



Radical Democracy and Civic Education

Professor Judith Suissa

**Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies
Institute of Education, University College London**

**March 6, 2018 (Tuesday)
10:30 – 12:00**

**Room 550, Meng Wah Complex, HKU
Chair: Dr Liz Jackson**

Abstract:

Character education is currently flourishing in schools in England and enjoys widespread support from government and public bodies. The justification is often linked to the idea of a “flourishing society”, and democratic citizenship. Recent research into the provision of character education in schools has shown that most school leaders and teachers see their role as being to “encourage pupils to understand, value and demonstrate the positive behaviour traits that would make them well-rounded, grounded citizens.” Yet what is the underlying understanding of political and social ideas and values, particularly those to do with democracy, held by teachers working in this area? While a growing body of research has explored the philosophical underpinnings of character education, empirical evidence for the efficacy of various interventions in character education on children’s academic outcomes and mental health, and the steps schools need to take to ensure that character education is properly embedded in the curriculum, questions are rarely asked about the underlying concepts of democratic citizenship implied in the various ways in which character education programmes are promoted, designed and delivered. In this talk, I will draw on recent work in political philosophy and on an analysis of some widely used teaching resources in the field of character education in order to explore how different underlying conceptualisations and images of democracy and of “the political” are reflected in these resources. This talk is work in progress that is part of an ongoing research project and I welcome feedback from colleagues.

About the speaker:

Judith Suissa is Professor of Philosophy of Education at the UCL Institute of Education, London. Her work explores the intersection between political ideas and educational practice, with a particular focus on pedagogical relationships outside the arena of institutional forms of education. These include parent-child relationships, educational experiments that challenge the state system, and informal education. Her research draws on political and moral philosophy, with a particular focus on anarchist theory, questions of social justice, the control of education, utopian theory, social change, and the role of the state. Her publications include *Anarchism and Education* (Routledge, 2006) and (with Stefan Ramaekers) *The Claims of Parenting* (Springer, 2012).

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For enquiries, please contact the Office of Research at 3917 8254.