

## Topic 2: Education and schooling

### About Topic 2

The Education and schooling topic includes teaching methods and resources, approaches to exams and testing, school management, pupil motivation, behaviour and discipline, school sport, extra-curricular activities, higher/further education and course funding.

### Topic 2 example Task

*'The Internet will never replace traditional course books in schools.'*  
*How far do you agree with this prediction?*

### Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Personal viewpoint type essay (it asks how far you agree with an idea.) You should introduce the topic and give your opinion in the introduction, then explain why you have this view. You should briefly consider the opposing view, then restate your opinion in the conclusion.

Notice how this essay type is different from the Opinion>Discussion type which we saw in Topic 1, which asks you to *discuss* both sides of a debate.

### Band 9 model essay

There is a huge range of resources available to the modern teacher, and the right selection is crucial in delivering effective lessons. I agree that there will always be a place for course books in the school **curriculum**, despite the many benefits of the Internet.

Firstly, course books (whether conventional or digital) have been developed by **pedagogical** experts and designed to be incorporated into a subject **syllabus**, leading to testing procedures such as **formal examinations** or **continuous assessment**. This means that they are proven to improve students' **academic achievement**, enhancing their potential for progression to **further** or **higher education**. Furthermore, the use of modern course books allows pupils to coordinate their studies as part of **group work**, hopefully making their lessons less **teacher-led** and more about **autonomous learning**. This in itself teaches **study skills** such as independent research and **synthesising sources**, rather than old-fashioned **rote-learning**. This is where the Internet, in fact, can play a useful part: to **supplement** and add to **knowledge** which the students are **assimilating** via their course books. However, it is the role of teachers and school management generally to ensure that use of the Internet remains a **guided learning** process, and not an exercise in **data-gathering** from Internet sources which may be unreliable or even misleading.

It is true that the Internet can be invaluable for adults (for example in **distance learning** or **self-study** modules) who are able to **discriminate between sources** and **sift information** to **marshal their facts**. However, this is a mature skill and we should not assume that school age pupils are ready to do this.

Overall, it appears that course books, with their quality and depth of material, are set to remain **an integral part of the syllabus**. The internet can be judged a useful supplement to this, if used carefully and **under supervision**.

(304 words)

### Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking

**curriculum** = the full range of subjects offered by a school or group of schools

The curriculum in private schools is sometimes wider than in state schools, because they have more resources.

**pedagogical (experts)** = (experts in) education and teaching

I admire pedagogical pioneers such as the Victorian English thinkers who began free schools for all children.

**syllabus** = the content of elements taught in a specific subject

The syllabus for geography at my school included volcanoes, earthquakes and tidal waves, which we found fascinating.

**formal examinations** = exams where students answer set written or spoken questions without assistance

**continuous assessment** = giving students marks for course work or projects, rather than formal exams

At my school, our grades were based 50/50 on formal examinations and continuous assessment, which we thought was very fair to all the children.

**academic achievement** = the measurable performance of a student in marks, exam results etc

In my country, children enjoy school, but academic achievement is frankly quite low.

**further education** = education after leaving school at the minimum age

Some governments encourage further education by allowing teenagers to claim benefits while they study.

**higher education** = education after age 18 at college or University, usually for a Degree

When I pass IELTS, I plan to go on to higher education in Canada and do a degree in

engineering.

**group work** = study where pupils discuss and agree a project together

Personally, I think that group work enables lazy children to do less work than the eager ones.

**teacher-led lessons** = traditional lessons where the teacher delivers a long talk and the students take notes

In my country, lessons are still very teacher-led and interaction is rather limited.

**autonomous learning** = when a student learns through independent study and research

At University, you are expected to be an autonomous learner far more than at High School, which is quite exciting for me.

**study skills** = the skills of organising, using and checking study work

My study skills were rather weak until I read an excellent book by a Japanese pedagogical expert.

**to synthesise sources** = to use a variety of sources and combine them in one project

I use the Internet to synthesise my sources, and I always cite the origin of the information. (to cite sources = to acknowledge publicly)

**rote-learning** = learning by repetition and memorising items

I used to think that rote-learning was a negative approach, but my recent experiences teaching in a South African school have changed my view.

**to supplement** = to add extra content or material

My supervisor said that I should supplement my essay with more examples of experiments.

**to assimilate knowledge** = to absorb and understand it

I always use a dictionary when I study in English, to help me assimilate new phrases.

**guided learning** = learning under the supervision of a teacher

Lessons in Primary Schools should always contain guided learning, otherwise the children will lose focus.

**data-gathering** = collecting information, usually in numerical form

Mobile phone companies employ many people in data-gathering Tasks, to see how users are using the phones and Internet.

**distance learning** = learning by the Internet or email, rather than face-to-face

My mother took an entire degree by distance learning over a period of five years.

**self-study** = studying using a course without a teacher's involvement

There are many self-study guides to improving your English, and some of them are actually quite good.

**to discriminate between sources** = to decide whether one source is better or more reliable than another source

Children should not study using unsupervised Internet access, because they can't discriminate between the sources of information they find.

**to sift information** = to remove unwanted or less useful information

I had to sift hundreds of pages of data to arrive at my conclusions when I did my thesis.

**to marshal facts** = to organise facts in support of an idea

In IELTS essays, you should marshal a few facts to support each idea in the argument.

**an integral part of the syllabus** = essential, central or indispensable

Nutrition is an integral part of food sciences these days

**to work/study under supervision** = under the direction of a responsible person

At college, I discovered I did not have to work under supervision all the time, and I was free to do independent research.

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