

Standards Unit

IMPROVING DIFFERENTIATION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

TOPIC 2: QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

PARTICIPANTS' BRIEFING SHEET

Activity 2: Which questioning techniques? (1 hr, 20 mins)

Objectives

- To identify and explore a range of questioning techniques for individuals and groups.
- To identify appropriate questioning techniques in teaching situations.
- To evaluate questioning techniques for individuals and groups.

Task 1: Question types (in groups of between three and five) (40 mins)

Resources

- Laminated strips with questions (Stage 1)
- Laminated grid with questioning techniques (Stage 2)
- Red, amber and green pens (Stage 2)
- Flipchart paper
- White or blue tack

Stage 1 (20 mins)

You will be provided with a set of cards. Each card has a question on it. Place the cards face upwards on the table so that all members of the group can see them.

As a group, pick out one question card at a time. Through discussion, identify which of the skill-level categories shown below the question would be most likely targeted by that kind of question. These skill level categories are

placed as headings on flipchart paper.

The skill-level categories are:

- knowledge;
- understanding/application;
- analysis;
- evaluation.

When you've decided on a question's skill level, place the question on the appropriate sheet of the flipchart. You may find that a question card could be suitable for more than one category. In these cases you should try to agree as a group the category in which to put it.

Stage 2 (20 mins)

Read the case study on the next page and use it to prepare differentiated questions for a range of learners.

Fictional case study

In 1950 Ellis and Sons (drapers) and Baker and Co (furnishings) began trading as separate businesses in adjoining high-street shops. In 1970 the two family businesses merged and became Ellis and Baker Ltd, trading in a single high-street department store employing 60 people. An additional business was opened in a nearby out-of-town retail park in 1995.

John Ellis was the group managing director and knew that in order for Ellis and Baker Ltd to remain competitive it would have to be restructured and moved nearer to the newly developed town centre. John Ellis put the following proposals to shareholders:

- close and sell the high street site for redevelopment;
- close the out-of-town retail park store;
- open a new furnishing and carpet business in a location more central to the new town centre.

These proposals were accepted and in 2003 a new shop was purchased which was more central to the town centre. Money from the sale of the high street store was spent on refurbishing the shop and warehouse, and installing information and communications technology (ICT). Some of the employees of the high street department store who did not want to move accepted redundancy after discussion with their trade union, whilst most staff from the retail park store transferred to the new furniture and carpet store near the town centre.

After trading for a year, Ellis and Baker remains confident of success. John Ellis recognises the high level of competition in the furniture business and is always looking for suppliers at home and abroad of quality products at reasonable prices. He and the ICT director have developed a web site and have plans for selling this site at home and abroad. Wide use is made of ICT throughout the business.

Task 2: Questioning techniques (in a group) (25 mins)

Resources

- A laminated grid 'What are these techniques good for?'
- A document listing the questioning techniques from the grid in larger type
- Red, amber and green pens (see below for an explanation of what these ratings mean).

As a group, select one strategy at a time from the list headed 'Questioning techniques'. Discuss how effective that questioning technique is in relation to the criteria set out along the top of the grid (also repeated below). For example, does the questioning technique involve just one learner? If so, then the participation rate will probably be poor

and so you will colour the box headed 'Participation' in red.

Criteria:

- teacher or trainer gets feedback – teacher or trainer gets representative feedback on quality of learners' reasoning and understanding;
- learners get feedback – learners receive feedback on the quality of their understanding, ideally improving it as a result;
- participation rate – high proportion of learners are engaged in trying to answer question;
- thinking time – learners are likely to spend time thinking productively about the question and the quality of answer;

- learner comfort – learners are not put on the spot and are unlikely to feel humiliated by the teacher, trainer or fellow learners.
- teacher and trainer observations – an opportunity for teacher or trainer to think and tailor strategies for individuals or group.

Ratings:

Green = Good Amber = OK Red = Poor

Task 3: Which questioning techniques to use when? (group) (25 mins)

For each of the questioning techniques, decide as a group how, when and where they are best used. The group should put this information in the blank space available on the questioning techniques grid under the heading 'When?' You can use the following headings as examples to support your decisions and the group can add additional headings to the list.

- Introducing a topic for the first time to a group.
- Imparting theory/information.
- Developing understanding.
- Provoking thought and the development of ideas.
- Encouraging analysis and evaluation.
- Revising a topic area.
- Sharing ideas.