Experience and Policy Analysis of Singapore's Talent Construction

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Abstract. The fundamental source of national scientific and technological innovation lies in talent. Only with a high-quality talent team can countries win in the fierce competition of globalization. Since its founding, Singapore has attached great importance to talent development, formed a sound talent policy system, and made remarkable achievements in science, technology, economy, culture, etc. relying on the talent feedback effect. It is of great significance to promote the flow of global innovative talents. From the perspective of policy science, this paper mainly analyzes the top-level design of Singapore's talent work, the local training of science and innovation talents, the policy of attracting overseas talents and the promotion of soft environment, and summarizes the evolution logic of Singapore's talent policy. At the same time, it analyzes the effectiveness of Singapore's talent policy by comparing the cases of many countries. The research finds that Singapore's talent policy has played a role in promoting industrial development and building a clean government, making Singapore break through its development shortcomings and become one of the most developed countries in the world. On this basis, it provides policy enlightenment for developing countries to accelerate talent construction.

Keywords: Singapore, Talent Policy, Innovation Driven Economy, Social Development, Evolutionary Logic.

1. Introduction

The rule of the world lies in talents. Leaders in American business, science, technology, and research view talent development as the key to national prosperity in a competitive global economy [1]. Scientific and technological innovation ability is the core power of the high-quality development of the national economy. The innovation ability of talent determines the development speed and level of scientific and technological innovation. With the continuous advancement of globalization, industries are changing rapidly, and the wave of industry 4.0 is sweeping the world. While the exchange and cooperation among countries are increasingly strengthened, the competition is also increasingly fierce. At the same time, the outbreak of COVID-19 has plunged the economies of all countries into a low ebb, exposed the weaknesses of economic development of all countries, and changed the direction of talent flow in the world market. In this battle for talent, Singapore came first with its strong comprehensive strength.

As an island country, Singapore has a small population and a lack of resources. However, its economy has developed rapidly and it is leading the world in social governance and clean government construction. It has become one of the four developed countries in Asia. Since the founding of Singapore, three industrial transformations and upgrading have been carried out in response to economic difficulties. Each industrial upgrade has promoted rapid economic development. In 2021, the GDP reached $396.99 billion. The reason why Singapore can create a development miracle that has attracted worldwide attention is that it has always adhered to the strategy of building a country with talents, implemented the strategy of Elite Governance, attached great importance to talent work, and formed a series of perfect talent work policies. As a country with relatively scarce natural resources, the development of traditional manufacturing and agriculture is restricted, which makes Singapore focus its industrial development on innovation-driven economy. Singapore is one of the country’s most eager for talents in the Asia Pacific region and also one of the country’s most attractive to talents. According to the 2021 global talent competitiveness index report jointly released by the European Business Administration Institute and the Portland Institute, Singapore ranks second only

to Switzerland in attracting global talents and ranks first in Asia. It is a world leader in talent environment, attraction and global skills. Singapore's policies on training and attracting scientific and technological innovation talents are of great significance for reference, and provide a good example for the development of talent work in developing countries. So, what are the results of Singapore's talent work? In order to solve the above problems, this paper will discuss and analyze the talent work in Singapore, from the perspective of policy science, using case analysis. Through the analysis of Singapore's industrial transformation process and specific talent policies, and the comparison with Japan, China and other countries, this paper highlights the achievements of Singapore's talent work, with a view to putting forward suggestions to developing countries.

2. Review of innovation-driven industrial transformation in Singapore

Since its independence in 1959, every economic development of Singapore has been accompanied by industrial transformation. It has experienced industrial upgrading from labor-intensive to capital-intensive and then to technology-intensive. Talents have played a vital role in every transformation and upgrade. The industrial transformation can be roughly divided into three times.

2.1. Supply and demand-oriented industrial recovery period (1959-1979)

During this period, Singapore just got rid of the British colonial rule and the control of the Commonwealth of Malaysia and became an independent country. There were a lot of things to be done, and the unemployment rate was as high as 14%. A deformed economic structure dominated by the tertiary industry centered on entrepot trade was formed in Singapore [2]. Foreign direct import and export trade in other Southeast Asian countries led to the deterioration of Singapore's economy and the contraction of its export market. For this reason, the government decided to change the single entrepot trade economy, vigorously develop labor-intensive industries domestically, actively open the door to the outside world, attract a large number of foreign capital and introduce technology, and vigorously develop the export processing and manufacturing industry. In 1979, a diversified economic structure with manufacturing, trade, transportation, finance and tourism as the pillars was formed [3]. During this period, the main purpose of training the labor force was to improve the literacy rate. At the same time, due to the increase of transnational corporations, one quarter of Singapore's manufacturing companies were foreign-funded or joint ventures in 1972. The government mainly encouraged transnational corporations to establish training centers to meet the needs of Transnational Corporations for highly skilled personnel.

2.2. Efficiency-driven industrial upgrading period (1980-1997)

By the 1980s, Singapore's economy had developed rapidly, and its unemployment rate had dropped significantly. In 1996, it entered the ranks of developed countries. However, Singapore faced rising labor costs, the gradual elimination of the population dividend, the rise of trade protectionism and other problems, so the labor-intensive economy was no longer suitable for the economic development of Singapore. At the same time, the rapid development of economic globalization, and the "U-shaped curve" industrial division structure gradually emerged. Therefore, the Singapore government proposed to carry out the "second industrial revolution", vigorously developed capital-intensive industries, turned to the development of machinery manufacturing and electronic industries, and made Singapore's industry move towards mechanization and automation [2]. By 1985, more than 150 multinational companies were engaged in the production of electronic products in Singapore, and the proportion of skilled workers in the total labor force increased from 11% to 22%, gradually becoming the electronics center, IT manufacturing center and financial center in Southeast Asia [4]. In order to cope with the industrial structure transformation at this stage, improve the quality of the labor force and establish a professional talent team in accordance with the future industrial development trend, Singapore has established a vocational and Industrial Training Bureau, and at the

same time established two polytechnics and Nanyang Technological University to cultivate professional and technical personnel required for economic development.

2.3. Innovation-driven economic transition period (1998 to present)

During the third industrial restructuring period, Singapore experienced the Asian financial crisis, the continuous rise in labor prices, the decline in the demand of the world electronics industry and other difficulties, which caused many multinational companies to move out of Singapore. For this reason, the Singapore government adjusted the industrial structure again, gradually turned to technology-intensive industries, reduced low-end electronics industries, and formed an industrial structure with international trade, processing and manufacturing industries and tourism as the pillars. Singapore's industrial structure from the traditional manufacturing industry to the innovation-driven structure characterized by talent accumulation, the diversified industrial development driven by innovation has been realized [4]. At this stage, Singapore has paid more attention to talents and attracted a large number of overseas scientific and technological innovation talents. According to statistics from the Singapore Bureau of statistics, by 2019, the research and development manpower was 52989. There were 38887 research scientists and engineers, and the "industry 21 plan" and "talent 21 plan" have been proposed. Singapore ranks among the top three in the global talent competitiveness index. Moreover, Singapore had strengthened its ties with other countries in the world, carried out foreign cooperation in running schools and training talents suitable for the development of globalization, laying a solid foundation for Singapore to become a world leading economy.

Throughout the upgrading process of Singapore's innovation-driven industry, the industrial development policy closely relies on the world development trend and the domestic economic situation. The industrial structure has gradually improved, from the abnormal economic structure centered on entrepot trade to the reasonable industrial structure centered on capital-intensive industries such as electronics and machinery manufacturing, and then to the innovation-driven industry. Economic development provides the development direction and economic foundation for the construction of talent team. The construction of high-quality talent team promotes rapid economic development, and the two complement each other.

3. Singapore's talent strategy initiatives

The transformation of Singapore's industrial structure cannot be separated from the assistance of the talent team. In order to cope with the skills required by each industrial transformation, Singapore's talent policy has been adjusted in time. This paper will elaborate on Singapore's talent policy from three aspects: government institutions, local training, overseas introduction and soft environment for attracting talents.

3.1. Top level design under national leadership

As the main planner and implementer of the talent strategy, the government places the talent work in the national strategic system, conducts macro-control for the development of the talent work, and maintains the long-term planning of the talent work. The Singapore government has carried out its work from two aspects: institutional reform and strategic planning. First, a series of government institutions specialized in talent management has been set up, forming a complete mechanism system for talent introduction, training and reserve. The Singapore government mainly has four human resources management departments: the National Manpower Council of Singapore, the Ministry of Manpower, the National Population and Talent Division of the prime minister's office and the Economic Review Committee, which are respectively responsible for the highest decision-making of human resources planning, the formulation of the national human capital strategy and plan, the coordination of various government departments on talent-related affairs, the study of social and talent-related issues. The division of labor and cooperation among various departments has promoted

the development of talent work in Singapore. This view has been widely recognized by scholars. For example, Zhengyi Li and Xiaobin He believe that these four departments have their own division of labor. They have organized the talent work from the macro to the specific, forming a complete and orderly human resources government management system and ensuring the steady development of talent work [4]. In addition, the Ministry of Manpower and the Economic Development Board of Singapore have jointly established the "Contact Singapore" organization. It has set up nine branches in countries with rich human resources such as India, China, Australia and the United States to actively explore overseas talents. It has established a database of potential talents around the world to continuously track and pay attention to potential talents [5]. The Singapore government has also set up a special website to find qualified overseas talents for enterprises. At the same time, it has also set up a website for overseas students to provide rich information on studying abroad and working. It also launched the “Global ready talent program” to provide local and overseas internship programs [6]. In addition, the Singapore government has also promulgated many plans for talent work. For example, manpower 21, a sustainable population and a vibrant Singapore: population white paper 2013, etc., make more than 50% of the employees in Singapore's labor market senior technical personnel, and more than 30% of the labor force have university degrees, and 15% of the labor force have college degrees or professional qualifications. Putting the talent strategy into the national strategic system provides macro guidance for Singapore's talent work so that various departments can cooperate and complement each other.

3.2. Coexistence of local cultivation and overseas introduction

The Singapore government has strengthened the construction of the talent team from two aspects: local training and overseas introduction. On the one hand, the Singapore government has always attached great importance to local talent training since independence. Taking the 2021 budget as an example, Singapore's education budget has reached 13.6 billion yuan. The government has adopted a series of policies to actively cultivate local talents. First of all, the government has put forward the concept of lifelong education to encourage citizens to continuously improve their skills. From 2015 to 2020, the Singapore government spent an average of S $1 billion a year on continuing education and training. In response to the government's "lifelong learning" policy, the National University of Singapore has set up a school of continuing and lifelong education (SCALE) to encourage alumni who have graduated to return to the classroom to learn new knowledge and skills. The government has also announced the plan of "Skillsfuture", which encourages the labor force to improve their own abilities and complete self-improvement and transformation according to market demand. It has also set up Skillsfuture Singapore to promote this plan [7]. In 2021, about 660000 Singaporean citizens will upgrade their skills through the courses of the Skillsfuture Singapore. At the same time, the Skillsfuture Singapore provides internship opportunities for college students. Taking the banking industry as an example, JPMorgan Chase, Citibank and other banks have increased internship posts [8]. In addition, Singapore has formed a relatively complete education system, and the implementation of the diversion system of education is divided into three times, namely, the fourth grade, the primary school to the junior high school, and middle school graduation. In the end, about 10% of the students can enter the University, 20% of the students enter the Polytechnic, and 70% of the students enter the skills education system [9]. According to PISA 2018 data, Singapore students' scores in reading, mathematics and science are higher than the world average, especially in the field of "core adaptability", which is twice the world average.

On the other hand, as Singapore's fertility rate is far below the world average, only 1.1 in 2021, the aging trend of the population is gradually emerging. Attracting overseas talents is of great significance for supplementing the talent team. Singapore allows 15000 to 25000 foreigners to become Singaporean citizens every year. The introduction of overseas talents is generally consistent with the process of industrial upgrading [10]. The Singapore government has specially set up the Ministry of manpower to coordinate and manage the introduction of talents in a unified way. According to the needs of Singapore's economic development, the "key skills list" is formulated and

updated every year to predict the skills required by talents in the future. For example, in recent years, banking, financial information and communication, electronic equipment manufacturing and other industries need to introduce professional and technical personnel, and these personnel will be given priority when applying for employment permits [11]. At the same time, Singapore's government also insists on opening up investment channels for domestic and overseas residents and encourages overseas residents to carry foreign advanced industrial chains and technologies to promote the development of domestic industries.

3.3. Comprehensively improve the talent ecological environment

In order to attract and retain overseas talents, Singapore has created a comprehensive supporting environment from four aspects: economic level, social atmosphere, immigration policy and social environment. First, Singapore entered the ranks of developed countries in 1996 and still maintains rapid economic development. In 2021, the GDP growth rate will reach 7.2%, which ensures that it can provide rich salaries and scientific research funds for talents. Economic prosperity attracts a large number of overseas talents. The arrival of professional talents can promote economic development. The two complement each other. Second, Singapore is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with good inclusiveness and bilingual education in English and Malay. Singapore has a high degree of nationalization and English communication and working environment. Foreign talents can be well integrated into the local society [12]. Third, The Singapore government has implemented relaxed immigration and study abroad policy for foreign talents required by economic development. The personal income tax for overseas workers is relatively low, 11.5 percentage points higher than the average level in Asia. There are also corresponding tax incentives for companies employing overseas workers. Moreover, preferential benefits such as free housing, low-interest loans, and children's schooling are provided to overseas workers, thus solving their worries. At the same time, Singapore also pays attention to improving infrastructure, building key laboratories, increasing scientific research funds, and attracting global scientists to work in Singapore. Fourth, Singapore is a world-renowned garden city country. 47% of the land is covered by green space. It has not only a pleasant climate but also a beautiful environment, providing a comfortable living environment for foreign talents. At the same time, Singapore has also established a new science and technology city integrating learning, work and life, so that foreign people can learn and work with dignity and obtain a sense of belonging and achievement.

4. Effectiveness of Singapore's talent policy

Singapore's talent policy plays a very important role in its social development. It has significantly improved the quality of the talent team, international competitiveness and scientific and technological innovation ability.

4.1. Quality of talent team

For a long time, Singapore has attached great importance to talent work and built a high-quality talent team with world competitiveness. Singapore has been ranked in the top three in the global talent competitiveness index and the first in Asia over a long period. Taking the data of 2021 as an example (see Table.1), Singapore ranks second only to Switzerland in the world. 18 ahead of Japan, which ranks second in Asia. In the 20 years after entering the third industrial transformation, it has maintained global leadership in the domestic environment, talent attraction, talent training, talent retention, technology and vocational skills, and global knowledge and skills. With the emphasis on innovation-driven economy, the R & D personnel team has also increased year by year. From 2000 to 2019, the total number of R & D personnel has more than doubled (see Table.2). According to the report of the Statistics Singapore, the adult literacy rate in Singapore is as high as 97.6%, and more than 70% of the educated residents have the ability to read in more than two languages. In 2019, Professor Konstantin Novoselov, the Nobel Prize winner in physics, joined the National University of Singapore, further

enhancing the University's scientific and technological innovation capability. All these show that Singapore has established a world-leading team of high-quality talents.

Table 1. Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2018-2021

Rank/Time Period	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Switzerland	Switzerland	Switzerland	Switzerland
2	**Singapore**	**Singapore**	United States	**Singapore**
3	United States	United States	**Singapore**	United States
4	Norway	Norway	Sweden	Denmark
5	Sweden	Denmark	Denmark	Sweden

Table 2. The Number of Research and Development Manpower in Singapore

Date Series/Time Period	2000	2006	2012	2019
Total	25220	36191	44986	52989
Research scientists& engineers	14483	22675	30105	38887
Full-Time postgraduate research students	3819	3761	5924	4931
Non-degree researchers	2498	3042	2392	2307
Technicians	2262	3291	3022	2400
Supporting staff	2158	3422	3543	4464

4.2. International competitiveness

According to Shaojian Li's Exposition in sustainable development and pluralistic social harmony: Singapore's experience, the competitiveness of Singapore is evaluated from the political, social and economic aspects [13]. According to the world competitiveness annual report released by the International Management Development Institute in Lausanne, Switzerland, after entering the third industrial transformation, Singapore's competitiveness has always remained in the top five in the world, and has made remarkable progress in four aspects: economic performance, government efficiency, enterprise efficiency and infrastructure. In the latest 2022 world competitiveness annual report (see Table.3), Singapore ranks third among the 63 economies evaluated and it is two places ahead of Hong Kong, China, which ranks second in Asia. In terms of politics, in the 2021 global government integrity index released by Transparency International, Singapore ranks fourth in the world with Norway and Sweden. According to the 2021 global conquest trust survey report released by Edelman international public relations company, the overall trust of the Singapore government has increased by 6 percentage points, reaching 68%. When the Singapore government trains local talents, it will select specific personnel to enter government institutions for special training, and enter government institutions for internship during school to strengthen the construction of the civil service. In terms of social governance, Singapore ranks first in the 21st Mercer quality of life ranking and is also the second safest city in the world. The proportion of people who feel safe when they go out alone at night is 94%, far higher than the world average of 69%. In terms of economic development, high-quality talents have helped economic development. In the global innovation index of 2021 released by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Singapore ranks eighth. In 2021, Singapore's per capita GDP exceeded $70000 to $72800.

Table 3. The Global Competitiveness Report 2001,2009,2015,2022

Rank/Time Period	2001	2009	2015	2022
1	United States	Switzerland	Switzerland	Denmark
2	Finland	United States	**Singapore**	Switzerland
3	Taiwan	**Singapore**	United States	**Singapore**
4	**Singapore**	Sweden	Germany	Sweden
5	Sweden	Denmark	Netherlands	Hong Kong

4.3. Scientific and technological innovation ability

One aspect of talent innovation is reflected in the number of patents. According to the data of the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore, the number of patent applications in Singapore in 2021 was 2024, ranking second only to the United States in the world, and the number of trademark applications and design applications ranked first in the world, up 14%, 19% and 21% respectively compared with 2020. The Singapore government has also launched the Singapore IP strategy (SIPS) to promote Singapore's economic innovation-driven and industrial transformation. According to the World Economic Forum's 2019 competitiveness report, Singapore ranks first in the world. In the 2021 world Trademark Review and intellectual property office innovation ranking, Singapore ranks third. The scientific and technological innovation ability is also reflected in the construction of domestic universities. Singapore has two world-class universities: the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University, which rank 11th and 12th respectively in the 2022qs ranking, ranking first and second in Asia. Taking the National University of Singapore as an example, the majors of chemical engineering, civil structural chemistry and geography rank among the top ten in the world. In addition, Singapore has also established three technology education colleges, including Singapore Management University, Singapore University of Science and Technology and Singapore Institute of Technology, five polytechnics and four public universities, to cultivate various talents required for social development in Singapore and improve the talent team [14]. Take Singapore's electronics industry as an example. Singapore has the most diversified semiconductor industry in the Asia Pacific region. In order to support the development of the electronics industry, Singapore has introduced the Singapore Industrial scholarship program and the industrial research and production program. It trains more than 13000 engineers and technicians every year to ensure the steady growth of talents in the electronics industry.

5. Enlightenment of Singapore's talent policy to developing countries

Attracting talents and social development complement each other. Developing countries should pay more attention to the development of talent work. Singapore's talent policy provides a good example for developing countries. The introduction of talents should match the direction of industrial development, pay attention to the continuity and planning of the talent policy, and the government should provide a good environment for attracting talents.

5.1. Matching of talent introduction and industrial upgrading

For developing countries, talent work must serve national strategy, economic and social development, and must be at the forefront of future scientific and technological development. The introduction of overseas talents and the training of local talents should focus on industrial development, conduct scientific prediction and macro-control on the required talents, and clarify the direction of social development. Talent is the first driving force to promote innovation. The training of talent skills should be based on industrial development, and different talents required by emerging industries and national administrative units should be trained separately. As a reserve force for economic development, the government can provide special training for talents in emerging industries. At the same time, the government can divide the cultural level and professional skills of foreign personnel, and attract overseas talents by relaxing the immigration or study abroad policy for urgently needed talents, reducing taxes, improving treatment, signing graduation work agreements and other measures. For government departments and other industries involving national security, the government can gradually change the education system, explore and train local talents, focus on cultivating a batch of elite talents needed by the future society in a planned way, and focus on cultivating students' innovative ability and improving their own quality. In addition, the government, schools and enterprises should establish a perfect training system to make the training of talents highly match the needs of the country.

5.2. Pay attention to the continuity and planning of talent policy

The purpose of cultivating talents is to use talents. The cultivation of talents is a long-term process, and each stage needs to be consistent. For talent training in developing countries, first of all, clear objectives are required at the initial stage of training. Talents in different industries, different positions and different skills are trained separately, and special training is given to special talents. Secondly, in the training process, the training plan needs to be adjusted in time according to social development to ensure the rationality and integrity of the talent system. The lifelong education system is an education system in line with the rapid development of the current society. The government should create a good learning atmosphere, create a culture of respecting knowledge and talents, let the public actively participate in lifelong learning, and meet the needs of industrial upgrading and transformation and social development. In addition, the government should put the talent plan into the national strategic system, strengthen the cooperation between various regions and departments, jointly formulate the talent utilization and development plan, introduce the urgently needed talents from abroad, establish a talent database, timely grasp the status of the talent team, make overall planning for the talents required by different positions, fully explore the maximum value of talents, and play a role in their respective fields. Governments should open up various talent introduction channels, strengthen our ties with the world, invite world-famous universities to cooperate with domestic universities in running schools, jointly train students, and improve the international competitiveness of domestic talents, so as to realize the sustainable development of the economy driven by innovation with talents as the core.

5.3. Improve the supporting policies and environment for talent introduction

The fundamental guarantee for the cultivation, introduction and retention of talents is a sound supporting facilities policy and a beautiful cultural environment. The government should pay attention to building good social security and livable urban environment, and establish a high-quality talent life security system. In terms of the introduction policy, governments should relax the immigration or permanent residence conditions for urgently needed talents, remove the institutional barriers to the introduction of overseas talents, attract overseas talents for long-term development, and provide low-interest loans, housing subsidies, children's enrollment and other material guarantees for scientific research talents. In terms of the social environment, first of all, governments should improve the urban environment and improve the living quality of the city. Second, developing countries should create an inclusive urban atmosphere, create a social atmosphere that is people-oriented and respects talents, enhance the interpersonal inclusiveness of the city, prevent talents from being difficult to integrate into the local life and cultural environment, and enhance the sense of belonging and happiness of overseas talents. Third, governments should pay attention to improving urban infrastructure construction and improving the convenience of urban transportation. Fourth, governments should improve the construction of scientific research environment, increase the input budget of scientific research projects year by year, and provide sufficient scientific research funds and advanced scientific research facilities for talents to attract scientific research workers to develop locally.

6. Conclusion

Innovation is the first driving force and talent is the first resource. The competition in today's world is the competition for talents and education. To keep up with the times, all countries must not only attach importance to the local training of talents, but also have the courage to gather talents from all over the world and make use of them, create a talent team with world influence, and adhere to innovation-driven and science and technology led. Singapore's talent work has helped its industrial structure transformation and economic development, breaking through the shortcomings of limited land resources and achieving world-renowned development results. This paper uses case analysis to explore the contribution and effect of Singapore's talent policy on its social development. The Singapore government has established a special talent training, introduction and management

institution, formulated a sound policy, adopted a talent construction system that combines local talent training and overseas talent introduction, comprehensively improved the social environment, and provided an all-round strategic environment for attracting and retaining talents, As a result, Singapore's talent competitiveness has been in the leading position in the world for a long time, and the number of patents has steadily increased year by year. The National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and other domestic universities are well-known in the world and have a strong attraction to young talents around the world. On this basis, this paper puts forward enlightenment to the talent work of developing countries from the three aspects of talent introduction objectives, talent policies and social environment. The government should make predictions on industrial development, the talent introduction should be guided by the industrial development direction, and the training of local talents should be planned and continue to build a complete talent team. The government should create a good atmosphere for attracting and retaining talents, and adhere to the concept of talent building the country and talent promoting development.

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