

Numeracy market stalls

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To present 4 x 5 minute market stalls, role play presentations that highlight current/relevant topics involving numeracy with the aim of furthering understanding and possibly the evolution of new concepts/ ideas.

The 4 different presentations will be:

- *A role-play of an employer/employee, in relation to employability and how numeracy affects employment.*
- *A role-play of a tarot reading, demonstrating the fun and interactivity that could be adopted when ascertaining learning styles.*
- *An overview of functional skills and what it means for the learner and educational establishments.*
- *A demonstration of how the language of maths affects the potential of successfully learning maths.*

All presentations will be accompanied by a variety of handouts that reinforce what has been presented and will lead onto topic discussion with a view to a generation of new ideas/concepts.

Background

The aim of the workshop was to outline the concept of market stalls (with variations) and how these can be used effectively with teacher or student led groups. A research paper by the LLU+ team (Griffiths, Kaye and Moulton (2009)) was made available to the group but was not analysed in detail, allowing group members to deliberate and reflect individually after the workshop.

During the workshop we demonstrated adapted versions of two themes ('employability' and 'functional skills') we had separately delivered whilst attending an MA course in Birmingham. The 'employability' market stall originally used hand puppets to illustrate its characters. At the ALM workshop, we portrayed the recognisable characters of Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore to convey our message. The overall aim was to deliver a message/activity without using PowerPoint, which some learners find boring and mechanical. An employability handout (using the same format as for the Birmingham market stall) was made available.

The second topic described how the theme of functional skills was played out as a market stall in Birmingham and how it had been adapted for the ALM workshop. The changes were subtle (different suitcase, less handouts, less animation due to a lack of props). Handouts (market trader bags, scratch cards, pens, UK awarding body functional mathematics assessments) were made available. The market stall rationale was based around a Rodney and Dell Boy Trotter theme to link in the uncertain and changeable nature of 'functional skills'. Some of the handouts included information on awarding bodies approaches to functional mathematics, taken from an MA assignment (on functional skills) and examples of practice assessments from these awarding bodies.

The workshop group came up with several ideas as to how market stalls may be used. One of these involved learners choosing items from a ‘bag of resources’ e.g. string, modelling clay, etc. Another chose fractions as their theme. These ideas were written on the whiteboard and a whole-group discussion expanded on these ideas.

One of the group members teaches institutional prisoners and explained that some of the materials and ideas being presented in the workshop would *not* be allowed within his training environment. Various suggestions were offered – folding paper to make origami style shapes, tearing paper, matching cards etc. Another suggested using learners as ‘people resources’ which can be applied to areas such as statistics; people bar chart and box plots, line graphs using rope, although the latter would not be permitted within prisons. Resources and ideas from the Standards Unit were also reviewed and Java applications were highlighted, as the prisons tutor is able to use an interactive whiteboard during lessons.

The workshop ended with a series of general discussions around the use of market stalls, their application such as mid-course regeneration, icebreakers, main topic themes, and direct questions on functional skills.

Reflection

We had originally proposed 4 x 5 minute market stall slots with short Q&A between each episode. However, a significant constraint was the number of people interested/available to deliver the market stalls, out of the nine people who demonstrated stalls in Birmingham, only two attended the conference. Although we were able to draw on different market stall experiences, we did not have materials from the other market stalls, and decided in the days running up to the conference to describe these market stalls rather than fully demonstrate them. This approach seemed to work effectively on the day. Perhaps a video showing other market stalls on the Birmingham course could have been useful here.

The planned format worked successfully for the group attending the workshop. Delivery could perhaps have been improved with the use of technology; the video themes that were demonstrated in the Birmingham market stalls could have been incorporated in the workshop. The activity for the group to devise their own theme worked well and was enjoyed by the workshop group. This in turn led to meaningful discussions, with the whole group collaborating and making contributions.

References

- Griffiths, G., Kaye, D., and Moulton R. (2009) ‘I’ve got a luvly bunch of calculations. A ‘market stall’ of activities that develop language and numeracy’ in Kathy Safford-Ramus (2009) *A Declaration of Numeracy: Empowering Adults Through Mathematics Education Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Adults Learning mathematics (ALM-15) pp225-232.*