



A-Z University Teaching & Learning

Buzz-Groups

Short description

Buzz groups is a didactic method that can be used as a type of brainstorming to activate students in a lecture. In pairs or groups of four, students briefly and quietly discuss a question, picture, problem, etc. Because they do this simultaneously, it creates a "buzz" in the room, though this is generally not disruptive. Exchanging in a small group lowers inhibitions to answer a question and creates a space to actively tackle a problem (by thinking and formulating).

Procedure

- Prepare the question/ task
- Announce how much time students will have
- Plan how to collect the discussion results in plenum

Didactic functions

- Introduce a new problem or topic
- Activate previous knowledge
- Animate discussion
- Lower inhibitions for answering questions in a group
- Delve deeper into the topic (see `Lernstopp`)
- Loosen up frontal instruction phases

Learning objectives

- Absorb new information and compare it with one's own previous knowledge/ideas
- Articulate and communicate one's own work results/ ideas
- Formulate knowledge gaps

Application

Questions to ask when planning:

- What do I want to know?
- Why do I want to know it?

- How do I collect the discussion results, or how do I give the students feedback? For instance, hand out colored strips of paper randomly at the beginning of class; students know that they will be asked to give an answer in front of the class; do not collect the answers, but instead give your own answer for comparison; take votes, etc. It is not advisable to call on individuals directly without advance warning!

General framework

Type of course:	any
Number of participants:	at least 6 people (works for 500 as well)
Room:	anywhere
Time:	3 min. plus feedback
Material:	present a possible visual starting point for question/discussion (picture, short quote, etc.)

Remarks

This method involves the least amount of effort for the instructors and yields the greatest activating effect for students! A variation of this is "Think-Pair-Share": Students work on a question for one minute individually (Think), discuss their answers with a partner (Pair), and then present them to the group (Share).

Literature

Bain, K. (2004). *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Harvard University Press.

Barkley, E. F., Cross, K. P., & Major, C. H. (2005). *Collaborative Learning Techniques* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Barkley, E. F. (2009). *Student Engagement Techniques*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.