

## GROUP CONTACT METHODS

### Group Discussion

Definition: It is that form of discourse which occurs when two or more persons, recognizing a common problem exchange and evaluate information and ideas, in an effort to solve that problem. Their effort may be directed towards a better understanding of the problem or towards the development of a programme of action relative to the problem. Discussion usually occurs in a face – to – face or co-acting situation, with the exchange being spoken. And when more than two people are involved, it usually occurs under the direction of a leader.

### Purposes

1. To solve a problem (decision – making).
2. To exchange information (improve understanding)
3. To motivate.
4. To plan a programme of action
5. To elect or select a person for a position etc.
6. To entertain.
7. To hear and discuss a report.
8. To form attitudes.
9. To release tensions.
10. To train individuals.

### Procedure

1. Understand and adopt the proper technique. The technique of a problem – solving group discussion consists of the following **six steps** based on the “**reflective thinking**” pattern.
  - a. Recognition of the problem as such by the group.
  - b. Definition of the problem, its situation and diagnosis.
  - c. Listing of as many solutions as possible.
  - d. Critical thinking and testing of these hypotheses to find the most appropriate and feasible solution or solutions.
  - e. Acceptance or rejection of the solution or solutions by the group.
  - f. Lastly, considering how to put the accepted solution into practice.
2. See that one of the group members takes up the role of the discussion leader (or chairman). Extension worker should avoid this role as far as possible, because in such a case, a situation is likely to develop where the group listens and the chairman does all the talking.
3. The size of group should never exceed 30 persons.

## **Advantages**

1. It is a democratic method, giving equal opportunity for every participant to have his say.
2. It appeals to the practical type of individuals.
3. It creates a high degree of interest.
4. The strength of group discussion lies in the fact that the discussants approach the problem with an open mind and suspended judgment in a spirit of enquiry.
5. It is a co-operative effort and not combative or persuasive in nature.
6. Combined and co-operative thinking (Pooling of wisdom) of several persons is likely to be superior to that of isolated individuals.
7. A small group can think together on a problem in an informal fashion and work out solutions better and faster by using this method than by following rigid parliamentary procedure. (Even parliament and legislatures recognize this when they appoint adhoc committees)
8. Develops group morale. When a group discusses a question and then comes to a decision that is “our” decision for the group and they will see that our decision is carried out. (Group action encouraged)
9. It is a scientific method (employing the reflective thinking pattern).
10. Participants need not be good speakers or debaters.
11. Continued experience with such group discussions improves one’s capacity for critical and analytical thinking.

## **Limitations**

1. Factions in villages may hinder the successful use of this method
2. The ideal discussants with self-discipline (open mind and suspended judgment) are difficult to find. So, also, it is difficult to find an ideal chairman or leader for group discussion.
3. It is not suitable for dealing with topics to which discussants are new.
4. In large groups especially, and even in small groups to some extent, it is difficult to achieve group homogeneity or cohesion.
5. The size of the group has to be limited, because the success of the method is perhaps inversely proportional to the size of group other factors being constant.
6. It is not a good method for problems of fact.
7. It is not suitable for taking decisions in times of crisis or emergency, as it is a slow process.
8. Due to its informal conversational style, the scope for orderly or coherent arrangement of ideas is limited.

## **Group meetings**

1. Avoid use of too many technical terms
2. Illustrate the ideas through visual aids
3. Be convincing
4. Avoid contradictory ideas

5. Quote authority to support the statements
6. Always remember the heterogeneous nature of audience
7. Identify all potential persons among the group and entrust him the responsibility of leading the discussions
8. Involve all people in the deliberations
9. At the end of the discussion, chart out the action steps to be taken with the involvement of people.

### **Method demonstration**

Meaning: It is a relatively short – time demonstration given before a group to show how to carry out an entirely new practice or an old practice in a better way. It is not concerned with proving the worth of a practice but **how to do** something; e.g.,: pruning grape vine, seed treatment. It is definitely not an experiment or trial but a teaching effort. A result demonstration is conducted by the farmer (demonstrator) under the supervision of the extension worker to prove that the recommended practice will work locally whereas the method demonstration is given by the extension worker himself or a trained leader for the purpose of teaching a skill to a group.

In the role of a skilled technician the extension worker or leader shows the step-by-step procedure in the operation, explaining each succeeding step as he proceeds. The learners watch the process, listen to the oral explanation, and ask questions during, or at the close of the demonstration to clear up points about which there is uncertainty. The members of the group repeat the demonstration in the presence of the others. This helps to fix the process in the minds of the audience and increases confidence in their ability to master the technique. The method demonstration is the oldest form of teaching long before language was developed, men taught their children how to hunt, how to cultivate etc., through method demonstration. In the jungle, the tiger cub learns to hunt by following and playfully mimicking the tigress.

### **Objectives or purposes**

1. To enable the people to acquire new skills.
2. To enable people to improve upon their old skills.
3. To make the learners do things more efficiently, by getting rid of defective practices.
4. To save time, labour and annoyances and to increase satisfaction of learners.
5. To give confidence to the people that a particular recommended practice is a practicable proposition in their own situation.

### **Procedure or steps to be followed**

#### **1. *Analyse the situation and determine the need***

- a) Determine that the subject-matter practice involves skills which need to be demonstrated to many people.
- b) Is the demonstration for new skills developed through research, or for old skills not being performed successfully?

- c) Is it suitable for visual presentation to a group?
- d) Can the demonstration be repeated satisfactorily by local leaders?
- e) Is the practice really important from the farmers view point?
- f) Can people afford to follow the practice?
- g) Are supplies and equipment available in sufficient quantities to permit wide- spread use of the practice?

## **2. Plan the demonstration in detail**

- a) Gather all the information about the practice. Familiarize yourself with the subject matter. Check on research findings.
- b) Talk over the problem with a few village leaders. Let the villagers help you plan the demonstration. Let them provide land and other requisites.
- c) Have a time table, depending on how much skill is required and how soon it is to be acquired.
- d) Have a job break-down or a demonstration outline giving the operations in logical steps.
- e) Identify the key points to be emphasized under each step.
- f) List out and select demonstration materials and equipment most likely to be available or readily obtainable.
- g) Arrange for diagrams, directions, and other teaching materials to be distributed.
- h) Prepare kits of special material needed by local leaders if they are to repeat the demonstration.
- i) Make sure that the work place is properly arranged: (lighting, no odours, and no distracting noises).

## **3. Rehearse the demonstration**

- a) Practice demonstration until you are thorough with all the steps and know exactly what you should say or do at each step, so that the operation can be performed in a manner to inspire confidence.
- b) Make sure steps and points will be clear from audience's point of view.
- c) Check time required, to make sure there is opportunity for audience's questions and other expected participation.

## **4. Give the demonstration**

- a) Prior publicity should have been given about the place and time.
- b) Be at the spot early to check up equipment and material.
- c) Make physical arrangements so that all participants can have a good look at the demonstration and take part in the discussion.
- d) Explain purpose, and how it is applicable to local problem.
- e) Find out what they already know about the practice.
- f) Show each operation slowly step by step, repeat where necessary.
- g) Use simple words to explain each step of the operation.
- h) Make sure the audience can see and hear clearly.
- i) Emphasise key points and tell why they are important.
- j) Solicit questions at each step before going on to next step.
- k) Give opportunity to learners to practice the skill.

- l) Distribute supplemental teaching material (bulletins, leaflets etc.) pertaining to the demonstration.
- m) Summarise steps covered in demonstration.
- n) Get the names of participants who propose to adopt the practice. This helps follow – up.
- o) If demonstration is given before local leaders who will repeat it, emphasise teaching points to be made. Explain contents of demonstration kit.

#### **5. Follow – up**

- a) Give publicity on the demonstration through press, radio, meetings etc.
- b) Arrange for reports on number of, and attendance at demonstrations given by local leaders.
- c) Make a sample check to assess the extent of use of the skill, and satisfaction derived by those attending the method demonstration.

#### **Advantages**

1. Peculiarly suited in teaching skills to many people.
2. Seeing, hearing, discussing and participating in a group stimulates interest and action.
3. The costly ‘trial and error’ procedure **is** eliminated.
4. Acquirement of skills is speeded.
5. Builds confidence of extension worker in himself, and also confidence of the people in the extension teacher, if the demonstration is performed skillfully.
6. Simple demonstrations readily lend themselves to repeated use by local leaders.
7. Introduces changes of practice at low cost.
8. Provides publicity material.

#### **Limitations**

1. Suitable only for practices involving skills
2. Needs good deal of preparation, equipment and skill on the part of extension worker.
3. May require considerable equipment to be transported to the work place.
4. Requires a certain amount of showmanship **not** possessed by some extension workers.

#### **Field trips**

It is a method in which a group of interested farmers accompanied and guided by an extension worker, goes on a tour to see and gain first-hand knowledge of improved practices in their natural setting (whether on research farms, demonstration farms, institutions or farmers fields). It is a series of field and demonstration meetings arranged in a sequence. It is very difficult to convince the farmers with oral explanation and they will not believe unless they see and interact with the farmers those who have adopted the recommended practices. It is well said that SEEING IS BELIEVING. This method satisfies and motivates the farmers who are not convinced and believe in the said concept.

## **Purposes**

1. To stimulate interest, conviction and action in respect of a specific practice, e.g., preparing rural compost. The cumulative influence of several ideal compost pits is more likely to provide such stimulation than a single illustration.
2. To impress the group about the feasibility and utility of a series of related practices, eg. proper preservation of farm yard manure, rural composting, urban composting and green manuring which are all included under the item “development of local manurial resources”.
3. To induce a spirit of healthy competition by showing the accomplishments in other villages.
4. In short, to help people to recognize problems, to develop interest, generate discussion and to promote action
5. Identify right type of participants who wish to derive benefits out of the field trip.
6. List out right type of places to be visited, which have direct relevance to the farmers' needs.
7. Arrange the visit at opportune time.
8. The audience must be prepared before the visit
9. Proper labeling must be done in the fields and the researcher/farmer must be able to explain with clarity to the visitors.
10. Arrangements must be made in advance to exhibit posters depicting the innovation on the way leading to the fields.

## **Circular letter**

1. Specific needs and interests must be highlighted
2. Thought provoking beginning is advisable
3. Printing/cyclostyling must be neat
4. Personal touch- personal references adds value to the contents
5. Single purpose-for each subject matter/ problem and separate circular letters must be prepared on a series basis.
6. Highlight the seriousness of the problem. It should answer all possible doubts.
7. Enumerate what the audience can contribute to alleviate the problem
8. Use a courteous conclusion
9. At the end of the circular, the contact address may be furnished to clarify further on the subject.