

Topic: Public Affairs Participation and Policy Determination for Children and Youth

I am 12 years old this year. I am concerned about whether society can be transformed into the way I want it to be. But Taiwan's education today keeps telling me that I should only be focused on beating the competition at school, and that I have no time to be concerned about other things. Therefore, I think it is more important to let everyone know that: "You have the right to express yourself, and you have the right to let your opinions to be heard."

In my day-to-day life, there are often things which are quite different from those stated in the articles of CRC and national reports – even situations and experiences which are the complete opposite. For example:

CRC Article 3:

From my day-to-day living experience, what I can feel is that every time public agencies that are related to this field proposes a policy, they seem to be more concerned about "Will parents think this is a great idea?" rather than the optimal benefits for us who belong to the group of children and youths (the benefit which I understand means both what we want and what we need). The reason for this is maybe that they cannot hear are real voices, or perhaps they do no need to take our opinions into account?

However, our national report mentions that in Taiwan, kids can legally express their opinions. Therefore, I guess maybe that what we think is not important, or maybe it's not necessary to give it any weight. Perhaps it is because that the voting requirements in Taiwan is fairly high, so some of the government officials might believe that helping us to satisfy our needs will not necessary bring them more votes. Therefore, it makes more sense to satisfy the needs of parents. But there are many times where what we want and what our parents want is different? (Truthfully, based on my own experience, children in Taiwan rarely have channels where we can express our opinion easily and directly). I believe that if we can have the right to decide who has the right to manage us, things will be better. Even if that's not allowed, there should be at least a mechanism that ensures they can really hear what we have to say and implement policies accordingly. If not, even if we can express our opinions, it is pointless if nobody sees it as important.

The national report also states that when public agencies handle opinions related to children and youth issues, they should weigh the opinions based on the respective subject's mental maturity level.

But first, there is really a lot of factors that can impact children and youth-related policies. In addition to those which have direct impacts, they should also include ones that indirectly affects our future. These factors cannot be ignored. Next, likewise, based on my day-to-day living experience, public agencies rarely adopt our opinions. I hope there can be improvements in this area.

I think maybe it's because of the reasons above that resulted in many of the policies and facilities designed for children and youths ending up being unable to provide

what they want or need. Furthermore, there are some things which I think is important, but none of them were mentioned in the national report:

CRC Article 17

Based on what I've observed, even though there are many data which are useful for kids, useful TV shows or news report which truly adopts the perspective of children, or at least offer explanations in a way which children can comprehend, are extremely limited in numbers. I think there should be changes made in this area.

Finally, the national report also mentioned the related procedures for handling and shelter placement in the event if we face sexual assault. But I believe that other than taking care of the aftermath of the incident, what is more important should be providing kids and youth with more knowledge in related areas through sex education, to prevent such misfortunes from occurring in the first place and not to wait until it takes place and spend time discussing what to do. However, the national report doesn't mention anything in this field. Even though today schools provide sex education courses, the current situation should be on what to teach, how to teach, and what amount of knowledge to teach, but society has no consensus on these issues. I believe that it should be taught, and students should receive all the knowledge with nothing hidden. Like what I've said before, it shouldn't be just discussing how to make up for the wrongdoings, but to do everything correctly with education as the basis. Kids and youths have the right to know, and I think the part on education should also be included in the national report and undergo review. Only through this can we make sure that the courses for us complies with necessary standards and meet our true needs.

This is what I want to let everyone know, the real opinions of a youngster from Taiwan.