

Impulse Questions/Query Cards

From Phase 1: Entry

Phase 1 contains methods that can be used in programmes for (recently) immigrated and refugee teachers in Higher Education to start with the topic of heterogeneity at schools. As an introduction to the topic, the methods are characterised by high openness with regard to the question of what heterogeneity actually means and what it can or should mean in the school context.

a) General information

Time frame: 15-30 min

Social form(s): Short, changing dialogues between the participants

Number of people: 10-20

Short summary: The aim of the method is to query previous knowledge or opinions on various aspects of a topic. Before the method starts, approx. 10-14 cards with short impulse questions on a chosen topic are prepared. There should be so many impulse questions that at most two participants have the same question. Each participant receives a card with which he conducts short, 1-2-minute conversations with as many other participants as possible. The method allows participants to individually express their experiences and opinions on the given topic. This provides a vivid picture of different life experiences and perspectives. Heterogeneity can therefore be discussed with respect to the actual diversity of perspectives and experiences of the group. Thus, external attributions can be avoided and the discussion of differences always remains bound to multi-layered individuals, which can deconstruct one-dimensional cultural concepts.

b) Description of the method (preparation, working steps, aim)

The questions should enable the participants to approach a topic in short dialogues from several perspectives. For this purpose, the lecturer must prepare questions that address several facets of a topic. The questions should be short and precise, but at the same time sufficiently open to be discussed by all participants.

If, for example, the topic is 'heterogeneity in school', the teacher can prepare specific questions about personal experiences as a student, previous experience as a teacher, knowledge about school concepts, preferred teaching and learning methods and much more.

There are two ways to start the method. Usually the main topic is briefly introduced and the question session opens afterwards. However, it would also be possible to start with the questions directly, allowing the participants to formulate an overall theme themselves later on. This second option is particularly useful if you are willing to adapt the goals and topics of the rest of the learning series to the interests of the participants.

During the course of the teaching method, it is important that the individual dialogues take only a relatively short time, at most 2-3 minutes. The participants should rather have many small conversations about many different aspects than just one or two longer ones.

The phase of the individual dialogues is followed by a joint conversation. One way to shape this discussion is for participants to write different answers on cards to be collected on the blackboard. The individual answers can be clustered in order to illustrate specific subcategories of a topic. Here again, the lecturer can either predefine these subcategories and collect them, for example, on cards of different colours, or instead collect all answers first unsorted and then develop subcategories together with the participants.

As this method is intended to provide a broad overview of a particular topic at the beginning of a learning series, many of the mentioned aspects should subsequently be explored within the learning series in more depth using other methods.

c) Reflecting questions on how to implement the methods in programmes for (recently) immigrated and refugee teachers

How can the participants and lecturers contribute their knowledge in a way that does not culturalise?

The questions should focus on individual experiences and prior knowledge and should not introduce culturalising categories. (See also the following question). Of course, in this way it can also happen that culturalising narratives are brought in by the participants, but these are not anticipated from the outset by suggestive questions and can be reflected critically and constructively on the basis of individual experiences.

What must be considered so that this method does not lead to stereotypes and/or discriminatory categorisations?

The questions should not be asked in a way that they aim at proving differences between certain cultural contexts or national school systems. For example, questions such as “How is the typical school life in Syria?” and “How is the typical school life in Germany?” are problematic because they lead to the development of stereotypical and dualistic images.

Instead, the questions should be posed openly and allow individual access for the participants. The questions must be verbalised in such a way that they enable the participants to bring in their previous experience and knowledge in an individual and differentiated way. An example would be: “What experiences do you have with various school systems?” In this way, participants can identify both similarities and differences against the background of their own experiences, and also point to different school experiences within a country.

How to work with this method in a language sensitive way/how to include multilingualism?

The short dialogues can be conducted in different languages. The reflection discussion or the collection of answers on cards can also be partially carried out in several languages, especially if a lecturer or a participant can translate the contents for all.

How to use this method in a participatory way?

The method generally allows participants to contribute their previous knowledge and perspectives. If the participants are already familiar with this method, they can also prepare question cards that are of interest to them and can be used immediately. Ultimately, it is possible for the participants to develop the main topic, sub-themes and single query cards according to their own interests.

Possible variations of the method

Instead of conducting short dialogues, the individual participants could also only briefly respond to the question of their counterpart. On the one hand, this ensures that many questions are answered by each

participant, but on the other hand, the complete absence of dialogue can make the subsequent reflection more difficult.

Possible application (for other contexts, e.g. schools)

The method can also be used in schools, where the teacher should provide a clear framework (e.g. main topic, openness to possible further topics brought in by the students, coloured cards, definite timeframes).

Tips

In groups that does not know the method, it may be helpful to use a signal for changing dialogue partners. This ensures both that two partners do not get lost in a long conversation and that new conversational partners are easily to be found during the change.

Examples/possible topics

The method can be used, for example, for a deeper mutual getting to know each other and the individual experiences concerning heterogeneity in school within a programme. The following question cards could be used for this purpose, but can of course be changed or supplemented as required.

In which countries have you lived so far?	What are your professional focuses or school subject?
In which countries have you been teaching so far?	What languages do you speak?
Do you have goals concerning your own professionalism as a teacher?	What are your personal professional strengths as a teacher?
When thinking of your colleagues in school in the past, did you experience heterogeneity or not?	When thinking of a class in school: Do you think of the differences or the similarities of the students first? And why?
What do you think is the best part of being a teacher?	What do you think is most important for a teacher concerning a heterogeneous group of students?
What is the most challenging task of being a teacher?	What does heterogeneity in schools mean to you?

Illustration 3: Impulse Questions for the entry phase on a teaching series on the topic of heterogeneity in schools.

d) Further information

The method is based on the exercise: “Standpunkt und Bewegung: Kommunikation” In: Handschuk, Sabine/Klawe, Willi: Interkulturelle Verständigung in der Sozialen Arbeit: ein Erfahrungs-, Lern- und Übungsprogramm zum Erwerb interkultureller Kompetenz. Weinheim und München 2010, Juventa.



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