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FISHBOWL DISCUSSION ON AI IN TEACHING

GROUP

VET design

1. AT A GLANCE

Activity title	*Fishbowl Discussion on AI in Teaching*
Format	*Group*
Duration	*75 minutes*
Group size	*10-20 participants*
Challenge	*Challenge 3 — AI & Digital Tools in VET Delivery*
Setting	*Physical room with chairs arranged in two concentric circles; flipchart or whiteboard visible to outer circle*
Method / framework	*Fishbowl (Liberating Structures)*

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- A written group summary of shared positions and remaining tensions on AI in assessment
- Completed outer-circle observation sheets (worksheet, page 7)
- One personal open question per participant
- Input for your own AI use policy (Supporting Tool 2)

2. DESCRIPTION

The Fishbowl is a structured dialogue method in which a small inner circle discusses openly while the outer circle observes in silence before rotating in. It surfaces genuine disagreement and consensus in a group without the dynamics of a full plenary debate, making it particularly effective for contested topics such as AI in assessment. By the end of the session, the group will have produced a written summary capturing both shared positions and remaining tensions.

2.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Articulate a personal position on AI use in learner assessment and listen actively to other perspectives.
- Identify points of group consensus and areas of genuine disagreement.
- Contribute to a shared written summary that reflects the collective discussion.



- The power of the fishbowl lies in the discipline of silence in the outer circle — hold this firmly, especially early on.
- Avoid summarising what was said between rotations; let the next inner circle make their own reading of the discussion.
- If the group is strongly polarised, consider assigning devil's advocate roles in the second rotation to surface all positions.
- The written summary is a key output — build in time to draft it during the debrief rather than leaving it for afterwards.

ROLES IN THE FISHBOWL

INNER CIRCLE
4–5 people speak openly with each other, not to the audience.

OUTER CIRCLE
Listens in silence, takes notes and joins via the empty chair.

NOTE-TAKER
Captures key phrases, consensus and tensions on the flipchart.

3. PREPARATION

Set up the room in advance. Designate one participant as note-taker before the session begins — brief them on their role: capturing key phrases, tensions, and emerging consensus on the flipchart throughout the discussion. Write the central question on the flipchart before participants enter: "How should we handle AI in learner assessments?"

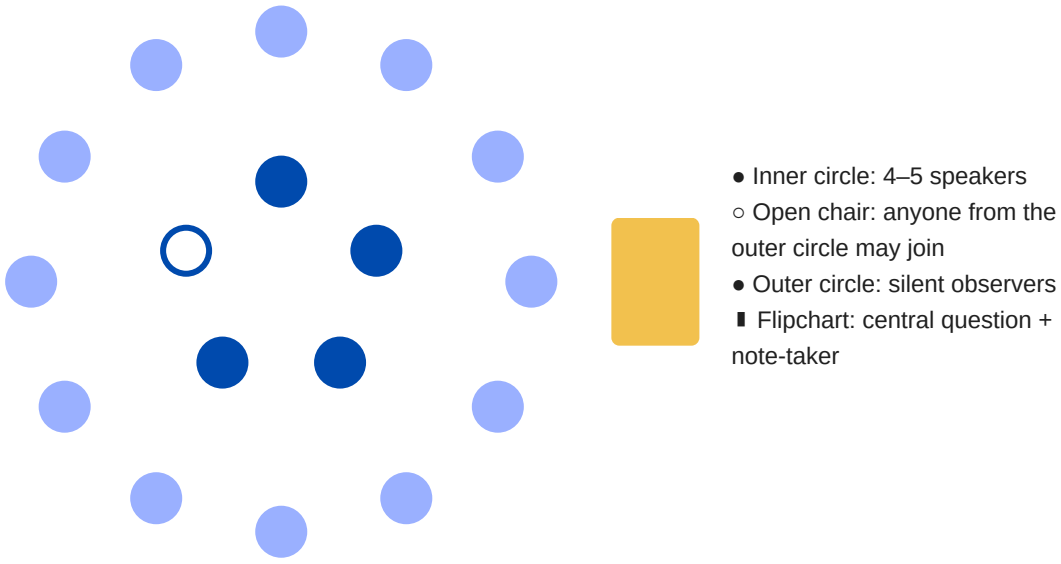
ROOM PREPARATION

Arrange chairs before participants arrive. Place 4–5 chairs in a tight inner circle facing each other. Arrange all remaining chairs in an outer circle around them. Leave one chair in the inner circle visibly empty at the start — this is the 'open' seat that outer circle participants can occupy to join the conversation. Place the flipchart where the outer circle can see it but it does not obstruct the inner circle.

3.1 MATERIALS NEEDED

- ☐ Chairs arranged in two concentric circles
- ☐ Flipchart or whiteboard and markers
- ☐ Timer (phone or visible clock)
- ☐ Post-it notes and pens for debrief step
- ☐ Paper for note-taker to draft final written summary

ROOM LAYOUT



● Inner circle: 4–5 speakers
○ Open chair: anyone from the outer circle may join
● Outer circle: silent observers
▮ Flipchart: central question + note-taker

4. STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step	Time	What the facilitator does
1	*10 min*	*Setup and framing. Welcome the group and explain the Fishbowl format: the inner circle discusses openly; the outer circle observes in silence; any outer participant may move to the empty inner seat at any time, replacing one current speaker. Write the central question visibly: "How should we handle AI in learner assessments?" Invite 4–5 volunteers (ideally varied roles: trainer, assessor, coordinator) to take the inner seats.*
2	*15 min*	*First inner circle round. The inner circle begins the discussion. Your role is minimal intervention — only step in if the conversation stalls. Prompting questions if momentum drops: "What is the difference between using AI and cheating?" / "What are we actually assessing — the learner's knowledge or their product?" / "Is it possible to write an AI-proof assessment task?" Note-taker captures key phrases and tensions on the flipchart.*
3	*15 min*	*Rotation 1. Call a 2-minute rotation pause. All inner circle participants return to the outer circle. Invite a fresh set of 4–5 participants — ideally those who observed with visible reactions or hold a distinct perspective. The new inner circle picks up from where the previous one left off. The empty seat remains available for spontaneous contributions.*
4	*15 min*	*Rotation 2 (open round). Invite the full group to self-organise. Anyone who has not yet spoken is especially encouraged. The facilitator may briefly sit in the inner circle to model open-ended questioning. Focus conversation toward synthesis: "What would a shared position look like? Where do we genuinely disagree and why?"*
5	*20 min*	*Debrief and written summary. Bring the full group together in a plenary circle. Review flipchart notes together in three parts: (1) What did we agree on? — highlight consensus points and confirm with the group; (2) Where did we genuinely disagree? — name tensions without resolving them; (3) What questions do we leave with? — each participant writes one open question on a post-it. The note-taker finalises a one-page written summary to be shared with all participants after the session.*

5. DEBRIEF QUESTIONS



- What position did you come in with, and did it shift during the conversation? What shifted it?
- What surprised you about the perspectives you heard from others?
- Where does the group have genuine consensus, and where does principled disagreement remain?
- What is one question you are leaving with that you did not have before this session?

5.1 KOLB EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

Concrete experience	*Participants take a position in the fishbowl — either speaking in the inner circle or observing structured disagreement from the outer circle.*
Reflective observation	*Participants observe how the group conversation evolved across rotations and what moved people from one position to another.*
Abstract conceptualisation	*Participants identify what the collective discussion reveals about assumptions, values, and policy principles underlying AI use in assessment.*
Active experimentation	*Participants draft or update their own AI use policy (Supporting Tool 2) based on insights and tensions surfaced in the session.*

VARIATIONS

• Larger groups (20+): run two fishbowls in parallel and compare summaries at the end.
• Online: use a video call with 4–5 cameras on (inner circle) and the rest muted; the chat replaces the open chair.
• Learner version: run the same fishbowl with VET learners on “How should AI be used in our assessments?”
• Follow-up: share the written summary and use it to draft your AI use policy (Supporting Tool 2).

6. WORKSHEET

6.1 OUTER-CIRCLE OBSERVATION SHEET

Use this sheet while you sit in the outer circle. Write down what you hear, not what you think. Bring it to the debrief: it helps the group see consensus and tensions.

👍 ARGUMENTS FOR AI IN ASSESSMENT	⚠ CONCERNS & ARGUMENTS AGAINST

🔄 **POSITION SHIFTS: Who changed their mind during the discussion? What moved them?**

✅ WE AGREE THAT...	❓ WE STILL DISAGREE ABOUT...

MY OPEN QUESTION TO TAKE AWAY

_____

_____

Did my own position change today? ☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Quite a lot ☐ Completely

Authors and main contributors:

Thomas Gkilias (MindmeUp), Konstantina Mataftsi (MindmeUp), Mohamed Sakr (Acceleras), Kristýna Strnadová (Know-House), Magdalena Hubená (Know-House), Marzena Beáta Oltean (VET Center Romania), Szabolcs Dolcsig (VET Center Romania), Thomas Blum (RegioVision GmbH Schwerin)

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AI

Parts of this document were drafted with AI. Reviewed and approved by the VETdesign consortium.

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