

Equal Opportunities Practice in Communication

Equal opportunities legislation and practices have implications for all teachers, trainers, learners, employers and employees.

CHECKLIST

Equal opportunities practice

Use this checklist to help you to be sure that you are applying good equal opportunities practice in the way you communicate with your learners.

1. When you are talking and discussing do you:
 - ❖ avoid using language that discriminates against groups or individuals on grounds of race, gender or other characteristics?
 - ❖ discourage learners from using such language?
 - ❖ make sure that every individual feels secure in the group?
 - ❖ encourage participation from learners in a minority in the group (e.g. women in male-dominated group)?
 - ❖ take cultural differences into consideration?
2. When you are preparing resources and schemes of work do you:
 - ❖ avoid discriminatory language in the texts you use?
 - ❖ avoid stereotyping people in case studies and other material?
 - ❖ try to eliminate sexist practice (e.g. always using 'he' when referring to individuals in general)?
3. When you are assessing and giving feedback do you:
 - ❖ avoid discouraging learners from taking your course because they differ from the learners you traditionally recruit?
 - ❖ take cultural differences (e.g. language problems) into account?
 - ❖ make time to respond to the needs of all learners?
 - ❖ avoid showing prejudice, for or against any learner?

Future Action

If you did not answer 'yes' to all the questions, you need to:

- ❖ find out more about equal opportunities policies
- ❖ try to apply the policies rigorously in your teaching.

Barriers to Communication

Communication does not always work in the way we want it to. Other signals interfere with the messages we intend to send.

Interference

There are many things (including non-verbal communication) that affect the way a signal is received. These may be:

- ❖ sounds
- ❖ visual distractions
- ❖ environmental factors
- ❖ language factors
- ❖ pre-occupied with other thoughts
- ❖ emotional reactions
- ❖ clashes of ideology (the attitudes, beliefs and character of a particular class, culture and/or background).

Interference may come from a number of sources:

- ❖ the transmitter
- ❖ the receiver
- ❖ the environment

If a teacher mumbles, or uses distracting body language when s/he is talking, then s/he is the source of interference. If a listening learner is preoccupied with last night's TV, or a row with a friend, or has a headache, then the receiver is the interference source. If the room smells strongly of polish, or there is a drill working nearby, or dazzling sunlight is causing visual distraction, the environment is interfering with the communication process.

Examples of barriers to communication

List at least ten specific examples of things that could interfere with communication in your own teaching situation. Try to not down examples of different types, and from a variety of sources.