Critical and Visual Sociological Pedagogies

In this paper I share experiences of teaching equalities and building understandings of social justice through visual sources, innovative teaching methods and co construction of assessment. The visual surrounds us in everyday life and the use of film produces an opportunity to develop visual literacy at a critical level for our students. Visual methods are under-utilised in higher education pedagogies in favour of verbal and written methods. Visual method also allows each learner to explore differences and identities, without the need for personal disclosures, and allows emotionality to be present in the learning environment. The teacher becomes secondary, and the student creatively engages with sources. Their reactions and interpretations will be subjective and variable. One student responded: It encourages and depends on students to emotionally engage with the visual and develop a passionate connection with it .... In essence it is this emotional connection to the visual that inspires students to an extent that allows them to produce high quality essay-based work. In this type of learning the viewer/learner is bringing to the forefront their own and other interpretations of what we are seeing and hearing in our culture. We are increasingly aware that the graduate skills needed for interpreting the visual world are precisely the transferable skills that our humanities and social science graduates need in the workplace. There is increased recognition that graduates who can demonstrate visual literacy, are able to demonstrate interpretive ability developed in this type of learning experience are crucial for 21st century employment.