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Tips for trainers: the buses game

• Introduction

I first came across the Buses Game in 1994 in a book called 'Educating for a Change' and have used it in a wide range of training situations and with a varied group of people - from aloof professionals to workers, peasant farmers and children who are not used to being acknowledged for who they are. It's an excellent way to start a workshop, both as an icebreaker and as a means of addressing important issues related to group composition (e.g. class, gender, ethnic background, first language).

• Objectives

- to get to know some things about each other;
- to have fun and relax; and,
- to get a social x-ray of all of us as a group;

• Preparation and time

- a large space, clear of furniture;
- 15 - 30 minutes, depending on the size of the group and the number of buses you identify; and,
- work with group size of between 10 and 500 people.

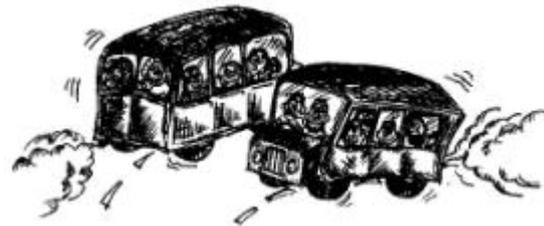
• Procedure

Ask everyone to come into a large space and explain the objectives of the game. Ask them to imagine what it's like getting on a public bus, crowded, noisy and confused. Tell them that they are going to form buses based on who they are and where they come from. Name the buses according to important features of the group that you want to highlight. I usually start with gender buses, a men's bus and a women's bus. This gives a visual representation of the gender balance of the

group and is also an easy way to get people to understand the game. Other buses can be: where you live, where you were born, work, first language (an important issue in Africa where the official workshop language is seldom the first language of participants), why they came to this workshop, hobbies, etc.

Each time the group is in a new set of buses, ask them to say something about themselves related to that bus. You can comment when necessary. Find a balance between eliciting interesting information from the group but prevent the game from going on too long. Don't forget to include yourself in the game - it's important that participants get to know you as well.

At the end of the game, summarise what you've learnt about the group and note any specific issues raised.



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NOTE

'Educating for a Change' by Rick Arnold et al. Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action, Canada, 1991