

COUNTRY REPORT: SINGAPORE

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Singapore is an island state in South East Asia, lying at the southern tip of the Malaysian Peninsula, between Malaysia and Indonesia. It has a population of three million people living on 632.6 sq km and is a focal point for South-East Asian sea routes.

Over the past decade, Singapore has developed substantial national informational technology (IT) capabilities and infrastructure. This was in preparation for the new challenges of the information age. "The World Competitiveness Report" has, in recent years, placed Singapore among the top nations in the world in terms of strategic exploitation of IT by companies, computer literacy of workers and telecommunications infrastructure.

The vision of the Singapore government is to transform Singapore into the Intelligent Island where Singaporeans will be able to tap into vast reservoirs of electronically stored information and services to improve their businesses and recreational options. Text, sound, pictures, video, documents, designs and other forms of media can be transferred and shared through a high capacity and high speed nationwide information infrastructure named the Singapore ONE (One Network for Everyone). The network will interconnect computers in virtually every home, office, school, and factory. The computer will thus evolve into an information appliance, combining the functions of the telephone, computer, TV and more.

Education is just one of the many areas where this vision will have its effects. The Masterplan for IT in Education aims to integrate information technology (IT) into education so as to equip the younger generation with skills that will enable them to meet the challenges of the 21st century. This involves shifting the focus of learning from the reception of information towards an emphasis on finding relevant information and learning to use it to solve problems. IT will be an essential tool in effecting this change.

In an IT-enriched curriculum and school environment, a child will be able to enhance his learning through an expansion in the resources available as well as the development of self exploration and self discovery skills. Linkages between the school and the world through multimedia will expand the learning environment. Teachers and pupils will be able to tap into a growing wealth of educational material outside the school. The opportunities for communication and collaboration between other educational institutions and the communities are

made available. Computer literacy is just one of the beneficial spin-offs from this scheme. These new avenues will help pupils develop the perspectives required to work and live in an increasingly borderless world.

Our local schools have been given the autonomy to deploy IT resources develop new teaching and learning strategies. This is backed by much technical support funded by the government. The teaching staff is also in the process of being trained in the use of IT as well as the development of new teaching materials and methods. In the near future, pupils will enjoy a pupil to computer ratio of 2:1.

Singapore's only resource is her people. We place great emphasis on the education of our young and believe that use of multimedia in education is part of the answer.