

Civic, Social and Political Education

Teaching and Learning Workshops

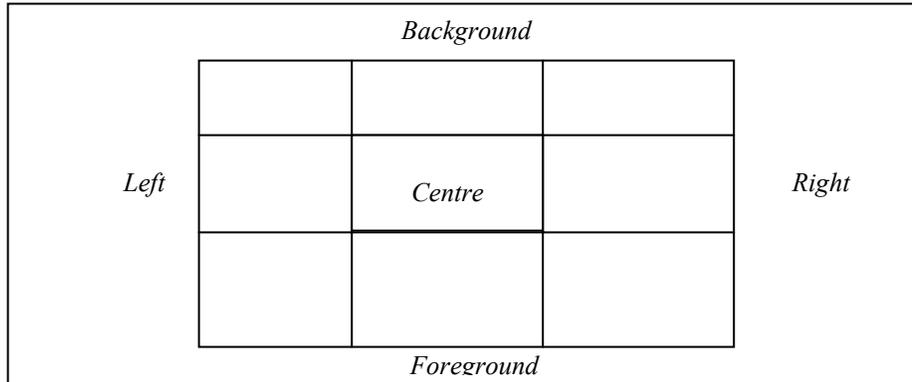
Using Photographs in the Classroom

1. Photographs can be lively, engaging and effective tools for learning in the CSPE classroom. Everywhere we look we are confronted by still images that sell products or communicate ideas. Photographs are central to our everyday understanding of civic, social and political life. Photographs can be very effective gateways to the study of CSPE.
2. Photographs can be used very effectively in developing constructivist classrooms.
3. A good supply of varied photographs can be built up by relatively easily by teacher and students working together. Mounting newspaper and magazine photographs on to A4 sized pages and inserting them into transparent protective envelopes is one useful way of building up a resource which can be stored in a binder.
4. Getting students to observe and describe photographs introduces and opens up a variety of CSPE topics and issues.
5. Prior to using photographs in the classroom the teacher needs to acquaint him/herself with some basic facts about photographs. These include:
 - a photographic image is a representation of one moment in time
 - photographic images are open to a variety of interpretations
 - every photograph reflects decisions made by the photographer
 - these decisions refer to both *composition* (arrangement of the visual elements) and the *content* (meaning)
 - in constructing the image on a page, an original photograph may have been enhanced by computer technology.
 -
6. Some useful basic photographic vocabulary includes:
 - content** – the subject, topic or information captured in the image
 - angle** – the vantage point – or point of view – from which the photograph was taken
 - contrast** – visual differences between light and dark, but also textures, sizes and objects
 - setting** – the actual physical surrounding or scenery, whether artificial or real.
 - representational** – an image which shows recognisable objects
 - framing** – what is within the boundaries of the photograph
 - abstract** – an image that emphasises formal elements such as shapes, lines etc rather than specific recognisable objects
 - expressive** – concerned with communicating emotion

landscape – an image that portrays the natural environment; an image that is of greater horizontal length than vertical (opposite of **portrait**)

theme – a dominant or unifying idea in one photograph or in a collection of photographs

7. In getting students to describe photographs the frame overleaf can be helpful. Any photograph can be divided into NINE sections and the students can develop the practice of describing a particular part of the photograph as: *background left* or *centre right* or *foreground left* and so on.



8. In exploring students' understanding, the teacher could use the following types of prompts:
- Describe what you see
 - What is the main subject matter?
 - Where was the photograph taken?
 - What evidence is there for this?
 - Who are the people in the photograph?
 - What evidence is there about the people's lives?
 - In a newspaper, what caption might be attached to this photograph
 - To what civic, social or political theme/issue does this photograph relate?
 - How would you classify this photograph?
 - What might have been happening before this photograph was taken?
 - What might have happened immediately after the photograph was taken?
 - What was the point of view of the photographer?
 - Why might the photographer have taken this particular image?
 - Were the people in the photograph aware of the photographer and if so does this make a difference?
 - What is your response to this photograph?
 - Do you like or dislike the photograph? Why?
 - What other images does this photograph remind you of?
 - What is the overall meaning of the photograph?
 - What kind of civic, social or political statement is this photograph making?
 - Who benefits or suffers from this photograph being published in a newspaper?
9. Encourage students to develop their own collection of CSPE photographs in a folder or scrapbook.
10. Both teacher and students can develop many of these ideas further by taking their own photographs, whether with digital, disposable or other cameras.
11. Many of the application suggested in relation to POSTERS can also apply.