

# Projects



Under this heading may be placed any activity in which learners set out to discover items for themselves although the topic which is selected for research is usually the responsibility of the trainer. However, the wise trainer will ensure that the project has the learners' full interest and co-operation.

Although it should be used in conjunction with other methods, the approach to a topic through project work is of particular value. Provided the learners see it as relevant and helpful in their own situation it will arouse interest and thus involvement. It permits them to go at their own pace and using initiative, helps develop an enquiring approach to related topics and improves subject recall.

The search may be done individually or in small groups - the latter being used frequently on training courses. The exact form of a project varies and it may occupy any period of time before, during or after the course.

Learners may be asked, for example, to ascertain particular facts about the members of their Section before coming on the course, to survey the facilities available for pursuits in their area or to carry out a follow-up activity based on a feature of the training course.

On the formal training course the use of project work emphasises the discovery method which can be translated by the participants into their own work situation. The project need not necessarily be a physical one; discoveries of the mind should not be neglected.

## THE ROLE OF THE TRAINER

1) Careful **selection and preparation** of the project. As with any approach used, trainers must assess the existing knowledge of the learners and decide the objectives of the session and the best method of achieving these. The preparation must not be neglected - the project method takes a long time, both for trainer and learner. It is crucial that learners are aware of the precise aim of the project and consider it realistic and relevant to their situation. The trainer must ensure that the project is such that it does not lead away from the desired objective nor is so demanding that it obscures other topics in the course.

2) The provision of **resources**; up-to-date reference books, adequate facilities to complete the project properly, expert guidance where appropriate, encouragement, perhaps by a tutor.

3) Guidance with **organisation** and planning. (Useful opportunity for the tutor provided they do not take over the leadership of the group.) Working in a group affords an opportunity to learn from each other and to share approaches to topics.

4) Drawing of **conclusions**. This period is a critical opportunity to gain maximum benefit from the project and, where appropriate, to share knowledge with other learners who may well have been working on related subjects. However, there is also a danger of boredom and if this is to be avoided thought must be given to the presentation methods which must be imaginative and varied - for example, exhibition of objects or a short spoken report with illustrations.

The trainers must draw out the key discoveries and underline them, and, when appropriate, a local expert can tactfully ensure that the facts are correct, illuminate particular relevant points and deal with questions. Learners are often hypersensitive to any criticism of project work.

In conclusion, the trainer should draw together the various threads and endeavour to relate the discoveries made to the learners' role. The project is not just an experience on a training course; it must be a feature which can be translated by the learners into a purposeful activity for the future.

5) Critical **analysis**. Following the project the trainer should ask:

Did it meet the agreed objectives?

How could it be improved?