

Refocusing Knowledge Module III – Asking Questions

When talking to friends and students that go to Capilano University, a common concern people have are the food options. Whether there is not enough options, the food is too expensive, or the quality is not up to par. As a result of this, my class group decided to interview students around campus about the food options on campus. Even though this is an individual research assignment, my group all had to research the same topic. We decided that our research question would be, what students thought about the food options on campus. From there we created a set of questions that we would all ask our participants. After the questions were all figured out and I knew the general direction I wanted to take the interview, I went to the cafeteria to observe people and what they were buying. When I was at the cafeteria, I came to the conclusion that a lot more people had brought their own food vs. the people that were buying food. When I found that I had spent enough time in the cafeteria observing, I moved on to the other food/drink areas around campus. I went to the good earth cafe and found that the majority of people were ordering drinks and not food. I found the same with the people at Tim Hortons on campus. When I had gathered enough information I went back to the cafeteria to find someone to interview. I wanted to find a person that did not look too busy but that was also eating the food. After I found my interviewee and after I interviewed them I went to the library to record my findings.

I found that the interview ran very smoothly and went really well. The opened ended type of interview worked really well when it comes to this topic. The interviewee answered in really long, descriptive answers. That ended up giving me a lot of insight into what works and what does work when it comes to the food options at Capilano University. Even though the interview went really well, I found that there were a few things that did not really work. Firstly, it was very difficult to find someone to interview. Many people did not want to partake as they did not have the time or they just did not want to. Secondly, I also found that my answers were a bit too broad. As a result of this, the interviewee sometimes went on a ramble that was not important to the research. I also found that it was very difficult to keep up with what the interviewee was saying, while trying to write my notes. I often had to ask for things to be repeated. Lastly, I did not conduct the interview in the right environment. The cafeteria is very loud with lots of different things going on. This often lead to one or both of us getting distracted by what was going on in the cafeteria. The next time I conduct an interview, I will make sure to do it in a quite and calm environment.

As a new interviewer, I found that I had many different strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths I found I had was that I am very personable. This is very important as you want to make the interviewee very comfortable when they are answering the questions. You want to make them feel like the interview is a normal conversation with an old friend. Another strength I found I had was that I was very organized and had lots of questions prepared. It is important to be organized and not be shuffling through the notes looking for lost pieces of paper. Having lots of prepared questions will help the interview go a lot more smoothly and help eliminate the awkward silence. On the other side of the interview, I also had a few weaknesses. During the interview I found that I was talking too long to write down the answers and having to ask the interviewee to repeat their answers. I was also writing down all my notes by hand which also lead to the note process taking longer. Next time I will definitely take my notes on the computer, as I find it easier to type than write. Another weakness of mine was that I got off track a few times and did not bring the conversation back on track. Throughout the interview, the interviewee would slightly go off track and talk about something that was irrelevant to the topic.

Instead of bringing the interview back to the right topic, I would let the interviewee keep talking in the wrong direction. This was only my first interview, but it was interesting seeing where my strengths and weaknesses are, and how I can grow as an interviewer.

Throughout the interview a number of key issues were raised. A main issue is that there is not enough “healthy” options on campus. The cafeteria only has a few healthy options, and they are way too expensive for what you are actually getting. Lots of the time the salad bar will have rotting and molding vegetables instead of fresh ones for sale. The Good Earth snack bar has more options when it comes to eating healthier; however, many of the options are limited. There are not enough of the supplies and they often sell out very early on during the day. The interviewee also mentioned how there is not enough options for people with restricted diets such as: vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free, gluten free, and plant based. If someone that fits into these categories forgets their food at home, there is not enough options (or any options) for them to have. Another major issue with the food at school is that it is too expensive, for the quality of food you are getting, and the amount you are getting. The interviewee found that the food quality is very low, as much of the prepared food has little nutritional value. She also found that the quantity of the food, is not where it should be. These two reasons alone, stop her from eating the school food more. She said the only reason she was eating the food was because she had too. She has forgotten her lunch at home, so she needed to buy food. When I brought up the idea of having a pub or sit down restaurant on campus, she was not opposed. The interviewee said it would be a great idea to have an area that was completely separate from school, without having to travel. The food prices wouldn't be an issue as the quality of the food would be higher. She said it would be nice to have a place to sit down, talk with friends, and decompress from school.

Overall, I found that the interview went really well. I was able to gain new information on the schools food options, as well as, learn what the students are thinking when it comes to food. I will definitely think about these answers when I want to buy food at school.