Game of defining

Game of defining – is logical game with aim to clarify our thinking, to put our thoughts in argumentative line. Through this game student/participant learn how to think critically and how to research one concept in order to understand concept from different point of view.

Here you cab find a basic instructions for leading workshop for critical thinking call "Game of defining".

The leader of the workshop explains to the students the procedure of this activity. The students have to write one or a maximum of two sentences about one ethical concept (good, friendship, justice, respect etc.. You can choose the concept what you like or what you need to do with your students. Students need to formulate those sentences as a definition. Tell them to imagine that they are preparing a definition that will enter the Dictionary of ethical terms. Tell them that they need to write definition of ethical concept (justice, respect… chosen one). Give to each student one sheet of paper. Instruct them how they can write good definition. You can put shorter version of Aristotle rules of definition on board. Explain to them these roles:

- **A definition must set out the essential attributes of what is being defined.**

- **Definitions should avoid circularity.**

- **The definition must not be too wide or too narrow.** It must be applicable to everything to which the defined term applies (i.e. not leave anything out), and to nothing else (i.e. not include any things to which the defined term would not truly apply).

- **The definition must not be obscure.** The purpose of a definition is to explain the meaning of a term which may be obscure or difficult, by the use of terms that are commonly understood and with a clear meaning.

- **A definition should not be negative!**

Then give to them 10 minutes to write their definition in peace and quiet. Make sure that Everybody writes for himself.

After they finish writing definitions, tell them to fold the paper in half, then to fold the paper in half, so that it bent again and again. Then ask them to put this paper in their pockets, bags or somewhere where they don't see paper.

Game of defining

Then the second stage of workshop comes. Workshop leader asks students to think about concept who are strongly connected with main concept of workshop. Give them some time to think about it. They need to find concepts which are strongly connected with main concept. (For eg. if main concept is friendship, maybe they think that love, relationship, loyalty, faithfulness etc. are closely linked to friendship?) But let them think about it. Then ask few of them what is concept are essentially connected with main concept. Write this concept on the blackboard or somewhere. Ask another student etc. Write from 6- 10 concepts on the board. Then start discussion. Pick the first concept on the board and ask student who propose this concept to answer to you:

- Why did he/she choose this concept
- To explain what that concepts means?
- How this concept is in relation with main concept of workshop?

Of course, ask him some sub-questions (remember Socratic Dialogue). While questioning, allow other students the same so that the sub-questions asked. When you finish with questioning ask students: "Please raise hands you who think this concept is strongly connected to main concept of the workshop?" If more than 50% students raise their hands, then concept will stay on the blackboard. If this sub concept has less than 50% voters, then just arise this concept. Repeat this procedure with every concept written on the blackboard. Take tame, discuss with your students.

At the end, some of concepts will stay on the blackboard. Then ask your students did they have some new concept strongly connected, with main concept. If they have, discus with them and decide do they won to put this new concept on blackboard or not.

Third part of workshop:

Now tell your students to find paper with their definition from the beginning of the workshop. When all take out their paper ask them to think do they want to change something? Do they want to write new different definition from first one? Some of them will change their definition. Ask few of students who changed their opinion to read first and second definition. Then ask them why they change their minds? Discuss with them little bit.

little

Game of defining

At the end choose one student and asks the student to read his definition. Then, the workshop leader writes down on a visible spot (a blackboard, a flipchart, a PC connected to a LCD projector...) the definition that was made by that student. Other students now become an „editorial board, and they discuss about the definition that was written down. The leader of the workshop has to be skillful and help the students in finding both good and bad parts of the definition. After the discussion, the students editorial board and the workshop leader discard the part of the definition that they regard as unsatisfactory, and they leave the parts that they consider to be good and usable. Then ask your editorial board (all students) do they one to change something in definition. Do they want to add something important in definition? Then discuss about this new entry. And when more than half of a class are agree put this new entry in the definition. The students must not talk all at once, but they have to raise their hand if they want to say something. Then, the students that don't agree with the definition have to explain why. The workshop leader asks the students that do agree (he has to choose one of them) if those who didn't agree argued well. The student has to explain why the arguments that were used are good or not good. The workshop leader can repeat the procedure until the definition is reached, the one that approximately 75% of the students agree upon. Finally, you and your class have your definition of main concept.

The aim of this workshop is not to find a perfect definition of the concept that's being defined, but to think about the very concept that is being defined. In each part of the workshop, the students are actively engaged. The basic educational method being used in the workshop is the Socratic dialogue – questioning that what we think we know, provoking doubt, finding an answer through discussion and discarding of one theses, and affirming some other theses. Apart from the informative part, the workshop enables the students to take an introductory glimpse of our own conceptions and the relativity of knowledge in general. Through interaction and intellectual provocation, the students are introduced to the world of science that needs clarity, purity of definitions, and non-ambiguity of expression.

Task for teachers:

1. Please choose one of ethical concept and try to implement this workshop in your class/group. Then afterwards please write to us:
   a. What concept you have choose? Why?
   b. What are the first concepts on the Blackboard?
   c. What concepts stay on blackboard after discussion?

  d. Did group add more concepts after discussion?

  e. How much students changed his or her definition after discussion about strongly connected concepts?

  f. What is the final class/group definition?

  g. Are you satisfied with final process?

  h. Are you satisfied with responses o your class/group?

  i. How much time you need to implement this workshop?

  j. Is it hard to lead workshop like this?

2. Additional comments, suggestions…