

# Standards Unit

## IMPROVING DIFFERENTIATION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

### TOPIC 2: QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

#### FACILITATOR GUIDANCE

#### Activity 1: Open and closed questions (20 mins)

##### Objectives

- To introduce questioning techniques.
- To consider individuals' responses to two types of questioning technique.

##### PowerPoint slides

The Standards Unit definition of differentiation is supplied on Slide 3 as a reminder. The objectives are on Slide 4.

You can use Slide 5 at the end of the activity to summarise key points in open and closed questioning.

##### Facilitator notes

Activity 1 is a warm-up session that enables participants to gain first-hand experience of the different type of responses that different question types are likely to get. The activity will make participants aware of the impact the two types of questions have on their partner's feelings, involvement and verbal/non-verbal feedback.

Although two minutes are allowed for asking closed questions, you should be flexible. If participants are getting bored or frustrated then allow just one minute for the exercise. You will still see the same results!

When participants change roles for Stage 2 you should ensure that the person who was asking

the questions in the closed question task is now the person answering the open questions.

In the second task the questioner is likely to find out the information more easily (e.g. by asking what the hobby is, why they like it, etc.) In fact, the second questioner will find out much more, in much less time. One minute should provide more information than that obtained in two minutes from the previous exercise.

##### Now read the activity.

#### Stage 1 Closed questions (in pairs) (2 mins)

Find a partner. If possible, choose a person you are not very familiar with.

Choose whether you are to be the person to be questioned or the questioner. (You will swap roles for the next stage.) The person to be questioned should select one of the topics below but keep it to themselves. Their partner will then attempt to find out what it is and why it's important.

- An unusual hobby.
- A particular achievement.
- An important day in their life which was out of the norm.
- A very special holiday.

The questioner can then ask only closed questions to which the person being questioned is allowed to answer only 'yes' or 'no'. The questioner should first try and

discover the topic area and then the specific issue.

For example, to discover the topic, use closed questions to work your way through the list.

'Have you chosen an unusual hobby?'

'Is your topic related to a particular achievement?'

### Facilitator notes

Make sure participants understand that they should choose only one of the above topics and that they shouldn't tell their partners which one they've chosen.

### Stage 2 Open questions (in pairs) (1 min)

Keeping with the same partners, now change roles. The new questioner can now ask 'open' style questions.

### Facilitator notes

You can lead your discussion using the following questions.

1. How does it feel to both participants under the 'yes' and 'no' questioning exercise – is it uncomfortable? How quickly could each one develop a picture of the topic being highlighted? Is it frustrating? If yes, for whom?

2. Does it feel different for the second task when open questions are being used? If there is a difference between the two approaches – what is it? How does it feel?

As a warm-up session, this short exercise enables you to ask participants to think about the value of these different types of questioning techniques. Participants will clearly feel frustrated by the closed questions, which are very time-consuming. They will find it difficult, if not impossible, to gain any detail about the event and why it was chosen. The open questioning techniques very quickly help them to gain facts and details. Participants are

able to see why the chosen event was important to them. They will quickly build rapport and empathy. Participants may feel relaxed enough to open up and even share some intimate details. Watch the positive body language. PowerPoint Slide 5 summarises some of the key features of open and closed questions.

This is your opening into Activity 2. You can follow on the discussion by asking participants to think whether all learners enjoy answering questions. They will probably reply that some do and some don't, that it depends on confidence, knowledge, etc.

Ask participants to think about why they should bother asking questions if it's so problematic. Through discussion, identify situations in which they feel learners perform better under questioning. They are likely to say that it's when learners are more relaxed and don't feel threatened.

- What type of environment and types of questioning make them feel more relaxed?
- How could they achieve that?

This will get your participants thinking about styles of questioning, levels of learner participation and the environment.