jet, then Singapore would disintegrate. This indicated that leaders were limited in number.⁶ On the issue of the shortage of talent, Lee Kuan Yew was very forward-looking. As early as the 1980s, he already realised the importance of attracting talent from around the world. On 20 May 1980, before the merger of the University of Singapore and Nanyang University to form NUS, Lee Kuan Yew spoke to the academic staff of the two universities, expounding his hopes for the future standards and development of NUS. He stressed the need to employ even more high quality lecturers to raise the university's standards, and groom even more able graduates. He pointed out, “In a ministry, some sensitive work must be done by Singaporeans; in a university, it doesn't matter what colour of skin the teacher has: white, black, yellow, brown or mixed, they are all important. The

⁵ *Ibid.*, 475.

⁶ Lee Kuan Yew, *Lee Kuan Yew at 80: 80 Quotes from a Life* (Singapore: Lianhe Zaobao, 2003), 90.

importance is whether they are able and enthusiastic? Can they engage the students' interest?"⁷ Following that, he repeatedly affirmed the contributions of foreign talent and proposed attracting even more such people. On 12 August 1982, speaking to the National Trades Union Congress on "The Future", Lee Kuan Yew pointed out, "Without these foreign-born talents who take on responsibilities at ministries and statutory boards, Singapore would never have been able to achieve what it has today."⁸ On 20 August 1989, in his National Day Rally Speech, Lee Kuan Yew said that the government's policy of attracting of foreign immigrants, including immigrants from Hong Kong, was "for the sake of Singapore's economy, society and politics, and would not disadvantage any Singaporean climbing the social ladder."⁹

Lee Kuan Yew's ideas on talent development have greatly influenced the government's approach and strategy over the past 50 years. Singapore government policies are the expression of these ideas.

2. Singapore's International Talent Development Strategy

Under Lee Kuan Yew's influence, Singapore made talent development an important strategy. The Singapore government's talent development policies were based on his ideas and were instrumental in Singapore's economic and social development.

Higher education is emphasised, with the Singapore government making great efforts to develop polytechnic education and also raise the overall standard of education. Beyond the three existing publicly-funded universities, NUS, NTU and the Singapore Management University (SMU), in 2010, the government also announced plans to found a fourth publicly-funded university, the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). Later,

⁷Lee Kuan Yew, *The Papers of Lee Kuan Yew: Speeches, Interview and Dialogues (1950–1990)* (Singapore: Lianhe Zaobao, 2011), 475.

⁸*Ibid.*, 457.

⁹*Ibid.*, 501.

plans were made for the fifth and sixth publicly-funded universities, the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and SIM University (SIM). In a 2012 speech, Lee Hsien Loong said that the government had in recent years expanded polytechnic education and with the conversion of SIT and SIM to become publicly-funded universities, by 2020, there would be government-subsidised university places for up to 40% of each cohort.¹⁰ Aside from this, Singapore's many polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education would ensure that a majority of students would be able to move on to higher education or skills training to prepare them for jobs.

While greatly expanding higher education, the Singapore government also provides scholarships to support excellent students in local or overseas universities. After graduation, these scholars will serve in various government ministries and future leaders will come from these ranks. At the same time, the Singapore government pays high salaries in order to attract talent and provides training to ensure a smooth leadership transition. Lee Hsien Loong in a 2011 speech entitled "Leadership Renewal: The 4th Generation and Beyond" said that he had already formed a young "A-team" to lead Singapore in the future.¹¹

As a small country lacking natural resources and with a small internal market, Singapore's international talent strategy of attracting foreign talent is an important part of its national development strategy. The origin of this policy and its implementation is a response to the shortage of labour required for Singapore's economic transformation as a result of falling fertility rates.

Unlike its Southeast Asian neighbours, since its independence in 1965, Singapore has embraced multiracialism. This has helped to support an open immigration policy. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said, "We are going to be a multiracial nation in Singapore. We will set an example. This is not a Malay nation; this is not a Chinese nation; this is not an Indian nation. Everyone will have his place,

¹⁰ *Lianhe Zaobao*, Oct 18, 2013.

¹¹ *Lianhe Zaobao*, Apr 6, 2011, <http://www.zaobao.com.sg/special/report/singapore/ge/story20110406-135640>.

equal: language, culture, religion.”¹² In the early days of independence, Singapore launched a “Two is enough” family planning campaign; at the same time, more women entered the workforce and the fertility rates gradually fell from 4.93 per woman (1960–1965) to 2.62 (1970–1975) and to 1.57 (1995–2000). Although the government has offered many incentives to encourage births, the situation has not improved. In 2010, the fertility rate was just 1.15 births for every female resident (far below the population replacement rate of 2.1).¹³

From the perspective of macroeconomic policy and process, the globalisation of Singapore’s economy began in the 1970s, making it very dependent on the world market and foreign investments. For example, the manufacturing industry contributes about 25% of GDP, employing about 20% of the labour force. Foreign investments account for 78% of the investment commitments in the manufacturing industry, while local investments only account for 22%. After the end of the twentieth century, Singapore’s economy underwent significant structural changes: labour-intensive manufacturing industries were no longer the stars of economic growth, and high value-added and high technology industries became the force behind the increasingly regionalised and globalised economy.

For this reason, as well as because of Singapore’s traditionally multicultural and multiracial history, the international talent strategy became an important policy of the Singapore government, forming a core element of immigration policy. The author feels that this strategy has four main features:

- (i) It is a national strategy supported by the leaders at the highest level;

¹²Liu Hong, “Zhanhou Xinjiapo huaren shehui de shanbian” [Evolution of the Chinese Community in Postwar Singapore] (Xiamen: Xiamen University Press, 2003), 6.

¹³For materials on changes in Singapore’s birth rate and population policies, see Shirley Hiso-li Sun, *Population Policy and Reproduction in Singapore: Making Future Citizens* (London: Routledge, 2012), Chapter 2.

- (ii) its targeted and strategic policies are designed to attract the foreign talent required to support changing economic development strategies;
- (iii) the government's guidance is closely followed by the market; and
- (iv) related support mechanisms have been established to screen and manage foreign talent.

2.1. A National Strategy Supported By the Leaders at the Highest Level

From the 1980s, government leaders have stressed the importance of foreign talent. Then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in his 1999 National Day Rally speech said, "It is talent that counts. We can be neither a first-world economy nor a world-class home without talent. We have to supplement our talent from abroad."¹⁴ Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew said in 2009 that if Singapore was not able to reach the 2.1 population replacement rate, it would be in trouble. He said that Singapore needed a steady flow of able, young and energetic immigrants from China, India and Southeast Asia who would help maintain the vibrancy and vitality of Singapore society.¹⁵

Singapore's talent development policy is well-defined. Then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in his 1997 National Day Rally speech announced a "Foreign Talent Policy" and stressed that foreign talent contributed to Singapore's economy at three levels. These were: (i) at the top, such as CEOs, scientists, academics and artists; (ii) professionals such as engineers, accountants, IT professionals, teachers and administrators; and (iii) skilled workers such as bus drivers, technicians etc.

It can be seen that the Singapore government views the foreign talent strategy as a national strategy, and supports and promotes it at the highest levels. Singapore's ruling political party promotes

¹⁴ *Lianhe Zaobao*, Aug 23, 1999.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Apr 13, 2009.

meritocratic and elitist personnel policies, and quickly and effectively applied this strategy across the island nation. This can clearly be seen from the rapid increase in immigration (permanent residents and foreigners) in the 10 years up to 2010 (see Table 1).

Undoubtedly, Singapore's foreign talent includes outstanding people from all over the world, but Chinese nationals form a large majority of immigrants. This is due to historical, ethnic and cultural reasons as well as the close economic ties between China and Singapore over the past 20 years (China is now one of Singapore's largest trading partners). It is estimated that there are more than 500,000 immigrants from China in Singapore (including new citizens, permanent residents and those holding visas of one year or longer). Many of them are highly-skilled. For example, in NUS, out of 1,671 full-time teaching staff in 2001, 887 of them (53%) were Singapore citizens, while 784 (46.9%) were foreigners. Among the latter, Chinese nationals (many of them permanent residents) numbered 110 (14%). Among the 842 full-time researchers in NUS, 221 (26%) were citizens, and the remaining 621 (73.7%) were foreigners, of which 329 (39%) were Chinese nationals.¹⁶

2.2. Targeted and Strategic Policies Designed to Attract Foreign Talent

Singapore focuses on two levels of immigrants: professionals or skilled immigrants with "portable skills", and ordinary workers (the latter enter as contract workers and most are unable to acquire permanent resident status). In 2007, the government sought to change the pattern of immigration by attracting more immigrants with higher educational qualifications to fill vacancies in private banking, financial institutions and other service industries, and also positions in biotechnology and education. The government hoped that some

¹⁶Liu Hong, "Immigrant Transnational Entrepreneurship and Its Linkages with the State/Network: Sino-Singaporean Experience in a Comparative Perspective," in Raymond Wong, ed., *Chinese Entrepreneurship in the Era of Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2008), 117–149.

Table 1: Singapore's Population Increase (1980–2010).

Year	Total population and annual increase (thousands; %)	Resident population and annual increase (thousands; %)	Singapore citizens and annual increase (thousands; %)	Singapore permanent residents and annual increase (thousands; %)	Foreigners and annual increase (thousands; %)
1980	2,413.9	2,282.1	2,194.3	87.8	131.8
1990	3,047.1 (2.3%)	2,735.9 (1.7%)	2,623.7 (1.7%)	112.1 (2.3%)	311.3 (9%)
2000	4,027.7 (2.8%)	3,273.4 (1.8%)	2,985.9 (1.3%)	287.5 (9.9%)	754.5 (9.3%)
2005	4,265.8 (2.5%)	3,467.8 (1.6%)	3,081.0 (0.8%)	386.8 (8.6%)	797.9 (5.9%)
2010	5,076.7 (1.8%)	3,771.7 (1%)	3,230.7 (0.9%)	541.0 (1.5%; 11.5% in 2009)	1,305.0 (4.1%)

would take up citizenship or become permanent residents, with a target of 240,000 individuals taking up these offers within five years.¹⁷ This target was based on Singapore's economic development plans and would be adjusted according to prevailing conditions.

From 1999, the government committed itself to developing high technology industries to move the economy towards becoming a knowledge economy, and encouraging manufacturing and service industries to complement each other. More than 20 measures and large amounts of funding support were announced to encourage technological development in finance, IT, science and technology, business innovation, human resource and other sectors. Some start-ups by new immigrants also received grants from the S\$13 million EDB SEEDS (Start-up Enterprise Development Scheme). High technology start-ups increased by 134% from 326 in 2001 to 762 in 2002. 60 of them were from China, of which eight (about 13%) received help from the fund. By January 2011, there were 157 Chinese companies listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange with a market value of S\$54 billion. Chinese entrepreneur Shi Xu said, "If Chinese entrepreneurs want funding, new technology, partners, or need a platform to enter the world market, then Singapore is naturally a good transiting place for gradually moving towards globalisation. Singapore has first-class facilities and technological development costs are lower than in many countries, and this enables start-ups to be more competitive."¹⁸

Besides attracting entrepreneurial talent, Singapore also offers many incentives in the education sector to nurture and attract talent. In the 2001 Budget debate, Lee Kuan Yew revealed that in order to better understand the Chinese people, Singapore would have to attract intelligent Chinese to work and study in Singapore so that they could understand Singapore and become part of Singapore.¹⁹ In 1992, Singapore's Ministry of Education began to offer a series of

¹⁷ *Financial Times*, Aug 3, 2007.

¹⁸ Liu Hong, "Immigrant Transnational Entrepreneurship", *Global Times*, Feb 24, 2011.

¹⁹ *Lianhe Zaobao*, Oct 24, 2001.

Senior Middle School scholarships, named SM1, SM2 and SM3. Students who had completed middle school, were in the second year of high school or in the first year of university were invited to apply for one of these scholarships to study in Singapore. SM1 students were sought from the top graduates of selected middle schools from all over China. SM2 targeted top science students who had completed the second year at selected high schools from all over the country. SM2 students were awarded S\$6,000 each year for living expenses besides school fees, accommodation and food, and after graduation from university would be required to work for six years in a Singapore company or organisation. SM3 sought first-year students from top universities in China (mainly science students).

According to a survey, 74% of SM3 scholars stayed on in Singapore after graduation and became permanent residents. This plan achieved the dual purpose of increasing Singapore's population and also strengthening Singapore's technological and economic competitiveness.

2.3. The Government's Guidance Is Closely Followed by the Market

The main characteristic of Singapore's international talent policy is the effective collaboration between government policies and market mechanisms. The government provides favourable policies and guiding principles but does not do everything. Instead, it makes use of a system of measures to attract talent from all over the world.

The EDB and the Ministry of Manpower have jointly set up "Contact Singapore", a national headhunting organisation, with the aim of attracting international talent to Singapore to work, invest and live. It has offices in Asia, including Beijing and Shanghai, as well as Europe and North America, providing a one-stop service for talented people interested in working, investing or launching new business activities in Singapore. This agency also works with the private sector in Singapore to assist potential investors in Singapore.

Contact Singapore provides up-to-date news of employment and business development opportunities and acts as a platform for

talented individuals from all over the world to connect with Singapore employers. For example, in 2010, Contact Singapore's Area Director for Greater China, David Ho, said that "the upcoming special employment fair is to enable talented people from China's electronics industry to make connections with Singapore's companies, and provide China's elite with a platform to develop globally." Many famous international semiconductor companies participated in the specialised employment fair, and job opportunities offered included integrated circuit designers, packaging engineers and applications engineers. Other jobs featured were in areas such as clean-tech, bio-pharmaceutical, finance and healthcare. It also provided targeted services for different groups. For example, Careers@Singapore targeted those with working experience, and Experience@Singapore targeted fresh graduates, including tours for them to explore the electronics industry.

2.4. Related Support Mechanisms to Screen and Manage Foreign Talent

Attracting and managing international talent requires a whole system of administrative measures to be successful. Singapore's policy of defining, identifying, rewarding and managing international talent has several unique features. The channels for attracting international talent are both diversified and coordinated. The Ministry of Manpower focuses on attracting highly-skilled workers and has set up an International Talent Bureau (now renamed the International Manpower Bureau) to be responsible for the global recruitment of talent. It updates a Strategic and Skills-in-Demand List every year in accordance with the needs of the economy. For example, industries for which Singapore requires talent from overseas include banking and finance, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, electronic equipment manufacturing, healthcare, information and communications, interactive digital media, law, shipping and tourism. Foreigners with relevant skills are given priority when applying for employment passes. The Ministry of Manpower also introduced a free online self-assessment tool to enable potential employers or

employees to find out whether an employment pass application would be likely to be approved.

The Ministry of Finance is responsible for tax policies. In order to encourage companies to employ foreign talent, the government offers companies tax relief on expenditure related to employing and training foreign talent, and also on their salaries and benefits such as housing. The EDB, responsible for charting the direction of the economy, identifies strategic industries and directions, promotes collaboration between industry and research, and provides strategic direction for the attraction of foreign talent.

Having attracted foreign talent, the government pays attention to their assimilation into society, and also attempts to change their political allegiance in favour of Singapore and become a part of the nation. In 2007, a National Population and Talent Division was set up in the Prime Minister's Office with the responsibility for integrating immigrants and enabling them to contribute to Singapore society. In September 2009, the National Integration Council was set up jointly by the government, people and private sectors to open the doors, hearts and minds of the people to help new immigrants integrate into society, and promote mutual trust between different sectors of society. The government also set up a S\$10 million Community Integration Fund.

3. Lee Kuan Yew's Thoughts on Talent and the Success of Singapore's Talent Development Strategy

Needless to say, Lee Kuan Yew has been the key person behind Singapore's policies and development strategy over the past 50 years, and his opinions have been highly influential. From the early days of independence, Lee Kuan Yew clearly recognised that Singapore faced issues of a paucity of natural resources and the need to develop the economy. Lacking in natural resources, a key development strategy was to rely on human resources. From the start, Lee Kuan Yew promoted the development of higher education, and this has become an important government programme over the past decades. Many institutions of higher learning have been established: Nanyang University (1955),

Singapore University (1962), National University of Singapore (1980), Nanyang Technological University (1991), Singapore Management University (1999) and Singapore University of Technology and Design (2012). Other institutions included: Singapore Polytechnic (1954), Ngee Ann Polytechnic (1963), Temasek Polytechnic (1990), Nanyang Polytechnic (1992) and Republic Polytechnic (2007). Over the last 50 years, Singapore's higher education has improved greatly and become more varied, providing many more opportunities for students.

When Lee Kuan Yew first came to power, he was very far-sighted. He realised that it was necessary to continually attract talent and innovation. At the time, he had already given thought to nurturing the second and third generations of leaders, and implementing a smooth transition and handover. In his long tenure, he and his government continually worked towards implementing this plan. After independence, Lee Kuan Yew's leadership team included talented people such as S. Rajaratman, Goh Keng Swee and Lim Kim San. In 1990, Lee Kuan Yew retired and Goh Chok Tong became prime minister. In his 14 years of leadership from 1990 to 2014, he continued to emulate Lee Kuan Yew in his attention to leadership renewal. Soon after the 2001 general election, when Goh expressed that he was ready to step down, Lee Kuan Yew told him that he need not be in such a hurry, but Goh replied that as Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was already nearly 50 years old, he wished to give him (Lee Hsien Loong) sufficient time to lead and nurture the fourth generation of leaders.²⁰ Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's leadership team also contains several talented people, such as Teo Chee Hean and Tharman Shanmugaratnam. Lee Kuan Yew felt that the ruling party should continually seek out young, dependable, hard-working and talented people to connect with the electorate and gain their trust. In 2011, the PAP fielded some outstanding candidates who have entered the cabinet. Heng Swee Keat, the then Minister for Education, was praised by Lee Kuan Yew as the best principal private secretary he had ever had. Others fielded are now

²⁰Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong's Eulogy for the Late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, <http://www.channel8news.sg/news8/singapore/20150329-sg-lky-esm-goh/1750964.html>.

in the Cabinet: Chan Chun Sing, Tan Chuan-Jin and Lawrence Wong etc.²¹ Lee Kuan Yew's ideas of meritocracy and leadership renewal have guided the Singapore government through successful transitions to its second and third generations of leaders, and new faces have been introduced who will become the eventual leaders of the future.

From early on, Lee Kuan Yew had the idea of attracting foreign talent, hence Singapore's immigration policy has always been quite liberal and straightforward. For example, the government offers attractive scholarships to attract top students from other countries to study in Singapore. Some of these students are expected to serve Singapore for six years after graduation. In this way, Singapore will be able to retain their talents. Many of these will continue beyond their six years and become permanent residents or citizens. Before 2010, Singapore's Immigration and Checkpoints Authority would send invitations to foreign students while they were still in the universities and polytechnics and invite them to apply for permanent residence status after starting work. Also, Singapore's barriers to immigration for investors is relatively low. These measures have enabled Singapore to successfully attract many talented people from all over the world. Many immigrants are also attracted to Singapore's reputation for cleanliness, safety and the bilingual education policy. In 2007, well-known investor Jim Rogers also chose to live in Singapore.

Of course, no policy is ever perfect. The influx of foreign immigrants has caused many Singaporeans to feel that there are too many differences between themselves and the new immigrants (including those from mainland China), and that the large number of immigrants has increased competition for resources (such as jobs, housing, transport, schools and healthcare). They also doubt the loyalty of these new immigrants. The topic of immigration became a major issue in the May 2011 general election and the August 2011 presidential election, and was the main reason that the PAP received

²¹ Lee Kuan Yew, *One Man's View of the World* (Singapore: Straits Times Press, 2013), 209.

only 60% of the vote in the general election while opposition parties received 40%. Similarly, in the presidential election, former Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan only won by 7,000 votes. After that, the government launched “Singaporeans First” policies, slowing down the pace of immigration and raising the bar for immigrants. From 2011, the Singapore government also tightened the immigration policy by reducing the number of new permanent residency applications granted, raising the requirements for employment pass applications and ceasing to issue invitations to foreign students studying in Singapore. These measures caused the increase in immigration to slow and even fall from 2011 to 2014.

Lee Kuan Yew clearly recognised the negative effects of immigration, but felt that it was necessary to be realistic and look for solutions. He pointed out,

But even as we recognise these limits to immigration, we must understand that there are no alternatives in the short term. We must remain open to the diversity that newcomers bring to our shores. If harnessed effectively, diversity within our schools and workplaces can broaden perspectives and facilitate the constructive exchange of ideas. Permanent residents are potential citizens; either we or they themselves have not yet made a final decision on Singapore citizenship. We should just take them in at a rate at which we can integrate them and let them adjust to our values and norms, so that they form a pool who could become citizens.²²

4. Conclusion

Without Lee Kuan Yew’s contributions, Singapore would not have achieved its present success. His foresight and unique leadership ability have made a world leader in the provision higher education, attracting foreign students from all over the world. In the past 50 years, the government has been stable. This has made it a centre for international talent and a favoured destination for immigrants. Although not all policies have achieved positive results, these were

²² *Ibid.*, 221.

choices he had to make given the situations he faced. History can never be repeated, and Singapore will never produce another Lee Kuan Yew. Today, we have to look at Lee Kuan Yew in the context of his time, reflect on his ideas, and find the best direction for future development. Lee Kuan Yew said, "My job is done. I have put in place a system that is clean, meritocratic and open."²³ The future belongs to the new generation of leaders.

²³ *Ibid.*, 213.