Fishbowl

For supporting conversations and debates

What is needed?

Time: 1-2 hours

Participants: 20 people or more + 1 moderator

Material: 1 Question Wall + post-its

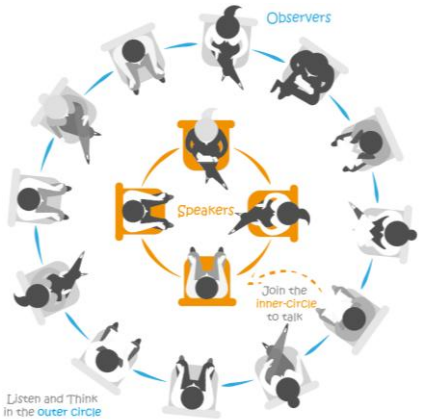
- The common topic (theme of the fishbowl) must be defined in advance and the interventions of the "fish" will be linked to this topic.
- Setting the room (see figure): chairs in the center of the room (for the fish) and as many chairs as needed around them for the other participants. **Please note that these roles are dynamic and not set.**
- Reserve a visible space for placing the feedback post-its, such as a flipchart or a large poster.
- The moderator takes care of the timekeeping.
- There are no bad questions (nor bad answers)!

The Fishbowl is an interactive and participatory method to structure a discussion and knowledge sharing session.

The objective is not to have a decision nor reach an agreement on a topic in the end of the practice but rather getting maximum participation, expertise and perspectives of all participants about a specific topic.

What for?

- **To foster discussion** among participants – Encouraging everyone to participate and allowing the entire group to take part in the conversation.
- **To address complex issues** in a group discussion by giving an in-depth picture of the topic.
- **To replace presentations** with conversation.



How to use it?

Step 1 Define a topic for discussion and explain the rules of the fishbowl: the few fish in the inner circle discuss while there should be no speeches in the outer circle. However roles are flexible and fish and observers can change places when someone wants to ask a question or add his/her input.

Step 2 The fishbowl starts: each fish has a limited predefined time to give his/her input on the topic and to have a conversation with the other fish in the inner circle. The attention of the outer circle should be focused on the conversation.

Step 3 After some time, invite people from the outer circle to replace a fish and switch places in order to intervene or ask questions. Also invite fish to step out of the inner circle once they have contributed.

As a moderator, keep track of the conversation and questions using a flipchart. It will help you debriefing at the end of the fishbowl session to consider outcomes of the discussion and to document it.

For other methods to support semi structured conversations, check out World Café!

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