

Teaching Techniques

Brainstorming

Purpose

The purpose of brainstorming is to collect a number of ideas in order to solve a problem. It provides opportunities for learners to be creative and to generate different ideas about how to go about solving a specific problem. Brainstorming may also encourage learners to acquire a deeper understanding of a problem and possible solutions.

Goal

The goal is to generate as many ideas about the solution as possible and give everyone the opportunity to be heard. Ideas generated during a brainstorming session are not evaluated during the brainstorming session. At the time of the activity, there is no discussion or criticism. Evaluation of ideas occurs following the brainstorming session (Osborn, 1963, 151).

Two basic principles of a brainstorming activity are that (Osborn, 1963, 141):

1. judgment is deferred;
2. quantity is desirable.

Strengths

Brainstorming can:

- be used to introduce a new topic;
- activate learners' background knowledge on a topic;
- focus learners' attention on a new topic;
- serve as point of departure for a discussion;
- encourage learner participation;
- further free exchange and interaction between learners;
- help develop team spirit;
- be done by a group or individually.

Weaknesses / Suggestions for Improvement

Brainstorming:

- is focused on participation of learners not the ideas they generate (Timpe, 1987, 203);
- should never be considered as a substitute for instruction, discussion, problem-solving, etc.;
- works better in smaller groups (Osborn, 1963, 168).

References

- Osborn, A. F. (1963). *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem-Solving*. New York: Scribner
- Timpe, A. D. (1987). *Creativity*. New York, NY: Facts on File Publications.