**CHAPTER 7 – RESPONSES TO DIVERISTY**

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| **RESPONSES TO SOCIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY.** |

**RESPONSES OF INDIVIDUALS**

* Individuals can respond constructively to promote understanding of cultural differences and strengthen harmony in society.
* E.g. an online influencer uploaded a picture of 2 Sikhs during a sporting event and claimed they were blocking her view.
* Online users assumed she was referring to their turbans and responded angrily and claimed the influencer was disrespecting their religion.
* The influencer clarified that she was referring to their heights. But online users continued to be angry with her.
* However, the President of the Young Sikh association invited her for an informal tour of a Sikh temple where the influencer got to learn about the Sikh culture.
* The president and the Sikh community were heartened by the influencer’s efforts

**When individuals respond to insensitive comments with anger and hurtful words/actions citizens will fuel unhappiness and criticism. This will weaken the bonds between different cultures.**

**When individuals respond constructively to help others understand the impact of their actions, we raise awareness and address areas of ignorance.** **This will promote understanding of cultural differences and helps deeper engagement to strengthen cohesion in a diverse society.**

**RESPONSES BY COMMUNITY GROUPS**

* Citizens with common interests can organise themselves into formal or informal community groups to contribute towards specific needs or issues in society.
  + E.g., Welcome in My Backyard (WIMBY) – a group that took action to address the challenges experienced by migrant workers and forge better relationships between Singaporeans and migrants.
  + This group was to counter the negative sentiments held by many locals against migrant workers – NIMBY (NOT IN MY BACKYARD)
  + WIMBY organised events which encouraged locals to interact and build bonds with migrant workers such as writing welcome greetings to migrant workers.

**Constructive efforts by community groups can help to shape attitudes and actions of the public. It helps to develop a deeper understanding between different cultural groups.**

**This will strengthen relationship and bonds between people of diverse backgrounds. When citizens respond to socio-cultural diversity in a sensitive manner, interactions and relationships among people of different backgrounds will remain harmonious and meaningful.**

**RESPONSES OF GOVERNMENTS**

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| **ASSIMILATION IN FRANCE** |

* Immigrants are expected to adopt the beliefs and practices of the majority group in France.
* Over time, the identities of the assimilated group are expected to become more identical to those of the majority group.
* **Principle of laicite** – which means state secularism (the belief of setting a clear separation of religious affairs from governance and not favouring one religion over another).
  + France believes that harmony is achieved when every individual puts aside his or her connections to race, ethnicity and religion with the French national identity being prioritised.
* **Policies** are intended to assimilate immigrants and their families into French society.
  + Education:
    - Immigrant children must attend adaptation classes to improve their French and be assimilated into French schools.
    - In the classroom, no discussion of religion except in History, Literature, Philosophy and Art classes.
    - Moral and Civil education – to promote national identity, justice, mutual respect, and non-discrimination.
    - **This will ensure immigrant children will be able to interact with other French children and be able to adopt French attitudes and beliefs that will strengthen their French national identity.**
  + Employment:
    - **2015 Diversity Charter** – To encourage employers to be inclusive and welcome migrants into their workforce.
    - It encourages companies to recruit employees from diverse backgrounds.
    - The government hopes that migrants will build roots in France if they have a stable job.
  + Naturalisation:
    - Programmes to help immigrants learn basic knowledge about life in France and understand what it means to be a French national.
    - Attend a 4-day civic course in French principles and values and learn practical aspects of life in French society.
    - 600 hours of free language courses are offered to immigrants to help them learn French.
    - **This will ensure immigrants will be able to interact with other French citizens and be able to adopt French attitudes and beliefs that will strengthen their French national identity.**

**Assimilation is hence effective in ensuring migrants adopt the beliefs and values of the majority in the country. They will learn to interact and communicate with a common language which helps to build bonds and meaningful relationships.**

**Migrants will be able to adapt to the way of life in France more effectively leading to a stronger sense of national identity, peace and harmony.**

**TENSIONS ARISING FROM ASSIMILATION IN FRANCE**

There are tensions between upholding the French national identity and recognising the role of culture and religion in the identities of immigrants and respecting their right to practice their religion.

* 2004 – France banned the wearing of religious attire and symbols in public schools to maintain religious neutrality in schools.
* E.g., Muslim students not allowed to wear religion headscarves, Jewish students cannot wear the Kippah, Christians not allowed to wear crosses, Sikhs cannot wear turbans.
* The ban was implemented to ensure state secularism and uphold French national identity which some people believed was threatened when immigrants display their religious identities.
* However, immigrants feel that it is their right to be able to publicly showcase their religious and cultural identity.

**This has led to growing tensions and conflicts between immigrants and citizens.**

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| **INTEGRATION IN SINGAPORE** |

* Immigrants retain their unique identities while forging common ground with the majority group in the host country.
* Singapore is welcoming of different cultural practices and encourages its practice to add vibrancy to society.
* Policies and programmes encourage interaction between locals and immigrants.
  + Bilingualism – Implemented to promote integration in Singapore.
    - Students required to learn English and one of the official Mother Tongues.
    - English has given different ethnic groups a common language to communicate with each other. -> **These builds relationships and promotes integration.**
  + Community Support – Community Integration Fund set up in 2009.
    - To support organisations in launching projects to encourage interactions between Singaporeans and immigrants -> **to deepen mutual understanding, build relationships with each other and develop a stronger connection to Singapore.**
    - E.g., People’s Association organise activities such as house visits, block parties and festive celebrations so that these groups can make new friends and build bonds.
    - Facilitates meaningful interactions between different ethnic groups and religions - > learning from each other.
    - Foreigners will be able to make new friends with Singaporeans and learn about Singapore’s history, culture and way of life - > this will promote integration.
  + Naturalisation:
    - New citizens go through Singapore Citizenship Journey programme.
      * Learn about Singapore’s history and development.
      * Deepened appreciation of Singaporean norms and shared values.
      * Have meaningful interactions with local community.
      * Receive Singapore citizenship certificate at Citizenship ceremony after programme.
      * **This ensures that new citizens will be able to adapt to Singapore’s way of life and integrate easily.**
  + Common Experiences
    - National Service – Plays a key role in creating greater social cohesion.
    - Brings people of diverse backgrounds to train and live together.
    - They learn a sense of collective interest. -> strengthens relationships between citizens and creates a strong Singapore national identity.
    - **These experiences provide opportunities for immigrants and locals to interact and build meaningful relationships - > this helps to promote integration.**
* **Integration is effective in building a harmonious society -> it encourages immigrants to practice their cultures and adapt to the way of life in Singapore. Everyone is treated equally.**
* **This creates a vibrant society with different cultures -> enhances the Singaporean identity.**
* **Creates a strong senses of belonging as immigrant cultures are valued.**

**TENSIONS ARISING FROM INTEGRATION IN SINGAPORE**

* Tensions between Singaporeans and immigrants due to perceived erosion of the Singaporean identity and the difference in norms and values of immigrants.
* Singaporeans may have negative stereotypes of foreigners’ behaviours and values based on his country of origin. -> this may cause immigrants not want to interact with Singaporeans as they feel they are not open and welcoming of them.

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| **RESPONSES TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVERSITY.** |

**RESPONSES OF INDIVIDUALS**

* Can contribute their time, effort, and money to meet areas of need in society.
* They can start ground up initiatives and distribute food to those in need.
* E.g., The charity Free Food for All started by an individual which aim to provide food to the less fortunate.
* **Individuals’ efforts can help to improve the lives of others who are less well off. This will help those from the lower socio-economic group to be able to move up the social ladder.**
* **Lead to meaningful relationships in society when people take care of each other.**

**RESPONSES BY COMMUNITY GROUPS**

* Some groups in society do not have sufficient resources and opportunities to progress.
* Can lead to challenges in accessing healthcare and education – this will reduce their quality of life.
* Formal and informal community groups can step in by providing support in the form of financial aid, guidance, and resources.
* E.g., Daughters of Tomorrow is a formal community group that help women aged 20-60 upgrade their skills and jobs. These women come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, hence the skills training opportunities provided by DoT will help these women find suitable employment which can then help them move up the social ladder.
* **These efforts by community groups help to improve the quality of life for low-income families in Singapore.**
* **Their efforts can help build bonds and meaningful relationship as they help give individuals a better life.**

**RESPONSES OF GOVERNMENTS**

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| **Government financed approach in SWEDEN** |

* Swedish government provides high subsidies, allowances and opportunities to equip individuals with skills for employment.
* This ensures citizens, regardless of their background or socio-economic status have access to social services.
  + E.g., Healthcare services are publicly funded.
    - All families are covered by a medical protection scheme.
    - Children can claim up to $330 in a year from the government.
    - Dental care costs are free for locals up to the age of 23. After which it is subsidised.
    - This ensures all citizens have access to healthcare regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.
  + E.g., Education is funded by the government for all Swedes.
    - Every child receives a free school lunch.
    - All children have access to school doctor, school nurse, psychologist, and school welfare officer at no cost.
    - Tuition fees for tertiary education are fully subsidised for Swedish students.
  + E.g., Housing allowances are provided for lower income families to help them pay for their homes.
    - Families receive allowance if they live with their children and pay more than $190 for their housing.
    - Elderly with low or no income they are entitled to housing supplement (financial support).
  + E.g., Skills Training is provided by the Swedish Public Employment service to help individuals increase their chances of employment.
    - Free vocational courses provided to train individuals from diverse backgrounds for industries that lack workers.
    - Course applicants must meet a criteria to be eligible. (refer to textbook).

**The support given by the Swedish government ensures costs remained affordable and that citizens of different economic backgrounds have access to healthcare, education, housing, and employment. It ensures the needs of the elderly, children and sick are met thus improving their quality of life.**

**Challenges:**

High taxation rate

* To fund the government subsidies, the high-income earners are taxed 57.2% of their income which is one of the highest in the world.
* In addition, there is indirect taxes such as Value-Added Tax (VAT) which is like our GST. The VAT is 25%.
* **Individuals may feel financially burdened as a large portion of their income goes to taxes, reducing their disposable income and possibly affecting their quality of life and spending habits.**

Ageing population

* In 2018 they spent $17.2 billion on eldercare which is expected to increase over the years. This is because of Sweden’s growing ageing population (people aged 65 and above).
* Sweden has one of the highest life expectancies in the world – 80.6 years for men and close to 84.3 years for women.
* This is another reason why government will be spending more on elder care.
* **With more retirees, there will be a smaller group of working population to bear the increased cost.**
* **There will be a need to increase employment rates, lengthen the employment years for those still working or raise taxes.**

High immigrant unemployment

* Challenges to integrate immigrants into the workforce - > leads to widening income gap between immigrants and citizens.
  + Immigrants may not have received education in their home countries -> unable to take up jobs in Sweden -> leads to high unemployment for low skilled workers.
  + Employers have difficulties assessing immigrants’ skill level if their training was not in Sweden - > long processing time for foreign qualifications -> leading to highly education immigrants with foreign qualifications facing challenges finding a suitable jobs.

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| **Shared responsibility approach in SINGAPORE** |

* Many helping hands such as individuals and families, community groups and the government work together to address issues related to socio-economic diversity and meet the needs of society.
  + Individuals play an important role to support themselves and their family members -> for individuals who are unable to do so the government steps in.
* The government provides targeted assistance (subsidies, financial assistance, skills training) to individuals and families who are unable to provide for themselves and where support from the community is not enough.
  + Subsidies
    - Government provides multiple tiers of protection to ensure **accessible and affordable healthcare for all Singaporeans**.
    - Singaporeans save for their own or their dependants’ healthcare needs through CPF Medisave and in addition the government provides subsidies to reduce medical costs for them.
      * E.g., Up to 80% subsidies for hospitalisations.
      * Medishield life – Pays for large medical bills.
      * Medisave – Helps to pay for medical expenses.
      * Medifund – Helps those who are unable to pay the subsidized bill.
    - **Preschool subsidies** – Government provides subsidies to low-income families with pre-school children attending pre-schools operated under the Anchor Operator System.
    - Families pay $3 a month for enrolling in preschools under the Anchor Operator System.
    - This ensures that all children have access to quality education regardless of their family background.
    - **Public housing subsidies** –To ensure affordable housing for Singaporeans.
      * Housing grants and rental housing schemes by the government ensures housing opportunities are kept affordable.

Other forms of government support:

* + Vouchers to provide more support for lower to middle income Singaporean households.
    - GST Vouchers scheme provides cash payout to support lower income Singaporeans with their immediate needs.
    - U-Save rebates to help lower and middle income HDB households with their utility bills.
    - This will help lower income families lower the cost of living.
  + Opportunities for upskilling and training.
    - SkillsFuture programme which provides courses for students and adults to upskill and equip themselves with industry-relevant skills.,
    - Workfare Skills Support scheme provides training allowance and cash rewards to encourage low-wage workers to upgrade their skills.
    - This ensures that individuals are able to remain employed and earn an income.

**The assistance provided by the government ensures the needs of Singaporeans from diverse socio-economic backgrounds are supported as costs remain affordable.**

**Individuals, the community and the government work hand in hand to ensure the needs of citizens are met.**

**Challenges:**

* Ageing population.
  + By 2030 - % of seniors will more than double, while those aged 20-64 will decrease -> greater government funding is needed for healthcare and social services to support the ageing population.
  + Singaporeans living longer – up to age 85 on average - lead to tripling of healthcare expenditure to 11.3 billion from 2010 to 2019 -> to ensure the needs of seniors are met and Singaporeans have access to affordable and quality healthcare.
  + Increasing cost of supporting ageing population will affect the working population **as the burden for each working adult will increase**. -> E..g. working adults would need to pay more income tax so that the funds can be channelled into healthcare. -> Lower disposable income for working adults leading to lower quality of life.
  + **Reduced vibrancy of Singapore’s economy** due to ageing population – lower productivity – lower economic output – lower economic growth. -> Challenging for Singapore to care for the elderly and people in need.
* Increase in taxation.
  + To help meet the needs of the population, the government plans to increase GST from 7 to 9% by 2024.
  + Higher income earners pay a higher tax – 22%.
  + More than 60% of taxes is paid by foreigners residing in Singapore, tourists and the top 20% of resident households.
  + **If taxes keep going up, Singapore will not be an attractive place to do business, deter tourists from coming.**
  + **Increases burden on Singaporeans which will lower their quality of life.**
* Limitations in upskilling and training.
  + Those aged 60 and above find it difficult to find employment even through they have upgraded their skills. -> Many employers prefer hiring younger workers.
  + More support is needed for senior workers so that they can continue to work and support themselves till 70.
    - This support is important as it would be hard for employers to retain and hire them and wages might be insufficient to support their needs.

**Managing these challenges are important because if the needs of the people are not met it can lead to unhappiness and tensions. Citizens and the government must work together to respond to socio-economic diversity. This will enable people to enjoy the benefits of living in a diverse society.**