

APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL/ TRAINING METHODS

Instructional methods are only as good as they contribute to the achievement of a learning objective. In fact, it is often helpful to think of methods as roads which lead to cities (objectives) and of training materials (visuals aids, case study, write-ups, role play, descriptions) as the materials with which the roads are constructed. Participants may need to travel several different highways in order to reach a given destination. Just as there are differences in training styles, there are also differences in learning styles. People usually fall into one of four categories for preferred learning styles.

- Doing
- Thinking
- Trying
- Watching

Certain people may progress most rapidly if they discuss (doers, thinkers). Others may learn more rapidly and more significantly through lectures (thinkers, watcher). In order to reach goals, there may be several equally appealing and productive routes. When these issues arise, and at all phases of training design activity, the trainer faces the question. “What methods shall we use?”

The design is multidimensional. It involves the learning objectives, the learner needs, the availability of instructors and training materials, the urgency for training, the norms of the organization and the money available for training. But a fundamental criterion in selecting a learning method should be the appropriateness of that method to the learning objective. These methods are described as under:

Lecture: The lecture is, by definition, words spoken by the instructor. It is thus a “verbal-symbol” medium, offering a relatively passive and unstimulating experience for learners. Unless the speaker has unusual vocal and rhetorical talent, this method may not be so effective. The lecturer needs a plenty of interesting example to illustrate theory, colourful and persuasive language to enhance a well-organized pattern of ideas, and a pleasant and stimulating voice.

Interactive Lecturette, is an improvement over simple lecture where unlimited opportunities are given to the learners to interact with the trainer/facilitator. In a KVK training programmes, interactive lecturette, therefore, should be used extensively as method of training. Details of this method is dealt in a separate chapter.

Reading: Reading assignment don't do much to stimulate the sense. They merely require some concentrated seeing of words on the pages. They can, of course, efficiently expose learners to a large amount of content. Reading assignments, like the lecture, should be accompanied with some feedback activities which measures and assist the retention of learning. Unless, the group of trainees is literate, this method should not be used. Otherwise also one should avoid using this method except as supplementary to main method in the training programmes of KVK.

Demonstration: Demonstrations are merely illustrated lectures on presentations. We usually think of manipulative activities in a demonstration, through mere picture of the process, sometime replace the “model” which the demonstrator manipulates. Such pictures are appropriate for processes which can be comprehended through schematics or drawings. Demonstrations are especially useful for psychomotor objectives (Where participants are

required to perform some manual task), but can of course be used (as in “modeling”) to illustrate inter-personal skills, interviewing, communication, discipline or counseling. In the KVK training programmes, this method can be used. In order to demonstrate effectively, the facilitators should practice demonstration before actually conducting the same in the classroom.

Interactive Demonstration: Any good demonstration should be an interactive—but unfortunately there are many bad demonstrations. The difference is that interactive demonstrations allow learners/watchers to do something instead of merely observing. They have things in their hands and they move those things in a purposeful ways; they start doing so at the earliest possible moment. They move around, they ask questions, they interact. It is the most effective method of adult training. This method has been found most effective in the KVK training sessions. It is therefore necessary for the scientist of KVKs to make maximum use of this method in their training programmes. In order to have a very effective interactive demonstration in the class room or in the fields, the trainees should plan interactive demonstration well in advance and practice before the same is demonstrated in the class/field.

Field Trips: Field trips, excursions, observations, or tour may or may not be participative learning experiences. That depends upon how well instructor set up expectations and objectives before the trip takes place, and the mechanisms developed to ensure that learning happens. A major argument in favour of field trips is that they permit the learners to experience sensory impressions which could never occur in classroom or conference rooms, but which are characteristic of the environment in which the new behaviour must preserve. The trip thus assists the “generalization” process, permitting behaviours acquired in an isolated or unnatural environment to persist in a less focused “real world”. This is one of an important method which normally should be adopted in KVK training along with other methods in a long duration training programme.

Panel Discussions: Panel discussions are sometimes called colloquies; sometimes they are called symposia. Panel symposia tend to be short lectures by a variety of people rather than a long lecture by one individual. In effective panels, each speaker concentrates on a single sub topic, delivering a unique thesis (clearly different from any other panelist) and relating that thesis to the unifying objective. This model is useful specially in in-service training programme.

The problem with many panel is that they tend to be so structured that learners participation is very low. Thus the control of the content (to say nothing of thr control of the processes) rests too heavily with the panelist.

Group Discussion: Group Discussions are conversations and deliberations about a topic among two or more participants facilitated by a trainer or other discussion leader. Such discussion are most useful when there is someone in the group with some experience or knowledge about the topic being addressed. Discussion can also assist groups when they have to create new ideas or actions, do a need assessment, understand complex ideas and then make decision about them. The purpose of the discussion in these situations is to assist the group in doing what it is supposed to do. A trainer or leader serving in this function helps to set the stage, keeps the discussion moving along, gets everyone involved, and assist the group in establishing a systematic approach to its task. This method is useful in KVK training programme.

Question-Answer Panel: In more controlled question answer session, instructors announce a topic and a reading assignment, plus the key requirement : a list of questions to be brought to the session itself. The session may be the next meeting of the class; it may also be “after an hour of research and analysis”. When the time for the Q-A session arrives, the instructor calls on the learners for their questions. The answer may come from a panel of the participants. The answers may come from the instructor. But that will only prove that the instructor is smart; it will not develop much learning on the part of the learners. The answers may come from invited questions, although that also causes minimal growth in the learners. Whenever the answers come from someone other than the instructor, the instructor will need to participate only when the data given as answer are inaccurate or incomplete. Of course, instructor may be chairperson for the panel but that robs a learner of an opportunity to participate! Learners may also select a chairperson for the Q-A session. This is an effective method of training and therefore should be used more frequently in KVK.

Case Studies. Case studies have been a popular way to get involvement and to bring discussion down to a reasonable level of concreteness. In traditional case studies, participants received printed description of problem situation. The description contains sufficient detail so that learners can recommend appropriate action. The printed description must, therefore, include enough detail to enable learners to make recommendations but not so much that they are distracted from the central issues. Control of the discussion comes through (i) the amount of details provided, (ii) time limits (frequently rather stringent),(iii) the way the task is defined (often a description of desired output such as a recommendation, a decision, or the outline of an action plan) and (iv) sometimes a list of questions for the group to answer on their way to the final product. This is also an effective method of training and should be used in the KVK appropriately.

Small Group Tasks. Small group tasks (small teams of participants) result in some product, decision, or recommendation to be shared with similar group in the class. For example, case studies may be assigned to small teams rather than the entire class. Whatever the task, the small groups report their finding or present their “product” in a report to the larger group. Typical products from these small groups are reports, decision, a set of recommendations, or a pros/cons analysis of some issues. The assigned task is only limited by its relevance to the announced objective and by the learners’ perception of its usefulness in the learning process.

To increase the total participations, the trainer often divides the class into small groups. As there are fewer people in each group, individual learners are more inclined to participate at higher levels than they would or could if only one large discussion was taking place. Small group tasks need to be organized in the class room with proper guidance. Especially in the KVK training programmes, each group must have a experienced person to carry on the group to the desired objective.

Role Playing: Role playing is a training technique where, without a script, participants act out a situation in front of the rest of the group. In order to decide what they will say and do in the role play. Participants are given a situation described in detail and assigned a role to play. Role players and observers are aware of the general situation, but individual role players may be the only ones aware of the intricacies of their respective roles. The intricacies are either told to the role players individually, or written on a slip of paper for each of the role player. After the role play is completed, it is discussed by the entire group. Role play can be used to examine delicate problems, or to explore solutions and to provide insight into attitudes differing from those of participants.