Fishbowl discussion

Outline by the Y Vote Project - info@yvote.eu

Introduction
A fishbowl discussion is good to generate interaction between participants and let them discuss a specific question. For this, there should be two circle of chairs, where the inner one has less chairs than the outer one. Only the people in the inner circle are allowed to speak, the outside listens. If a person from the outer circle wants to speak, she/he has to get up and ask one person from the inner circle to exchange places. Good discussion questions are open questions (Why?, How? What if?...) which could also bring a concrete outcome like a list of ideas or recommendations that can be put into practise.

Depending on the amount of participants, slightly different version can be used. Keep in mind that the bigger the group it, the less each single person can be involved in the discussion actively. Therefore, adding tools like slido may be good for bigger groups (see version 3 below)

This document contains descriptions and schedules for three different versions of a fishbowl discussion. All of them can be adapted to your needs.

- Version 1: Simple fishbowl
- Version 2: Fishbowl with speakers
- Version 2: Fishbowl with speakers and slido

Version 1: Simple fishbowl
Short description: see above

Topic and aims: Set the topic and additional aims for it e.g. Why do young people not often participate in elections? An aim could be: come up with a list of things how to tackle that issue.

People: Up to 20 participants, one moderator (If the group is very small (e.g. 10 people), a moderator might not be needed), minute taker if wanted (especially if concrete result should be generated)

Material: Chairs for all people, maybe paper and pen to take notes, room setting should allow for two chair circles

Time: 60 minutes

Schedule

Part 1: Welcome (5 minutes)

The moderator/ group leader greets the participants and explains what the discussion will be about, introducing the topic as well as the aim of the discussion (see above).

Part 2: Introducing the discussion (5 minutes)

Then, the moderator/ group leader explains how a fishbowl discussion works, as described in the introduction. Moderation can either happen with finger rules or a moderator. The moderator/ group leader invites 3 guests from the audience to start the discussion.

Part 3: The discussion (40 minutes)

The participants discuss on their own, and can join the inner circle by asking someone to switch places with them. If participants do not change to the inner circle autonomously, the moderator can also animate them to change, so that no one stays in the inner circle for more than 10-15 min. However, each participant should be allowed to stay at least long enough to say something.

Part 4: Summary (10 mins)

The moderator thanks all participants. Now, she/he wraps up the main points of the discussion.

If you had a concrete aim like collecting ideas on a list, it is nice to stress that the outcomes of the session will be published e.g. in a FB event or on your website. In this case it is also very useful to have someone take minutes during the discussion to be able to reconstruct the main points.

Version 2: Fishbowl with speakers

Short description: This format is good to have interaction between the speakers and the audience on a certain topic. As there is a speaker, it is good to have a moderator, to also jump in if the discussion drifts away from the topic and give everyone enough chance to talk. Asking questions and moderating the discussion is a challenging task for the moderator. If you do not have anyone with this experience, you might ask someone from the outside to be a moderator. Another option is to try the format with a smaller group and without speaker first, so the moderator can gain some experience.

Topic and aims: Set the topic and additional aims for it e.g. Why do young people not often participate in elections? An aim could be: come up with a list of things how to tackle that issue.

Speaker: 1-2 speakers maximum. They can be experts on a topic or stakeholders for change e.g. politicians or city administrative

People: Up to 20 participants, one moderator

Material: Chairs for all people, maybe paper and pen to take notes, water for the speakers, maybe a little gift for taking part in the discussion

Time: 90 minutes

Schedule

Part 1: Welcome (5 minutes)
The moderator greets the participants and speakers and explains what the topic of the discussion will be.

Part 2: Introduction of speakers (10 minutes)
The moderator asks the speakers to introduce themselves (e.g. 3 min per speaker).

Part 3: Starting the discussion (20 minutes)
Then, the moderator explains how a fishbowl discussion works. It will be similar as version one, except that there are extra chairs in the inner circle for the speakers. The point of the fishbowl discussion is that the speaker and the guests in the inner circle can discuss with each other and the speaker does not only answer questions. The moderator's tasks is to follow that and maybe ask a question to the whole inner circle. For that it is good to prepare a few questions beforehand, especially for the beginning - to get the discussion started. They can be also used in the middle to guide the discussion towards the expected aim or topic.

The moderator invites 3 guests from the audience to start the discussion. To make it fair that different people can join the inner circle, it is good to change after 10 - 15 minutes (a time watcher is needed). Depending on how long the session should be, 3-4 changes can be made.

Part 4: change of guests in inner circle (30 - 60 mins, adjustable)

The moderator asks the 3 guests to exchange with new people from the audience. This is also a good point to change the direction of the topic when it is in the interest of the question.

This happens repeatedly, depending on how much time is available in total.

Part 5: Summary (10 mins)

The moderator thanks all participants and guests in the inner circle. Now, she/he wraps up the main points of the discussion. The speakers can make a final 1 minute statement if that fits to the content e.g. summing up the position.

If you had a concrete aim like collecting ideas on a list, it is nice to stress that the outcomes of the session will be published e.g. on a FB event or your website. It can also be the time to sign a pledge with the speakers, if you want something specific from them.

Version 3: Fishbowl with speakers and slido

Short description: This format involves online and offline tools as well as speakers. This combination can make it difficult to handle everything, but it increases the participation of all participants. Slido is an online app to make short surveys and collect questions for speakers from the participants (find more here: sli.do). AEGEE-locals have the possibility to get access to it for an event from hr@aegee.org. Additionally, the fishbowl gives the chance to discuss these questions more in depth. Asking questions and moderating the discussion is a challenging task for the moderator. If you do not have anyone with this experience, you might ask someone from the outside to be a moderator. Another option is to try the format with a smaller group and without speaker and slido first, so the moderator can gain some experience. Administrating the questions on slido and forwarding them to the moderator needs a well working team. Checking how slido works before and discussing who has which tasks during the discussion is important.

Topic and aims: Set the topic and additional aims for it e.g. Why do young people not often participate in elections? An aim could be: come up with a list of things how to tackle that issue.

Speakers: 1-2 speakers maximum. They can be experts on a topic or stakeholders for change e.g. politicians or city administrative

People:
- Up to 50 participants
- one moderator
- 3-4 helpers taking care of technical stuff: 1-2 person admin for slido questions, 1 person managing the projector, a minute taker

Material:

- Chairs for all people: there is an outer and an inner circle. In the inner circle are 5-6 chairs (1 for moderator, 1-2 for speaker, 3 for guests from the audience)
- Maybe paper and pen to take notes
- Water for the speakers
- Maybe a little gift for the speakers for taking part in the discussion
- 2 laptops for administration
- 1 tablet (phone will do in worst case)
- Lan cable and projector

Time: 90-120 minutes

Schedule

Before the event already write the link to slido on papers and distribute it to the participants. You can also put up the code on the screen.

Part 1: Welcome (5 minutes)

The moderator greets the participants and speakers and explains what the discussion will be about.

Part 2: Introduction of the topic (15 minutes)

The moderator explains how slido works. Then the participants log in (this might need some time).

In the beginning you can make a short survey about the discussion topic including 3-5 questions. With this, you can get the opinion of people on it or their pre-knowledge and warm the up to get active and use slido.

When all participants answered the survey, the results can be shown on the screen. It is nice if the moderator reads out the results and makes short comments about them.

Part 3: Starting the discussion (20 minutes)

The moderator asks the speakers to introduce themselves shortly (e.g. 3 min per speaker).

Then, the moderator explains how a fishbowl discussion works, especially how the discussion will include the questions from slido. To get the discussion started, the moderator can ask a question to all the people in the inner circle. It should not only be a question and answer session for the speakers. The administrator of slido can see all questions submitted and has to choose which ones should be forwarded to the moderator or put on screen wisely and put them on the question line when it fits to the topic section. Especially don't choose closed questions (yes/no). During the discussion, the moderator only jumps in, if people move away from the topic or the question is

answered, so she/he can ask another one. As in the beginning the audience might need some time to write questions, it is good to prepare a few beforehand. They can be also used in the middle to guide a discussion towards the expected aim or topic.

The moderator invites 3 guests from the audience to start the discussion. To make it fair that different people can join the inner circle, it is good to change after 15 minutes (a time watcher is needed). Depending on how long the session should be, 3-4 changes can be made.

Part 4: change of guests in inner circle (30-45 mins, adjustable)

The moderator asks the 3 guests to exchange with new people from the audience. This is also a good point to change the direction of the topic when it is in the interest of the question.

This happens repeatedly, depending on how much time is available.

Part 5: Summary (10 mins)

The moderator thanks all participants and guest in the inner circle. Now, she/he wraps up the main points of the discussion. The speakers can make a final 1 minute statement if that fits.

If you had a concrete aim like collecting ideas on a list, it is nice to stress that the outcomes of the session will be published e.g. on a FB event or your website. It can also be the time to sign a pledge with the speakers, if you want something specific from them.

Now, another survey on slido can be opened to the participants. It can include questions how they liked the session in general or how they opinion changed towards the beginning.