

Using group work

Activity. Thinking about group work

Objectives

- To recognise the value of group work and its contribution to understanding and learning.
- To understand the need to manage group work to meet the different needs of learners.

Notes

This activity is a warm-up session that gives participants first-hand experience of the outcomes of group work. It's about testing the 'mechanics' of wordstorming or thought showers. There are two of these activities. The first is the traditional 'calling out ideas' style and the second uses a modified technique where learners write down their ideas. You're using these techniques to demonstrate to participants how well learners get involved in different kinds of group work. The activity is intended to develop participant's awareness of the need to manage both participation and learning outcomes for all learners.

Stage 1 Wordstorming (in groups)

In groups of four choose one of the following titles:

- Factors that affect the motivation of 'older' learners.
- Preparing for a teaching observation.
- Developing active learning strategies to teach theory and concepts.

Using wordstorming, generate as many ideas on the topic as you can. You'll need to nominate one member of the group to write the ideas on the flipchart.

Stage 2 Wordstorming, the modified technique

In groups of four, choose another title from the above list. Once a decision has been made, each participant should take a blank card. Then, working as individuals, list as many ideas about the topic on the card as possible.

The facilitator then collects the cards and combines the ideas onto a flipchart. Once the list has been completed and written up it will be read aloud by the facilitator. The groups re-form and the facilitator asks individuals in the groups to talk about how they felt doing each of the activities and their ideas.

Possible discussion questions for the plenary:

1. As a learner, does it feel different in the two wordstorming activities?

2. Is there any evidence of different participation rates in the two sets of wordstorming activities?

3. Did either of the activities show a stronger outcome in terms of:

- how much learners learned and understood; and/or
- feedback to the teacher or trainer on the quality of a learner's understanding and reasoning?