

Fishbowl conversations are a useful technique for debating "hot topics" or sharing ideas and knowledge from a variety of perspectives. They can be used as an alternative to the traditional panel discussion or debate enabling more dynamic participation.

Fishbowl

A Fishbowl can be "open" where anyone can join the discussion or "closed" where a group of experts debate the question observed by an outer circle of observers

Preparation:

- · Appoint a facilitator and scribe
- Arrange an outer circle with easy access to three or four chairs in the inner circle
- Identify a stimulating question for discussion
- Identify and brief your inner-circle participants that will start the discussion

Tips:

- Adapt your fishbowl to ensure it is fully inclusive and everybody can take part
- Use a prop to ensure only one person speaks at a time – a toy fish works well
- Observers may also take notes

- 1. The facilitator explains the fishbowl, poses the question and invites the inner circle participants to take turns expressing their view.
- 2. In an open fishbowl those who would like to join the conversation may do so by occupying the spare chair in the inner circle. When a new person joins someone else should leave.
- 3. The scribe captures the key points raised in the discussion and presents these back at the end of the session.
- The facilitator invites others to join the conversation, manages the time and leads a short debrief about the effectiveness of the technique at the end.