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**Effective Listening for Professional Experience**

 The purpose of this resource is to:

* highlight the importance of listening and observing for cultural differences; and
* provide some strategies that could be used to develop better listening skills.

**Listening and Observing for Cultural Differences**

When one communicates in one’s own language or with someone from the same cultural background, communication often unfolds without any challenges. This is not the case when communication takes place with people from other cultures. Effective communication requires extra awareness and attention (Prince & Hoppe 2000). Listening is an important aspect of communication.

* To ensure that pre-service educators develop effective communicative skills they should keep the following questions in mind each time they communicate:
	+ What do I know about this person’s culture?
	+ Do I take time to focus on a person from another culture so that I can understand where they are coming from?
	+ Do I pay attention to a person’s words or body language?
	+ Do I listen to feelings and unvoiced questions?
	+ Do I clarify and confirm what I heard?
	+ Do I check to ensure that the other person has fully understood what I said?

 (Prince & Hoppe 2000, p. 14)

**The three Cs of better intercultural communication**

**Capture**

* To avoid misunderstandings during your practicum, focus solely on the conversation.
* Capture what is said and refer to your knowledge of other cultures to make meaning.

**Clarify**

* If you are not completely sure that you have understood what the other person is saying, look for non-verbal cues (body language, facial expression, eye contact) to explain the message.
* Ask the speaker to clarify what they mean.
* You can also check your understanding with someone else that is privy to the communication.

**Confirm**

* Confirm that the listener (the children/young people, mentor teacher, parents, etc.) has understood you.
	+ Ask them if they have understood you and if they respond negatively, paraphrase or clarify what you had said.
	+ Restate your message in a different manner (either in written form or visually if it is possible).

 (Prince & Hoppe 2000, p. 15)

**Strategies to improve your listening ability**

The quality of listening can be significantly improved if pre-service educators actively engage in the conversation.

* More meaningful information can be drawn out when actively listening.
* Active listening involves six skills: paying attention, holding judgement, reflecting, clarifying, summarising and sharing.

**Pay Attention**

* Create a comfortable space and allow time so that the speaker has time to think and speak.
* Pay attention to your mind set.
	+ Be focussed on the moment, operate from a place of respect and empathy for the speaker and be ready to summarise the speaker’s ideas, feelings and concerns at the end of the message.
* Be aware of your body language.
	+ Maintain eye contact and show interest with positive body language (lean forward, nod and smile when appropriate, etc.)
* Observe and hear with careful attention.
	+ Pay attention to other person’s verbal and non-verbal behaviour, pick on important information that it offers and make sense of it.

**Hold Judgement**

* Active listening requires being open to new ideas, perspectives and new possibilities.
* Listen and pay attention without trying to argue or provide your own perspective immediately.
* Practice empathy.
	+ Put yourself in the other person’s shoes and try not to make judgement about the situation.
* Indicate your open mind.
	+ Show your genuine intention to be open-minded.
* Acknowledge your differences
	+ Experience, culture, personal background and current circumstances all contribute to the way people react in a particular situation.
	+ Communicate that you would like to understand things from the other person’s perspective.
* Be patient
	+ Do not speed the conversation along, allow for pauses and be comfortable with silence.

**Reflect**

* + Reflect on the information without agreeing or disagreeing.
	+ Use paraphrasing to confirm your understanding.
	+ Demonstrate that you are tracking with the information presented by periodically restating the speaker’s basic ideas and emphasising the facts.

**Clarify**

* + Check on any issue that is unclear.
	+ Ask open-ended questions so that the speaker can expand on their idea.
	+ Ask clarifying questions to clear any confusion (who, what, where, when, how).
	+ Ask probing questions, invite reflections and a thoughtful response.

**Summarize**

* + Briefly restate the core themes raised by the speaker.
	+ This will help the speaker see their key themes and confirms and solidifies your grasp of their point of view.

**Share**

* + As you gain a clearer understanding of the speaker, you can introduce your ideas, feelings, suggestions and address any concerns.

(Hoppe 2006, pp. 17-18)

**References**

Hoppe, MH 2006, *Active listening: improve your ability to listen and lead*, Center for Creative Leadership, USA.

Prince, D & Hoppe, MH 2000, *Communicating across cultures*, Center for Creative Leadership, USA.