

Assessment task 06: Individual Mini-Research Projects related to 'Education as the critical interpretation and evaluation of culture'

The work should be submitted to G Rossiter by email attachment (g.rossiter@bigpond.com). If too large for email (try email attachment first) we can try some other system for getting the file through.

The group will be notified of the website where the various presentations of participants can be viewed.

Introduction: Basic principles underpinning the mini Research Project

This assignment on education as the critical interpretation and evaluation of culture is based on the following premises:-

- School education can make **a valuable contribution in helping young people learn how to become critical interpreters** and evaluators of the culture. This is to help them learn how to identify and diagnose cultural situations, and to be able to think more critically about the shaping influence culture can have on people's attitudes, values and behaviour.
- There is scope for teaching about **spiritual and moral issues in special subject areas like religion**, personal development, ethics, philosophy and politics. There is also scope for addressing these issues in across-the-curriculum studies.
- If teachers are to be able to **lead pupils in the exploration of contemporary social issues in an open, inquiring, research-like way**, then the teachers themselves need to have some basic understanding of the issues and questions – *and they need to have experienced the research pedagogy themselves*. Teachers do not have to have all the answers on issues, but they need to know enough to be able to help the young people get moving in the direction of getting up-to-date information so that they can make better judgments about them.
- If educators develop even a basic understanding of the key principles and issues related to a particular topic, and if they can converse about these in a simple and coherent way, then their understandings will have a positive flow over into their interactions with pupils both within and outside the classroom.
- While people usually have their own opinions on social issues, this exercise and its related assessment task, are designed to **help educators see that there is a need to develop a relatively structured and organised approach to the analysis** and interpretation of social problems.

Social research questions

The challenge for the group is to summarise in a clear and coherent way some of the major issues and principles associated with this particular social problem or social question. Your purpose is to present a short, introductory summary of key information that will inform your colleagues. It can be a model for what you could get your own school students to do. Clearly the Internet will be the major resource for the exercise.

The examples here are mainly problems. But when using a critical, research-oriented pedagogy at school, you would need to include positive topics as well. E.g. students in groups finding out what is done by way of community service by groups like St Vincent de Paul, Smith Family, Salvation Army, Wesley mission. And for older students work like Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Medecins sans Frontieres,

Note that for primary school students the pedagogy might include very basic items like school vegetable gardens, water safety, the work of charitable organisations, bullying at primary school level.

Presentations on the web by individuals on their findings. Make your presentation a length to go for about 5-7 minutes (E.g. time to read through the presentation)

In the presentation, you should give attention only to the key ideas and issues for your topic. The presentation need not refer to how you would conduct an investigation of this topic with a class at school. If you wish you can add some very brief notes below the Powerpoint slides, or some may wish to add a recorded/embedded commentary as part of the Powerpoint, that will be fine – but it is not necessary.

The presentation Powerpoint or similar could include linked video clips, word files etc. Only a very **short bibliography** can be included to show other useful sites or resources for further information. When you do the work, give some thought to what you think might be good topics for the students you actually teach, including both positive topics for information as well as problems to be investigated.

Some people may want to try other programs for the presentation E.g like Prezi – but the problem here is having it in a form that the group can look at. That is why powerpoint files are most useful.

Copyright is not an issue as only our group will see the results and they will not be for sale or general publication. So no problem with copying any texts, photos etc. from the net that might be useful and there is no need to have these sources identified.

Collection of reports made available to the whole group on the unit website.

All of the group presentations will be posted to the unit website for all to look at. You may wish to use some of these at school or even show to students (depending on their age and the topics)

Presentations on issues / topics studied as mini-research projects as part of seeing Religious Education as the Critical Interpretation and evaluation of Culture

No	Participants	Topic for research/investigation
1		Slow food and slow towns – especially as developed in Italy
2		Ricardo Semler – a community orientation to business that conflicts with the predominant capitalist model
3		Animal rights
4		Raunch culture.
5		Sexualisation of children and adolescents through advertising
6		Branding – the mythology of brands and its link with consumerism. The buying and selling of teenagers?
7		Consumerism – the driving force of westernised cultures.
8		Advertising – creating consumerist imaginations of what life is really about
9		Future social dimensions to cyberspace: You Tube, FaceBook, My Space GPlus, Txting etc– newfound communities or a diversion from healthy face-to-face relationships?

10		The myth of maintaining economic 'growth' as fundamental to our consumerist societies
11		Use and misuse of cosmetic surgery
12		'Binge' drinking in Australia – especially for teenagers
13		Reality television: Fact is stranger than fiction
14		Poker machine addiction in Australia
15		The 'death' of country towns in Australia
16		Screen violence – does it prompt actual violence?
17		But it's just a game! The social and psychological influence of video games
18		The religious motivation behind suicide bombing
19		How has social media contributed to the public discourse about Jihadi terrorist attacks? Opposition? Radicalisation?
20		Arranged marriages and related issues
21		Homelessness in Australia
22		Sweat shop labour and profits for multinational companies
23		Human trafficking
24		Bullying in schools, including cyber bullying.

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