

# Standards Unit

## IMPROVING DIFFERENTIATION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

### TOPIC 2: QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

#### FACILITATOR GUIDANCE

#### Activity 3: Applying questioning techniques (1 hr, 20 mins)

##### Objectives

- To apply appropriate questioning techniques in teaching and learning situations.
- To evaluate questioning techniques for individuals and groups.

##### Facilitator notes

This is the final activity on questioning and in it participants use role-play to put into practice the questioning techniques explored in the previous activities.

- PowerPoint Slide 8 shows the objectives for the session.
- Slide 9 provides some key points for consideration after the role-play.

Any role-play activity needs careful planning and management. The guidance notes that follow are therefore very detailed. If you're experienced in facilitating role-play you may want to modify the suggested procedures.

The role-play team will consist of a teacher or trainer, observer and four or more learners. There are two stages to this activity.

Stage 1: A group exercise<sup>3</sup> carried out by those in the role of learners. Whilst the learners are engaged in this exercise, the role-play teacher

and observer watch the exercise in progress and work together to prepare questions and questioning strategies. The teacher or trainer will draw on these during the role-play.

Stage 2: The role-play itself where the teacher or trainer uses questions and questioning strategies to check and develop the understanding and learning of those in the role of learners. At the end of Stage 2 there'll be a plenary feedback and discussion about the role-play.

##### Resources

PowerPoint Slides 8 and 9

Participants' briefing sheet

Group exercise brief and support materials. (These materials are not included in this pack and will need to be prepared by facilitator.)

Role cards

Observer grid.

##### Facilitator notes

*Advice on choosing the group exercise*

- You'll need to choose an exercise that will take the group about 20 minutes to complete.
- The exercise can be on any topic relating to business education that is relevant to your participants.

<sup>3</sup>As facilitator you will need to choose and set up this exercise yourself, including providing extra materials if appropriate.

- The exercise should form the basis of a teaching and learning session. It should have specific learning objectives.
- It could be any of the following:
  - a case study to consider;
  - an interactive activity such as problem-solving;
  - a subject-related exercise;
  - a team game;
  - a session you've already planned.

Remember, these are only a few ideas and there are many more possibilities. You'll need to take into account:

- the amount of time you have available for the CPD session;
- the relevance of the exercise to the group undertaking the CPD;
- the questioning skills you want them to develop. For example, the more interactive the exercise the better will be the opportunity to develop and test interesting questioning techniques.

### Preparing the group exercise

You may want to use the template below to prepare your group exercise.

a) Title of exercise:

b) Learning objectives or outcomes:

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c) Guidance to learners

- You'll be given an exercise.
- Spend some time individually reading the exercise.

### The roles and how they operate over the two stages

#### The teacher or trainer

##### Stage 1 – group exercise

- Observes the group whilst they're doing the exercise.
- Devises questions and prepares questioning techniques to use with the group once they've completed the exercise.

##### Stage 2 – role-play

- Uses those questions and questioning techniques.
- Reflects on the effectiveness of these in the plenary session after the role-play.

#### The observer

##### Stage 1 – group exercise

- Observes the group whilst they're doing the exercise.
- Helps the teacher or trainer prepare questions and questioning techniques whilst the learners are doing the exercise.

- You'll need to be prepared to answer questions on the exercise.
- Once you have completed the exercise discuss the following:

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d) The exercise

### Stage 2 – role-play

- Observes and records the teacher's or trainer's questions and questioning techniques, and notes what works and what doesn't work by observing the learners' responses.
- Provides feedback to the teacher or trainer in the plenary session after the role-play.

### Learners

#### Stage 1 – group exercise

- Undertake the exercise following the instructions on the task and role cards (learners will be told on their role cards to be 'confident', 'reasonably confident' or 'less confident' in their understanding of the exercise).

### Stage 2 – role-play

- Respond to the teacher's or trainer's questions, taking account of the information on their role card.
- Provide feedback to the teacher or trainer in the plenary session after the role-play.

### Facilitating the role-play

#### Stage 1 (group exercise) (20-30 mins including preparation and reading time)

- Allocate roles or ask the participants to choose roles. You may not wish to direct individuals to roles. However, because the teacher or trainer role is so important, it may be advisable to encourage an experienced teacher or trainer to take on this role. You need to ensure whoever takes on this role is willing and confident enough to be creative and adaptable in testing out various questioning techniques.
- Give out the role cards. You'll need to be familiar with these. Participants will know who has the role of teacher or trainer, observer and learners, but they should not reveal to each other the details on their role

cards.

- You should ask those in the role of learner to read the exercise they've been given to themselves (that is, the one you have devised for them) and then to work together as if they were in a real teaching and learning session.
- Make sure that those in the roles of teacher or trainer and observer familiarise themselves with the exercise you have chosen and observe the learners carrying it out. You should also ask them to spend time together preparing questions and questioning techniques for the group once the exercise is completed.

#### Stage 2 (the questioning role-play) (20 mins)

Participants should now act out the role-play, taking account of the guidance on their role sheets.

Remember, the main purpose of the role-play is for the participant who has the role of teacher or trainer to use questions and questioning techniques effectively to check and develop the understanding and progress of all learners. They will need to consider:

- what the learning objectives were for the session;
- which questions and questioning techniques best check learning against those objectives;
- how to take account of learners' different abilities, behaviours and learning preferences;
- whether all learners in the group are responding to the questions.

The teacher or trainer role-player will need to adapt those techniques depending on the learners' response. If the teacher or trainer does not elicit the desired 'learner response' they will need to change approach.

The observer should observe and make notes on the grid provided.

### Plenary feedback and discussion (20 mins)

As facilitator, your responsibility is to manage the feedback at the end of the role-play. The group will have undertaken the exercise and the teacher or trainer will have demonstrated (hopefully) several questioning techniques. If the teacher or trainer has been skilful they will have adapted the techniques to the learners' responses (or non-responses!).

The observer will have made notes on which techniques work and which don't, backed up by evidence based on the learners' responses. They will feed back these observations to the teacher or trainer. It's important to ensure that this is constructive feedback and that the group doesn't focus on the negative points. For this reason it may be helpful to manage the feedback as follows:

- Teacher or trainer comments first. They might, for example:
  - say how it felt;
  - identify one technique they felt worked well;
  - say what they found most challenging.
- Learners comment from their perspective and say which techniques or types of question, for example:
  - encouraged and motivated them;
  - gave them useful feedback;
  - developed their thinking;
  - felt threatening or demotivating.
- The observer:
  - responds to, and elaborates on, these comments in the light of what they have written, drawing in particular on concrete evidence/examples noted;
  - adds any further observations not already made.

Once again, this is not an exercise in 'getting the right answer'. Feedback should encourage participants to reflect on which techniques

and types of questioning produced results. Were the outcomes valuable? What could have been done differently?

### Follow-up activity

If there is time left at the end of the activity you could ask participants to review a session plan. This could be for a session that has already taken place, or a planned session. The review should focus on how teachers or trainers can incorporate the various questioning techniques into the session plan. The new session plan can be completed individually or as a group activity.

### Taking the session forward

You may want to encourage participants to commit themselves to taking further actions to experiment with using questioning techniques. They could agree to try one or two approaches then arrange to compare experiences at a future date. You should reassure them that questioning is a 'high-level' teaching skill. Developing effective questioning skills takes practice.

Or, they may want to meet in curriculum teams to look again at their schemes of work and consider how they might:

- better incorporate different types of questioning;
- distribute these to avoid 'overkill';
- use them to reinforce each other.