CIRCLE OF VOICES

Purpose

The purpose of the activity is to train participants of a S-PLC on active listening skills and on providing the conditions for equal participation and expression of ideas within group work.

Preparation

Material
notebooks or computers or smartphones with internet connection (for students)
computer with internet connection, screen, beamer (for lecturers)

Room
group tables for 4-5 participants

Duration
about 75 minutes
- Presentation of the activity (5')
- Students form into circles of 4-5. The teacher poses a question / topic of discussion / quotation (5')
- Silent thinking time (1')
- Every student in the group expresses her / his view / interpretation, etc. (15')
- Teacher introduces the next activity and elicits expressions in order to check the understanding (10')
- Students paraphrase what other fellow students have said and check if her / his interpretation is accurate (20')
- Possible addition: 10'

Target group
student teachers, student teachers in internship, students

Setting
S-PLCs in seminar or internship

Application
beginning of the S-PLC work

Description of the Activity

Students develop strategies for active listening and for clarification of the ideas expressed by others. In addition, they are provided with a method which ensures that all members in the group have the same conditions to express their ideas:

1. Students form circles of 4-5 people. The lecturer poses a question, topic of discussion or a quotation.

2. Each participant thinks about the question / topic or quotation individually. (1-2 minutes)

3. Each individual view is introduced to the whole group without interruption of others. Students are encouraged to listen carefully to each other and take notes. (2-3 minutes)

4. The lecturer selects one individual to present his / her viewpoint which is paraphrased by the group. He/she has to be sure that the summary is correct. The lecturer elicits expressions named by the students as points of "checking understanding" and takes notes. E.g.:
   - Am I on the right track?
   - Did I get it right?
   - Is this what you meant?
   - You are shaking your head. What have I missed?
   - You don't seem happy with my summary. Did I forget anything? Did I get it wrong?
   - Would you like to add anything to my summary?

5. Start of the group discussion: Each group member paraphrases the comments / views of another student. Primary objective is an accurate understanding / paraphrasing. This has to be checked with the student concerned. Then this student explains if and how his / her own remarks relate to the interpreted ones.
6. Students are asked to reflect on the activity and on what they have learnt about communication within a group. The teacher provides them with the link to an editable (e.g. Google doc) document / digital poster (e.g. Padlet) via email / learning platform, and writes their impressions on this shared document.

Additional Information

Alternative
This activity could be done in one session or over a series of sessions.

Learn more
- Brookfield, S.D., & Preskill, S. (1999). Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Warwas, J., Schadt, C. & Wilke, C. (2020). Kommunikationsqualität in Professionellen Lerngemeinschaften und ihr Stellenwert für das professionelle Handeln der beteiligten Lehrkräfte - Eine systematische Literatursichtung. wp@ Profil 6: Berufliches Lehren und Lernen: Grundlagen, Schwerpunkte und Impulse wirtschaftspädagogischer Forschung. Digitale Festschrift für Eveline Wuttke zum 60. Geburtstag, 1-23.