Interview as a learning method

Encouragement for Changes
Comenius 1 School Project
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The framework

- Difficulties in running counseling classes
- How do we get information about different aspects (social life, jobs, training, …)
- Information is constantly changing
- At what extent do we trust the information we receive? Can we trust all the sources?
- Which are the sources the students are trusting more?
How students get information

- from the World Wide Web
- from books
- from magazines
- from families & friends
- from their teachers
- from their own experience
- by interviewing people
Interview- features to be considered

- The interview which is taken in a natural environment (e.g. at the researcher’s workplace) is more “real”
- The interview which is taken by all the students from one class can disturb the institution activity
- Students should be given the whole information which is obtained by interviewing people without any interpretation
Steps of the interview- as a method of teaching (1)

- Realizing the guide for interviewing- establishing questions with the students by using the Think-Pair-Share cooperative discussion strategy

- Identifying the people who are being interviewed - e.g.: diversity in specializations, diversity in the type of researching (theoretical/ experimental research)
Example of an interview guide
the interview for researchers

- How long have you been working in this area?
- Why did you choose this area? Did anyone (family, friends, teachers etc.) influence your choice?
- Which are the requirements for obtaining a job in the research area?
- Which are the main activities and responsibilities you have to carry out in your position?
- Did your gender influence the result of your application for this job? Please explain your answer.
- How many people are working in this institute (men and women)?
- In team-work situations do you prefer working with women or with men? Why?
- What do you like most in your profession?
Example of an interview guide
the interview for researchers

As it happens in all jobs, maybe there were/are some difficulties that you had/have to pass over. If this is the situation, please name some of these difficulties. Which were the reasons why you decided to continue your work?

- On a scale from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) please consider in which position your career is situated in your life.
- If possible, please name the most important thing for you.
- Considering your profession, which is the most important result you obtained/ acquired?
- Which should be the main reasons for the fact that in the sciences research area, sometimes men are distinguishing themselves more than women do?
- Please add any comment you would like to add.
Steps of the interview – as a method of teaching (2)

- Contacting the people who should be interviewed and fixing the date and the hour for the interview
- Identifying the pairs of students who are going to take the interview (interests and participation of the students should be taken into consideration)
- The interviews (tapes and photos)
Steps of the interview – as a method of teaching (3)

- Copying the tapes on a CD
- All the students listen to the interviews and receive a copy of the CD
- Elaborating the questions/ tasks to be answered when listening the interviews and after it
Elaborating the questions/tasks

Three levels:

- First level: they found the information for answering the questions only by listening to the interviews - low-level cognitive questions

- Second level: information for giving the answers can be found by gathering information from different interviews e.g. by working out a survey - medium level cognitive questions

- Third level: students have to transfer the information - they have to do judgments related to ... - high level cognitive questions - requires students to use higher order thinking or reasoning skills
Examples of questions/ tasks

First level

- Outline 5 aspects of the scientific research profession.
- Describe the profile of a scientific researcher.
- Write down the requirements for obtaining a job in the scientific research area.
- List the tasks the scientific researchers have to fulfill on their job.
- List the principles and the values of the scientific research profession.
Examples of questions/ task

Second level

- List the principles and the values of the scientific research profession.

- Are there equal chances for men and women in the research area? Please write the arguments for your answer.

- Mention 5 important aspects you should consider when choosing a profession. Please explain.

- Which are the steps you should take in choosing a profession?
Examples of questions/ tasks

Third level

- Please read the statements.

Nurturing a new generation of scientists is essential if we aim at improving the quality of life of European citizens and enhancing the economic competitiveness of the continent. Several initiatives have been launched to enhance the interest of young people in science. These include strengthening scientific education and careers and involving young people in scientific discovery both inside and outside formal education. Among the Commission’s initiatives to spark scientific interest among youth, the EU Young Scientists Contest rewards and celebrates Europe’s best young scientific talent.\(^1\)

Please make a brief comment (round about 250 words) about the statements above.

- Do you think that the education provided by our school is developing scientific interest among young people? Please explain your answer.

Sanders (1966) stated, "Good questions recognize the wide possibilities of thought and are built around varying forms of thinking. Good questions are directed toward learning and evaluative thinking rather than determining what has been learned in a narrow sense" (p. ix). With this in mind, teachers must be sure that they have a clear purpose for their questions rather than just determining what knowledge is known. This type of question planning results in designing questions that can expand student's knowledge and encourage them to think creatively.
Positive aspects of the method

- “real”/ authentic information – taken directly from the source
- contact with the real world
- bigger number of interviews gives opportunities for varied information
- body language, environment, social context … give opportunities for new ways of understanding
- wonderful tool to be used for counseling in choosing a career (new professions, …) or other situations when students not need general information
- not boring
- it enhances social skills
Difficulties in using the method

- Takes time for taking the interviews – the teacher should accompany students in doing the interviews
- Students have to take the interviews when the interviewed person is available
- Students that are taking interviews are advantaged
- It takes time for listening all the interviews
- The key are the questions/ tasks!!!
Students’ impressions

- It was interesting to hear speaking people with so much enthusiasm about their work, their profession, about their passion. I think it is about “being brave” (even if it should be about “being usual”) to ask yourself questions and to try to find answers at these questions - especially because it is possible that you’ll never find the answers. I really admire the lady who dared to say YES to her passion and started to study at forty years old a new domain and now she is working in the research area. The interview reinforced the idea I sustained before: loving what you are doing, you feel really fulfilled.

Raluca Tegzesiu
Students’ impressions

- The interview was very exciting for me because it was the first time when both, I took an interview and I was in the building of a chemistry college.

  I liked very much the building with all the equipment, but also the people who study/ work there.

  Dora Petrisor

- For me the interview experience was/ is important. I think it is wonderful to work with passion – and the researchers I interviewed are working with lot of passion in spite of all the difficulties they have to face with. They are using their own resources (financial and material), they sacrificed a big part of their personal life for discovering in mathematics. It’s really great!

  Horatiu Pop
Taking these interviews didn’t change my life; it wasn’t a miracle, but I had the chance to see people who have not very common workplaces, at which not everyone has access whenever he or she wants.

It was really interesting to see how somebody can talk about things, I’ve only read in physics magazines or in books, for hours, with such a passion. I realized that being a researcher is a lot more than studying obsessively a thing …. I had the occasion to view this job from another angle. Even if I don’t think I’ll be a researcher, I really enjoyed taking interviews of some walking encyclopedia – people who spread so much culture and knowledge around them. Behind the new scientific information I’ve accumulated, I discovered real character models and life lessons.

Daria Rokk