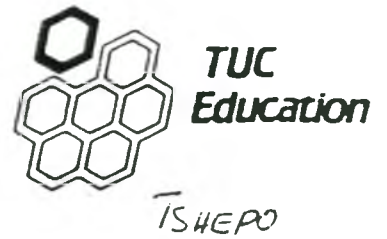


EDUCATION METHODS



A to Z
OF METHODS IN
TRADE UNION EDUCATION

EDUCATION METHODS

- Activity
- something that people do in the class to help them learn.
 - for example discuss problems or write a letter. Activities should have Aims, a clear Task, and develop Skills.
- Activity plan
- good teaching means careful preparation. Whenever you plan a session you should think about:
 - * who the session is for (target group)
 - * what the session is about (subject)
 - * aims - what will people get from the session
 - * main points you want to establish
 - * methods - how to run the session to get people involved and use their experience
 - * materials and resources - do people need handouts or documents to help them? Do you need visual aids?
- Action
- the main point of trade union education. It's what you want people to do after your session or course.
- Aims
- every part of union education must have aims - what the participants will achieve by their work. Clear, relevant aims make people motivated, so your aims should be:
 - * written down
 - * clear and simple
 - * the aims from the participant's point of view (not always the same as the tutors)
 - * realistic and practical
 - * include building of skills.
- Clear aims will help you evaluate later on.
- Attitudes
- one of the aims of union education is to develop attitudes - how people feel about issues like the role of the union, or women in the union.

- Checklist • list of the main points in clear simple language. Can be drawn up by the tutor as a handout or by participants as part of an activity.
- Course • a complete education event, made up of a number of sessions.
The course sessions could all be held one after the other, or at different times (for example, one day each week).
- Discovery work • were you ask participants to go back to their workplace during a course to find things out, consult members, try out ideas. They can then report back to the group. It's easiest to use discovery work if you have gaps between sessions - for example if your study circle meets for two hours each week.
- Discussion • where the whole class is involved in discussing an issue or problem. The person who leads the discussion has the job of:
- * keeping discussion to the point
 - * encouraging use of real examples and participants experience
 - * giving everyone the chance to get involved
 - * feeding in new ideas
 - * summarising, reinforcing, drawing conclusions.
- Try not to dominate discussions. Very often discussions are much better if participants are first given time to prepare ideas in smaller groups.
- Discussion leader • someone who leads a discussion, and organises local classes. Discussion leaders could often be local union activists - they could also be described as Study Circle Leaders.
- Evaluation • this means finding out if a course has been effective. Participants should be involved in this, and key questions include:
- * was the course relevant?
 - * were the aims achieved?
 - * what will be done as a result?

It is vital to leave time at the end of a course to discuss points like these. But evaluation should happen during a course - perhaps using a course meeting to discuss progress. This can help the tutor and make participants much more committed. It may mean that course plans have to be changed.

Follow-up • what happens after the course? What will participants do? Will the course organiser be able to offer support and information? Are there opportunities for more courses? Will there be a report of the course? How will participants keep in touch? These are all part of follow-up.

Introductions • there are two main sorts of introduction:

- * to a course. In this case participants must learn about each other and the tutor - the aims and programme for the course must be explained. It is important to set the right atmosphere - relaxed, positive, relevant, informal, easy to participate.
- * to a session. The tutor must explain what the session is about, how it links to the rest of the course, the aims of the session, the task for participants and any material they need to use. Clear instructions must be given if using **small groups**. Be clear about timing, and always ask whether everyone understands and agrees.

Jargon • people in unions and industrial relations use lots of 'jargon'- for example "Executive Council", "Arbitration", "Industrial Court". Be careful about this and encourage participants to say when they don't understand the words. Use other words where you can. It can help to use a poster to list jargon, writing down each word the first time it is used, and checking that everyone understands.

Learning by doing • by way of describing active education methods. "Learning by doing" can mean that education is more relevant, practical and effective. It means that everyone must participate in the work of the class.

- Lectures
- the tutor gives ideas and information by talking sometimes with the help of **visual aids**. Lectures can be used with large groups of people, and can cover many points in a short time. Lectures can be boring, go on too long and the method can be passive without participation. Such expert input needs to be well prepared and organised.
- Materials
- the documents you give to participants. Two main sort are:
 - * activity sheets - written instructions for participants, setting out subject, aims and task. Can be put on a poster or board.
 - * handouts - notes you prepare with key points, checklists, facts and so on.
- Participants
- the people attending a trade union course. The word implies that people are treated as adults and as equal members of the course, and that they are expected to participate fully.
- Pre-course work
- it can be very useful to ask people to do things before a course. Send them a letter if you can. Some of the things to ask could be:
 - * "think about what you want from the course"
 - * "talk to your members about the issue, and get ideas from them"
 - * "get documents which could help in the course".
- Programme
- this means the plan for a course. You need to do several things when designing a programme:
 - * decide the subject and title for the course
 - * decide on aims, target group and the level of experience of participants
 - * decide how long the course will be
 - * break down the subject into a series of

sessions, and decide the best order for these

- * consider how to run each session Where possible, write down the programme on a poster, or give participants copies. Be prepared to modify a programme during a course.

Posters

- a visual aid. You can use felt-pens or charcoal to write on them. They have a number of advantages:
 - * cost - they needn't cost much, especially if you can get reel-ends of newsprint or bits of wallpaper.
 - * carrying - they are easy to carry, especially important if you are using rooms without education facilities.
 - * participants can use them to present reports. This develops their skills.
 - * permanent - unlike a blackboard you can keep them, to refer back to later in the course, to take to the next course, or for participants to use when they report to members.

Questions

- one of the tutor's jobs is to encourage discussion. Instead of giving all the answers you encourage people to reach their own conclusions and learn from each other. This means asking the right sort of questions.
 - * ask for examples which draw on experience and encourage people to talk. "Has this happened to anyone....?" "Can anyone remember....?" "Does anyone else have this problem....?"
 - * ask questions practically, not theoretically - "How can members influence their union?", is better than "What is union democracy?"

If you ask questions that people can answer you will create good discussion.

- Recruitment
- you can't do any education unless people come to your course, so recruitment is vital.
 - * Timing - tell people in enough time so they can arrange to come.
 - * Clear subject, target group and aims • you must let people know enough about the course, so they can decide whether it is the right course for them. Be clear about the target group, or you may get the wrong people for the course.
 - * When the course is held can affect recruitment - courses in the evening could be harder for women to attend, for example.
- Reinforcement
- this means highlighting the vital points from a discussion or session.
 - * During the discussion emphasise the vital points, and refer to participants by name when you agree with a point they make. This encourages people.
 - * At the end - part of the job is to summarise the main points. Sometimes you can use a blackboard or poster to write them down.
- Reports
- reporting to members and union meetings is a vital skill. Small group work means that participants produce reports for the rest of the class, and develop this skill. Some points to consider are:
 - * appoint reporters - groups must be clear who is to report at the start. Always stress this.
 - * reports can be done in different ways - for example, with a poster, or verbally.
 - * vary the way you take reports - sometimes take the whole report from one group - other times take just one or two points and move on to another group. That way everyone contributes equally.

- Resources • documents for participants to consult during the course. For example agreements, union constitutions, copies of laws, health and safety books. In many cases, participants can be asked to bring resources themselves.
- Role-play • an activity where participants act a role - for example a member with a grievance, a union representative or a manager. They would be given certain information about the situation, for example:
- * interviewing a member about a grievance or an accident
 - * a union meeting to decide about a problem
 - * negotiations with a supervisor or manager
 - * a radio interview with a journalist.
- Role-play can build confidence. To make it work:
- * keep it fairly simple
 - * give people realistic roles and cases
 - * encourage participants not to overact.
- Room layout • how do people sit in the class?
- * in rows - this emphasises the importance of the tutor. It makes it harder for participants to talk to each other and reminds people of school.
 - * in a circle or horse-shoe, or round a big table - this makes it easier to get involved, and encourages democracy and discussion.
 - * in smaller groups - this is needed for activities based on small groups. If possible they should sit round a table.
- Be prepared to change the layout as needed. The best furniture for a class would be individual chairs and a number of medium sized tables.
- Self-reliance • an important aim of all trade union education. Participants must:
- * feel more confident.
 - * be prepared to take action.

Because of this it is very important to choose methods which are active, build confidence and develop skills. The same ideas apply to assistance from overseas to trade union movements. These must:

- * be under the control of the union movement receiving help
- * give help that is appropriate to local circumstance
- * build self-reliance, so that unions are able to carry forward union education by themselves.

Session

- one part of a course. On a day long course you might have four separate sessions. For a discussion after work a session might last 30 minutes or one hour.

Skills

- a vital part of union education is developing the skills that people in the union need. For example:

- * giving reports
- * taking written notes
- * negotiating
- * interviewing members
- * reading agreements

Active methods mean that you can develop skills at the same time as you cover your subject - for example by getting groups to write letters, give reports, use documents and discuss real problems. Whenever you think about the Aims and Task for a session, always include the skills you want to develop.

Small Groups

- active methods work best if people are asked to work in small groups. Large groups make it harder to get involved, individual working can be competitive, and undermines co-operation and people learning from each other.

When working with small groups:

- * the best size of group is 3 or 4; with a maximum of 5
- * change the groups often

- * consider the mix of groups - of experienced people, shy people, men, women and so on.
- * visit groups often to check progress. Listen, and don't interrupt unless you have to.

Study circles • unions need education systems which:

- * are cheap to run
- * don't need experts to teach
- * can be used in all parts of the country
- * can reach large numbers of members.

The Study Circle is one answer to this. It involves union activists as Study Circle Leaders, and a group of members who study and learn together. The union can give the study circle leaders some training and materials to help with the job. The methods are active and informal. The study circle can influence the subjects studied and the way the sessions are run.

Summary • a tutor or discussion leader should help to end a session by summarising and drawing conclusions. Sometimes the main points can be put on a poster. Try to link to future sessions, and emphasise the action people must take.

Target group • the people you are aiming to educate with a particular course. You need to be clear about this:

- * to decide the most appropriate subjects
- * to decide the level of difficulty
- * to publicise the course, and make sure the right "sort of people" come.

Examples of "target groups" might be:

- * rank and file members
- * more experienced officers
- * branch officers
- * chairpersons
- * full-time officers
- * executive members

- Tasks
- active learning means people working together in the classroom - learning by doing. To do this well they must be set a task. The task should be:
 - * clear, and written down
 - * relevant to the participants, and to the aims of the session
 - * manageable in the time you have
 - * encourage skills, for example reading a document, writing a letter, making a report.
- Team teaching
- means a class where two or more people work together as tutors or discussion leaders. This can be very positive, but tutors need to prepare carefully, and agree clearly on how to divide the work.
- Time-off
- participants need time-off work to come to courses during working hours and they need to be paid as well. Some agreements with employers give a specific right to paid time off for education for union representatives. Some countries have laws which oblige employers to grant time off to recognised union representatives.
- Tutor
- the teacher. Some trade unionists prefer the word "Discussion leader" or "Study Circle leader" when talking about rank and file union educators.
- Visiting speaker
- someone who is invited to a course to cover a specific subject - usually because they have some special knowledge. If you use visiting speakers:
 - * don't have too many - this can spoil continuity
 - * choose speakers who will be able to explain their ideas clearly
 - * give the speaker precise advance information about the participants, the work they will do on the course, how the speakers session fits in, how long to speak for, etc.

- * ask participants to prepare for the session by thinking about the questions and issues they want to discuss
- * evaluate the session after.

Visual aids

- anything that helps you present ideas visually. Aids can really help people to learn and remember. Examples of visual aids are:
 - * Blackboard - can be useful, but hard to carry, can be hard to read and writing is not permanent
 - * Posters - see the paragraph on posters
 - * Overhead projectors - useful for pre-prepared diagrams. Bulky and rather expensive
 - * Films and videos - can create interest and variety. Harder to use for local education work because of lack of equipment. Be sure the films you use are relevant and useful.

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