

RESEARCH WITHIN REACH

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**04 THE BIG IDEA**  
Rigorous, Relevant, Responsive:  
Education Research for a Changing World

**07 CLASSROOM PERSPECTIVES**  
Making Thinking Visible,  
Making Feedback Matter

**12 PEOPLE**  
The Shift Towards Flourishing  
in Education



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# Contents

- 03** **EDITORIAL**  
The Conversations Continue:  
From Research to Impact

- 04** **THE BIG IDEA**  
Rigorous, Relevant, Responsive:  
Education Research for a  
Changing World



- 07** **CLASSROOM PERSPECTIVES**  
Making Thinking Visible,  
Making Feedback Matter

- 09** **RESEARCH IN ACTION**  
Parent Anxiety in a High-Stakes System:  
What Teachers See, Feel and Carry

- 12** **PEOPLE**  
The Shift Towards Flourishing  
in Education

- 14** **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**  
Teacher Reflections on  
Learning in an AI Age

## 20 YEARS

### OF RESEARCH WITHIN REACH

As we wrap up *SingTeach's* 20th anniversary, we are pleased to launch **20 Years 20 Stories**, a commemorative book featuring reflections from educators, researchers and policymakers who have journeyed with *SingTeach* over the past two decades. The collection celebrates a shared commitment to bridging research and practice, and the people who have made that journey possible.



Scan the QR code  
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## THE CONVERSATIONS CONTINUE: FROM RESEARCH TO IMPACT

What does it mean for education research to make a real difference in schools?

That question sat at the heart of the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference (RPIC) 2026 organized by the Office for Research at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. Educators, researchers, school leaders and policymakers came together to explore this year's theme, Education Research for Impact. Across three days of keynote addresses, presentations and conversations, a common message emerged: research matters most when it helps us better understand learners, strengthen teaching and inform decisions that shape educational practice.

For many educators, research can sometimes feel distant from the realities of the classroom. Yet the ideas shared at RPIC remind us that evidence-informed practice is not about adding more to teachers' already full plates. Rather, it is about equipping educators with insights, tools and perspectives that can help them navigate complex challenges – from the rise of artificial intelligence in education to growing concerns around student well-being.

In this issue, we bring you highlights from selected keynote addresses and presentations, as well as reflections from the conference convenors on why building stronger connections between research and practice is increasingly important. When educators engage with research, ask questions and reflect on evidence, they are not simply consuming knowledge, but also strengthening their professional judgement and helping to shape the future of education.

We hope this issue offers both inspiration and practical takeaways, and invites you to continue the conversation on how research can support meaningful impact in classrooms, schools and beyond.

We look forward to welcoming you back to the RPIC in 2028, where we will once again come together to exchange ideas, challenge assumptions and reimagine the future of education.

### **SingTeach editorial team**

Office for Research  
National Institute of Education  
Singapore

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### **Research in Action**

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Envisioned as a one-stop repository of evidence-based knowledge and classroom resources, Knowledge Resource Bank (KRB) covers NIE research over a range of education themes and academic subjects.

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# RIGOROUS, RELEVANT, RESPONSIVE:

EDUCATION RESEARCH FOR A CHANGING WORLD

**E**ducational challenges today rarely have simple solutions. From the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence to shifting expectations of what it means to thrive in an uncertain future, addressing these challenges requires research that is rigorous, relevant and responsive to rapidly evolving realities. The 11<sup>th</sup> edition of NIE's Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference (RPIC) brings together educators, school leaders, researchers and policymakers to explore how education research can generate meaningful, lasting impact. In this Big Idea article, RPIC 2026 Conference Convenors Professor Kenneth Poon and Dr Dennis Kwek share what education research looks like in practice, and how it shapes classrooms, informs policy and transforms learner experiences.

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## NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY IN EDUCATION RESEARCH

The challenge for education research is not simply to produce knowledge, but to remain responsive in a world where change is occurring at an unprecedented pace.

“In such an environment, research must remain responsive to emerging challenges and translate into meaningful improvements in policy and practice,” Professor Kenneth Poon, who is also Dean of Office for Research (OfR) at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore, says.

Dr Dennis Kwek, who is also Associate Dean (Global Strategic Engagement) and Principal Education Research Scientist at OfR, echoes this sentiment. “We’re living in a time of rapid transformation – with technological shifts, evolving learner needs and growing complexity in our education systems,” he says.

Keeping pace with this complexity, however, is rarely straightforward. Understanding how students develop critical thinking, resilience or socio-emotional competencies, for instance, often requires years of sustained inquiry that generates the robust evidence base needed to inform policy and practice over time. At the same time, researchers are increasingly confronted with developments that demand more immediate responses.

This tension is something Minister for Education and Minister-in-charge of Social Services Integration Mr Desmond Lee acknowledges in his opening address at the 3-day education conference. He highlights the dual challenge facing education researchers: pursuing rigorous investigations that require “multi-year, longitudinal studies” while also being able to “move quickly to respond in a fast-moving environment”.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a case in point: the rapid advancement of AI technologies has transformed how students access information, complete tasks and engage with learning, sometimes faster than educational institutions can adapt.

“To implement this well, we need strong research to understand how AI affects our children’s learning and development, and how to deploy it appropriately,” he notes.

He identifies three areas where research must do more:

- **Building** students’ core competencies in an AI enriched world.
- **Developing** evidence on what AI tools work “for whom, under what conditions, and with what safeguards and guardrails”.
- **Equipping** students with the skills to thrive in an AI-shaped future.

## BEYOND SILOS: THE POWER OF DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

The conference programme spans a wide range of themes, from AI to early childhood education and lifelong learning, to citizenship education and human flourishing. While these areas may appear distinct, they share a common concern: how education can prepare learners to navigate a complex and volatile world.

“One of the key highlights of RPIC 2026 is the breadth of topics and perspectives represented in the programme. With the availability of a rich mix of keynote addresses, symposiums, masterclasses and interactive workshops, participants are encouraged to explore unfamiliar perspectives, exchange insights and consider new possibilities for collaboration,” Professor Poon shares.

Dennis adds that the breadth of the programme is a reminder that educational improvement rarely follows a single pathway. “Different learners, schools and communities face different challenges, and solutions that prove effective in one context may not necessarily translate to another,” he points out.

By bringing together diverse strands of research, RPIC aims to foster conversations that might not have emerged within individual fields alone, thus reinforcing the importance of looking beyond traditional disciplinary silos. Both convenors stress that meaningful educational innovation often occurs not within a single discipline, but at the intersections where different perspectives meet.

“We invite participants to join us not only to share their work, but to be part of a larger conversation about impact; how what we do, collectively, can lead to tangible improvements in classrooms, schools and education systems,” Dennis adds.

## BRIDGING THE CLASSROOM AND THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

As new technologies emerge and learner needs evolve, educators are often among the first to observe how these developments affect learning. Their experiences offer valuable insights that help researchers identify pressing questions and emerging areas of inquiry.

“Teachers are uniquely positioned to observe how students learn, how classroom environments shape engagement and how different approaches influence outcomes,” Professor Poon notes. “These everyday observations raise powerful questions, and research can help explore and build on the answers.”

When teachers engage with research – whether by applying evidence, reflecting on their own practice or collaborating with researchers – they contribute to a richer, deeper understanding of teaching and learning that benefits the entire education community.

"That connection between the classroom and the research community is at the heart of what RPIC is all about," he adds.

For Dennis, the message to teachers is clear. "Research is not something distant or abstract; it is a resource for your professional growth and your students' success," he remarks.

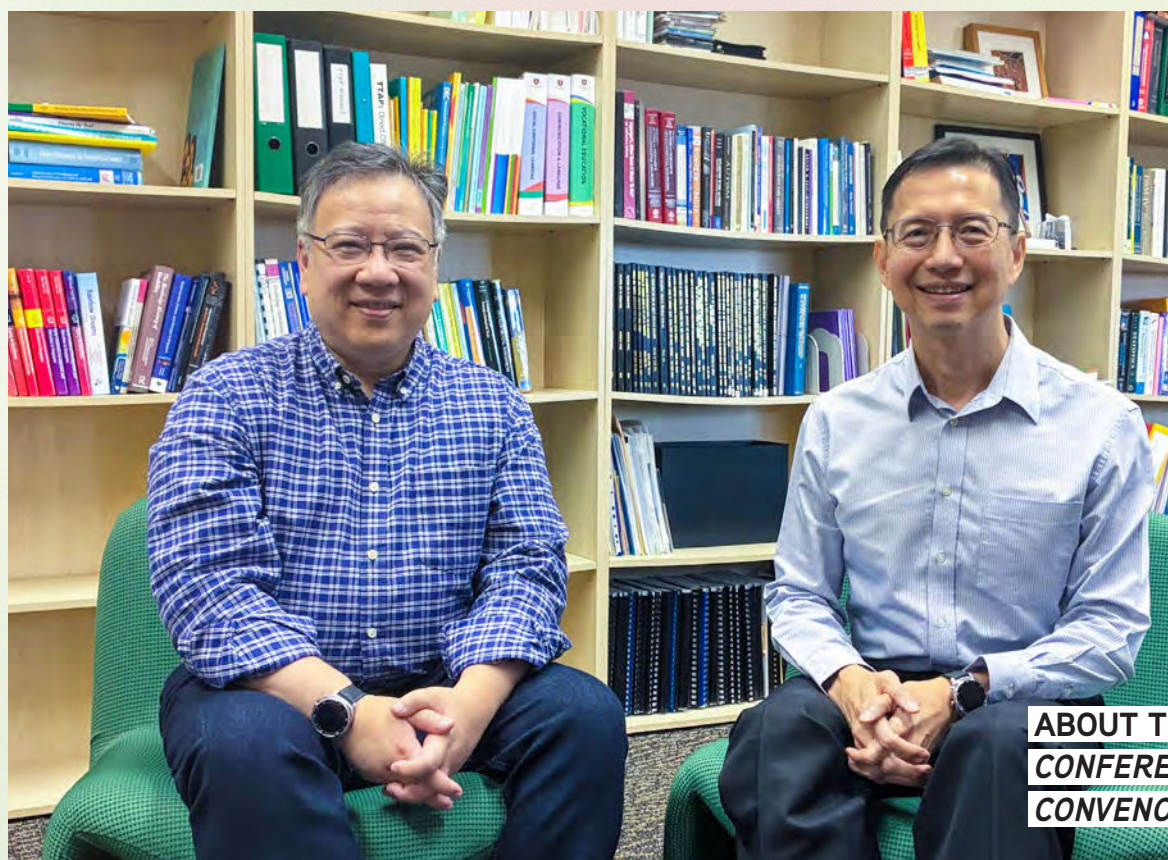
Professor Poon agrees, noting that evidence does not replace the expertise teachers already bring to their work. "Every teacher is already making thoughtful decisions every day. Evidence doesn't replace that expertise, it sharpens it," he emphasizes. "Sometimes, even a small shift, grounded in insight and reflection, can unlock powerful learning moments for students."

Looking ahead, Dennis hopes that every teacher who attends RPIC 2026 leaves not just informed, but inspired. "We hope every participant leaves confident to try something new, reflect deeply and continue growing as both a practitioner and a learner," he says. ■

## COLLABORATE WITH NIE RESEARCHERS

Educational improvement thrives when research, practice and policy work in concert. The Research-Practice-Policy Group (RPPG) at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore, is committed to bridging these domains by bringing together researchers, educators and policymakers to exchange knowledge, co-create solutions and translate insights into meaningful impact for classrooms and education systems.

If you are interested in collaborating with NIE researchers, please contact the RPPG at [ofr.rppg@nie.edu.sg](mailto:ofr.rppg@nie.edu.sg)



### ABOUT THE CONFERENCE CONVENORS

**Professor Kenneth Poon (right)** is Dean of Office for Research (OfR) at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore. He is also Centre Director of NIE's Centre for Research in Child Development. Trained as a clinical psychologist and as an early interventionist, he has spent the past 20 years of experience working with children and persons with neurodevelopmental disabilities.

**Dennis Kuek (left)** is Associate Dean (Global Strategic Engagement) and Principal Education Research Scientist at OfR. He is also Centre Director of NIE's Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice. He has over 30 years of research experience in the UK and Singapore that focuses on system studies in education, policy research and classroom pedagogies.

# MAKING THINKING VISIBLE,

MAKING FEEDBACK MATTER



**H**ow can pedagogy and AI work together to help students become more aware of their thinking and take greater ownership of their learning? In their presentation at the Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference 2026, two teachers from Pasir Ris Primary School share their experiences in designing a Primary 5 Science learning experience that combines explicit modelling of thinking with *Snorkl AI*, an AI-powered formative assessment platform, to make students' thinking visible as well as deepen their capacity for reflection.

## MAKING STUDENTS' THINKING VISIBLE

As science teachers, Mdm Haryana Bte Mohd Isahak, Head of Department for Science, and Mrs Priscilla See, Senior Teacher for Science, have observed a recurring challenge in their classrooms: while many students can provide the correct answers, they often struggle to explain the reasoning behind them.

"Students are generally able to arrive at the correct answer, but many find it difficult to articulate how they got there," Haryana shares. "Their explanations are often brief and lack scientific justification."

To bridge this gap, Priscilla, Haryana and a team of teachers from Pasir Ris Primary School set about rethinking how learning can better support students in making their thinking visible. They adopt a think-aloud pedagogy, where teachers explicitly model the reasoning behind scientific concepts by verbalizing their thought processes. Students then practise making their own thinking explicit through structured peer discussions and recorded verbal responses.

This was put into practice in a Primary 5 Science lesson on water purification and the water cycle. By the time students engage with the core task, they have already been introduced to key concepts such as evaporation

and condensation – giving the lesson space to focus on deepening reasoning.

"Our inquiry question is not simply what students are learning, but how we can help them become more aware of their thinking," Haryana explains. "We want students to not only acquire scientific knowledge, but also to develop competencies such as critical and inventive thinking, communication and collaboration."

## TURNING FEEDBACK INTO ACTION

To complement their think-aloud process, students use *Snorkl AI* to record explanations of their scientific reasoning. The platform analyses their responses and provide immediate feedback on strengths and areas for improvement.

"Rather than treating feedback as a one-off event, students are encouraged to revise and resubmit their explanations after reflecting on the AI-generated feedback," Haryana says. "They are expected to refine their thinking and improve the quality of their explanations."

This iterative cycle of feedback, reflection and revision creates a learning environment where students can monitor their own progress and identify gaps in their

understanding. The teachers observe that this process motivates students across a range of abilities.

“It is heartening to see students putting in effort to improve their responses,” she shares. “Even our lower-progress students are more motivated to refine their explanations and challenge themselves.”

Over time, students begin to view mistakes not as indicators of ability, but as opportunities for learning – a shift the teachers see as central to building a growth mindset. Flexibility in how students communicate their thinking also plays an important role. As part of the self-directed learning experience, students work in self-selected groups and exercise choice in how they demonstrate their understanding, whether through recorded verbal explanations, drawings or written responses.

“Some students prefer to speak their thinking aloud, while others find it easier to draw or write,” Priscilla notes. “Giving them that choice means they can participate meaningfully, regardless of their strengths or communication preferences.”

## USING AI INSIGHTS TO INFORM TEACHING

Beyond supporting students, the platform offers teachers a richer window into student thinking. One feature the team finds particularly valuable is the automatic transcription of students’ verbal responses, which captures evidence of reasoning that written work alone often cannot reveal.

“The transcripts allow us to identify misconceptions, analyse students’ reasoning processes and determine where additional support might be needed,” Priscilla remarks.

A common example is students conflating water vapour and water droplets – a misconception that transcripts surface quickly, allowing teachers to intervene and adjust their instruction before misunderstanding takes hold.

The platform also generates class-level analytics that highlight common strengths and learning gaps, giving teachers an overview of student understanding without requiring them to review every response individually.

“The real-time insights allow us to identify patterns in student thinking and respond more quickly to students’ learning needs,” Priscilla notes. “This data-informed approach enables more responsive teaching while reducing the time needed to gather formative assessment evidence.”

## THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN AI-ENHANCED LEARNING

While the AI platform has brought clear benefits, both teachers are emphatic that technology should

complement rather than replace teacher judgement. They note that there have been instances where the AI misreads a student’s intended meaning or uses language that does not fully align with curriculum expectations – moments that underscore the irreplaceable role of the teacher in validating, clarifying and contextualizing feedback.

“AI can support learning, but teachers still need to exercise professional judgement,” Haryana notes. “We cannot simply take the feedback at face value.”

For Haryana and Priscilla, this points to a broader principle: effective innovation begins with sound pedagogy. The value of AI, in their view, lies not in automating teaching but in creating more opportunities for students to reflect, refine their thinking and take an active role in their own learning.

“What encourages us most is seeing students identify their own gaps, discuss ideas with peers and take responsibility for improving their work,” Haryana remarks.

“As schools continue to explore emerging technologies, our experience shows how thoughtful integration of pedagogy and AI can make learning more visible, feedback more actionable and students more empowered as learners,” she adds. ■



### ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

**Haryana Bte Mohd Isahak (right)** is Head of Department for Science and **Priscilla See (left)** is Senior Teacher for Science at Pasir Ris Primary School.

*This article is based on their presentation “Classroom: Making Thinking Visible and Feedback Actionable: Using Think-Aloud Pedagogy and Snorkl AI to Develop E21CC in Science Classrooms” presented at the Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference 2026.*

PARENT ANXIETY IN A HIGH-STAKES SYSTEM:

# WHAT TEACHERS SEE, FEEL AND CARRY



**I**n Singapore's high-stakes education landscape, assessment reforms promise a gentler, more holistic journey for children. Yet in classrooms and staffrooms, teachers continue to confront parents' deep-seated anxiety about exams and future survival. Drawing on qualitative interviews with primary school teachers from the *Parent Matters* research project at the National Institute of Education (NIE), this feature explores how parental worry persists despite policy shifts, and how teachers quietly shoulder the emotional labour of calming parents, protecting children and fronting assessment reforms. It also situates these tensions within a broader story of meritocracy, inequality and the social pyramid that shapes family life and schooling.



## A SYSTEM IN REFORM, A FEAR THAT STAYS

In the official narrative, assessment reforms soften the edges of schooling. From 2019, schools remove all exams at Primary 1 and 2, phase out mid-year exams across all primary levels and introduce bite-sized assessments. By 2021, PSLE T-scores give way to achievement levels based on broad percentage bands, signalling a move away from fine-grained ranking.

On paper, the system is kinder. In practice, teachers see something else.

“Teachers perceive that parents’ anxiety levels have remained high with regards to assessments, even with reforms that are designed to reduce emphasis on exams and promote holistic learning instead,” explains NIE Senior Research Associate Ms Wendy Huang, presenting findings from the teacher data set in the *Parent Matters* project led by Education Research Scientist Dr Pan Qian Qian from NIE’s Centre for Research in Pedagogy & Practice.

The research uses a qualitative approach – focus groups and interviews with 10 primary school teachers – to understand how educators read parents’ motivations, behaviours and fears around assessment. Far from being “just anecdotal”, the data reaches what researchers call saturation: by the 8<sup>th</sup> interview, new conversations sound strikingly similar.

Across these accounts, one pattern is unmistakable: anxiety does not disappear when exams do. It shifts, mutates and seeps into everyday interactions between parents, teachers and children.

## TEACHERS AS CUSTOMER SERVICE, COUNSELLOR AND POLICY SPOKESPERSON

Teachers describe a hidden layer of work Wendy calls **emotional labour**. Borrowing from sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild, she frames this as the effort needed to manage other people’s feelings while presenting the right emotions on the job.

One recurring role is that of **customer service representative**. Even though no one explicitly asks, teachers find themselves constantly soothing distressed parents whenever assessment results or changes come up.

“Across the interviews, the common teacher behaviour is calming and reassuring parents when talking about assessments,” Wendy notes. “From the teacher’s perspective, assessments trigger strong feelings in parents that they have to manage.”

Almost every teacher has at least one painful story of a parent who challenges their marking, demands re-checks or becomes aggressive. For some, it is rare but unforgettable. For one, it is routine enough to be exhausting.

Another role is that of **child advocate and counsellor**. Teachers worry when they see children cracking under pressures that originate at home – extra tuition, relentless practice papers, schedules with no room to breathe.

“We do see burnouts,” one teacher shares. “The child is showing a lot of stress... ‘I can’t cope with it, my mother is giving too many tuitions, and I can’t breathe.’”

Teachers recognize that parents and educators both care about children, but they often diverge on what “care” looks like. Many parents prioritize weighted assessments and especially the Primary School Leaving Examination or PSLE. They respond by adding more classes and more work, while teachers see this as harmful over-support.

“We’re telling them, but they’re not listening,” a teacher recounts. Parents, she says, feel trapped: “They feel that, ‘I know my child best... Ultimately, who’s going to help my child succeed in life?’”

Teachers often become the **bridge between education policy and the families** it affects. When reforms are introduced, they are usually the first people parents turn to with questions, concerns and misconceptions. Whether explaining why mid-year examinations have been removed, why bite-sized assessments are intended to support learning rather than increase testing, or what is meant by the idea that there are

multiple pathways to success, teachers help translate policy into everyday classroom practice.

These conversations are not always straightforward. Parents naturally want reassurance that their children are progressing well and may interpret reforms differently from how they were intended. For many teachers, answering these questions becomes part of the job. They are expected not only to implement change in the classroom, but also to explain it in ways that parents can understand.

“Teachers and parents don’t share understanding about reform intent,” Wendy sums up. “But teachers are the face of policy, so they must explain and persuade parents. That is another form of emotional labour.”

## TWO SCHOOLING WORLDS: TEACHER-LED AND PARENT-LED

From the interviews, Wendy sketches a worrying picture: children are effectively going to two schools at once.

In the teacher-led world, educators try to privilege assessments *for* learning – formative tasks, qualitative feedback, holistic development. They want to help children grow as whole persons, not just as test-takers.

In the parent-led world, families focus on assessments *of* learning – especially those that look like PSLE-style tests. Here, evidence of learning is narrowly defined: if marks improve on the next worksheet or mock paper, the child must have learned more.

“Parents are conducting formative assessment using summative materials,” Wendy observes.

This is not because parents don’t care about learning. They care deeply, but they equate learning with test performance, especially at high-stakes checkpoints. Their own “formative” work takes the form of item-by-item analysis of practice papers, aimed at closing gaps for the next round of testing.

The result is a kind of double schooling: one guided by holistic goals in the classroom, another driven by exam logic at home. “No wonder they’re so tired,” Wendy remarks. Teachers, meanwhile, are left trying to protect students’ current well-being, while parents keep one anxious eye fixed on future survival.

Wendy closes with a teacher’s observation: “For the students right now, they don’t love learning. They can’t wait to stop learning.” If children learn to associate “learning” only with testing, tuition and exhaustion, the costs go far beyond any exam cycle.

“Teachers, you may not have much influence on students’ lives outside of school,” Wendy tells her audience. “But in your classroom, what will you do to create space for joy and a taste of freedom from the weight of assessments?” ■



Discover how teachers can better understand parental anxiety and foster more constructive home-school partnerships in the online version of this article!



### ABOUT THE PRESENTER AND PARENT MATTERS

**Wendy Huang (left)** is Senior Research Associate at the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. This article is based on her presentation “When Fewer Exams Create More Anxiety: Teachers’ Experiences of Parental Responses to Assessment Reform in Singapore” presented at the Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference 2026.

The Parent Matters project is an NIE research study led by Education Research Scientist **Dr Pan Qian Qian (right)**. Started in 2024, it investigates how parents of Singaporean primary school students are engaged in their children’s educational assessment and the factors that influence their engagement. Learn more about the project here: <https://tinyurl.com/SGparentmatters>



THE SHIFT TOWARDS

# FLOURISHING IN EDUCATION

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**T**he concept of “flourishing” has become increasingly prominent in education discourse, moving beyond its origins in philosophy and branches of psychology into policy and practice discussions. At the Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference (RPIC) 2026, Professor Kristján Kristjánsson from the University of Birmingham traces the rapid rise of flourishing in education and explores what this shift means for curriculum, teaching, and the aims of education. This article is based on his keynote address titled “The Flourishing Bandwagon in Education: From 2020 Onwards” at the RPIC 2026.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY FLOURISHING?

The idea of flourishing can be traced back more than 2,000 years to Aristotle’s concept of eudaimonia. In recent decades, however, the concept has been further developed through philosophical work in education and psychological traditions such as self-determination theory and positive psychology.

Today, flourishing is no longer a marginal academic idea. Since 2020, it has gained significant momentum and is increasingly reflected in educational research, policy discussions and practice. Despite its growing prominence, flourishing is not a singular or straightforward concept. Rather, it is best understood as multidimensional.

In my 2020 book, *Flourishing as the Aim of Education: A Neo-Aristotelian View* (Kristjánsson, 2020), I proposed a definition of flourishing centred on a simple core idea: flourishing encompasses both subjective experiences and objective conditions. It involves the development of human capacities in ways that are meaningful and valuable.

This is why many contemporary accounts of flourishing are described as hybrid. They bring together subjective elements, such as happiness, life satisfaction and a

sense of meaning, with objective dimensions, including health, relationships, character and social functioning.

One influential example is the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University, which conceptualizes flourishing through domains such as happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, close social relationships, and, in some accounts, financial and material stability.

Similarly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) work on flourishing in education emphasizes both the development of human potential and the conditions that enable individuals to live well, including supportive relationships, meaningful activity and nurturing environments.

While there is no single, universally accepted definition of flourishing, there is considerable overlap across these accounts, particularly in their emphasis on meaning, relationships, character and the conditions that support human development.

At the same time, an important question remains: does flourishing risk becoming too broad a concept, and if so, does this breadth diminish its conceptual precision?

## FROM HUMAN CAPITAL TO HUMAN MEANING

The growing attention to flourishing is closely linked to shifts in how the aims of education are understood and articulated at the policy level.

For many decades, international policy frameworks, including those associated with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) from the 1960s onwards, have tended to frame education through the lens of human capital. Within this perspective, education is valued primarily for its contribution to economic productivity and national development.

While this framing remains influential, it is increasingly being complemented by broader conversations about the purposes of education, including well-being, meaning and human flourishing.

Part of what has driven this shift is a set of concerns emerging from within some of the world's highest-performing education systems, including Singapore, Finland and Estonia. Despite strong results in international assessments, these systems reported rising levels of student stress, anxiety and mental health, prompting a re-examination of what education is ultimately for.

In response, UNESCO was among the first international organizations to publish a report on flourishing in 2022. The OECD subsequently developed the idea further, culminating in its 2025 report, which explicitly positions human flourishing as the overarching aim of education. Together, these developments reflect how education is increasingly understood not only in terms of measurable outcomes, but also in relation to how individuals live, develop and thrive as human beings.

## FLOURISHING AND ITS IMPACT IN EDUCATION

One of the themes of this conference is impact. While I am pleased to see flourishing gaining traction in policy circles, I often find myself asking a simple question: what impact will it actually have in schools?

A report published by the OECD or UNESCO may help shape international conversations, but if it simply gathers dust on a shelf, its influence will be limited. The challenge is not simply adopting flourishing as an educational aspiration, but translating it into teaching, curriculum and teacher preparation.

This raises an important question: if we are to genuinely embrace flourishing as the aim of education, how much curricular change is needed? Is it enough for teachers to approach familiar subjects differently – to use literature, science or history as opportunities to inspire awe, enchantment, and to explore meaning, purpose and human development? Or does flourishing require a more fundamental rethinking of curriculum and schooling?

Some scholars, such as John White, argue for the latter. He suggests that if we are serious about flourishing, we may need to rethink the way learning is organized altogether, moving beyond traditional subject-based timetables towards interdisciplinary themes such as war and peace, climate change, and health, taught by teachers working across disciplines. Whether one agrees with this proposal or not, it reminds us that flourishing is not merely a slogan. It has practical implications for how schools are organized and how learning is experienced.

Equally important is the role of teachers. For schools to contribute to human flourishing, educators must be prepared for that responsibility. They should be supported through teacher education and professional learning to nurture not only academic achievement, but also students' sense of meaning, purpose, character and well-being.

At the same time, we should be careful not to place the responsibility solely on teachers. Flourishing cannot be achieved through classroom practice alone. It requires supportive policies, school cultures, families and communities working together. In this sense, flourishing is not about replacing traditional educational goals. Rather, it broadens our understanding of what education is for and invites us to consider not only what students know, but also how they live, develop and thrive as human beings.

## THE ROAD AHEAD

The history of education is full of ideas that briefly capture attention before fading away, while others reshape how we think about teaching and learning.

For my part, I hope the flourishing discourse continues to evolve. It has already moved well beyond a small circle of philosophers and psychologists to engage educators, policymakers and education systems around the world. That, in itself, is encouraging. My hope is that we continue to examine it critically, refine it where necessary and ensure that it enriches both educational policy and classroom practice. After all, the ultimate value of any educational idea lies not in the reports we write, but in the difference it makes to the lives of learners. ■

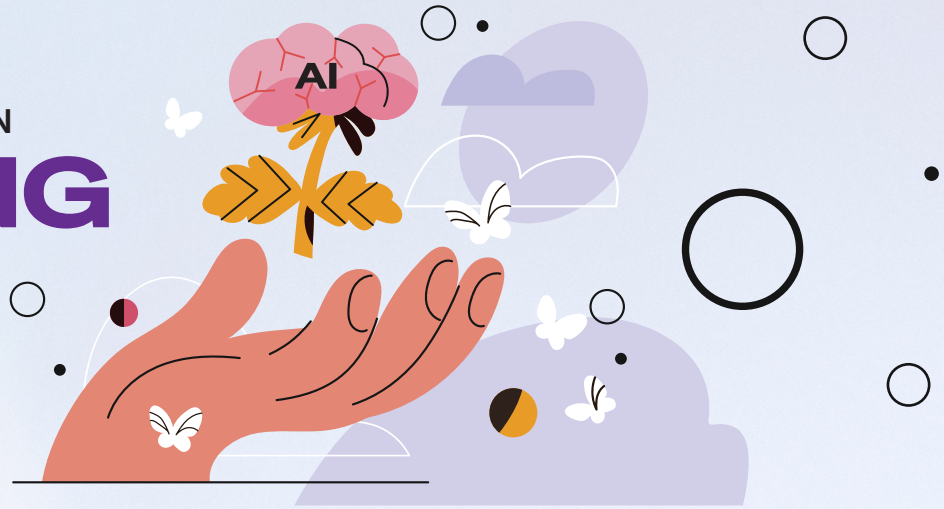
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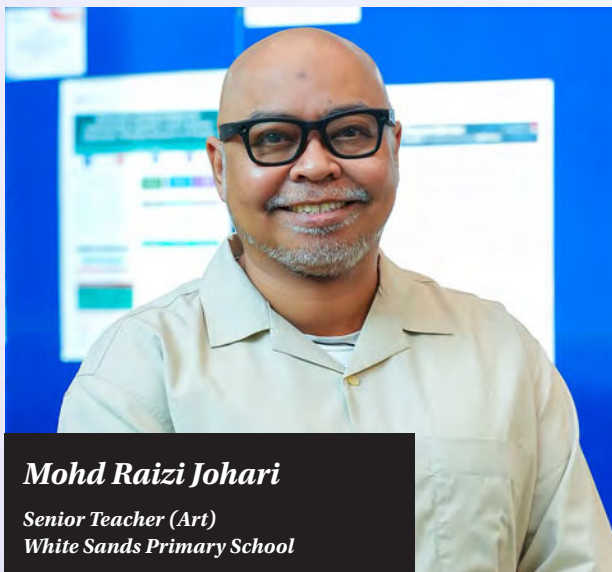
## ABOUT THE KEYNOTER

**Kristján Kristjánsson** is Professor of Character Education and Virtue Ethics at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham. His research bridges philosophy, education, and educational psychology, with a particular focus on character, flourishing and moral education. He has authored numerous books and over 200 journal articles on education, ethics and moral psychology. He is the editor of *Journal of Moral Education*.

## TEACHER REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING IN AN AI AGE



**H**ow can teachers design learning experiences that prepare students to truly thrive and flourish? In this article, three teachers reflect on insights from Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference 2026 – from interdisciplinary learning and productive struggle to the thoughtful integration of AI. Their reflections speak to a shared conviction: that meaningful learning is shaped by collaboration, professional agency and purposeful innovation.



**Mohd Raizi Johari**

Senior Teacher (Art)  
White Sands Primary School

**AT RPIC 2026, YOU AND YOUR FELLOW TEACHERS FROM WHITE SANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL SHARED YOUR ONGOING WORK ON DESIGNING INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING EXPERIENCES THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS. WHAT SPARKED THIS JOURNEY?**

Our team is inspired by the belief that learning becomes more meaningful when students can make authentic connections across subjects. In real life, problems are rarely confined to a single discipline, so we wanted our students to see how knowledge, skills and values can work together in meaningful contexts.

We also recognize that competencies needed for the future such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication and adaptability are best developed through integrated learning experiences rather than isolated subject lessons. This aligns closely with the Ministry of Education's (MOE) vision of developing Emerging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies (E21CC) through authentic learning opportunities.

In one of our projects, for instance, students draw connections between Art, Music and English through shared experiences, creative expression and reflection. This allows them to apply learning in multiple ways, engage different strengths and develop deeper conceptual understanding.

Ultimately, our motivation is not to combine subjects, but to create richer learning experiences that are joyful, relevant and purposeful for students while helping them to transfer learning across context.

**WHAT IS ONE KEY TAKEAWAY FROM THE CONFERENCE THAT YOU BELIEVE CAN HELP YOUR TEAM STRENGTHEN AND EVOLVE THIS APPROACH FURTHER?**

One key takeaway is the importance of using AI not merely as a productivity tool, but as a thought partner that enhances learning while preserving human agency, creativity and ethical decision-making.

The conference reinforced the idea that technology should support, rather than replace, the cognitive and social processes central to learning. As a team, this has



encouraged us to think more intentionally about how AI can be integrated into transdisciplinary projects. AI can help students gather information, generate ideas, receive feedback and explore different perspectives, while teachers continue to guide critical thinking, ethical use and reflection.

An equally important insight is that AI literacy must go hand in hand with information literacy and responsible digital citizenship – aligning with MOE's emphasis on creating and sharing information thoughtfully and responsibly.

Moving forward, we hope to design learning experiences where students learn not only *with* AI but also *about* AI, developing the discernment, creativity and responsibility they will need as future-ready learners.



**Divya Somasundaram**

Subject Head, English Language  
Yishun Innova Junior College

## HOW DID INTERACTING WITH EDUCATORS AND RESEARCHERS FROM DIVERSE CONTEXTS DEEPEN YOUR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AT RPIC 2026?

One of the most meaningful aspects of RPIC 2026 is engaging with educators, researchers and curriculum specialists from within and beyond Singapore. Through conversations with colleagues from MOE schools, polytechnics and countries such as Australia and Brunei, I am reminded that many challenges in education are universal.

What I find particularly valuable is hearing how others exercised professional agency within their own contexts. Whether discussing AI, curriculum implementation or student engagement, participants share thoughtful responses to complex issues. These exchanges – both after presentations and during the Unconference sessions – challenge me to consider alternative approaches to familiar problems.

The conference also introduced me to research-informed frameworks that have helped me make sense

of current educational debates. One enduring tension that has emerged is balancing measurable outcomes with broader aims such as developing students' civic, moral and ethical competencies. Beyond the formal sessions, reconnecting with colleagues from different stages of my professional journey reinforces the importance of communities of practice in sustaining growth. Collectively, the experience leaves me with a renewed sense of purpose and optimism.

## WHAT IS ONE KEY TAKEAWAY FROM RPIC 2026 THAT YOU HOPE TO APPLY IN YOUR OWN TEACHING PRACTICE?

My key takeaway is the importance of designing learning experiences that preserve productive struggle. Several sessions reinforce the idea that learning is not simply about arriving at the correct answer, but about engaging in the thinking processes that lead to deeper understanding. The struggle is not an obstacle to learning; it is the learning.

This resonated strongly in light of ongoing discussions about AI in education. Rather than focusing solely on preventing misuse, presenters encouraged participants to think about learning about AI, learning with AI and learning beyond AI – helping students use these tools thoughtfully while developing capabilities that technology cannot replace.

In my own practice, I hope to create more opportunities for students to grapple with uncertainty, test ideas and refine their thinking before receiving support. I am also interested in exploring approaches such as productive failure and purposeful play, which challenge the assumption that efficiency always leads to better learning.

Ultimately, the conference reinforces my belief that technology should augment, rather than replace, human agency. As educators, we must make deliberate decisions about which cognitive tasks can be supported by AI and which should remain central to human learning and development. ■



We interview a third teacher, Ms Lim Shu Yen from Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School. Scan the QR code to read her reflections on teaching, learning and student growth.



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