



**CGC Seminar Series 2009/01**

# **SCHOOLS FIT FOR CHILDREN?**

**Student voice, rights and social justice**

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**Date : 18th November, 2009 (Wednesday)**  
**Time : 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.**  
**Venue: Room 13, Podium, Block B3 (B3-P-13),**  
**The Hong Kong Institute of Education**  
**(Tai Po Campus), 10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po**

# **Schools fit for Children? Student voice, rights and social justice**

The Hong Kong Institute of Education  
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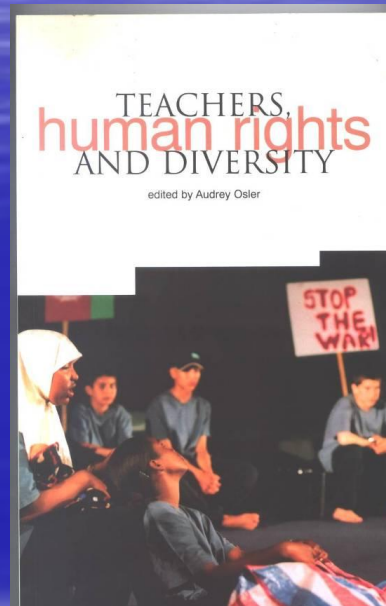
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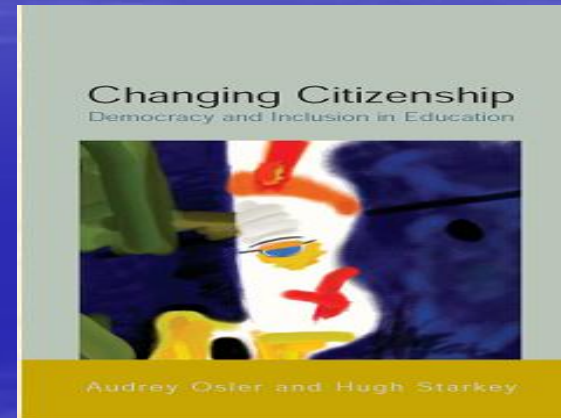
**<http://leeds.academia.edu/AudreyOsler>**

# Acknowledgements and sources

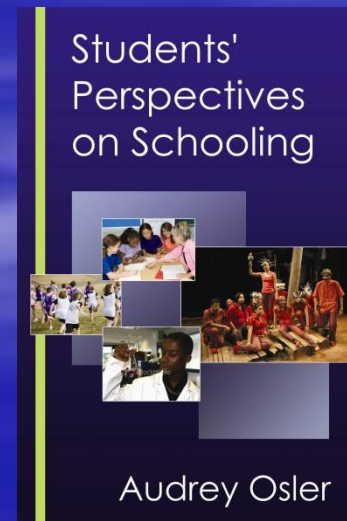
Teachers, Human  
Rights and Diversity:  
educating citizens in  
multicultural societies  
Trentham, 2005



Changing Citizenship:  
democracy and  
inclusion in education  
Open University Press  
2005



Students' Perspectives  
on Schooling  
Open University Press  
2010





# International political context: globalization and nationalism

- Globalization and nationalism as co-existing and sometimes conflicting
- Shifting challenges as new forms of racism, such as Islamophobia, gain ground
- Citizenship education needs both global and intercultural perspectives because nationalist perspectives may engender racist / xenophobic attitudes and discourses
- An alternative to nationalist citizenship education is *education for cosmopolitan citizenship*

# Schools fit for children: some assumptions

- Future orientated
- Rights respecting (children, teachers, other staff)
- Explicit about values base
- Enabling future participation (economic, social, political)
- Diversity of intake
- Overcoming inequalities
- Managing potential tensions between student/ community expectations and policy demands

# Student voice

- Rights-free concept!
- Benevolent adults 'giving' voice
- Improving schools rather than improving lives of young people
- Apolitical
- Ignores wider political questions
- Doesn't address rights issues beyond schooling: poverty, racism, sectarianism, gender politics
- Space and voice, influence and audience (Lundy, 2007)



# Student voice and rights: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12

- 1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
- 2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

# Article 12 and student voice

(from Lundy, [2007 *British Educational Research Journal* 33 (6): 927-942.

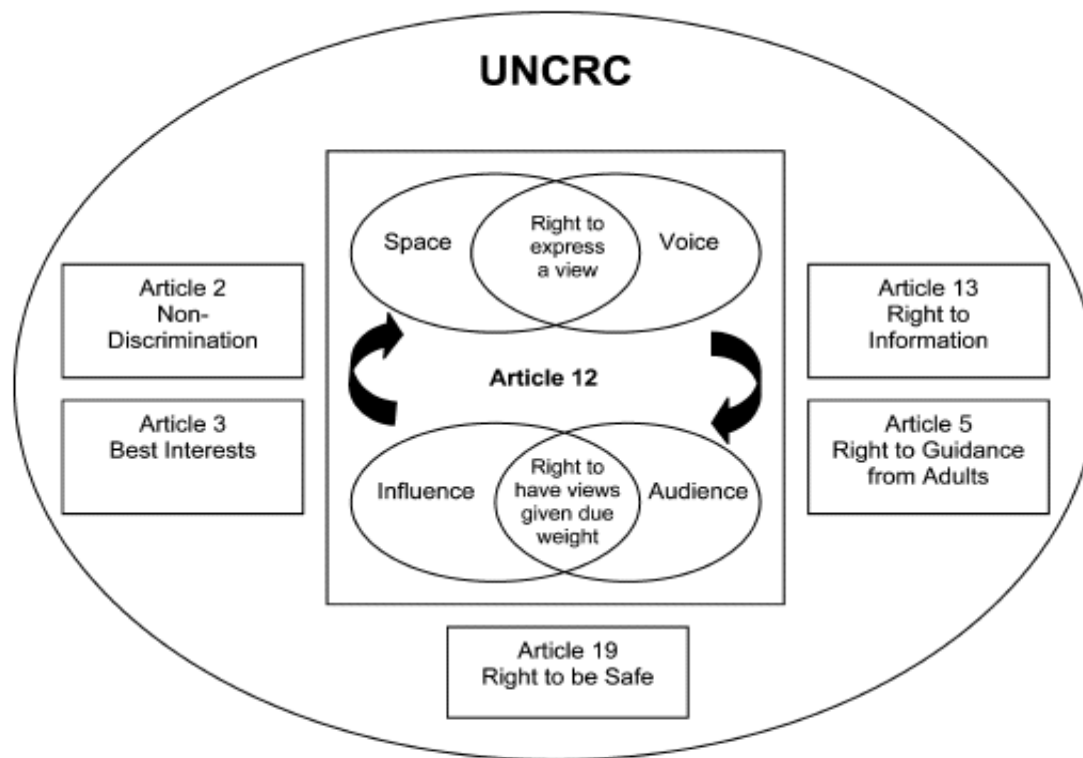


Figure 1. Conceptualising Article 12



# Students, schooling and social justice

- What kind of education?
- Article 29, CRC:
  - Education shall be directed to... the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,
  - ... peace tolerance, equality of sexes, friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin
- Respect for ... his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own
- Tolerance , diversity and the tensions between education for democracy and diversity (living and studying together) and those organisational arrangements which emphasise a particular cultural heritage and a wider heritage of humanity more broadly

# Research methods (UK)

- City-wide survey 1,900 year 10 students aged 14-15 years
- On-line discussion between students about key issues raised in survey
- Workshops in two schools (20 students) : photographic evidence collected by students

# Research methods (UK continued)

- City-wide survey 1,900 year 10 students aged 14-15 years
- On-line discussion between students about key issues raised in survey
- Workshops in two schools (20 students) : photographic evidence collected by students
- Working with students on research ethics



# Young people's perspectives: social justice

- Lack of respect for religious beliefs
- Concern about religious festivals/ holidays
- Freedom of religion and integration into school life
- Lack of guarantees over RE curriculum
- Issues about sex education,
- Influence by far right political parties: e.g. St George's Day
- Reflections on student/ staff relationships and respect
- Bullying and violence
- Racism
- Equality of sexes

# Negotiation and democratic dialogue

Class size and learning

Recreational facilities (context of poverty)

Cleanliness and hygiene

Access to toilets (dignity)

Security

Décor, repair and comfort

Flexible school day

School rules and discipline

Meals (poverty)

# Learning and pedagogy

- 'it would help if the teachers and students could work better together rather than the teachers just dictating to the students'
- Teacher characteristics and behaviour
- 'school needs to change so that teachers give students the same respect as I give them'
- Personal support
- Spending priorities
- Personal support



# Children as rights holders

- Challenges fundamental premise of contemporary mass schooling
- Highlights tensions, contradictions and ambiguities

# Ways forward for rights respecting schools

- Recognition of diversity and equality central
- Development of structures which build space, voice, influence and audience with students
- Facing up to political realities (and the far right)
- Reconfiguring child-adult relationships
- Re-examining political priorities
- ... And in Hong Kong?