Introduction to the International Classroom

Activity 5 Opportunities and challenges in the International Classroom

Activity Description

Purpose

Activity 5 is essentially a brainstorming activity.

The purpose of this activity is for participants to reflect on their prior knowledge and experience with an international classroom, thereby also wrapping up the discussions in this session and pointing towards (i) the final part of this module and (ii) the following modules in the full programme.
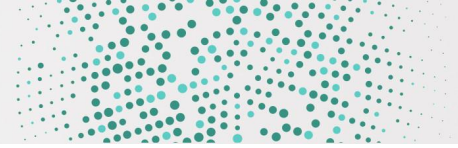
At the end of this part of the session, participants should be able to describe opportunities and challenges in the international classroom and to start reflecting on how they might assist lecturers in exploring the opportunities and meeting the challenges in their own classrooms.

If there are participants with no knowledge or experience in this field, they should be encouraged to contribute their expectations.

Procedure

- Participants are asked to reflect on two questions: *What are for you the most significant opportunities in the international classroom? What are for you the biggest challenges in the international classroom?*
- Individually, participants write the opportunities or challenges as keywords or short statements on PostIt notes. One opportunity or challenge per note.
- Participants then get up from their tables and form pairs or triads with someone from another group. Together they compare their notes; where they have similar opportunities/challenges, they scrap one or reformulate a new opportunity/challenge to cover input from both or all three of them.
- Participants then categorize the results of their brainstorming under one of the following headings:
  o Internationalised learning outcomes and course design
  o Intercultural group dynamics / Intercultural competence
  o The role of languages
  o Other
  Note that these categories reflect the content of the subsequent modules in the full programme!

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- Participants place their PostIt notes under the appropriate categories (physically, on a flip chart, white board or similar).
- All participants are invited to look at the results of the brainstorming session.
- The facilitator wraps up the session in the large group by commenting on the input to the different categories and, while doing so, pointing forward to the rest of this workshop and the following modules in the full programme.
- In particular, participants should be encouraged to consider this question: *What are the opportunities and challenges that apply to your own local context and (if relevant) to the case of the lecturer that you have brought with you?*
- The participants should take the results of this task, including their own cases, with them into the module on Feedback and Reflective Processes and understand how this can contribute to their portfolios.

The "Other" category has turned out to be very useful in earlier pilots of this module; input to this category has e.g. comprised institutional blockers to progress in this field or the need for further professional development. These comments are good conversation starters.

Note that facilitators in the following modules should be able to see the opportunities and challenges identified as a result of this brainstorming session, e.g. as clearly visible on flip charts or similar left in the room throughout the EQUiiP programme. Alternatively, they should have a photograph of the charts so that they are able to refer back to them (signposting) and, where relevant, use them as a springboard for the content of the remaining parts of the programme.
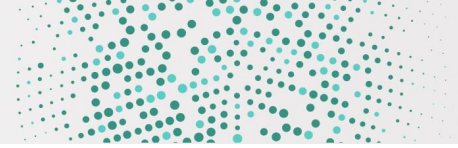
Resources needed

1. Post-It notes.
2. Flip charts, white boards or similar: one flip chart per category

Timeframe

Approx. 5 minutes for individual brainstorming and 8-10 minutes for the pair/triad activity.

Wrapping up can easily take 20 minutes or more depending on how much time is available in this session. Don't forget to leave 5 minutes for Activity 6 before the end of this session.

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If the facilitator is pressed for time at the end of this session, s/he may choose to postpone the final wrap up and pick it up after the break / at the beginning of the next session.

Possible variations

In the description above, opportunities and challenges are put together under the headings listed. This will show – and make the point – that challenges are often the flipside of opportunities (e.g. different first languages are an opportunity to draw on students' diverse cultural backgrounds and linguistic repertoires; the challenge may be that students' proficiency in the language of instruction is also very diverse). The benefit of this procedure is that it allows the facilitator to use input from participants to point towards the final parts of this workshop and the rest of the modules in the full programme.

The formation of pairs/triads has been suggested to "change gears" in the last part of an intensive 3-hour session. Alternatively, participants can compare notes in their small groups at the tables.

If there are participants with no prior knowledge and experience, they should be paired (or grouped) with more experienced colleagues if/when possible.

The facilitator can take photographs of the results of the brainstorming session (on the flips charts or whatever) and share them with participants in whatever electronic format is available to all (learning management platform, e-mail, etc.). Or participants can simply be encouraged to take their own photographs in order to refer to them during the following sessions.

Alternatively, the results of the brainstorming can be shared on a Padlet (padlet.com) or similar. This, however, prevents the facilitators from leaving the results clearly visible in the room after the end of the brainstorming session.

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