

CGC Seminar Series (2013/03)

**Citizenship, Participation and Elite Students in Singapore**

by

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Date: 29 August 2013 (Thursday)

Time: 1:00pm to 2:30pm

Venue: Room B3-LP-06, Lower Podium Floor, Block B3, Tai Po Campus  
The Hong Kong Institute of Education  
10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po

**Abstract**

Elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew maintains that a society ruled by elites is necessary to provide for high growth and social progress. While the Singapore national pledge of allegiance affirms the national goal of building “a democratic society based on justice and equality”, in practice, the governing principle of meritocracy allows the state to justify making a distinction between the roles of the talented and capable versus the less talented and less capable, defined largely by academic performance. Elitism conjures a class divide; the on-going concern is a disconnection between elite and the citizens it has to represent. This paper reports on a case study of 34 elite students from two top-ranking secondary schools. How do the elite students prepared to undertake their role as citizens? How do they understand citizenship and participation? Findings reveal that students are generally prepared to participate responsibly in the decisions that shape the lives of fellow citizens. Their discourse however emphasizes a narrow conception of responsibility that maintains class interests. With widening income inequalities, this is an inadequate response. Importantly, responsibility also lies in the moral obligation to act to preserve and enrich the quality of its collective life.

**Speaker Profile**

Dr Sim’s scholarly interests include civics and citizenship education, social studies education, and curriculum theory. Prior to joining the NIE, she has taught History and General Paper at Raffles Junior College, and worked in the Ministry of Education’s Curriculum Planning and Development Division and Schools Division. Her article, “Notions of criticality: Singaporean teachers’ perspectives of critical thinking in social studies”, co-authored with Dr Mark Baildon was awarded the Cambridge Journal of Education Best Article Prize in 2010.

**All are welcome, free admission.**

Event organized by:

Centre for Governance and Citizenship, the Hong Kong Institute of Education

Online registration at

<http://www.ied.edu.hk/cgc/view.php?secid=293&id=873&act=regform>

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