

The 'Movers and Shapers' method

The 'Movers and Shapers' method is a discussion format designed to enable the participants to discuss a specific issue, or to develop a specific scenario. For example, "picture the University in 2020", "what is the contemporary student's single greatest ICT need".

There are 3 or 4 tables with 6-10 participants at each table. A recording device can also be placed on each table, and participants may make notes on the paper tablecloths. A video recording may also be made of the proceedings.

Discussion proceeds on each table for a set period of 10 or 15 minutes (depending on numbers). At the end of the set period, participants at each table randomly select a card that designates them as a "mover" or a "shaper". The "movers" then move tables.

At the next table, the "shapers" inform the "movers" of the previous discussion, and attempt to convince them of the veracity of the arguments made. The "movers" question and challenge the "shapers", and bring new ideas from other tables. The "shapers" are free to reject or adapt to the input from the "movers", and the perspective adopted by this group of "shapers" informs the "movers". The process repeats until the "movers" have visited each table.

The advantage of the method over traditional discussion group arrangements is that the "group-think" and "loudest voice" syndromes tend to break down. Ideas are challenged, new ideas are introduced, and ideas that evolve through the process have been tested and modified under pressure. The discussion will last approximately 90 minutes in total, and food and refreshments are provided.

