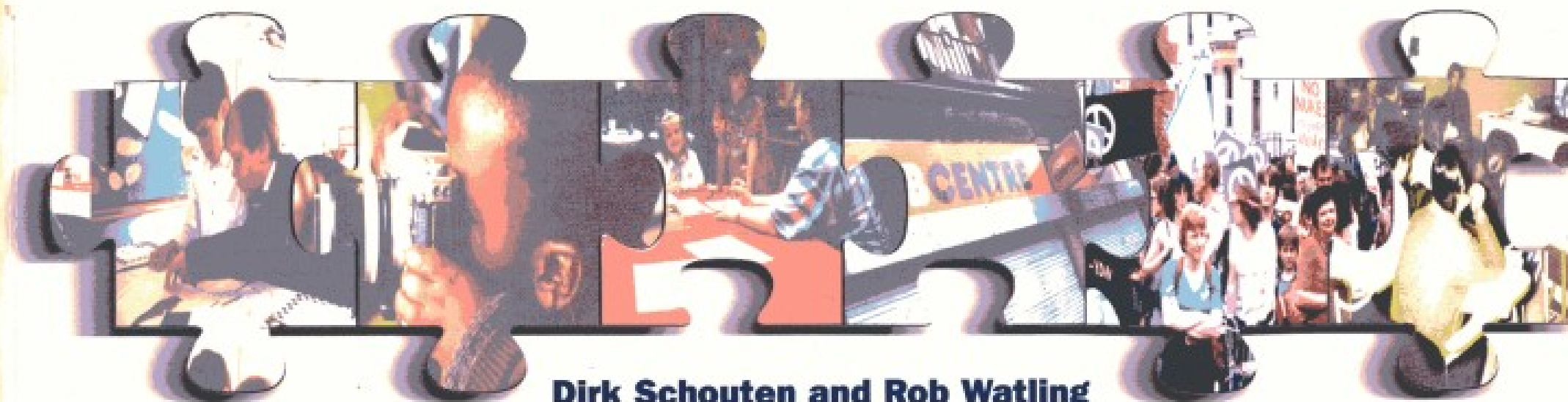


Media Action Projects:



Dirk Schouten and Rob Watling
Foreword by Len Masterman

**A Model for Integrating Video in Project-based
Education, Training and Community Development**

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Training and Community Development**

**Dirk Schouten
and
Rob Watling**

Drawings by Marike van de Klomp

To Joris, Daniel and Rosa

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FOREWORD

By Len Masterman

I was in Dirk Schouten's debt even before I had met him. In 1986 he had devoted much time and intellectual energy to translating some of my own work into Dutch and in the following year he arranged for me to teach a series of workshops at his college in Eerbeek, outside of Amsterdam. It is easy, of course, to warm to one who has worked so hard on your behalf, and not surprisingly the Dutch workshops turned out to be relaxed and convivial affairs, and Dirk Schouten the congenial host I had expected.

What I hadn't anticipated was the originality and rigour of Dirk Schouten's own teaching, particularly in that area where such qualities have been in notoriously short supply, that of practical media work. He and his colleagues had somehow managed to get young working-class adults who had been alienated from education producing photo-books, radio programmes and video-tapes about their lives which were of astonishing honesty and accomplishment. And the tapes I saw on how groups of students had gone about their work - their planning, discussions and decision making - was as good an exemplar as I had ever seen of democratic values at work in education.

In short, I returned from Holland having learned much more than I had given, and determined both to find out more about the processes which lay behind Dirk Schouten's work, and to make these available to other media teachers as quickly as possible. Accordingly I partly returned his compliment to me

by urging him to write up his work, and produce an English translation of it which I would try to disseminate. This monograph, after too long a delay, is the result of that request. It would not have been produced, however, and certainly not in its present form, without the commitment and application of Rob Watling - of whom more later.

When Schouten's manuscript arrived, even I was astonished by its detail and coherence. I had expected some original ideas and approaches, illustrated by practical examples. What I received was a comprehensive account of a twelve-stage model, which had been practically thought through and tried-and-tested over an extended period of time, and in a variety of educational settings. There was nothing in the available literature to compete with it. In its theoretical rigour and in the richness of its empirical detail it was out on its own, a genuine original.

But the very uniqueness and completeness of Schouten's model presented some problems. First of all there were difficulties of language. Schouten's English translation was excellent, but it was a translation nevertheless with rhythms and cadences unfamiliar to British ears. More importantly Schouten had been compelled to hammer out a distinctive vocabulary to describe what he was doing, and to signal significant breaks with more conventional practices. This was a language which Schouten had internalised. He used it naturally. But it presented

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some barriers to those coming to his work for the first time. Finally, Schouten's examples, taken largely from his most recent work with adult community groups, did not entirely 'fit' with the situations of those teachers whom I wished to reach, media teachers in British schools and colleges.

At which point, enter Rob Watling a British media researcher who was carrying out an international review of practical media work in 1992, and who was bowled over, as I had been, by Dirk Schouten's work. Watling travelled to Holland to gain first-hand experience of the model, and since then has collaborated with Schouten on a number of projects in Holland and Britain. He has adapted the model with a wide range of British groups in primary and secondary schools as well as in colleges and universities. Watling's achievement has been to take Schouten's original English draft and present it in a style and with examples which make it as accessible as possible to British teachers.

What a British readership will find in these pages is an account of practical media work which brings together qualities we have come to think of, during the 80s and 90s, as educational polarities: it is democratic, yet rigorous; creative, yet systematic; original, yet well-tested; reflective yet active; practical but not technical; progressive yet delivering high standards.

Media teachers won't have to adopt Dirk Schouten's model in its entirety to benefit from his work. Even his asides - on keeping technique in its place; on predicting and managing stressful situations; on the significance of research; on preparing for interviews; on avoiding the shooting of too much material - if heeded, would improve the quality of most practical work beyond recognition.

But what strikes this reader most forcibly about the work described here is its refinement of educational qualities which have been rendered almost literally foreign to us over the past ten years by our now over-centralised and over-prescribed curriculum. Anyone, of whatever political persuasion, watching the videotapes of Schouten's students at work, would attest to the democratic and educational value of the processes they are engaged in. Yet they assume the primary importance of students' own ideas, the investigative nature of real learning, the possible participation of parents, the linking of educational work with community action, a high degree of student control over their own learning, indeed a whole panoply of educational approaches which are now virtually out-of-court for British teachers. Their re-emergence, in however tentative a form, and the re-opening of a debate about the nature of a high-quality democratic education is long overdue. I hope that this monograph will not only be a fitting tribute to Dirk Schouten's work, but provide a relevant starting-point for that debate.

Len Masterman. Wirral, UK, August 1997.

INTRODUCTION

This booklet offers a systematic way of working for teachers, parents and pupils who wish to undertake practical media work (particularly video and audio-visual texts) in education, training, community development and similar settings. The model has been developed over a number of years since its conception at the Folk High School in Eerbeek, Holland, and provides an organisational structure within which groups can identify both their goals and the sub-processes for achieving them.

The book contains examples of the way the model has been used in a number of different settings. These are clearly marked in the text like this.

Key points for facilitators and group members are in boxes like this

Thanks are due to Karel Lantermans and Henk van Helvoort who laid the foundations for the model and to Hans Fröling who developed the type of documentary approach at its core. Goof van Amelsvoort has given important help with the theoretical basis of the work. It has been heavily influenced by the pedagogies of Paulo Freire and Celestine Freinet, and by the theories of Jürgen Habermas (particularly his Theory of Communicative Action). Some details of their relevance to this work can be found on the internet at:

<http://utopia.knoware.nl/users/schoutdi>

Len Masterman has been of great support to this project. Without his contributions and encouragement this English version would never have seen the light of day. Thanks are also due to all the people, parents, teachers and pupils who contributed to the model for their support. It has now been used with a wide range of groups from primary school pupils to unemployed young people and with community groups throughout Europe and in several African countries. Recently it has been used on a number of courses and research projects at the University of Nottingham, Amsterdam Polytechnic, and Erasmus University, Rotterdam. The booklet refers to several of these projects, though we have altered some of the details for the sake of anonymity and clarity.

Our experiences of using the model in such a wide range of contexts convinces us that there is something of great value at the heart of the process: students are made powerful in the classroom and come to use that power in positive and purposeful ways. In some countries there is undoubtedly a tide that is running against this sort of process. But tides change, and we remain committed to the right of people to engage with issues which they know to be important.

Dirk Schouten. Amsterdam.
Rob Watling. Nottingham. 1997

SECTION ONE

THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL.

In any media project undertaken by a group the members must reach agreement on a number of key issues: What are we going to do, and why? What do we need to know and find out? What aptitudes, abilities and contacts exist within the group? How can we identify our training needs and where do we need to go to receive the appropriate skills and information? Who are our audience, and how can we best reach them? How do we handle the material and co-ordinate the presentation? How can we edit and produce the material for the best effect? etc. The model is designed to help the group ask and answer this kind of questions at the appropriate time.

The model describes one method of organising, researching and producing practical media work. Other models would serve as well, provided they offered enough structure to organise the interaction between participants, subject-

matter, research, hardware and audience. Though the model as we describe it on the page may inevitably sound somewhat rigid and inflexible, in practice it is adaptable, open and interactive. Its constituent stages may be truncated, transposed or reversed. And it is suitable for projects taking place over the course of a few months or a few hours. See Section Five for some suggestions about how to use the model for different groups in various circumstances.

The model divides the processes of audio-visual production into twelve stages. We shall be exploring these in depth in Section Three. Not all of the stages will be required for every project. Schools and colleges coming to this sort of work for the first time might usefully study them all until they are familiar with the model and can adapt it to their own circumstances.

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The Twelve Stages of the Model

1. Deciding the topic/conducting self-research

Before a group can make a text, its members need to determine a topic, and find out how much they already know about it. In addition they might usefully carry out a group audit to discover what qualities each individual can bring to the project and what skills the group as a whole can make use of.

2. Problematizing

In this stage the group needs to examine and move beyond their common sense approach to the subject. They need to discuss the assumptions that underlie it, the apparently self-evident truths that surround it and the things that are generally taken for granted about it. This involves looking at the cultural, historical and social background of the subject and deciding which of these need to be understood or challenged during the rest of the project.

3. Choice of theme

Any chosen topic could be the subject of a thousand or more projects, each one potentially as valuable as the next. At this stage, therefore, the group has to decide on the precise focus of their project - which area of the topic they are going to concentrate on.

4. Forming a Supposition

The model requires the group to carry out a particular process whereby a supposition is developed. This helps to focus the group's work even further, and give it a particular direction, and is a crucial precursor to the research stage.

5. Research

During the research stage the group's supposition is set against other people's analyses of the subject for comparison and evaluation. At the same time the group are made aware of the sort of information they will need to collect and where it might be available.

6. Analysis

Here the material gathered during the research stage is re-examined in the terms of the supposition. This process converts the supposition into a proposition.

7. The proposition

The proposition can now be expressed as a statement, which becomes, as it were, the motto for the production.

8. Choice of target group

At this stage the group have to make their final decision about which people they wish to reach with their text.

9. Choice of medium

The best medium for reaching the target group can now be decided.

10. Choice of form

When selecting a medium it is also important to decide on the most appropriate form for the production.

11. Production

This is the actual work of producing the text. It involves the recording, collecting, analysing, arranging and editing of the material.

12. Presentation and Evaluation

No production is complete until it has been presented to the target group and they have been given a chance to give their reactions. Only when this stage is complete can the group make a final evaluation of their work.



Five Key Features of the Model

1. Groupwork

Media work is best done in groups. The project is not a simulation or an exercise. It is not 'playing'. It is a real piece of communication dealing with real issues and problems.

Media work is best done in groups, not least because it is almost impossible to produce a text of any complexity on an individual basis. Someone else will almost always be needed to hold a camera or speak into a microphone, to help with difficult decisions or to contribute vital information about content or style. Given this, the model insists on pupils working in democratic groups. In this way knowledge and power are spread more evenly among the group members and there are consequently fewer communication problems. It is more enjoyable to advocate a position with colleagues who have helped to develop it, and shared values arrived at by consensus are more powerful than individual statements of opinion. There's a danger, however, that the compromises generated by working in groups can result in projects which are grey and non-committal, and we shall discuss methods for avoiding this later.

Groups for media work should normally consist of between 4 and 10. Any fewer will be unlikely to generate sufficient consideration of the topic, may have trouble handling the amount of work required, and will be vulnerable to the problems caused by absenteeism. Although only one or two people will be involved in something like a conversation, having others around is often particularly useful, since the others will not only be learning from what is going on but can help to evaluate the process and feed this back into the group. They can make the process and feed this back into the group. They can make the procedure much easier because they can help each other.

Groups should be no larger than ten. There is then no problem if a member of the group is away, but the teacher will need to pay closer attention to ensure that everyone is involved in discussions, that they all take turns at the various tasks and that decisions are made with everyone's consent.

These guidelines mean that an average class of thirty pupils should ideally be divided into five groups of six.

2. Project work

The model operates through project work, though the term is worth considering separately, since it is loaded with confusion in the field of education. "Project" is often used to describe any sort of undertaking, but the model has a particular set of expectations, and the Dutch dictionary is surprisingly useful here:

Project: A subject which is studied by a group of pupils or students, about which a report is made, or the outcome of which is explained or shown in some way or another.

Adopting this definition of a project helps to emphasise that the work is not simply gone through and forgotten about, but that it is only finished when it has been completed and fed back to others in a defined educational context.

3. Planning

Anyone wishing to make a good media text will have to take particular care to plan it properly, and there are two major dimensions to this: planning the content and planning the time available. The model offers a framework in which both types of planning can be done, not as a guarantee of success but to ensure that all the right questions are asked at the right time. When a problem does arise (and it surely will) it is easier to see when, why and how it happened. Many difficulties can also be foreseen and avoided. These checking procedures are open to the whole group and democratically organised. here are a lot of groups in Holland who are now quite accustomed to producing material and using the model purely as a checklist. For groups like this some steps take minutes, others take months.

4. Stress-management

Practical media work is often stressful, particularly towards the end of the project. By organising the work into clear stages, however, the model lets the stress levels increase slightly during each stage but leaves it much lower during the final stages than would otherwise be the case.

5. Real and Relevant Work

The project is not a simulation or an exercise. It is not 'playing'. It is a real piece of communication dealing with real issues and problems. Its objectives are set and assessed by the pupils themselves. The model recognises that pupils have real concerns and ambitions, and seeks to make these the focus of the project.



Some Other Approaches To Audio-Visual Production

A method which results in many, and perhaps most, students sinking is too unreliable for the classroom.

Before exploring the model in detail it may be useful to summarise a number of other common approaches to media practical work in order to highlight the characteristic features of the model.

1. In at the deep end . . .

One of the most common ways of starting practical media work is simply to begin. The students have an idea. So they grab the equipment and start recording. Generally, such an approach is not underpinned by any kind of theoretical position, though it may be linked to a belief in the importance of student spontaneity or a 'sink-or-swim' approach to educational practice. It is a method which may be suitable for some artists who work alone, and are, stereotypically, driven by their inspiration and guided by their talent. But a method which results in many, and perhaps most, students sinking, is probably too unreliable for the classroom or media workshop. What's lacking, precisely, is any kind of structure which would help students to keep afloat by focusing their attention on what and who the work is for, and the kind of questions which might help them finish their text..

2. Imitations of Professional Practice:

In another approach, students may be encouraged to take an idea and develop it on paper in the form of a script, a story-

board or a proposal. Many people in the world of advertising or mainstream media use such techniques since it provides a clear structure to guide the people involved. But although it has been widely adopted, in the classroom it poses more problems than it solves for the educational context: Who has the idea and why? What constitutes a good idea and on whose terms should it be selected? Who does the drawing and writing, and who decides that at some particular moment it is complete and satisfactory, that the production can begin? Who will actually make the product? Who will decide on its ultimate purpose? Who will direct it and on what criteria should it be judged?

Approaches like this are generally inappropriate for school-based work since they rely on hierarchical structures and the division of labour into specialised jobs (Director, Camera Operator, Operator's Assistant, Secretary, etc). Such lines and divisions do not exist naturally in the classroom and if they are imposed artificially lead to unsatisfactory results and frustration amongst the pupils.

3. Technique-led practice

Another common approach is to have students begin by "mastering" the necessary techniques. In the words of a popular Dutch text-book "Handling the cassette-recorder and feeling confident with it is a prerequisite of being able to work with it". Students are given an explanation of how to handle the

microphone and the functions of the most important buttons on the recorder. Then they are given an exercise in which they record their own voices. After ten hours of similar exercises, they spend a further hour producing a story using just sound effects, and fifteen minutes recording another narrative sequence. When students have proceeded through the book, the authors suggest that they may wish to go on to record a radio play.

Much of this sounds sensible. Students and teachers are offered guidance on what they should do at every stage, how the available time may be best allocated, and what the production should consist of. Beginning with 'technique', however, has a number of consequences:

- It makes technique seem more important than it really is.
- It militates against students getting down to serious work by postponing the consideration of content.
- It makes superficially useful exercises a goal in themselves, carried out in isolation from any purposeful context.

It is, in short, very different from the many real technical concerns and problems a group will have if they are not making conventional productions. Commonly, in a technique-led course, the equipment itself can become a lightning conductor for the group's self-criticism. When a project fails the group can easily blame the equipment or the technical problems they failed to overcome, when in fact the real problem may have lain in a lack of developed objectives.

Such an approach gives technique an importance it scarcely deserves

During one radio drama project in Amstelveen (a suburb of Amsterdam) the class of eleven- and twelve-year-olds was divided into three. One group began by writing their own radio play, a second group converted a stage play into a radio play, and a third took fairy story as their source material. The plays were rehearsed, performed and recorded in just ten hours and this was only possible because the groups had spent so much time and energy on developing the content. Their search for suitable sound effects, for example, could be done in a directly-appropriate way with full consideration of the context in which they were to be used. This is much more appropriate than the exercise suggested by the technique-led approach. After all, any one can learn how to imitate a jet plane by recording a vacuum cleaner, but whether it sounds 'real' or not depends on its context. A low passing jet fighter in a story about Bosnia will sound very different from one in a fantasy about Harriet the Wonder Pilot.

Eventually all three of the Amstelveen plays were transmitted by the local radio station. Some of the students went to the station with their parents where they were interviewed about their work. In less time than in a technical exercise, this group had conceived, written, produced and broadcast three complete radio dramas. Concentration on technique would have killed these possibilities.

This book contains examples of the way the model has been used in a number of different settings. They are marked in the text like this. Some longer accounts can be found in section eight.

Our advice is to start with content, and to keep technique off the agenda for as long as possible.

On Technique

It is too easy, as we have seen, to start your project with technique. After all you only know a little bit about it and you are sure you are going to need it, so it is obvious that you should start by looking at the equipment. Before you know where you are you have started making some trial recordings, tried out the microphone ("Testing, one, two, three") and practised a few zooms and pans with the camera. Playing around with techniques can consume quite a lot of time, time that might more usefully be spent on content.

Our advice is to start with content, and to keep technique off the agenda for as long as possible. Start instead with talking, with discussion. The only aid necessary here is a blackboard (not pencil and paper) because it is accessible to everyone. It is common property. Everyone may write on it, everyone can read from it.

The model continually makes room for deliberations in the early stages. Again and again it has been shown that talking about content and discussing the way the subject should develop make it much easier in the later stages to select and use the most appropriate techniques for the job in hand. In Holland there are seldom complaints from adults or children about the cumbersome equipment (Camera of 2kg, U-Matic recorder of 10kg, cables, headphones and microphone). Groups only start to use the equipment when they know what they want to make with it, when the progress of the project calls for it, and when

they are ready to use the equipment on their terms, not on its own.

This actually makes explanations about the equipment a much simpler task, and is much better than learning the technique and then adapting the content to the technical possibilities of the equipment. In the model, technical questions do arise, but always out of a specific context:

A group wanted to make a recording in a very small house, but the camera could not see enough of the room. Then (and only then) the group discussed the possibilities of a wide-angle lens. They searched one out and made the recording they wanted.

Finally in this section, it is worth saying that groups are seldom advised to use a tripod. Experience has shown that they are likely to set it up in one place, stick the camera on it and never move it till the end of the recording. Everything would be recorded from one viewpoint and the group would be unlikely to move it around and use it as a good research tool. In the model it is important for the group to be able to get close (physically and culturally) to the people they are working with. It's important too, for the camera operator not to feel isolated or to become intimidating, but to be a participant in the discussions. Hence the need for flexible approaches to the use of the camera.

SECTION TWO

HOW TO BEGIN USING THE MODEL.

In the first meeting the class will need to be given an outline of the model they are going to be working with, and to understand the importance of the model for the satisfactory completion of the project. They need to acknowledge that they will all be working towards the production of a text through a number of steps and that the time they have available for each step is strictly limited.

Experience has shown that fixing a time by which the project must be finished is particularly important, since it helps curtail discussions and stops the class straying into entertaining but irrelevant areas. It also makes it more difficult for people to avoid unpopular tasks since the schedule makes them more pressing. The class will need to decide when the project must be finished, how much time is available, and how to structure their work and time to achieve everything by that date. In this way they will know that the text will be completed by a given date and that all problems must be overcome within that timescale. They will learn that the content of the text is their choice and their responsibility (though if the school or anyone else is to have a say it must be made clear at this point). The teacher will be responsible for overseeing the planning and will only intervene when necessary. Everyone should be quite clear about these points and the division of responsibilities.

At the end of the introductory session everyone is asked to think of a possible theme for their project and to bring it to the next session. People then know that they have time to give the

matter some thought and can raise questions if there is anything they do not understand.

In many cases the class will already be divided into work-groups, but the teacher may choose to rearrange these for practical media work. This can be done in a number of ways but probably the best basis is a shared interest in the subject the students are going to explore. This may be as simple as letting them choose to work with their friends, but the process will often need more guidance than this and the teacher will need to steer the whole class carefully through the decisions, making sure that everyone gets an equal chance to express their point of view and that nobody feels forced into a group they cannot work with. This helps to ensure that they are committed to the project and that they will work more effectively towards its conclusion. As with other stages of the model, our suggestions for this process can be adapted for different contexts, but we have found the following scheme quite constructive whenever a class does need help in forming groups. It can be a time-consuming activity, but there are usually ways in which teachers or facilitators can adjust the process.

The second session can plunge straight into its main objective of sifting through the themes brought by the class. These should be written out on the board and can ultimately form the basis upon which groups may be formed. It is important to register at this stage that themes should be expressed as an opinion.

Everyone should be quite clear about the division of responsibilities.

Key points for teachers and students appear throughout the book in boxes like this

When someone suggests “I want to do something on Schiphol Airport” or “Oil terminals” it is not sufficient. The teacher should question them until they are able to express something like “I think the jets are flying dangerously low at the airport” or “They should move the terminal further away from the fishing beds”. Everyone is encouraged to provide a theme, even if this takes some time.

When all the themes have been collected it is time for a strategic pause (a coffee break, perhaps) while people discuss the themes, exchange opinions, form coalitions, etc. without the teacher controlling the process. There are then several rounds of considering the themes. In the first round everyone is asked to point out which theme they are interested in (but they are not allowed to choose their own). Everyone is told that this is not a final choice, but a way of finding out what discussions have gone on during the break. The teacher puts a mark against any that are mentioned, but removes them when everyone has stated their interests. It is just a preliminary way of gauging people's interests.

In the second round the teacher asks if anyone can spot any similarities between themes. These are marked and the original proposers are asked if they agree with the links being suggested. By now certain themes will be emerging as clear favourites but the others should not be wiped off as they will be useful later. In the third round people are again asked to express

a favourite but this time they can mention their own theme if they wish. Gradually the size and number of groups will become clear and while teachers will often help determine this their involvement should be quite open.

At this point people should be given some time to themselves and it is here that the first stage of the model can really be seen to begin (even if the process of self-research might already be said to have started with the raising of themes). This is another good opportunity for a short 'strategic break' - even one or two minutes can be enough. It gives people time to talk among themselves, to make appointments, to do things a teacher does not need to see or hear. After that break, the class reforms and the teacher asks everyone if they know which group they wish to belong to.

In all classrooms, however, there will be limits to the number of groups that can be formed. These are set by:

- The amount of equipment available.
- The size of the groups themselves. It is generally better to have all the working groups roughly the same size.

It is perfectly understandable that people want to change groups at this moment – it can even be encouraged. This can take a whole session in a typical Dutch workshop, but the time is not wasted if everyone feels they have had a fair choice of theme and that they have not been forced into a group they will resent. It can be condensed if necessary but there are many ways to form subgroups and as long as everybody cooperates and sees that the process is not endless, people will be happy to go through this process.

SECTION THREE

THE TWELVE STAGES OF THE MODEL

Stage One. Self Research.

During self-research each group that is to make a text examines all the knowledge and qualities that are available amongst its members. They are given the chance to explore, with the help of the teacher, a range of things: what they already know about the subject; their ideas, their opinions and any experiences they have of it from their own lives; how it might affect other people, and so on. This is also a good moment to consider the skills and personal qualities that they can bring to the project. These might include the ability to scan through written material quickly, or managing the group's timekeeping, making sure that coffee is always on tap, keeping good records, or making clear appointments. Many such processes are vital to the trouble-free operation of a project and their importance should not be underestimated.

The whole self-research process is designed to clarify the knowledge and experiences already in the group and those which it will have to look for elsewhere.

At this stage it is important to broaden the discussion as much as possible, to avoid the common practice of working on a topic given by the teacher or on the first thing that comes up in the conversation.

A group of 18-20 year-olds were exploring issues around the general theme of "the environment". As they were discussing their own experiences one of them mentioned that he had been to a nearby conservation village. He had often wondered what it would be like to live there. The rest of the group asked him to say more about the village and gradually the conversation turned to the other picturesque streets and houses in the immediate neighbourhood where they all lived. One of the group lived in such a house and started to explain how nice it was but how rude all the tourists were. "Oh yes," said another, "all that staring seems horrible to me." In a conversation like this the group were exploring a number of issues in a non-committal way, with each member able to make their own contribution (however small and apparently insignificant).

It is particularly important that all the different opinions and concerns of individual members are brought out into the open at this stage.

It is particularly important that all the different opinions and concerns of individual members are brought out into the open at this stage. If conflicts are not sorted out now they will certainly rise to the surface later on and this will have a detrimental affect on the project which may not even be

Self-research aims to provide the group with a clear picture of themselves in relation to their experiences.

completed, especially if the conflicts erupt during the production stage. When the discussion is complete the teacher should check that everyone is happy with the make-up of the groups. If not (and this has never happened in Holland) there is a problem with the way the groups have been formed and it may have to be done again from scratch. This should be presented as a problem for all the sub-groups, for if one group is not settled none of the others will be able to start work.

The most common problem at this stage is in classes that are already used to working together, and who can easily consider self research to be unnecessary. In such cases it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that members really do know enough about each other and the subject. They should be encouraged to consider carefully, and for themselves, how important all this information is going to be for them.

A teacher can only advise on this stage when she has an overview of the group's discussion. The best way for her to help the group is by summarising their position to them from time to time. By asking the group if her impressions are correct she prevents the group feeling that she is telling them to change their minds. She will also avoid the temptation to raise her own questions about the subject and start to interfere in their deliberations. Her role is not to guide or to shape the discussion but to make sure it is comprehensible. If the group agree with her summary things are going well. If there are still uncertainties, if they cannot describe their discussion clearly, if they rely on the teacher to say too much or if the group start debating about the teacher's summary the stage is not yet complete.

This process of summarising the discussion and checking it with the group may need to be done several times. This is an effective way of ensuring that the inventory is as clear and precise as possible. The group will be able to decide for themselves how much time to devote to this stage and will gradually move towards a consensus. It is important that this is done with the support, not the leadership of the teacher since she, after all, is the only one who is working from outside of the group, and her repeated process of summarising the group's progress helps to ensure that they are all working together to the formation of their perspective. By avoiding value judgements she will prevent herself being seen as partisan. If she is thought to be taking sides she will cease to be a proper facilitator. This is particularly hard but the important thing at the moment is for the group to decide what they want and why they want it. There will be opportunities to evaluate their decision later on.

Stage Two. Problematizing.

The intention of the stage we call problematizing is to challenge the entire theme, and everyone's common-sense position towards it. No elements should be allowed to remain self-evident for all relevant historical, geographic, cultural and social considerations are now taken into account. On the one hand the group explores the way in which the theme has been addressed by people in other times, surroundings and circumstances. They also explore their own personal relationship to the theme. This opens up the whole discussion to expose and to control contradictions within the group and between the group and those outsiders who nevertheless have

an interest in it. It is an important stage in preparing pupils for the complexities of the project since it gives an insight into the wider ramifications of their work and helps to place it in a more-developed context. It is important to realise however that it is the themes that should be brought under pressure, not the individual members of the group. Nothing will be gained from making people feel small or misguided, but the whole group will benefit from the feeling that the theme is now understood in a more sophisticated way.

Groups that have no clear-cut theme at this stage are in a different position but they can still benefit from these discussions. In particular they will start to see who else is connected with their plans, and whether different perspectives exist around it.

We have described the introduction, the self-research and the problematizing as separate stages but in practice they will often be combined. It is in the nature of group discussion that when one person makes a contribution another will immediately comment on it, and (in a way) problematize it. Our intention is mainly to explain the purposes of each stage and to suggest that teachers ensure that all three are covered adequately. The introduction serves to get the whole class working in the same direction and to set very broad themes. Self-research aims to provide the group with a clear picture of themselves in relation to their experiences. Problematization is designed to show how those experiences are culturally, historically or geographically specific.

Four University students working on the role of black women in the music industry had begun with the notion that things had changed for the better in recent years. Their early discussions were full of examples of successful black artists and they began to paint quite a hopeful picture. During problematization, however, they questioned the nature of this success and realised that they would need to ask some more demanding questions during their research. Had the women needed to change their music to get on in the business? And had they been subject to any other sorts of obstacles, either because of their gender or because of their musical style? The group decided they would need to find some examples of artists who had not been successful to get a wider perspective on their theme. Eventually they were able to use some of these examples when interviewing an executive from a record company.

Problematization is designed to show how those experiences are culturally, historically or geographically specific.

All three activities are important precursors of the next one - choice of theme. If that is to be successful it will have to be well-balanced and must be based on common interests. For this reason the teacher should encourage the group to spend the problematizing stage concentrating on the similarities between them. Concentrating on differences often creates an atmosphere in which members spend too much time trying to convince each other - a risky business which takes too long, fragments the group and rarely results in a consensus. The teacher should also be ensuring that all the group get the chance to contribute and if she sees that a particular viewpoint is being excluded she should ask why. This is better than making a critical comment, or telling the group to listen, for it avoids making a judgement

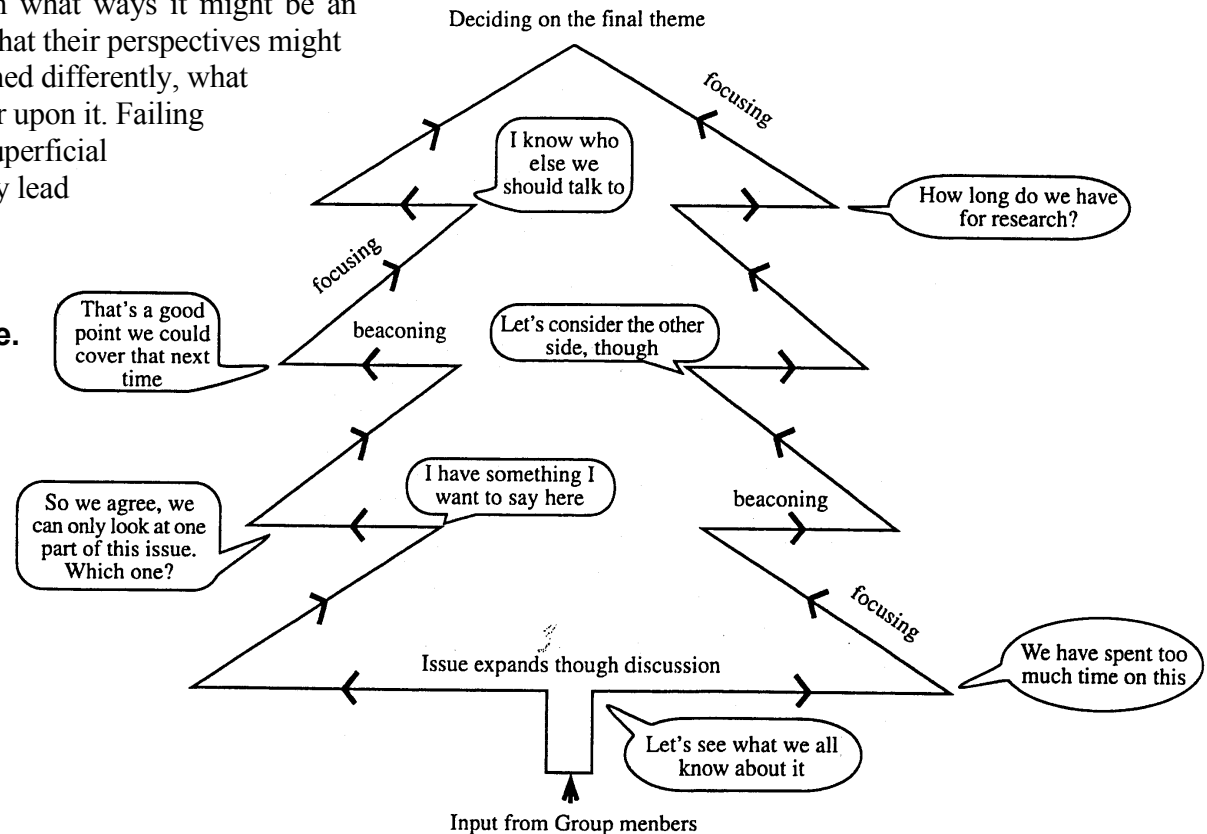
on the group. The minute that happens she will start to impact on the content-based decisions of the group, will be seen by them as partisan, as favouring one or more members. She will claim a steering position for herself which can give the impression that her contribution is more important than theirs. If, however, she asks the group why they have excluded a particular option she gives them the space to have their own argument and to come to their own conclusions.

Again we should stress that it is important for the group to look beyond their own experiences and opinions at this stage. They should be considering why and in what ways it might be an important issue for other people, what their perspectives might be, how the question might be framed differently, what other light might be brought to bear upon it. Failing to do this, or getting tied up with superficial business at this stage will inevitably lead to problems later.

Stage Three. Choice of Theme.

In choosing a theme the group will make their final selection from the results of all their discussions. In fact if a group has carried out the previous stages in sufficient detail their options will already be clear to them.

Beaconing and focussing are vital strategies in choosing a theme, for they help a group to avoid the two biggest pitfalls of this sort of work: being too ambitious, and being too vague. They need to beacon out their field of concern (“This far and no further”); focus in on the salient features (“We want to explore these parts especially”); beacon these out more precisely (“The issues seem to us to relate in these various ways”); focus even more closely on the scale of the issue (We're especially interested in this aspect”); beacon out this concern, and so on. During this stage the scope of the project broadens and narrows like the outline of a christmas tree:



One group wished to make a text on unemployment and had generated a number of options: should they concentrate on its causes, its effects, or even possible solutions? Even when they chose to look at solutions the information generated by the self-research and problematizing left them with topics as diverse as: voluntary work, projects for unemployed people, temporary workschemes, training courses, social and cultural activities, jobsharing, self-employment, and so on. Through a continuous process of "beaconing" and "focusing" they were finally able to select one aspect of their theme: the role of the young, small-scale entrepreneur.

Any group making a text on an important subject like this needs to be encouraged to keep limiting itself as much as possible. This is not the same as taking snap decisions, for a group that is enthusiastic is likely to come up with an idea very quickly and never really explore the subject in depth. They may lose themselves in discussions about technicalities rather than concentrating on the problem they want to pose. All too often this delays the consideration of content and, when it finally has to be discussed conflicts of opinion will surface and take the edge off the group's motivation. But the main problem in this stage is of insufficient beaconing and focussing. There is a tendency for groups to want to make "the" programme once and for all. They imagine it as the ultimate, all-embracing statement on the issue rather than as a contribution to it and an exploration of a particular part.

Beaconing and focusing are difficult tasks for groups, particularly for those which are keenly committed to the subject

they are exploring. Often they will feel that enough compromises have already been made in the collecting and ordering of information, so individual group members will often attempt to keep the subject as broad as possible at this stage so that their own particular interests will not be ruled out. But broad themes will prove unmanageable, for it will be difficult for everyone to keep an overview on the project or to move on to the next stage (forming a Supposition). The processes of beaconing and focusing will lead to choices that some people find difficult to accept. But that is the nature of good group work, and, as long as they have had a chance to discuss all the alternatives, groups can usually pull together in a common purpose.

As in the previous stages, the teacher's main task here is to summarise the group's discussions from time to time and ask if her impressions are correct. She must also ensure that the group has done enough beaconing and focusing, that they have considered a wide-enough range of options and considered them in sufficient detail. In this way the group will be able to make their own choices and take responsibility for them. If it is possible each group should be allocated a separate room as soon as they have formed. If this is not feasible provision must be made so that they do not bother each other. The teacher goes from one group to the other, listens, asks questions, etc.

One remark from a pupil can throw the subject so wide that it becomes difficult to comprehend, and the teacher should be there to help them narrow their focus down again. This is not always easy, but is less hard for a teacher who has maintained a neutral position through all the discussions. This is not to suggest that teachers have no influence in schools, far from it.

The teacher's main task here is to summarise the group's discussions from time to time and ask if her impressions are correct.

They are firmly situated in certain discourses, working in particular institutions with particular rules and regulations that may need to be negotiated.. This is why they must make their official position clear early on by explaining any legal or institutional guidelines for the projects. Sexist, racist or fascist projects should be ruled out, for example (though we have never known this to be a problem - perhaps this democratic way of working is not conducive to such ideologies).

There are some other general criteria which mark out a good issue. Of course these criteria will differ according to the particular circumstances of the group, the subject they are exploring, the medium they are going to use, and so on. But in general it is worth judging the issue against the points in the box on page 25.

By this stage most of the preparatory work is complete, and it is a useful moment to take stock of the projects you are working with. If you have more than one group get them to report to each other about the discussions they have had and the decisions they have made.

Stage Four. Developing a Supposition.

By now the group should be aware of their collective knowledge and abilities. They should also know how each of them is involved in the theme and what they think about the possible solutions to their problem. What is less clear is how others outside the group might be involved in its concerns. Discovering this is one point of formulating the Supposition.

A Supposition is the group's first attempt to define the issue they are going to explore. It implies an early step, a working premise which later work can build on. Formulating it is the last activity that can be done at the classroom table. The Supposition must reflect the central notions which have already been raised which means that it should ideally indicate:

- **the personal ideas and experiences of the group**
- **the chosen issue**
- **the significant parties involved**
- **the solutions that the group have considered**

1. It should be realistic for the particular group. Facilitators will need to use their own judgement and experience in this matter but groups will often come up with themes which are too ambitious, too general, or too technically-demanding. The time-scale will need to be borne in mind, the levels of experience that the group have (not just their technical competence but whether they are likely to be good at arranging access to people and places), and the sorts of resources they have available. Another common problem is that groups want to make "the" programme: one which will cover the whole subject and solve all the associated problems once and for all. It is sometimes difficult to persuade them that they would be wise to lower their sights a little. Tackling these things and overcoming obstacles are important parts of the model, but the facilitator can advise at this stage what sort of expectations can be achieved.

2. The issue should be directly relevant to the pupils. This can be difficult, especially with younger children, but it underlines the importance of the self-research process where they will have discussed their own experiences and backgrounds. If a group decides to study Downe's Syndrome, for example, it may be that they have no direct knowledge of it and may tend towards a superficial or even a flippant approach. On the other hand, if one member of the group does have some first-hand experience (perhaps through a relative with Down's) this may be sufficient as long as the group realise how dependant they will be on that one person.

3. The group must be able to research the theme themselves. Research is a vital part of this sort of educational process and must be carried out by the pupils with their own eyes and ears. This limits most projects to the immediate community and to resources like local people, libraries, museums and archives. Going out and finding your way through the world must be part of this work.

4. The best themes are those which are clear about the differences they will make to the group and their community. Research will always result in knowledge and insight, but one of the functions of this sort of educational project is to apply that knowledge and insight or to show them to other people in an attempt to broaden the influence of the project. This might seem a tough criteria for school students to aspire to but the changes do not have to be momentous. Maybe the audience (either the rest of the class or a wider group of people) will be made more aware of something in their neighbourhood, maybe the people who help with the project will come to know more about the school or centre that made it, maybe people will respond to an appeal in the text and start to move towards a larger change. In any case it is much more rewarding than making material that will just sit on a shelf.

There are some general criteria which mark out a good issue. It is worth judging the group's suggestions against this list.

Again a couple of examples might clarify what we mean.

A group of young Turkish workers had noticed during the first three stages of their project (self research, problematization and choosing a theme) that many of their friends at work had difficulties with the Dutch language. These friends seemed to be aware of the language courses that their employer was offering but were reluctant to use them, even though they knew that the ability to speak Dutch was important in many different areas of everyday life.

Some of the group could speak Dutch well, others still found it difficult, and drawing on this fact was useful to them, for their early discussions led them to note a curious paradox: that speaking Dutch clearly increases people's opportunities in society, but few people take advantage of the courses on offer in the factory. This formed the basis for their Supposition which was eventually formulated as follows: "Overseas workers do not attend the factory's language course because by doing so they would draw the managers' attention to the fact that they cannot speak Dutch. They should not be made to think that admitting their weakness will decrease their chances in the factory."

In this formulation we can find all the essential elements of a good Supposition. First there is evidence of the group's own ideas and experiences ("Overseas workers do not attend language courses..."). The use of the word "because" shows that the group have a notion of the main point of the problem.

All the principal parties are included (the Turks, potential employers, course organisers). A solution is implied: that the usefulness of the course should be made clearer to the employees and that their worries should be recognised by the management.

A different group (this time in England) were exploring the problems of a centre for young homeless people. The first draft of their Supposition read:

"The Employment advisors only have weak links with the housing team at the Centre. If there was more collaboration between the two teams the whole philosophy of resettlement followed by work or training could become more effective."

Again we can see evidence of the group's personal experience (they know what is going on in the centre), they make the central issues quite clear (the poor links between the two teams and the quality of the services offered to the young people), all the significant parties are identified and there is a proposed solution (better cooperation between the teams).

It is not always easy to identify these elements so clearly, especially as some of them may remain implicit but the four point list is always useful when asking a group about their Supposition, to see if all four elements are in it. If they are not all there, ask them about it and if necessary, add or change some words.

The quality of the Supposition has very little to do with the truth of its statement. Its value lies in the way it is formulated and the way it can be used to start a discussion with the people they are going to visit. It should be designed to open, rather than to close discussion of the issue and through this process to encourage the people they meet to take up their own positions. Otherwise the research runs the risk of producing superficial information which is too general to be of much use.

During this stage the teacher should ensure that the group are expressing what they think about the subject, rather than just describing it. The English group above, for example, could easily have used just their first sentence "The Employment advisors only have weak links with the housing team at the Centre," and failed to explore the importance of their observation. The Turkish group might have been tempted to say, "We want to examine why overseas workers make such little use of language courses," instead of their fuller Supposition. It is often difficult to convert such a statement of intent back into a question. When the teacher challenges such a group to say why they want to study the Supposition they are likely to say "Well it's what we want to know," or "That's what it's all about isn't it?" or "We have to research something so we chose this."

In such a situation it is often more appropriate for the teacher to suggest a Supposition by referring to the concerns and material she has heard them discussing already. In doing so she can ensure that it has all the necessary elements. Again we can see

how important it is for her not to have taken up a position on the different views circulating in the group and how she can now act as an impartial adviser helping them to understand their own position. In this way the group are less likely to see her intervention as an attempt to take over the project and they should be able to regain their direction rather than saying "She knows best, let's do what she suggests." Such a resignation of responsibility tends to be irreversible and can encourage the group to put the content, and indeed the whole production, in the teacher's hands.

Another common problem is for the Supposition to be too general or cautious: "We think that some foreigners might not go on language courses because they are worried about admitting that they can't speak Dutch. It is possible that this has implications for their job prospects." This may contain a high degree of truth but it is so general that anyone hearing it will say "That may very well be the case" and offer no useful information towards the research. The task of the teacher here is to help the group understand the consequences of such general formulations and to strive for a good, precise Supposition. It may be not be as close to "the truth" but it will be more useful for the research.

A group which is closely involved in preparing a Supposition can find it hard to view it as an instrument, as a means and not as an end in itself. But clarity at this stage enables the research and the analysis of the material to progress more easily.

*During this stage
the teacher should ensure
that the group are expressing
what they think about the subject
rather than just describing it.*

Stage Five. Research.

The research stage is designed to get the group to compare their own ideas with other people's, and to identify and collect any missing information. Often, when a group hears the term "research" they immediately think of forms, questionnaires and "neutral" questions. But when the idea is to compare their ideas and opinions with other people's, a conversation is a much more appropriate form.

The group should consider which of the parties identified in their Supposition, are the ones they wish to meet. It may not be necessary, or even possible, to visit them all in which case priorities should be set. At this stage it is relatively easy to choose individuals who can represent each of the parties and to make substitutes where necessary. And when a list is made in order of importance, it is clear which people and appointments need to be confirmed first.

The conversations which take place will be about the Supposition, and the people involved should do more than exchange facts. It is meant to be quite an intense discussion of the opinions and concerns of everyone involved and will reflect the quality of the Supposition. A good Supposition will result in a thorough exploration of the group's knowledge and opinions, and the people will feel welcome to make their own, clear contributions to the issue. They will recognise why they have been approached, how the group will use their contribution and what they think about it. In addition a good Supposition will allow a pertinent, wide-ranging exchange of opinions on the subject without the need for a definitive list of questions.

Recording the conversations can be done in a number of ways. Although written notes are the most obvious, they are not ideal

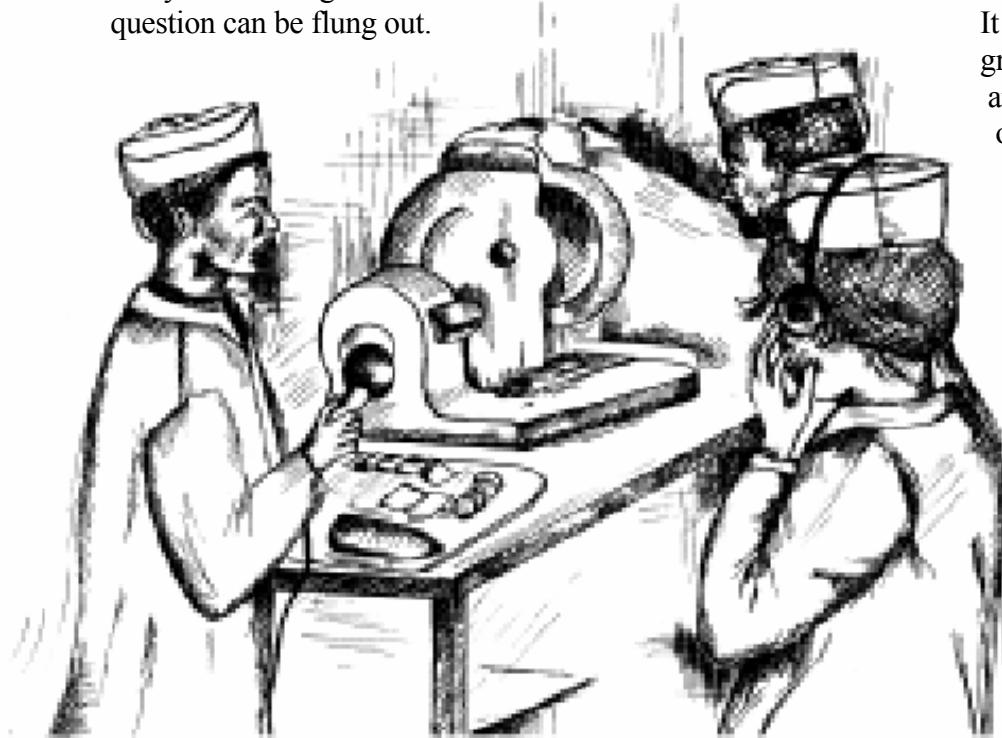
since writing is an individual activity in which a lot of material can get lost. Students taking notes are privileged and disadvantaged at the same time: privileged because their views are the most likely to get written down; disadvantaged because their attention is divided, because they are excluded from the conversation and because they are forced into making selective decisions throughout the process. These problems can be overcome with the use of cassette recorders and still cameras to collect interviews and details of people and places. Used with care they generate material which is quickly and more universally accessible. We do not necessarily recommend the use of video cameras at this stage as they demand too much attention and tend to be more intrusive, though in some circumstances they can have advantages. One is that they give the group some experience with the equipment. Another is that the material collected is easier to use in later stages.

If any equipment is to be used, now is the time to introduce it to the groups, but only in as much detail as they will require to collect usable material. It is the teacher's duty to ensure that they know how to make audible, noise-free recordings but this does not require a full-scale audio production course. Any explanations should be clear and concise, limited to the demands of the students at this stage of the process: collecting research material in a specific set of circumstances. These explanations may well be different for each group. The ideal situation is for particular equipment to be allocated to research with a clear set of guidelines for its use. The basic functions of the recorder and microphone must be demonstrated, for example, and the basic procedures outlined. These are the same for recording audio or video material.

- Always leave a 10 second gap at the start of the tape.
- Always make a trial recording before the conversation to check the equipment. Play it back to check if everything is working properly.
- Also always make a trial recording when you have moved the equipment. It takes about one minute to make one and play it back, so there is absolutely no need to say afterwards when the damages has been done, "We did not have time for it".
- Always check the material immediately after recording in case there has been a problem. This means, rewinding about 30 seconds of material, playing it back and checking the results.
- Stick to the time limits allowed. A useful rule of thumb is to record no longer than one third of the time that will be available for analysis. If a group is going to have three hours to analyse their material they should only take one hour's worth of tape with them and try not to use it all.
- Don't start recording straight away. A warm-up conversation is often useful and can help to condense the research process. A short chance for discussion after the recording can be equally fruitful.
- Don't feel you have to follow conventional media practices, indeed it is often a good idea to break them. There is no problem about passing the microphone around among the people in the conversation so they can ask each other questions. The camera operator should never feel left out of the discussion. It is a good idea to play the material back to those involved. They may wish to comment on it or to add some more information. However if you are using a playback monitor, have it switched off during recording since it distracts the attention away from the conversation, and sometimes, when the monitor is placed near the recorder, can cause interference on the sound or even feedback (a howling noise).

Follow these basic procedures whenever a recording is made.

There are two common problems at this stage. The first is when the researchers start acting like the reporters and interviewers they have seen on television, pushing the microphone forward, asking probing questions, making quick-witted remarks and leaving no space for a genuine exchange of ideas and opinions. The second is when the group go armed with an extensive list of questions which they feel they must get through at all costs. This limits the conversation to the group's agenda and can result in a member of the group having their eyes glued to the paper, the microphone pointing at the 'interviewee' and everyone waiting for the end of each answer so the next question can be flung out.



The only way to avoid these pitfalls is thorough preparation. The teacher needs to work with the groups on how to conduct decent conversations about their hypotheses and to stress the importance of exchanging views. It is for this reason above all that the traditional media interview is inappropriate to research, for it relies on strict roles for the interviewer and interviewee which obviate genuine dialogue. The interviewer is in control and the interviewee follows. Groups should avoid such processes which can easily leave people feeling as if they have been used and reluctant to be visited again.

It is much better if the teacher does not accompany the groups on their research. Not only does this free the teacher and enable more work to be done, it removes the possibility of the teacher being seen to take control and avoids giving the impression that the students cannot manage the task on their own. Let us suppose that the research conversation does not go according to plan. If the teacher was present the group may blame her for not intervening at the time. And instead of being an opportunity to learn a valuable lesson, to ask what went wrong and how to make the best of it, the group will start to feel let down. And if the teacher should try to help them with their problem after all, they may even think she let them make the mistake deliberately, or is now apologising for her error. It is far better that the group should make and learn from their own mistakes. The lesson will remain learned. In addition it usually gives the group a triumphant feeling: "We did it !!"

It is sometimes heartwarming to see groups come back to the center after a day's research, with a lot of stories on how it went, the problems they faced and the solutions they came up with by themselves. Sometimes they confess that they did not have much confidence in the operation, but went anyway and it all turned out wonderfully.

With younger students this unsupervised work can be a problem and we advocate the use of parents as facilitators with such groups wherever possible. This means that the teacher is still free to work with the rest of the class and that parents are involved in the work of the school bringing, as they do, a range of experiences and insights. There is still the possibility that they will dominate the process, however, and parents need to be encouraged to let the children develop their own ideas, decide things for themselves and even make their own mistakes.

Stage Six. Analysis.

The research stage was based on a Supposition, and the analysis of the material should now lead the group to decide on what we call their Proposition. This Proposition will form the basis of the final project.

Some aspects of the analysis will inevitably have been touched on during the research. Immediately after a conversation has been recorded the group will ask each other how they think it went. Was it useful? Were the people helpful? Are there any new things to take into account? Should the Supposition be adjusted? These questions are really an informal analysis of the material and the answers may (consciously or not) influence the way that subsequent research is carried out. This is just like a

conversation where the answer to one question may inform the next. Flexibility of this sort is vital if the conversations are going to make a genuine contribution to the research.

But informal analysis of this kind is not sufficient. The recordings will still have to be listened to systematically. Any photographs will have to be analysed, documents read and leads followed up. The tapes will have to be logged with counter numbers or times (and some parts may even need transcribing) so that relevant sections can be found easily. The group may even discover that they have forgotten to explore a particular aspect during the conversation and that this will require additional research if the schedule allows. When they are analysing the research material there are four main questions to pose:

- **What does the material tell us about the Supposition? Is it confirmed, disproved or shown to be in need of adjustment.**
- **Does the research material throw up any new areas for research?**
- **Does the material start to throw any light on the possible solutions to the problem?**
- **Does the material tell us something about the way we should make the final recordings? Does it, for example, show that in the final tape we should have the director standing in the factory instead of sitting behind his desk as we did the research.**

We have found that projects which include a variety of viewpoints can provoke useful discussions with the target group.

During analysis the Supposition acts as a touchstone for the material. In this way the group can assess their findings and come to appropriate conclusions. Making any necessary adjustments to the Supposition can be hard for people who have invested so much time and effort into producing it, but this is still the most appropriate time to do it.

Two postgraduate students in England, were exploring issues related to Youth Unemployment in their home towns. They had visited a drop-in centre for youngsters seeking work and advice where they had tried to have some general discussions with the young people about their concerns. The students were quite new to this sort of work and were generally pleased with the way things had gone. As they analysed the material however they noticed two main things. Firstly the youngsters were complaining that they were not offered enough information about the options that were available to them while there, in the background, were rows and rows of booklets, pamphlets, advice leaflets and career guides. The students recalled how the professionals at the centre had also been complaining - but they were saying how hard it was to get the young people to take any of their advice or to go through the information systematically. As the students looked at their pictures of the shelves full of information (which the youngsters said was unavailable and the workers said was being ignored) they realised that it was a Tower of Babel - constructed by the professionals, impenetrable to the youngsters, and a source of resentment to both. This led the students to wonder whether they were compounding the problem with their video rather than alleviating it.

In particular they were worried that they were coming in as outsiders, with their own view of what was going on, making their own confusing structure. They decided that one way they could change this would be to give the camera over to the young people themselves and get them to make their own recordings on the issue. The resulting material was not as technically proficient as their own, but the content (always of more importance in the model) was more vivid, more exciting and more relevant to a young audience.

Ultimately the research and analysis stages will provide the group with the basis for their text. This will include technical considerations - should it be recorded in a small quiet room or a vast noisy factory? - but also theoretical ones. In particular it is not uncommon for the group to start splitting over different reactions to the Supposition but this need not to be seen as a drawback. Indeed it can become a strength since it indicates that the group is still grappling with a complex issue that has a number of interpretations. In these circumstances a group has three choices. They can abandon the project with all that entails for the group, the people who have helped and a target group who may already be waiting for the result. They can split into subgroups and work separately, but this is likely to lead to problems in production and the project may again be jeopardised.

Alternatively they can try to incorporate their different viewpoints into the project and make them part of it. After all confusion and contradiction were some of the most important goals of the research stage. It may seem a weak decision to let these contradictions stand, but we have found that projects

which include a variety of viewpoints can provoke useful discussions with the target group. The problem lies in finding a suitable structure to contain them. Whatever happens it will be important for such conflicts to be clearly portrayed in the project to enable the audience to follow the arguments and come to their own conclusions on what is clearly a complex issue.

To assist the group with their formal analysis the teacher should start by asking for the group's general reaction to the research conversations and by relating these to the Supposition. The implications of the research will be much clearer after this. Students can give their overall impressions first, and in this way most of the appropriate material will have been highlighted by the group before they turn to the tapes. When they do so they will recognise the material more readily, will identify parts which are unclear or missing, and be able to move on more quickly to an adequate inventory. The teacher also has an opportunity at this stage to assess the technical quality of the recording. It is not especially important for the group (as long as they can see and hear the material adequately) but there may be implications for later stages where clarity will be vital.

Stage Seven. Making a Proposition.

The analysis will eventually lead to the formulation of a Proposition. This is not intended to describe an objective truth, but is considered 'true' as far as the group has been able to research the issue. As such it will embody one of the many different subjective truths that can be held on this theme. It will have similar characteristics to the Supposition and reading it should give some indication of:

- **the personal ideas and experiences of the group**
- **the problem they want to raise**
- **the significant parties involved**
- **the solutions that the group advocate.**

But these will now be informed by the results of the research and analysis. This again involves the process of focusing and beaconing.

The group we saw earlier who were looking at the centre for homeless youngsters had been working on the Supposition:

The Employment advisors only have weak links with the housing team at the Centre. If there was more collaboration between the two teams the whole philosophy of resettlement followed by work or training could become more effective.

By the time they had analysed their material they had come to believe that the problem was less to do with the level of collaboration between the two teams, and more to do with the underlying assumptions of training provision. This led them to reformulate their Supposition:

Personal development courses run by the centre cannot be effective in raising the self-worth of young people, if that self worth is only measured in job and housing status.

Groups can easily get carried away with their ambitions for the project ("This will change the world") and forget that they must tailor their work to their particular audience.

Clearer, and better focused, it was still a personal view which covered the four basic requirements: it was based on their own experiences of the issue (what they had seen and heard at the centre and what they knew from elsewhere); it stated the problem they wished to raise; it mentioned the significant parties involved, and suggested that a solution might be found if the staff could reassess their measures of self-worth.

By now the preparatory work is almost complete. The group has a clear understanding of what is at stake in the project, and the fact that this is a shared understanding is important to the next stages: deciding on the audience, the medium and the form.



Stage Eight. Choosing a Target Group.

People often wonder why we suggest leaving the choice of target group so long, but in fact a properly-informed choice is not really possible earlier. Obviously the group may have decided on their audience by now but if so this is the moment to assess that choice, alter or confirm it and to consider the implications for the audience and the project. The teacher must make these elements explicit at this stage to ensure that the best choice has been made and that mistakes can be avoided.

There is generally a great deal of discussion about the target group during all the previous stages, and that is to be welcomed. But until this point it is best kept in the background since it can easily distract attention from the content of the research.

Making the final decision involves much more than simply deciding who will see or hear the finished product. For the group will also have to consider how their choice of audience will affect the construction of their project and how their project is meant to affect the audience. It is often easy to forget that both sorts of influence are involved. Groups can easily get carried away with their ambitions for the project ("This will change the world") and forget that they must tailor their work to their particular audience. Central to both these considerations are the goals the group has set themselves in earlier stages.

Selecting a target group is not always easy, and projects frequently have a choice between those which might generally be expected to agree with their Proposition and those who might oppose it. In the first case a project will be trying to augment their existing knowledge on the theme and see how other, like-minded people are working towards the same goals. In the second case the target group will be given insight into opposing views, will be shown the implication of their own positions and actions for other people, and will be given an understanding of what changes the project is advocating.

These two positions are the extremes. Between them may be many people who have a mixture of feelings or are rather unsure. But the point remains the same: different target groups will need to be considered properly. It is important to understand the sorts of codes and conventions appropriate to each one and to bear these in mind when preparing the project.

One group that made a program on youth culture was able to choose between several different target groups. They could address people dealing with youth, the youth itself or the commercial enterprises that made a profit on youth culture. Eventually they decided to address young people directly. But even that did not help them fix the target group, for the music that was to be used in the program would certainly influence the viewing of the program. Punk music at the beginning would clearly alienate all the disco fans and vice versa. Then there were also youngsters that only wanted hard-rock. Finally they chose to make a program meant only for disco fans.

When the target group cannot be described clearly or is indicated in too-general terms it can raise problems. If one wants to define the audience with descriptions like 'As many viewers or listeners as possible' it is much too general when it comes to making an editing scheme or making a rough structure (see stage 11). Then it becomes difficult to assess the knowledge that the target group already has, which music appeals most, etc. The group also needs to discuss how the target group can be best addressed. It can be done on the basis of questions like:

- **Who can we address most successfully?**
- **Who has the necessary influence to support and implement the changes we propose?**
- **Are we seen as serious partners in conversation by the people we address?**

Sometimes a group can make a list of possible target-groups and after that discuss which one is the best.

Stage Nine. The Choice of the Medium.

At this stage the group must ask themselves the best way and the most appropriate medium for reaching their selected target group. There is a vast range of forms to choose from: video tapes, sound recordings, a photographic exhibition, a poster, a tape-slide project, a radio text, a newspaper, a magazine article, a poem, and so on. In this account of the model we will be

concentrating on video texts, but a photographic exhibition, a radio documentary or a tape-slide show can be produced in a very similar way. It should not be forgotten that there are additional ways of reaching the target group. For example it is worth asking the local radio station to carry a story about the project, to interview the participants, or even to broadcast some of the research material. In such a way the material gets a wider circulation and the curiosity of the target group can be raised even before the project is finished. It may be appropriate to use more than one medium. Maybe the video should be accompanied by some printed material. There are a number of possibilities, and local broadcasting must not be the automatic choice for promoting or transmitting the work. Indeed it may be particularly inappropriate for some target groups who would be better addressed via print, word-of-mouth, or in some other way. But it is always worth considering the contributions that local broadcasting can make for reaching the target group in which case it will be used as a channel for communication just like the local newspaper or the community centre.

One example of how the choice of medium was particularly important, was the group of young factory workers who chose to invite a group of their managers to see an 8mm film in a small hall. By showing it in the dark they made sure the managers had to look at it, and talking was not very easy since they had the sound turned up. When the film finished there was time for comments on the film but also discussions of its purpose. If they had chosen to make a poster it would have been all too easy for the managers to have read it quickly and gone about their everyday business. The group had made a careful decision about the effects of different media on specific audiences:

showing a film in the dark so it must be watched; showing it to a group so that everyone has the same information; regulating the sound to control the amount of conversation while people are watching it.

When deciding whether or not to use the local broadcaster the group should consider the effect. The facilitator should give a rough indication of such effects and let the group decide. If there is any doubt about its appropriateness other possible media should be considered, and again the facilitator should help them arrive at an informed decision without suggesting that there is necessarily anything wrong with the group or the local broadcaster.

Stage Ten. The Form of the text.

Generally speaking there are two options: the group can elect to make a documentary type of work or a narrative. For novice groups, or those who are working on a particularly complicated subject a documentary approach is advisable. The principle advantage is that the material can be found in their own locality, whereas with a narrative the group will have to create representations of reality. This will require not just a clear understanding of the subject, but also a degree of creativity and particular media experience which the group may not have. There is a danger that such concerns will dominate the project, and a group of novices will find it hard to pay enough attention to the real objectives of their work. In short they will be overwhelmed by form and unable to concentrate sufficiently on content.

Certainly the model can be used to help people prepare narratives. Experience in Holland suggests that, in any case, the group will be well advised to make a documentary first, and to use this as the opportunity to explore issues, discuss them with other stakeholders, and consider their responses. Even then we find that modern audiences are so used to expensive narratives produced to “high” production values, that they are very likely to be disappointed, and to judge the content against these unrealistic ambitions. Narrative is undoubtedly an influential form, but this is not a justification in itself.

Stage Eleven. Making the text.

In this stage the group's final Proposition is moulded into a form which can reach the target group. It will need to ensure that the target group understand why they are being addressed in particular, what is expected from them and why. Once again it is crucial there is a clear structure for all the tasks and time-management involved. It is worth reminding the group of the schedule they have set themselves because there are many opportunities for them to drift away from it at this stage.

As the work becomes more practical the teacher's role changes. Her first task is to ensure that there is an equal and fair distribution of tasks among the group. She should also make sure that her group is making an adequate plan, and that they are continually assessing their progress. The clearer the group are about their various tasks, the less the teacher will have to be involved. Ideally she will be able to concentrate entirely on supervising the planning, providing the right sort of information at the right time, and providing encouragement and support. In general the work to be done in this stage is broadly the same whatever medium or form has been chosen:

- **Making a recording scheme**
- **Recording the material**
- **Making an inventory of the material**
- **Deciding what functions the material will serve in the text**
- **Making a rough structure for the text**
- **Making an edit scheme on the basis of the rough structure**
- **Editing the text**

It is worth reminding the group of the schedule they have set themselves because there are many opportunities for them to drift away from it at this stage.

Making a recording scheme.

In making a recording scheme the group writes out a list of everything that should be in the text, where and with whom it can be recorded. The research stage will have clarified all such sources of information and we can see now why it was helpful to explain to the people interviewed during research that the group may wish to return. Now the group can decide which places to revisit to get their material. When this has been decided appointments are made for each section and the dates and times written on the recording scheme.

It is important for the group to decide exactly what they want to record before they finalise any of these plans, for only then will all the possible problems be clear. Facilitators are responsible for checking that the schedules are complete and achievable. They should then ensure that the group are sufficiently familiar with the equipment and know how to operate it in the right way for their particular purpose. Again it is not necessary to explain everything, just enough to help them get the material they require.

A well-designed scheme will also include details about the circumstances under which the material should be recorded. The amount of tape, film and other materials required, the purpose for which it will be used, extra equipment needed (lighting perhaps) or any other useful information will be noted down. It should be clear to everyone whether the material is designed to inform the audience of something in particular, to illustrate the central issues or, for example, to provide background information. When the facilitator is checking these details there is also the chance to suggest material which may be useful for the finished product but which an inexperienced group may not have considered. It is worth, for example, having some cut-away material for a video, some atmospheric background noise ("wild-track") for a radio project, or photographs of place-names and signs for an exhibition. Perhaps there will be opportunities to record additional material which might help in promoting the finished product. This is really the first time that the facilitator has made suggestions for the content, and they should only be given now if the group are not sufficiently aware of the post-production processes to see how useful they can be in giving the project its finishing touches.

Recording material.

If things have been planned well there will rarely be any unexpected events at this stage and all the group's attention can be focused on recording their material. They will have to choose their exact positions carefully checking, for example, whether the environment matches or deliberately contradicts what the speaker is saying and whether that is appropriate. They should also be reminded at this stage of the basic procedure for recording material (see Stage Five above)

When a group were making a tape about a statue commissioned by the director of the local water authority they decided to record him in the hall where he normally chairs the meetings. This illustrated his position better than having him sit in his office. In another example, the group knew that one of their interviewees owned a BMW. They carefully planned their return visit and recorded a conversation with his car in the background. In that way it served as a kind of 'commentary' on the things he was saying. Another example was the bank manager who was interviewed on mortgages. The head office had insisted on listening to the conversation by phone as it was recorded. The group made sure that the telephone was in the picture, and that the commentary mentioned that the boss was listening in.

The group should also be recording "cut-away" material to go with any commentary they have planned. If a video is going to talk about warped window frames or the noise from a motorway they must be recorded for inclusion in the programme so that the audience will be able to see or hear them. These excerpts should always be recorded at length – 30 seconds is an absolute minimum for each individual shot. Anything shorter will be difficult to use in the editing process.

The group should explain to everyone what is expected of them before they start recording. This will ensure that the material is collected as efficiently as possible and thus require less editing, but it will also make sure that the contributors are quite clear about their contribution to the project and how the material will be used. If they do not agree with the plans they can say so clearly and openly. Maybe they will say, "No the project is not in my interest, I won't cooperate." That is their right and their position may be as justified as the group's. Of course it is then legitimate to mention their refusal in the project, but since groups usually return to people they have already met during the research stage these things are very unlikely to happen.

There is a constant danger here that the group will record too much and start to drown in their material when they come to edit it. It is the facilitator's job to ensure this doesn't happen. A ratio of 3 or 4 to 1 is fine (that is 1 hour of video or audio tape for a text lasting 15 - 20 minutes, or three rolls of film for an

exhibition of 25 - 30 photographs). If something is forgotten there is usually a way round it when planning or doing the editing.

Logging the material.

When they have finished their recording the group will have their coarse production material, but that is not yet a programme. First they will have to make an inventory of everything they have brought back. For a video or audio tape they should do the following: Rewind the cassette completely, set the counter to zero, playback the material and write down what the group see and hear along with the counter numbers for each event. (numbers that can be played back in the picture itself) you should always use this as it is much more accurate than counter numbers alone. Everything should be noted as accurately as possible. In a photographic project contact sheets or proofs will need to be looked at in great detail and lists of negative numbers made. The group will also need to identify and list any material they are going to use from other sources (sound effects, titles, graphics, additional photographs from magazines or archives, etc). An excerpt from a video inventory used in the recording of material for this book is on page 40.

*The group should explain
to everyone
what is expected of them
before they start recording.*

14/3/97

Logging Sheet Tape 4 Sheet 1

Shot	Start	Content
①	00:11	Mark: "There are three different types of change in a project like this... You need to decide what you want to do."
②	00:58	Kate: "Change is often painful for organisations like ours... Susan has found this already."
③	02:14	Anne looks at the camera and says, "I like this bit... the material starts to make sense." * STRONG POINT *
④	02:43	Pictures of Group 3 reviewing their titles. (No usable sound on this - may need voice-over.)
⑤	03:37	Dirk explains possible styles to group 3: documentary, narrative, and appropriate options. * GOOD CLOSE-UPS OF GROUP *

14/3/97

Logging Sheet Tape 4 Sheet 2

Shot	Start	Content
⑥	04:12	Dirk with Group 3. "You will need to plan this interview carefully... Be sure to listen to the things she wants to say."
⑦	04:58	Group 3 describe their rough structure. (Not very clear)
⑧	05:21	Group 2 describe their rough structure. * BETTER *
⑨	06:05	Anne: "It is really important to organise this work... so that the audience have space for thought."
⑩	06:45	Close-up of Group 1 edit scheme (no sound).
⑪	10:32	Close-up of Group 2 edit scheme (no sound)

14/3/97

Logging Sheet Tape 4 Sheet 3

Shot	Start	Content
⑫	13:07	Close-up of Group 3 edit scheme (no sound).
⑬	14:01	Outside building. Trees, sun and footpath.
⑭	15:03	Same as 13. More people.
⑮	16:21	Sign at entrance to building. People walk by.
⑯	16:43	Seminar Room sign. * GOOD, STRONG *
⑰	17:11	Rob reminds Group 3 that "the time for thinking has run out... You must make your mind up now and stick to your decision."

Logging sheets are written on A4 paper and look something like this. Use only one side of the paper so they can be photocopied.

This is usually a tedious job and the group will often be satisfied with the most general of inventories. There are some quite cheap computer programs where you still need to type in the information, but which make later parts of the process less exhausting.

A good inventory is an investment that pays great dividends and can save a lot of time in the editing stage. In addition a thorough analysis of the material while making an inventory can get the group talking in depth about the different ways of using it and is another good reason for encouraging them to approach this stage conscientiously.

A lot of groups say in the evaluation of their projects that they learnt that logging tapes and making good inventories are about the most important things to be done and that they didn't pay enough attention to it. We usually tell them that if they are trying to describe a minute's worth of video in just one line they are in trouble. The opposite, writing everything down in fine detail, is very good but takes too much time. On average they should be logging about 5 minutes of material on a side of A4. They should write on one side of the paper in a way which makes it easy to use and to photocopy it if necessary.

Deciding what functions the material will serve in the text.

When all the material has been logged it is worth considering what it is going to be used for in the finished project. In the case of a documentary video there are six distinct functions for the material to perform:

- 1. An exposition of time, place and action.**
- 2. An exposition of the themes and the problem.**
- 3. The kernel of the text.**
- 4. Reconstruction, or summary.**
- 5. Conclusion.**
- 6. Address to the audience.**

It should be made clear that any material can perform any of these functions and that they do not need to be performed in this particular order. We are considering functions here, not the material. We are asking what it does, not what it is. The exposition of the theme, for example, can be done by an image, by the opening bars of Shostakovitch's 10th Symphony, by a caption, or any number of devices. For the purposes of this section it does not really matter. We are discussing function, not form.

1. An exposition of time, place and action.

In order to be able to follow the program the audience will need to understand where and when the various issues are happening (here or there, in the past or the present, concerning this but not that, and so on). This exposition provides a framework in which the rest of the information can be placed.

2. An exposition of the themes and the problem.

Here the group's Proposition will be highlighted. A clear explanation of this will ensure that the audience are aware of

how the group have approached the information in the text and why they believe it to be important. Understanding this will enable the audience to construct their own position from which they can watch the tape.

3. The kernel.

At the heart of the text will be all the material which is actually going to communicate with the audience. If this process is going to be as clear and straightforward as possible the text makers will need to arrange their material carefully according to two main tasks it has to perform (we shall look at these in a moment). This arrangement, this systematising, is a treatment of the material which shapes it in such a way that it gains more clarity. By systematising their material the group will be better able to influence the audience's interpretation and make it more accessible to other people's opinions. It will, in other words, be easier for people to understand the group's case and to view it critically. Exactly how the material should be systematised is dependant entirely on the material itself, the group, their aims, and the proposed audience. The possibilities are endless, but here are three examples:

In a text which explores two opposing sets of views (to expand the factory or to shut it down) the material might be arranged like this: Solution A; solution B; how group A view employment prospects in the area; how group B view them; what group A think the factory is doing to the environment; what group B think; and so on.

If the material is about the relationship between two groups of people it may be better to show both groups some of

the other peoples comments and use this to elicit their response. In a text about a remedial education programme in Holland, for example, a group of teachers were asked for their opinions about the scheme and the problems they were encountering. This material was edited into the first part of the text and shown to one of the administrators. The text makers recorded his respons and showed this back to the teachers. They in turn made a further response, and all these were included in the text which finished with the groups perspective.

A more ambitious, artistic approach was adopted by a group looking at freight-handling at Schiphol Airport. They tried to systematise their material by inserting photographs which were meant to operate as metaphors. This sort of approach is obviously more difficult, and facilitators will need to help such groups and advise them if their work is becoming unclear.

The material in the kernel, however it is systemised, is of two main types. We can call these opiniating material and polarising material. Opiniating material is that which acts as a prompt for the audience's opinions. It does not have to be controversial or contentious but is the raw material which they are invited to consider, to deliberate upon, to have feelings about or to respond to as you see fit. When they hear a conversation with an ex-railway worker he is telling them about the time when people used telegrams instead of telephones. Nobody contradicts him, he is just there to tell his story. The material is meant to say to the audience "That is how messages were relayed from station to station."

But that is not to say that the material is just informative. It doesn't just transfer content. It also invites and requires a response, an opinion. "How interesting!" "That must explain why the telegram service was connected to the railway company." "Tell us more." "I think I already knew that."

Polarising material is that which explores contradictory positions within the theme. But it does not do so from a neutral standpoint. It will reflect the Proposition of the text makers who will have "polarised" it (given it a polarity) by tearing it apart and making it vibrate in one particular way. By doing so they create centres of gravity within the mass of material which expose oppositions, dualities, trialities or even pluralities. If, for example, they have a collection of interviews about the history of the railway they may choose to edit them in a way which accentuates the nostalgia of the railway workers and the callousness of the authorities which closed the line. They are no longer just informing, nor simply inviting opinion, but are actively polarising the material in a way which highlights their own perspective.

Of course in the final text opiniating and polarising material are often mixed, especially when we consider that the audience bring their own experiences and attitudes to their reading of the finished piece. What may operate as opiniating material for one person may work as polarising material for someone who is already familiar with the subject and has their own position already.

Watching a tape, listening to a radio play, seeing a tape-slide

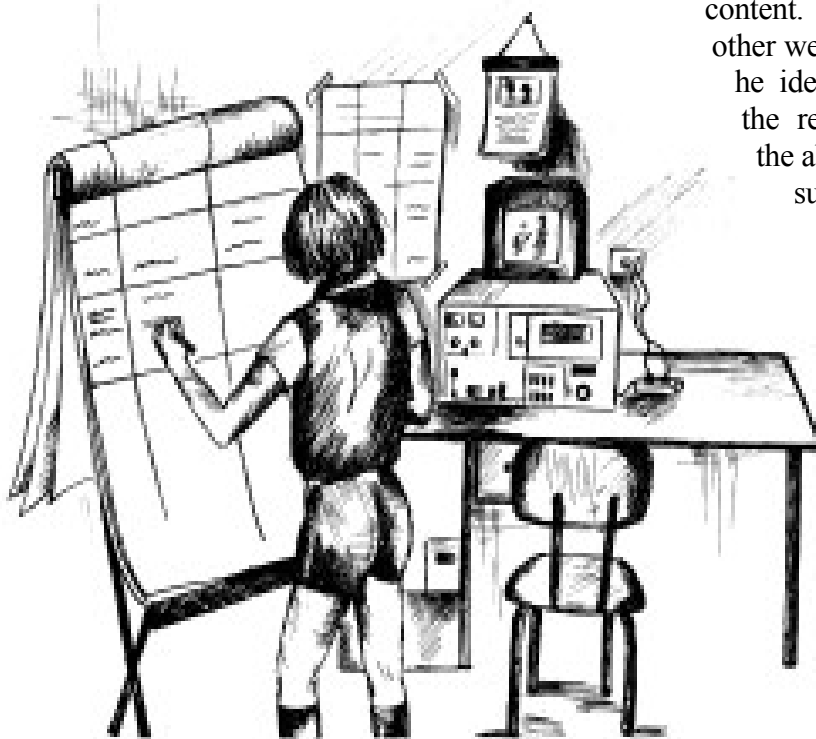
programme or viewing an exhibition is, in the end, about audiences making meanings from the material as it is presented to them. Text makers need to understand the likely ways in which the audience will produce these meanings and audiences need to understand as much as possible about the intentions of the producers. As far as the text-makers are concerned this involves giving the audience clear indications of their Proposition which will allow them to take issue with it. The simplest way of doing this, of course, is for the group to appear in the program and thus to explain their Proposition directly to the audience while they are watching it. They can simply say what they believe the important parts of the issue to be, and what they think about it. They might also make it clear how they have systematised the text and what devices they have used. All of these will put them in a criticisable position. Another frequently used method is for the group to make their text as directly as possible, to show it to the audience and discuss it with them afterwards. This has been useful in Holland where schoolchildren have wanted to make particular points about their school. They have always been encouraged to invite the local school inspector to see the texts.

4. Summaries.

It is important to offer summaries of the content at various points throughout a documentary program in order to make the different parts more understandable. When there has been a two minute interview, for example, a summary of the content may be helpful in understanding it. Of course it is the makers' summary, but it should nevertheless be a rather neutral affair.

A summary can come before or after the material it is designed to clarify. If it comes first it will serve to steer the audience's attention to certain points. ("Next we will see an interview with the manager who will tell us why the factory is to close.") If it comes afterwards it will tend to work more as a guide to the main points that have been raised. ("So, the workers have explained their three counter arguments...") Summaries tend to be scarce in most television documentaries where the flow of information is endless. This was made clear in a study by Bernward Wember (1983). He investigated why 80 % of an audience found reports on Northern Ireland 'very informative' while only 20 % could remember a few things about the

content. Among other weaknesses he identified in the report was the absence of summaries.



5. Conclusion

In making their summaries the group can choose to be neutral. In the conclusion they cannot and should not be. It is at this point, when all the material has been seen and heard, that they get the chance to give their final opinion about it. And it should be clear that they are speaking. This also makes it easier for the audience to form an opinion of their own, which does not necessarily have to be the same opinion.

6. Address to the audience

As we know the group will usually have a clear expectation of what their text should address with its audience. There are two sorts of dedications they can make to their audience: "Now you know..." or "We want you to...".

The first one is the address in a more informative type of program. When you have seen a documentary about the African wildlife and, say, the termite hills, the kind of address that is implicit is, "Now you know everything you'll ever need to know about termite hills." In something like a trigger tape a group might use the second type of address and ask you to do something. To sign the petition for a children's playground in your neighbourhood, to stop doing something, to start supporting something, to send money to their organisation.. etc.

Some people put their dedication at the start of their text. It can be very powerful to state immediately to the audience what you want from them.

Making a rough structure.

Despite recent developments, simple video editing equipment is still inflexible. It is not possible, for example, to add an extra scene to the middle, or to remove parts from a finished tape without making a new copy. Because of this inflexibility video editing requires a conceptual approach where 'everything' should be on paper before the process can start. The preparation of the rough structure is part of this conceptual approach and is a necessary step between the collection of material and the editing.

But there is another reason for a rough structure and an editing scheme: efficiency. When you are using rented equipment, you cannot do the renting company a better favour than to sit at their editing machines discussing details about the content of your text. Even though you are not actually using their equipment you are still paying rent for it. They will love you for this. And in a school or college you must make sure that students are only using the machines to make up their texts, not to make up their minds. Your centre will be able to support many more groups in this way.

When a group start to compose their rough structure we get them to draw a simple time line on a large surface such as a whiteboard:

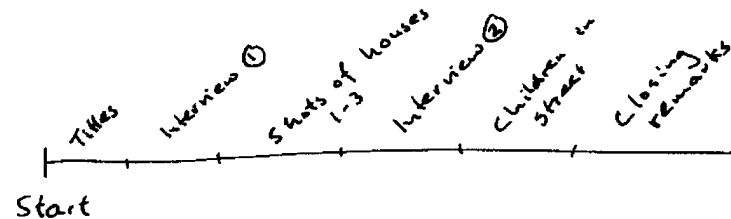
The group can now see, very quickly, how their text might be constructed:

This is such a quick exercise that the group can easily produce ten different rough structures in as many minutes, and it is far more economic use of their time than having these discussions

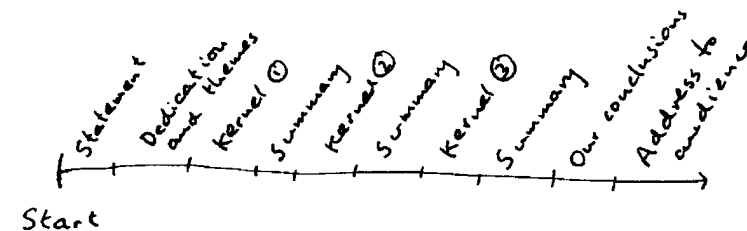
in front of the edit suite. In this way the same elements can often be seen in different sequences. A text might begin, for example, with a particularly striking statement from the Kernel (3). This might be so clear that there is no need for the exposition of time, place and action.



Perhaps the dedication (6) should follow here combined with an explication of the themes (2). The kernel (3) is further explored but is interspersed with summaries (4).



The groups conclusions (5) act as a final summary and the appeal to the audience (6) is repeated to round the whole thing off. In this case the rough structure would look like this:



When they are designing the rough structure the group should constantly be discussing the content: which parts of their material are most pertinent to the Proposition? Which order is most sensitive to their argument? It will be apparent here whether or not the inventory has been carried out properly. If it has, everything can be found quickly on paper and there will be no need for the time-consuming job of re-examining the material. The group will be providing themselves with a complete overview for the next stage (designing the edit scheme) when they will give more attention to the details. During this design period they can experiment with a number of different possibilities with the minimum of effort.

This may well be the most important stage of production, principally because of the overview it provides to everyone involved. If the rough structure is not designed carefully enough the overview will only become apparent when the final text is edited and ready for screening. If any mistakes are discovered then they will have to remain or the whole edit will have to be done again.

There is a risk that the group will go into too much detail at this stage. This can be at the expense of developing the overview and will often cause confusion and wasted time. Another common problem is for groups to allow too much or too little time for summaries in the text. Too much can dull the content ("Yes, we know what you mean, we understand that, get on with it.") while too little can leave a text as a dry mixture of facts, statements, commentary and music which are apparently unconnected.

The facilitator should let the group construct the rough structure on their own but should check it thoroughly with them

when it is finished. Again she can ask them to explain it to her and summarise their account, letting them say whether she is right or not. In particular they should be able to explain the structure in terms of what the audience will see and hear.

The facilitator should be considering the following:

- Will the text be comprehensible for the selected target group?**
- Are there any vital parts missing?**
- Are the group able to explain the structure clearly and completely, without disagreement, without reservations or indecision?**
- Are their suggestions consistent with the work they have done so far in research, Positioning, and so on? If not, why not?**

If she has any observations to make they can form part of her summary to the group who should then be left to make their own decisions on how to continue.

The Editing Scheme

Making an editing scheme serves several purposes. Firstly everybody gets a chance to discuss it and to contribute to decisions about the ways in which the material will be edited.

This may well be the most important stage of production, principally because of the overview it provides to everyone involved.

In making the plan the group will have the opportunity for detailed discussions about the content, and this is the time for those discussions to take place within the confines of the agreed rough structure. It will become apparent where commentary will need to be added, exactly which archive material needs to be inserted, and so on. By getting all these creative decisions out of the way the drawing up of a precise edit plan turns the actual editing into a largely technical operation which can be shared round equally among the group. In this way the form and content of the programme will not be altered if members are away or if they change around. They will simply be performing the edit process as it has been agreed by the group. But perhaps the biggest advantage is that the time needed for editing is drastically reduced. There will be no need for the group to sit in front of machines trying to make up their mind about which picture goes where (a waste of time and resources) since their minds will be made up before they even enter the edit suite.

Edit schemes are best written on flip charts and will look something like this:

Sheet ①

Video	Live Sound	Commentary	Music
Tape 4 9:38 - 10:04 Paul in Street	"The housing in this street... ... do something about it."		
Tape 1 20:38 - 21:41 Sameera walking		Commentary ① "Since the Council... ... to revise their budget."	
<u>TITLE ①</u> HOUSING IN ENSTLEY 5 secs			TRACK 14
<u>TITLE ②</u> PAPERING OVER THE CRACKS 5 secs			↓
Tape 3 11:15 - 11:57 Jean at her Front Door	Fade In "Ever since we moved in... ... isn't getting any better."		Fade Out

By writing it on big sheets everyone involved in the editing will be able to see at a glance what they have to do and which technical problems are going to come up. The group must feel able to ask the facilitator for help when they come across such problems. Of course there are occasions when there will be major differences of opinion and it is useful to have agreed in advance how long such discussions can be allowed to continue and how they should be resolved.

It is better if the facilitator is not involved in these discussions, and she may choose not to be present at all. The group should know how long they have for the task and the rough structure will be acting as their template. When the plan is finished they can explain it to the facilitator as a final check for themselves that they are ready for the next stage. Any remaining doubts can be cleared up now, and any technical requirements considered in advance. Common requests include things like titles, still frames, mixes, fades and special effects. Some of these may be complicated (or even impossible on cheap equipment) and the group will have to decide in advance how much time and effort they are prepared to spend on them. Their final consideration must be whether they are really essential to the text and whether they will help or hinder the audience. Only then can the group decide whether they are really worth the effort.

Some general remarks: People tend to spend a lot of time and effort on making a good beginning for their text, with stunning effects, complicated mixes etc. The problem is that since it is in

the beginning of the program, the audience will either forget it (the end of the program is the part which is remembered best) or it will give the audience an impression which the text as a whole cannot justify. So, keep it simple.

Facilitators should also try to keep the group's focus on the job in hand. As they go through this process a group will often get sidetracked. They may start going back over old debates or start to have long discussions about fine details. It is here that their efforts may need refocusing. A useful technique is for the facilitator to take the marker, go to the flipchart, point to the part of the timeline they are working on and ask: "What will be on the tape as this point? What will the audience see and hear?" When the group has answered, write it down and ask the same question about the next part of the line. After two or three times, a member of the group can perform the same task and the facilitator can withdraw. Facilitators should also keep an eye on the clock and see that the group doesn't get bogged down in detail but makes progress with the edit scheme. When it is finished the facilitator should go over it and explain to the group her understanding of what the audience will see and hear at each point. Any lack of clarity in the scheme should become apparent at this stage. Ideally the scheme should be precise enough for the group to be able to hand it over with the tapes, the commentary and the music, to a technician who could immediately make the programme just by following their instructions.

Editing

Since editing video is usually more complicated than sound this description will serve as a guide for both. The general principles are the same though and it is not difficult to translate these descriptions to another medium. If your centre has more basic equipment than that we describe here you should look at the advice in Section Seven (How to handle other types of equipment)

The material for video editing usually comes from a number of sources: a caption camera provides pictures for titles and illustrations; a computer may give additional graphics; the videotape player gives pictures and sound from the recordings that the group have made; CDs and cassettes may provide music; other cassettes might include usable material from the research stage; there may be a microphone for adding commentary. This should be in the same room but away from the main equipment - speaking the commentary and operating the equipment are very difficult to coordinate. A basic edit suite also includes a video recording machine and a sound mixer.

Most groups need help to begin the editing, not least because many of the more complicated technical processes are at the start of the programme (titles, music, mixtures of sound from one tape and pictures from another, and so on.) Facilitators should have made themselves familiar with any requirements in advance and offer assistance as required.

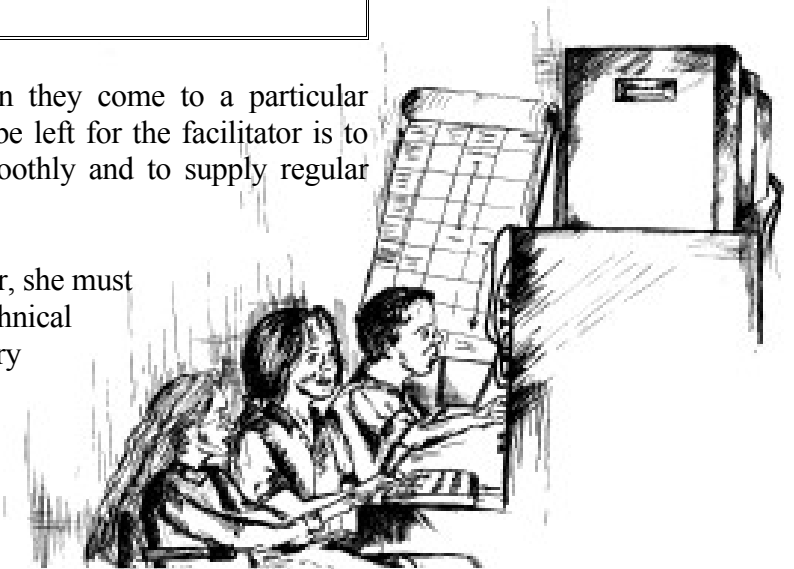
When the group are familiar with the four functions outlined above they are usually able to operate on their own within an

Looking at all this we can identify four main functions for the group:

- 1) Supplying material (looking for material on the playback machine, speaking the commentary, finding the right piece of music, etc.)**
- 2) Checking the audio material (setting the right levels on the mixer)**
- 3) Handling the supplied material (operating the record machine, checking edit points, etc).**
- 4) “Calling the shots” from the edit scheme and making sure that everything is done in the right order. All these tasks should be shared round the group as much as possible so that everyone learns all the processes required.**

hour, only calling for help when they come to a particular problem. With luck all that will be left for the facilitator is to see that the work is running smoothly and to supply regular coffee.

Before the kettle goes on, however, she must make sure they understand the technical elements. Again it is only necessary to explain the essential parts - technophiles can take always sign up for an evening course.



Handling the audio signal

Many groups editing video tapes do not pay enough attention to the quality of the sound, but it is just as important as the pictures. The variables here can be in level (loud and soft) or in combination (music mixed with a voice over). The group should understand the way the audio meters show the intensity of sound measured in decibels (dB). They should also know that 0 dB indicates the optimum level for the recorded sound. Levels much below that may be hard to hear, anything above may be distorted. This idea of 0 dB should be explained and connected to the idea of "signal to noise ratio" (which is also measured in decibels). At its simplest this is the strength of the recorded sound compared with the unwanted noise produced by the tape and the equipment. The group will easily understand that this noise is a bad thing and will get in the way of their text. When it is pointed out to them that this noise will always be worse when they make their final copies they soon learn to keep the signal/noise ratio as low as possible while they are editing. Sound is not always given enough consideration in video work but it is certainly as important as the picture, and sometimes even more crucial. When they understand these basics the group will know all that is required for a good recording. They may seem obvious to anyone in the group who is technically-minded, they may sound strange to people who are not used to them, but they should be explained to everyone so that no one is at a disadvantage or likely to get excluded from the operation of the equipment.

Handling the video signal.

This is much the same as audio editing but is technically more demanding. Video players and recorders need to run with much more accuracy to provide a stable picture which is why it is best to run them from an edit controller. The basic functions of this should be explained but it is not necessary to use its programming functions. These tend to take a long time to learn and do not offer the group anything they need.

The group should make "insert" edits in the simplest way possible (using the Auto-Edit button). (A full description of this is given in the "Teach Yourself the Model" section Six)

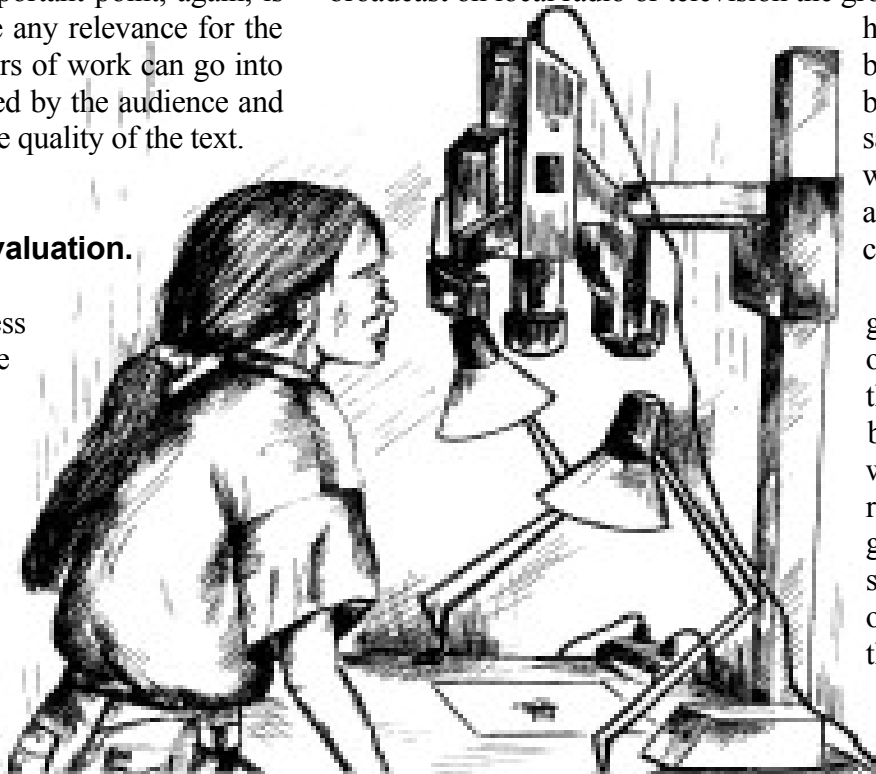
As the group is working the facilitator should check that they are not interfering in each other's jobs. Everyone should be able to get on with their allocated tasks. Everyone will be tempted to intervene when someone makes a mistake and try to correct it for them but this only leads to a tense atmosphere. It will rarely help people to gain confidence or to do it better next time. Apart from anything else it gives the impression that mistakes are irreparable. This is not so. The original material is still available and with careful planning mistakes can be rectified. The facilitator should help to provide a quiet working atmosphere and a continuous overview of how things are going. It is not her job to interfere for this, too, can contribute to the feeling that any mistake will be fatal. As long as the group are following their edit scheme the only problems that are likely to arise will be technical and these are easy to solve. Any parts of the edit scheme which are still obscure will have been

high-lighted beforehand and the group should have decided how much time they were prepared to spend sorting them out and who would have the final say if things remained undecided.

It is often tempting to give a lot of attention to all sorts of details during editing ("Should we show Mr Johnson before or after the bit about the factory?" "Should the music fade down here or there?" Have we shown enough close-ups of the subject?") The right time for these discussions was when the edit scheme was being devised. The important point, again, is to ask whether such considerations have any relevance for the target group. Experience shows that hours of work can go into such minutiae which are never recognised by the audience and which make no overall contribution to the quality of the text.

Stage Twelve. Presentation and Evaluation.

The better the preparation has been the less chance there will be of failure during the showing or transmitting of the text. But the presentation will always be an exciting moment for the group and the facilitator should be prepared to help them with their tension. Ultimately it is the group who are responsible for the way things go on the night, but the facilitator must make sure they have thought of everything and offer the help, advice and suggestions she thinks fit.



There is nothing worse for the text makers than being unable to gauge the reaction of the target group and whatever happens they should make themselves available after the transmission or presentation. It is a vital component of the sort of work we are considering here: texts which are made with a small target group in mind but which might also reach a wider audience. Their reactions are obviously important for the text makers but it can also be important for the target group to have a chance to share their responses. This is easily done in a meeting where everyone can see or listen to the text together, but even if it is broadcast on local radio or television the group should consider

how the reaction can be heard. they can be broadcast on the same channel or where available, on a special reaction channel. It is

sensible for the group to give a lot of consideration to this beforehand, for by considering the ways in which reactions can be generated and shared they will be of better service for the target group.

The presentation will always be an exciting moment for the group and the facilitator should be prepared to help them with their tension.

*You do not want to know
what the audience thinks about
the text, but what they think
about the content.*

Any forum for evaluation needs to be discussed, planned and organized if it is to be as useful as possible. The meeting may need to be chaired in some way and the group will often ask the facilitator to take this task on, but this should be avoided. She can too easily be forced into a position somewhere between the makers and the target group and it is far better that they do this themselves, with the support of the facilitator if necessary.

There is a lot to be said about reactions from the target group and the way the group asks for them. For example they should avoid remarks like, "What do you think about the text". You do not want to know what the audience thinks about the text, but what they think about the content. When you ask for reactions to the text you will hear things like "Oh, it was a nice tape" (Which means??) "It was ok, but the sound, image, music, commentary, cuts, colour was a little bit" (which means??). You will do better to ask questions like, "You have seen what we want, do you think that is reasonable?" or other content based questions. When someone in the audience does not wait for your question, but immediately starts making content-based remarks "Listen you, our school is the best in the area, how dare you suggest that...", stay calm and do not be overwhelmed by the feeling that you have made an excellent program (as this is the case). Answer the question and ask if there are other opinions on the subject. One of the best responses to a text was a hall full of people, discussing the content and the makers behind the green table, listening, making an occasional note and in the end thanking all the people for their contributions. At times like this you will find that the reactions of the target group can even be the prompt for more work and a new text.

Publicity.

It is difficult to decide exactly when publicity should be launched and in many ways it should have been a concern of the group throughout their work. It can so easily pale into insignificance besides the exciting work of production that it can easily be forgotten or left too late. But while one part of the group is editing their material it is an ideal opportunity for another group to be preparing the presentation and publicity. Wherever the presentation is to take place, in someone's home, in their school, in a village hall or community centre, on the local radio or cable television, the target group will need to know that something is going to be presented.

Publicity can come in different forms and at different times. There are three particularly opportune moments for it: when the Supposition is formulated; when the research material is analysed; when the production begins; and when the production is finished.

Pre-publicity is meant to raise the curiosity of the target group. Formulating the Supposition produced material which helped them to think more clearly about the subject and about their attitudes towards the target group. Because of that the material had a news value and it is quite possible that a local newspaper, radio station or television programme would be interested in it. The same is true of the results of the research:

"A group of local people are making a radio programme about their environment. Concerned about the noise from the nearby industrial estate they are trying to find out... They have attended a course at the Institute for Art and Culture where they are learning... They have already interviewed local residents and factory owners and would like to hear from anyone who..."

Once the group have started production there is another opportunity for publicity, for it is now clear exactly what aspect of the issue they are interested in and how it connects with the target group. The material should not be explained in too much detail, just enough to stimulate the target group:

"The group of local residents who we saw last week planning the programme about noise on the industrial estate have been out and about today interviewing factory owners about the problem. They have been trying to find out... and say they will be ready to broadcast the results of their work on..."

Good pre publicity requires thorough planning and the facilitator should be able to advise about this. It can be done through a number of channels: local newspapers, leaflets and posters in the neighbourhood, community newsletters, local radio, and so on. It should always make clear when and where

the text are going to be shown, what they are about, who made them, and to whom they are addressed. Ironically indicating who they are not aimed at can also be a way of getting the attention of your target group by making them aware that special efforts are being made to reach them.

"The group are not showing their text to the County Council yet, for they still want to get local residents to consider their own response to the proposed developments."

It might also be useful to point out particular people will be at the screening:

"Ms Smith, spokeswoman for the Residents' Association, will be in the audience and ready to talk to anyone interested."

Finally it is also worth considering what publicity can be generated after the screening. This can be particularly important when the text was intended to have a particular effect.

"Local residents have been active following the screening last week of the text about noise pollution. Several meetings have been held and the general feeling..."

SECTION FOUR

PLANNING THE MODEL

In order to plan things properly it is important to know how long each of the stages is likely to take. Obviously no firm rules can be given but the following guidelines show what sort of percentage of the time available should be taken up by each stage. From this a facilitator should be able to keep an eye on the progress of the group and (depending on the particular demands of their project) help them to stay on target.

Self- Research and Problematizing	10%
Choice of theme (beaconing and focusing Development of Supposition	5%
Research	40%
Analysis of research findings Defining Proposition	10%
Consideration and choice of target group Consideration and choice of medium Selection form	5%
Making the text	25%
Presentation	5%
	100%

This outline covers all the stages and all the work that has to be done, but it is still worth building in a margin for each part for there is invariably something that can throw the timing out. Sometimes even being an hour short in one of the planning stages can mean that a major point is left unconsidered and this can have disastrous consequences for the project.

The outline demands a large proportion of the time available to be spent on research and analysis. This is surprising to many groups who think they can just come up with an idea and that it is the production that will take most of their time. But good, thorough research, in which the group takes the trouble to study their subject in depth will always give a much more solid basis for the text.

The division of time proposed above is designed for a typical educational setting. If you are planning to do this work in other settings, for example training with a community group that has already spent years investigating the factory polluting their neighbourhood, the allocation of time to the different stages can be different. But in such cases the model can serve as a checklist and making a solid Proposition for the text can be made in an hour or so, just by summarising the years of research and analysis. But even then time must be taken to check if all the previous stages have been done properly. It is not uncommon to hear an experienced action group say, "We know what we're talking about, so let's get started".

Good thorough research, in which the group takes the trouble to study their subject in depth will always give a much more solid basis for the text.

Halfway through the work it becomes apparent that there are differences of opinion on what the text should be about, and a great deal of time needs to be spent on sorting out the arguments.

Converting this plan into actual hours is a relatively simple task once you know how much time is available in total. First you

must decide when the text is to be finished and work back from there. Let us take two examples, one where the group will meet from 11:00 till 16:00, twice a week, for eight weeks. This is a reasonably long project and will have a total of 80 hours. A shorter project, perhaps in a junior school, may have only ten hours to complete everything. Their respective schedules will look like this:

		Group A (80 Hrs)	Group B (10 Hrs)
Self-Research and Problematizing	(10%)	8 Hrs	1 Hr
Choice of theme (beaconing and focusing) and Development of Supposition	(5%)	4 Hrs	30 Min.
Research	(40%)	32 Hrs	4 Hrs
Analysis of research findings and Defining Proposition	(10%)	8 Hrs	1 Hr
Consideration and choice of target group Consideration and choice of medium and Selection of form	(5%)	4 Hrs	30 Min.
Production	(25%)	20 Hrs	2½ Hrs
Presentation	(5%)	4 Hrs	30 Min.

Throughout the planning stage there is one constant rule: don't bite off more than you can chew. Several things make it difficult for the group to follow this advice. At many stages they tend to want to do everything perfectly and the job of the facilitator is to ask them to be quite sure that their efforts are worthwhile. Most of the time the energy that goes into making a particularly precise edit is not worth it since the audience won't even notice it. If the text is working well they will be engrossed in the content. Similarly many groups spend far too much effort on the beginning of the text when they are fresh and determined to make "a smashing start with lots of action". The result may well be a great opening sequence but the end (which is often the part people remember most) may be weak if the group have run out of time.

Another common problem of overload is when groups get seduced by the research and production processes and collect too much material. Recording can be very easy and the group will not always notice how much they have done. Logging a tape can easily take three or four times as long as recording it, so making an inventory of twenty minutes of research or production material is likely to take at least an hour. This simple calculation can give a guide to the maximum amount of material that the group should actually bring back. Group A in the guidelines above, for example, have about 8 hours for the analysis of their material and the development of their Proposition. This can be further subdivided: four hours for the inventory, three hours for discussing the results and planning the next stage, one hour for contingencies. If they have four hours available for the inventory (and if it takes three times as long to log a tape as to record it) then we can see how much

tape they should allow themselves to use for research: $240 \text{ minutes} \div 3 = 80 \text{ minutes}$. Group B, on the other hand, only have one hour for this stage and should also allow time for discussion. They should, perhaps, expect to spend less than half of this on logging the tape and should only record $30 \text{ minutes} \div 3 = 10 \text{ minutes}$ of research material. Their project is obviously simpler and they will need to bear this in mind when setting out all their plans.

When the group draw up their rough structure they will typically refer to only half of their material. The rest will consist of mistakes, duplications, irrelevant asides, and so on. And only about a quarter or a third of it will end up in the final text. From this we can see that group A might turn their 40 minutes of material into a tape of between 10 and 13 minutes. Group B's text will probably be in the order of 4 or 5 minutes.

Trying to predict editing time is often difficult and it is particularly important to leave a margin for error. But simple, well researched and thoroughly prepared material which is being edited according to a conscientious editing scheme will usually go smoothly. The group can expect to complete between two and three minutes of the final text each hour they are in the edit suite. Group A's tape might take 5 or 6 hours to edit. Group B's should be done in less than 3. This is where we can see that complicated editing takes far too long. Technically demanding sequences can take over an hour per minute of final text and groups which spend too long on fine details are wasting their own time and often someone else's money. Both these examples show how a perfectly respectable text can be made within the time available in a way which does justice to the subject, gives due consideration to the audience, will be narrowcast to them, and which can expect to generate a reaction from them.

There is one constant rule: don't bite off more than you can chew.

FINALLY.

Any dogmatic facilitator who sticks rigidly to the different steps of the model we have outlined above will make their life (and the group's) very difficult. The same applies to those who become so involved with the group that their personal interest starts to tip the scales when the group is weighing up their options. But flexibility will always be the key. We should repeat that the production model is a checklist for what needs to be considered, not a blueprint for what must be done.

SECTION FIVE

SHORTCUTS AND VARIATIONS

So much for the full model. But of course there are many circumstances in which it is more appropriate to do things slightly differently. Sometimes you will need a shortcut, sometimes you will need to vary the emphasis placed on the different stages. On other occasions, sometimes you will be working with less-motivated groups. What then?

One advantage of working with the model is that it very soon becomes apparent when groups do not want to do the things that need to be done. It will jeopardize their time schedule and the first question to be asked is: How do you propose to make up for the lost time? (The only answer that is possible is: Putting in some extra time.) When the group does not want to do that, the only thing for the facilitator to do is to make her point another way. This means she says something like, "Time is running out. If you do not put in extra time we cannot facilitate this process in a way that will ensure a screening on the 11th of May and successful completion of all the previous stages. What do we do? Cancel the project?" If the group says "Yes, ok," that's it. If they come up with some other solution, it needs to be considered by the facilitator and the group.

Shortcuts are worth considering if you are going to work with an experienced action group, who have the content at their fingertips, but who have no media knowledge. On the other

hand, if you are dealing with video amateurs, who know everything about video, but nothing on research and how to do it, you may have to slow their progress down in certain parts of the text. We can illustrate this with a number of examples of the ways in which the model may be adapted to meet the needs of different groups.

Using Video for research.

Although a stills camera and a microphone are excellent research tools there is also something to be said for using video cameras while they are collecting research material. This enables the group to prepare a short audio-visual report when the research is completed. They have to select, say, two minutes of their material and edit it together roughly to illustrate a number of points they consider important. It may be a sentence from one interview ("This is where he puts the argument most clearly"), a mistake in the recording ("Now you know why you shouldn't record people when they are standing with their back to a bright window") or maybe a "bloop" (a funny mistake made by someone on the tape). The intention is simply to edit them together and present them to the other groups, not to make it look like a television programme. They should introduce the clips and let the others ask questions. Such meetings are often very fruitful for the different groups can learn a lot from each other and have not, until now, had much chance to see what others are up to. They can offer advice but care should be taken that criticism is not too damaging. Some

Shortcuts are worth considering if you are going to work with an experienced action group, who have the content at their fingertips, but who have no media knowledge.

groups may be at a particularly vulnerable stage of their work and will need support if they feel they have been attacked too strongly by others. They will be aware of their own shortcomings or their uncertainties. This is a time for encouragement, not abuse. In addition, of course, any material gathered at this stage can be used directly in the finished production. Early analysis of this material may be especially helpful with the preparation of later recordings.

Mini-courses.

As an alternative to the conventional practice of putting technical training at the start of practical projects, there is plenty of opportunity in this model for so-called mini courses. At the start of the research stage, for example, the group will need relevant advice about the camcorder or tape recorder, microphone, etc. But do not be tempted to offer more advice than the group need for their immediate tasks. This would start to put technique first.

Another good moment for a mini-course is if the group are going to make the two-minute edit of their research material. They will get a simple introduction to the edit suite and will be less intimidated by it when they come to make their final text. This course may also be given during the production stage. A longer session studying documentary material and the general principles of documentary work is often useful. Even the preparation of publicity might warrant special attention with some of the group.

Perhaps some people are not very confident with telephones

but there are a lot of appointments to be made. This would be a good opportunity to stop the course, practice telephone skills, then work together on making the appointments. Or with publicity it can be very helpful to invite a journalist to give a short lecture on the topic. It releases the group an insight into how to handle press releases and they may even get some free publicity. But the important points for all mini-courses are to explain that the main project has temporarily stopped, to offer only training that will help with the text in hand, and to run them as closely as possible to the time when they will be needed.

Using the model to compile research reports.

This is a common use of the model in Dutch schools which has now been used successfully in England with children as young as 5. One Dutch class of 11-12 year-olds had discussed a range of options in their class when they were exploring the world of work. By using the early stages of the model they settled on the most interesting for them: "Exactly what do hotel chambermaids do?" Part of the class (five girls in this case) wanted to explore the issue, and wrote down a list of questions that they wanted to ask and things they would like to see. They reported their work back to the rest of the class to see if they had covered everything. Then they had to telephone the local hotel to make appointments. Supervised by a parent (who had been on a 10-hour training course on how to facilitate this kind of work) they took a video camera and a microphone to the hotel.

They talked to a waiter, the owner of the hotel, a receptionist

and the chambermaids. Luckily an apprentice chambermaid was being taught the proper way to make beds that morning, so they recorded that as well and asked the list of questions approved by the class. These included, "Have you ever seen anyone naked in the bedroom?" A typical teacher might have censored this, but the facilitators understood that this model encourages the children to ask about their own concerns. Indeed it was no embarrassment for the chambermaids either, for it is an issue for them too and obviously something they are trained to cope with. "We have to knock at least twice," one of them said. "It did happen to me once but you just shut the door and come back again later."

This particular project generated 40 minutes of material (the maximum recommended for this sort of project) which was taken back to the centre, viewed and logged. The details were written on a flip chart and all the sheets were laid out on the ground while the rough structure was composed on a whiteboard. In this way it was easier to wipe parts out and make the inevitable adjustments. The children saw that what was going on was a process of choice and manipulation, and that they were able to make these decisions. The edit scheme was drawn up on flip charts so that the whole group could follow things while the editing was completed. Everyone shared the technical tasks and the editing was done quickly and efficiently. The final tape (about 8 minutes long) was copied onto a VHS tape (the centre has U-Matic editing). The entire project took them four mornings over a period of three weeks. One morning to develop the theme in the classroom, one to make the recording at the hotel, one for logging the tapes and composing the rough structure,

and one more for writing out the edit scheme and doing the final edit.

This project was important for the school since it encouraged the children to develop their own programme of work, researching their own concerns, and feeding information back into the classroom so that everyone would benefit from the efforts of those who had been out working on their behalf. It was the start of a rolling programme of such work for the school. Every three weeks a different group took a subject that was currently being discussed in their class and produced a video in a similar way. After six months there was a screening of all the tapes to the school, to parents, to local residents and to all the people who had taken part. Local newspapers were also invited since such screenings are a good chance to get some good publicity for the school and its work.



It will be clear that these projects are not "productions" on the scale of those we have outlined in the full description of the model. They are more akin to "research reports" but still serve a very important function in the school. There are also groups in Holland that produce such projects in one day. They start at 9am and are in the viewing room by 11 with a maximum of twenty minutes of material. The rough structure is completed before lunch, the editing by 3 and the finished tape shown at school first thing the following morning.

Nor are all the different stages as discrete as the model outlines. Here the self-research, problematizing, choice of theme and issues are all treated as a whole and it is not always clear where one stage ends and another begins. Such details are not really important for work of this kind with 10-year-olds. Similarly there is no need for the group to develop their Proposition, to go out again to get more material, and so on. The model is adapted to circumstances like this with ease. It is less important for teachers to follow the model in all its intricacies than for them to feel able to use it to help them and their classes with their educational goals.

Working with photographs.

A group of 16 year olds decided to make a photographic exhibition about their social work course. They wanted to be able to show it to new students so they would know what their forthcoming work would be like. While they were writing down a list of all the things that could be included in the exhibition: a list of the subjects covered, the books, the different stages, the work experience, and so on, this conversation took place between the students and their teacher:

Teacher "Why do you want to make an exhibition about the course?"

Students "When you start here you don't know enough to make proper choices about the education. You don't know what to expect or what's going on.

T "Is that a problem?"

S "Yes all sorts of people leave the school during second year because they have made the wrong choice."

T "Is it right then if I say that lots of the students don't know what lies ahead of them and then drop out?"

S "Yeah, you could put it that way."

T "Are you sure it's that way. Can you check it out with the students? Maybe you should talk to the course coordinator too, and find out if you're right. When you're sure why people drop out you will be able to know what the exhibition should be about."

S "Yeah, let's do that."

T "Maybe the school should be giving out more information, or maybe you students are the best ones to tell the newcomers about these things. But research first. Start with Miss Lemen and Mr Sloosz."

The group did all this and prepared a list of questions for the conversation. In addition they undertook a survey of which showed that students were unhappy with the amount of homework and the fact that there was more theory than practice on the course. They identified some strengths of the course too, including the college campus and the contacts they had made with their fellow students. After the survey the group defined their Proposition: "Pupils know too little about the school before they arrive and often have wrong expectations about it."

The results of the survey also told them what sorts of photographs were needed - they made a kind of photo-documentary of pupils doing homework with lots of books around them etc. The pictures were staged and a little exaggerated, but made the point effectively. At the same time the group planned the layout of the exhibition in such a way that visitors had to go through it like a maze, trying to find their way. There were pictures and texts about the subjects on offer as well as some of the less favourable aspects of the work. They also showed how education gives you the choice of carrying on with learning or going out to look for work. A notice at the end wished future pupils good luck with their choice.

The model assumes that you will be dealing with a group in which the people do not know each other. In this example the class members were a long standing group, so dealing with the first stage was easy but was still necessary.

Making a picture book.

Two student therapists were doing their practical placements in a hospital. They soon realised that there was very little material on the ward which could be used with children to tell them about the sorts of things they would find in the hospital and what was likely to happen to them during their stay. They discussed this with a supervising nurse and discovered that though there was material on this for parents nothing had been specifically prepared for children. They decided to make such a booklet themselves. They took photographs in the hospital and got a lot of help from the nurse and wrote captions and story lines to go with them.

In this example the research stage was effectively combined with the production. The teacher's role was to go through their experiences and conversations with them and to ensure that they were properly coordinated in their work. Eventually the students made an excellent picture book which was widely circulated among a number of hospitals.

We can give numerous examples where only some parts of the model have been used. What is common to most of them is the way in which the facilitator uses the model as a means of checking the progress of the groups that they are working with. The model is not sacred because, as Bertold Brecht said: The one who learns is more important than the doctrine.

SECTION SIX

TEACH YOURSELF THE MODEL

Just because you have no experience with this model, you should not be afraid to go off and do media work with groups. You too can be a facilitator. And you should remember that it is actually a great advantage to be driven to the media by content. You and your groups will know about that content and the model will help you develop your ideas. Here, though, is a five-session course which runs in Holland for parents, teachers and other facilitators. It is designed to give an insight into the processes that groups go through when they research a subject and prepare a research report.

The course takes 5 x 2 hour sessions and is best done with four or five people in a group. It describes the process used in by many groups in Holland with Sony Low Band U-Matic equipment. Don't worry if you use something else, or even if you are going to do radio projects or photography. (Anyone using only basic equipment or who has no technical expertise is advised to look at the Section "How to Handle Simpler Types of Equipment" below.) You can follow this course in your own way before using the model and it will give you confidence to act as a facilitator. Remember, the course is designed to introduce you to the basic elements of the model, not to make you an expert in technique.

Before the course starts you should all read this section of the book so that it is clear to everyone how the time is to be spent and what the results will be. By the time you finish the course you will have produced something that is useful for your own group. It is advisable for some of the group to have set up the equipment beforehand and tested its basic functions. Follow only the simplest parts of the manuals provided with it, and ignore all the fancy features of your equipment.

Session 1.

Start by taking yourselves through a brief 'guided tour' of all the sessions below. This will stress what the course is for and remind you that it is not about producing some highly polished piece of television. You will be making a piece of communication with a specific purpose.

The task for the rest of the session is to record and edit a practice sequence in which one of you arrives by bicycle at the centre. The scene will be a short story made up from five separate recordings of the same thing:

You can follow this course in your own way before using the model and it will give you confidence to act as a facilitator.

- 1. Wide shot: Someone arrives at the centre, gets off the bike, locks it and enters the building.**
- 2. Medium shot (recorded from a different viewpoint than the first shot): The person arrives, gets off the bike, locks it and enters the building.**
- 3. Medium shot (from different viewpoint again): Locking the bike.**
- 4. Close up: Locking the bike.**
- 5. Medium or wide shot (again from a new viewpoint): Entering the building.**

If it is raining or dark a similar exercise can be done indoors. For example someone opens a door, enters a room, opens a filing cabinet, puts in a file and goes out again. Before the recording starts check that everyone understands the assignment. By this time you will be about 20 minutes into the session.

Check which of you has used such equipment before and who hasn't (fortunately there is generally someone with no experience whatsoever). The least experienced should operate the equipment this time because they will have developed no bad habits and because it will give you all the chance to start from scratch. Then examine the different pieces of equipment and their functions. The camera (which converts light into electric currents) the microphone (which converts sound into electric currents) and the recorder (which records these currents

onto the tape in the cassette). Find the "play" and "record" buttons, the "start/stop" button on the camera, and the microphone (point it towards the sound you want to record and hold it as near as possible) It doesn't matter if the microphone can be seen in the picture - you are not making a Hollywood movie.)

Now you are ready to practice the basic approach to making a good recording:

- 1. Discuss the best viewpoint for recording an object or an action in the room, put the camera there and turn it on.**
- 2. Look through the camera and zoom in.**
- 3. Focus on the part of the picture that needs to be sharp.**
- 4. Zoom out (completely). Everything you need in the picture should now be visible in the viewfinder. If not move the camera and start again with 2.**
- 5. When everyone is happy press the start button on the camera. Wait for ten seconds and let the action start. When the action finishes wait ten seconds and press the camera button again.**

This practice should take about 10 minutes. It is best to do it with a monitor attached so that everybody can see what is happening when they zoom in and focus.

You can forget everything you have learnt so far, but promise yourselves that every time you work with the equipment you will:

1. Always make a trial recording before you start and any time you have moved the equipment.
2. Always watch the trial recording. Is everything OK? Then start your recording.
3. Always record the ten seconds before and after the action.
4. When you have finished, check the last part to make sure it is on tape. If you don't do this something will go wrong.

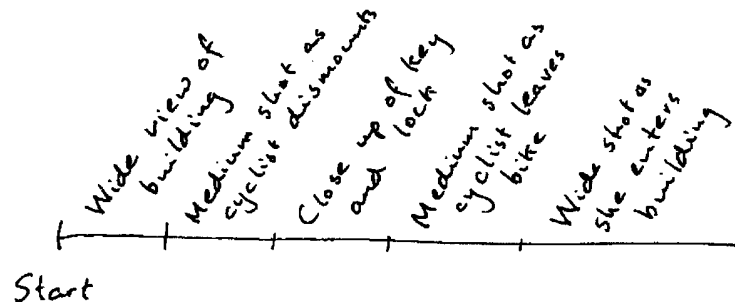
Pick up the equipment and go outside to record your material. You must be back within 20 minutes.

When you return watch the tape on the edit suite's PLAYER. In this way you will learn all you need to operate the machine: inserting a tape, using the buttons for play, stop, fast forward, rewind, search, and setting the counter to zero. It takes about three minutes. Log the material by listing the shots in minutes and seconds on a flip chart. This takes ten minutes. Then write up your comments on the material ("Shot 1 ends too soon". "Shot 3 is the best". And so on.)

From this point you will begin to uncover the ways in which editing works (the ways that different pictures work together to produce certain meanings). It only remains for you to point

these out to each other and you will realise the sort of thing you will need to consider when making your final programme.

Decide which shots you want to use and write them out on a whiteboard in the form of a rough structure. This gives you the chance to try out the time line (see "Making a Rough Structure") and how to use it. It merely shows the order of the shots you want to use and might look something like this:



As you do this you will realise that there are a large number of different texts you could make with this material. The shots can be used in a different order and last for different lengths of time. There is not one "right" way. The decisions are yours. When you work like this in schools or colleges the decisions will be your students'.

Now you can make a precise editing scheme, by writing down the point on the original tape (in minutes and seconds) exactly which parts of which shots you want to use and in which order.

Notice that you will not be using the material in the order that you recorded it. Whatever you choose it should be written down in this sort of detail:

Shot	Start - Finish	Video
1	00:10 - 00:18	Wide view until bike stops
2	02:20 - 02:32	Medium shot as cyclist dismounts and takes key
3	03:25 - 03:31	Close up as she locks bike
4	02:39 - 02:46	Medium shot as cyclist leaves bike
5	00:49 - 01:03	Wide shot as she enters building

This again is an exercise in handling the PLAYER since you will have to search for places on the tape and indicate precisely where they should begin and end. The whole process should take you another 15 minutes.

Editing. You need two machines for editing, one for playing back the material and one for making a new recording of it. This is not like film editing where you can take a piece of film, cut it up and stick it together in a new order. With video editing you make a copy of the material you want in the right sequence from the PLAYER to the RECORDER.

All you have to do now is:

1. Set the **PLAYER** at the right place (the exact beginning of the first shot) with the machine on **PAUSE**.
2. Set the **RECORDER** on **PAUSE** at the precise point where you want the previous shot to end and the new one to begin.
3. Press the **AUTO-EDIT** button and wait.

The PLAYER and RECORDER then run backwards a little so that they will have a chance to get up to the right speed before they do the edit. When they get to the edit point you have chosen, the RECORDER will automatically switch into RECORD and the copy will be made.

4. **When you have gone past the point that you want the recording to finish (check the counter number and the edit schedule) press the END button. Wait till the red light goes out and the machines go back into PAUSE by themselves.**
5. **Find the beginning of the next shot on the PLAYER. Find the end of the shot you have just copied on the RECORDER.**
6. **Do the next edit.**
7. **Keep going until the sequence is completed.**

During editing you should divide the work as follows: One person operates the PLAYER; one operates the RECORDER; one person supervises the controls on the SOUND MIXER if you have one (it is not very important here but it will be later on); and one person follows the edit scheme and gives the instructions. Editing a sequence like this takes about 5 minutes. Playback takes one more minute. The time is short but the exercise can be done. Perfection is not important. Next time will be more relaxed.

Before you finish set yourselves an assignment for next week. Those of you who work with groups or classes will have to ask them to suggest a subject for you. It must be something simple like "How do bananas grow?" or "How can you light a bunsen burner safely?". Your job will be to work together and make a tape which will give a reasonable answer to the group.

Session 2.

At the start of the second session look again at the material you edited last time, laugh at it, and learn from it. It proves that it is easy to handle all the equipment and to make something that has meaning.

Now you must choose one of the projects suggested to you during the week by your groups. Discuss all the alternatives and choose the one which is most interesting, realistic and relevant. It may not be a Supposition (as outlined on the model) and you can turn it into one if you wish. You need to explore the potential of your final subject, to plan exactly what you are going to record next week and to decide how you will share the various tasks.

Although the equipment was used in the first session you may not yet be confident with it. Now is a good time to have another try. It is also a good opportunity to start asking how the lessons learned so far can be used in your own circumstances when you act as a facilitator. What will you need to know? It may not be possible to answer those questions at this stage, but it is worth noting them down now and saving them for the final session of the course.

Session 3.

This time the material for the project can be collected. Work together, sharing the tasks whenever possible. Take only one tape and record no more than ten minutes of material (any more will be too hard to work with).

Start asking how the lessons learned so far can be used in your own circumstances when you act as a facilitator.

Remember the rules of how to set up each recording (choose the position, zoom in, focus, zoom out enough to frame the picture, record). And be sure to make all the checks before and afterwards, leaving ten seconds before and after each shot.

Go back to the centre and view the material. Discuss again the sorts of problems you anticipate when facilitating this sort of work and make a list of any unanswered questions.

Session 4.

Log the material you collected last week, discuss it quickly, make a rough structure and translate this into a precise edit scheme. Do not spend more than half of the session on this and try not to get stuck in discussions about details.

Take it in turns to edit parts of the tape. Watch the clock and make sure you have time for a celebratory premiere while you make a copy for the classroom.

Once again you can make a list of the possible difficulties involved in facilitating this kind of work.

Arrangements must be made for screening the work to its real audience before your next session and it is obviously better if the group can attend. When it has been seen it is important to ask the audience for their reaction. You are not looking for a criticism of your technique (fuzzy pictures, poor sound) so much as a reaction to the content. Do they now know how a banana grows? Or how to work a bunsen burner? (Better still give them one and see if they can do it safely.) Discuss the project with colleagues and get their assessment too.

Session 5.

View the finished tape again, but on your own this time. What do you think about it now? How fair were the reactions from the classroom. Check your work against the short description of the model (Section One) to see which stages you have covered and which you have left out. By doing this you will immediately see how adaptable the model is and start to develop ideas about how to use it yourself.

Some of you may want to try parts of the technical processes again, or to think about alternatives for the programme you have made. How could it have been better? What would you do differently next time? What were you best at?

By now you should have copied down all the concerns about facilitation that have been mentioned in previous weeks and sorted them into categories. Now is the time to go through them and look for tips and solutions. You can use each other as a resource and look in the rest of this booklet or in your equipment manuals for solutions. Remember: you are resourceful people. Many of the questions will seem irrelevant since they will have been answered by the course itself. Others can be opened up for discussion and possible solution by the group.

The most common concern raised at this stage is when a facilitator should interfere with the production process and when they should leave the group alone. This is a natural thing to worry about, for members of the group will be about to use new skills in new circumstances, and will often be unsure about

the right advice to give their classes. But you can rest assured that your confidence will grow the more you use the model and that, by and large, it is better to let the class make their own decisions provided they can justify them in terms of the project itself. You do not have to avoid being a leader, but you must not be the only one in the group.

This is the end of the course. There is nothing more to be done except to use the model and to adapt it to your own work. Good luck!

SECTION SEVEN

HOW TO HANDLE SIMPLER TYPES OF EQUIPMENT.

In this section we will describe the basic, most down-to-earth way of working. It involves no clever equipment, no extra sound or mixers, no edit controller, just the minimum to get started.

Choose a camcorder with a manual. There is no need to read all of this, but study it until you know how to put a tape in. See if you can set all the controls to a neutral position so that you only have to press one button (the RECORD button) to make a recording. If it is possible, turn off the autofocus. Since the camera's own microphone is only going to record what the camera operator says, plug in a separate microphone with a windshield. (This is the biggest single improvement you can make to the quality of the sound. Buy the best you can afford.)

If you have to buy such a microphone, take the camcorder to the shop with you and have it demonstrated on your camcorder. Play the tape back so that you can find out that it really works and that the sound is not distorted (the microphone gives too much current for your camcorder) or so quiet that you need to turn the television right up (the microphone gives too little current).

Another useful accessory is a close up lens. With this you can make really big close-up images of titles, documents and

photographs without using the "macro" facility on the camcorder which is a bit fiddly and stops you zooming in and out. Try one of about +1 dioptré at the shop and check the results before buying. The final accessory worth considering at this stage is a wide-angle converter which screws onto the front of the camcorder. It will widen your zoom lens by a factor of about 0.5 or 0.7 and will help you work in tight corners. Again you should try it out before you buy and play a recording back to make sure it gives you a clear, sharp image. Be careful that it doesn't cut off the corners of your picture when the camera is zoomed right out.

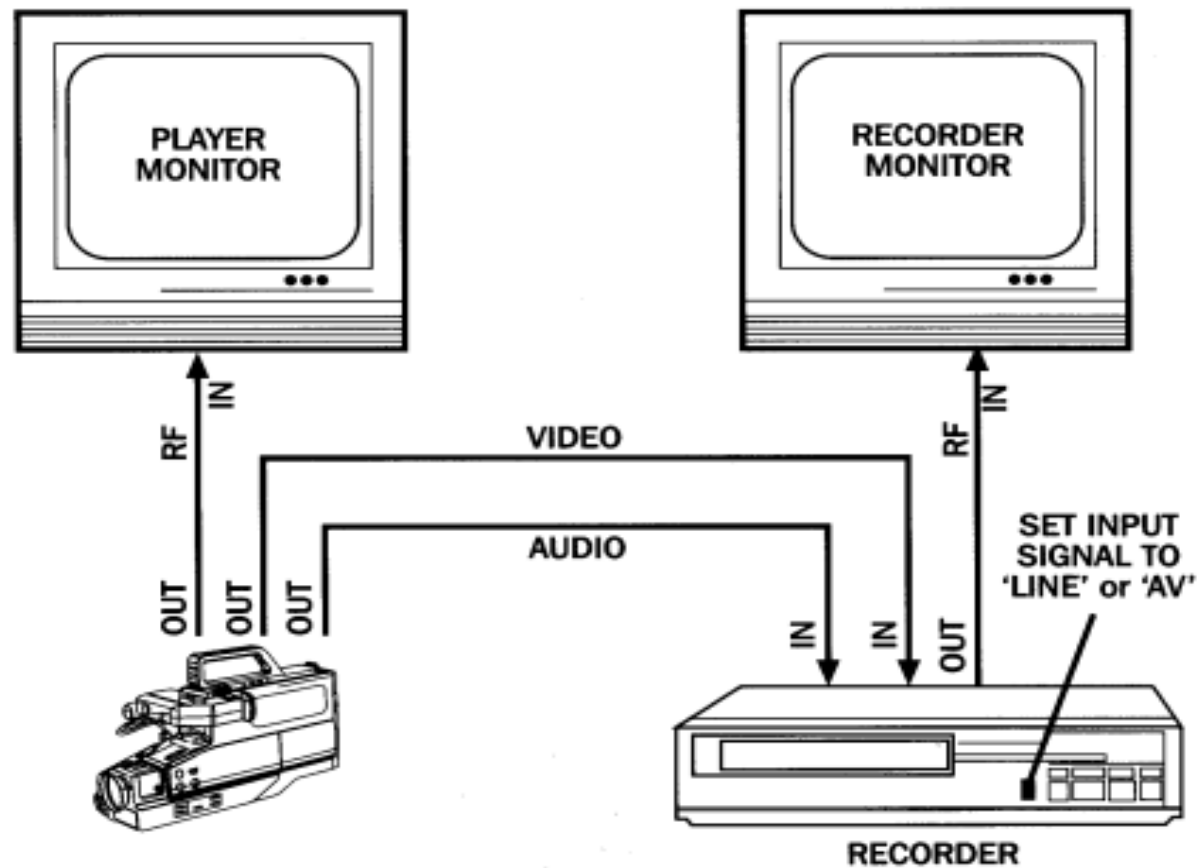
This is all you will need for recording during the research stage.

Choose a subject. Press the record button and make a recording for about one minute. Play this back on a television set or a monitor. (Check the details in your manual).

Now for the editing. Whatever happens you will need a PLAYER a RECORDER and two MONITORS or TELEVISIONS (to look for material on each machine). One of the players can be the camcorder but you will still need a monitor for it since a group cannot all look in the viewfinder at the same time.

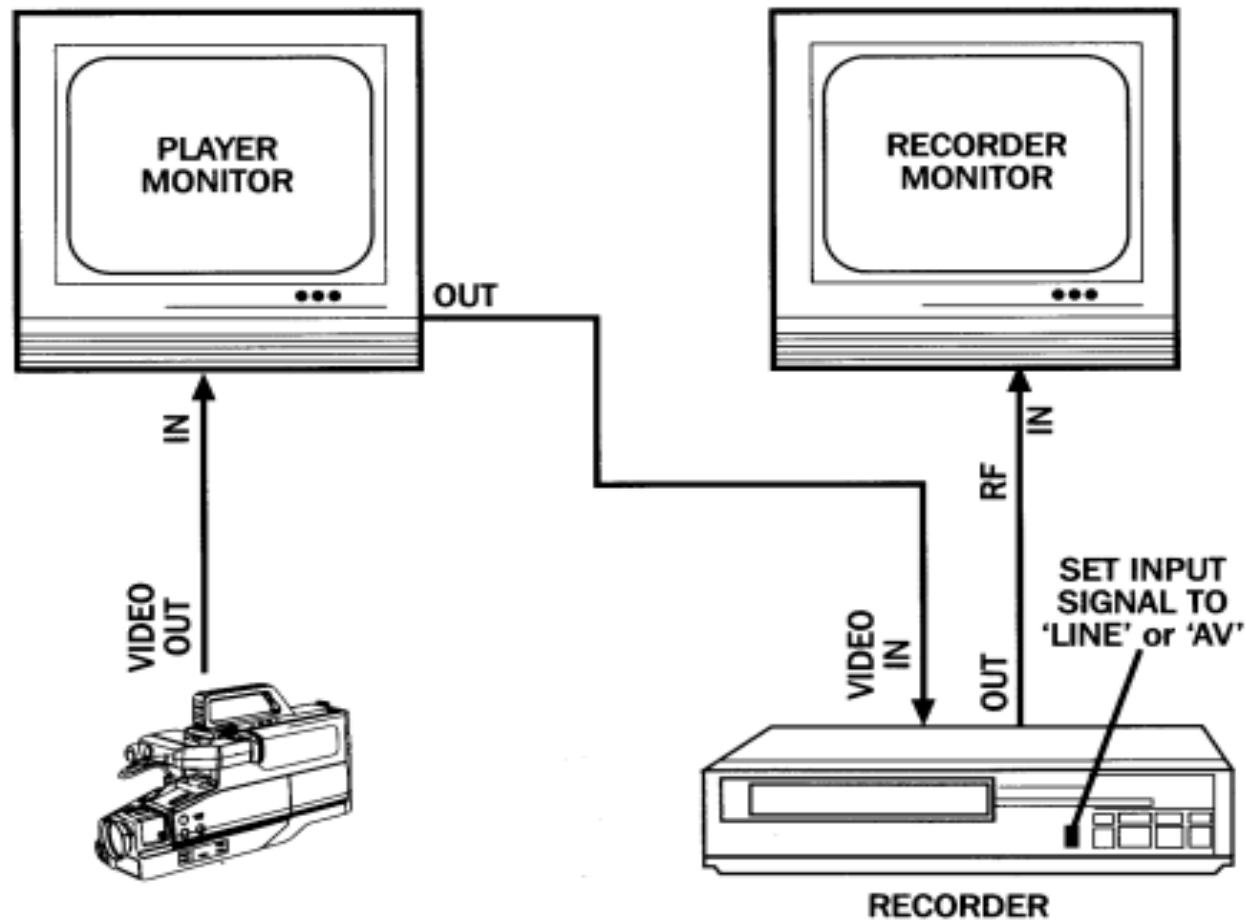
Connect the cables which will take the image and the sound from the PLAYER to the RECORDER. These are normally supplied with the camcorder and there is usually a diagram

in the manual to show you what to do. It will look something like this:



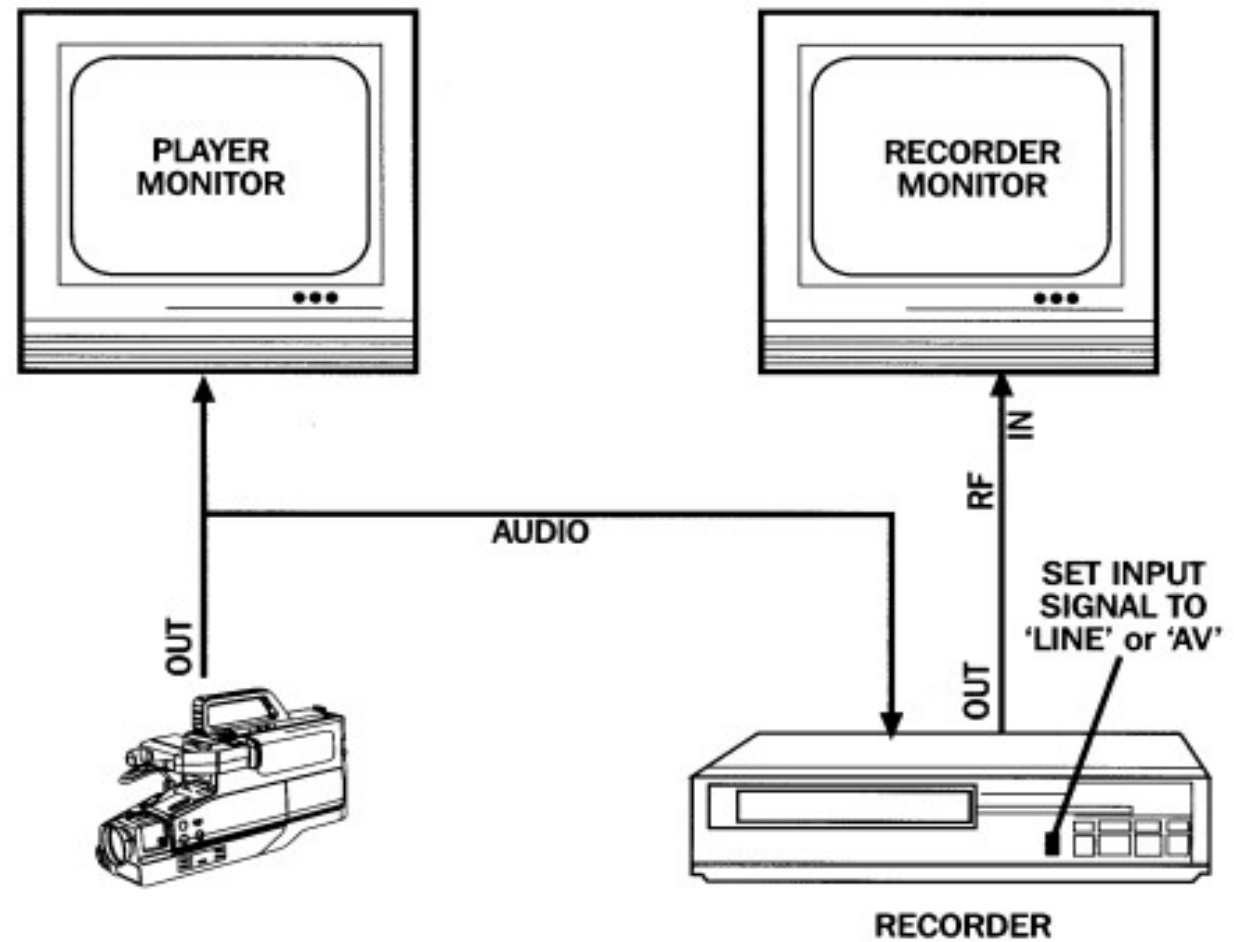
NOTE: some camcorders may not have a separate socket to send the picture to the monitor. Do not worry. If your monitor has sockets marked VIDEO IN and VIDEO OUT you can send

the picture from the camcorder to the VIDEO IN socket and connect the VIDEO OUT to the recorder. Put the terminator switch next to the socket on OFF.

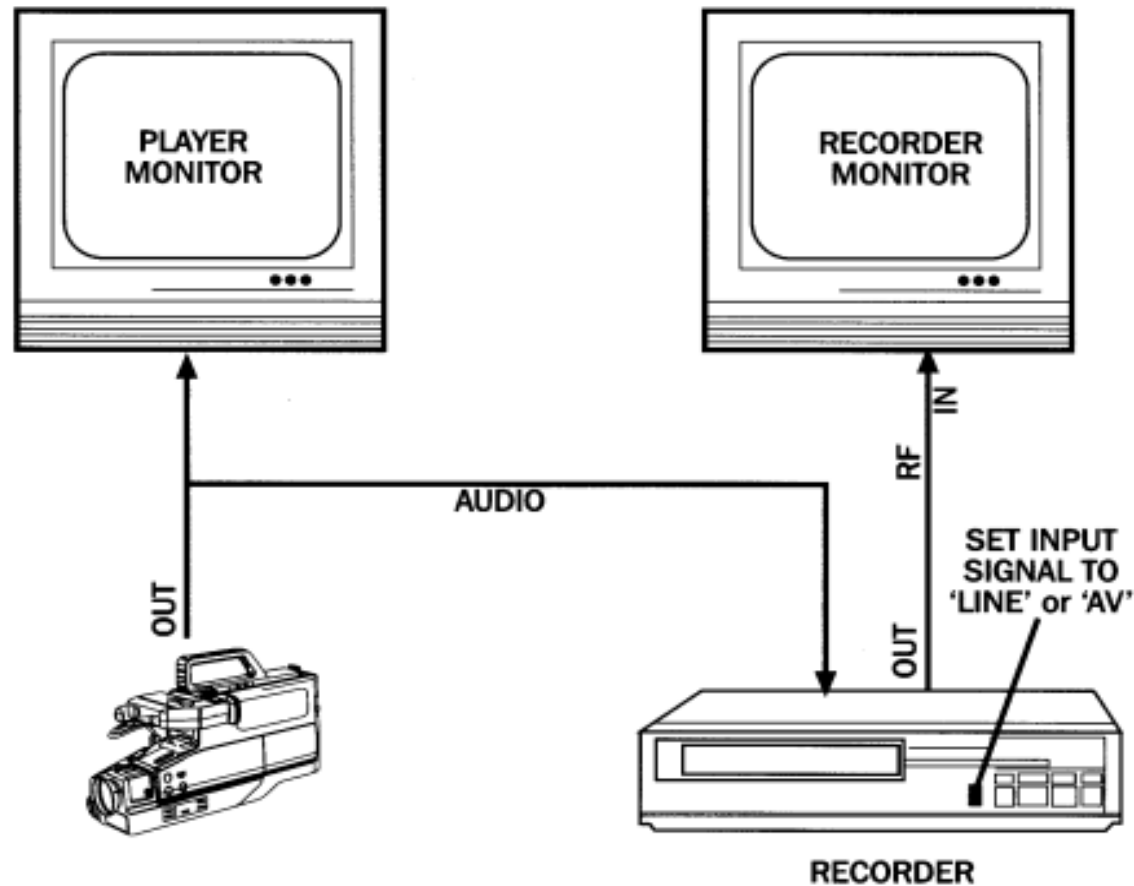


If you don't have this "loop-through" you can buy a "T CONNECTOR" in the VIDEO IN socket and attach another cable to the RECORDER. Put the terminator switch on OFF

or, if necessary have the built-in terminator resistor removed. It will take a tv repair shop less than 15 minutes.



In either case the audio cables can be connected like this:



A black and white monitor is perfectly suitable for the player or camcorder. They can be bought cheaply second-hand and (as a Sony salesman once told us) will make your edit suite look up to date. In the edit suites of the advertising

agencies the clients were constantly complaining that the images on all the screens were different and that their biscuits and washing powders looked green or too red. It is actually very difficult to adjust all the monitors to look the same and in

an edit suite it is not important since everyone only checks the colour on one, high quality monitor (the one that is connected to the record machine). In the end, instead of getting the agencies to explain things to the biscuit manufacturers, Sony came up with a technical solution. They supplied a new range of black and white monitors.

If you have difficulties check the illustrations above and in

your manual. If you are still unhappy ask for help. If necessary call in a local technician who will be able to do the whole thing in less than half an hour.

Put all the equipment on a large table and edit 'from left to right'. This means have the camcorder or player and its corresponding monitor on the left, and the recorder and its monitor on the right. Have one person sitting in front of each.

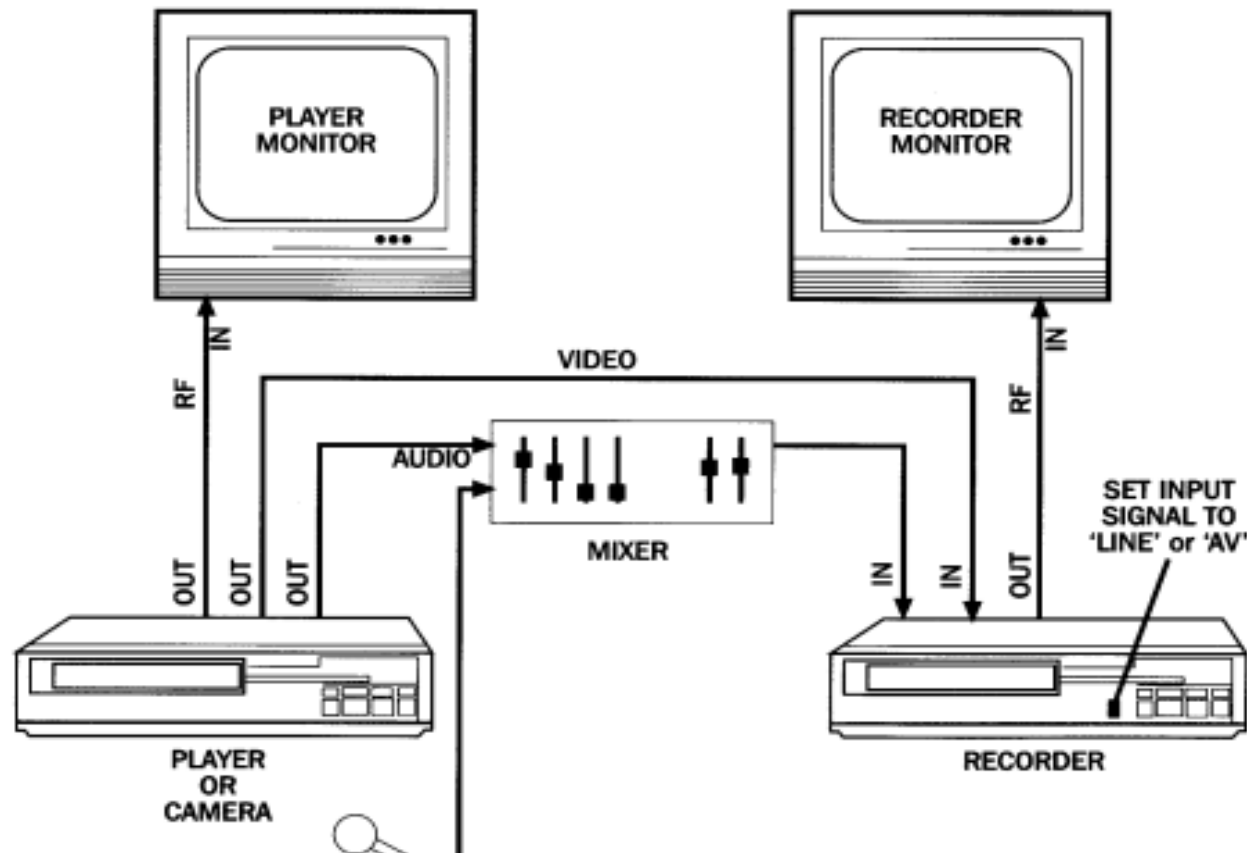
*The simplest type of editing needs
just two video machines and a
television.*

1. Do you have a video tape with a black picture recorded on it? If so go straight to point 3 below. If not follow point 2.
2. Put the lens cap on the camcorder and record about one minute of black picture. Stay quiet or you will record noises as well. You will need this tape every time you start a new programme so label it "Black Video" and keep it somewhere safe.
3. Rewind the "Black Video" tape and put it in the PLAYER on PAUSE.
4. Put a new blank tape in the RECORDER, start recording and play the black picture from your PLAYER. Now you are copying the black material to your RECORDER. This will give a nice clear beginning for your programme. Record at least 30 seconds of it then PAUSE the RECORDER and leave it in PAUSE.
5. Change the tape in the PLAYER and find the first piece of material by referring to your logging sheets. When you have found it put the PLAYER on PAUSE a fraction of a second before the place you want it to begin.
6. Everyone ready? Count down nice and clearly: "THREE, TWO, ONE, GO!" On "One" start the PLAYER. On "GO" start the RECORDER. You are now making the copy.
7. Check on your logging sheet where the shot will end and when you get there put the RECORDER in PAUSE. Leave it there.
8. Find the next piece of material on the PLAYER. Put it in PAUSE a fraction of a second before the place you want it to begin.
9. Everyone ready? "THREE, TWO, ONE, GO!"
10. And so on until the tape is edited.

Adding Commentary.

If you want to add commentary to your video, look at the diagram and you will see how an audio mixer can be used to combine sound from the PLAYER and live commentary from

a MICROPHONE. Experiment with this and you will soon find you have a powerful tool added to your equipment.



One final word of warning. Before editing your project it is advisable to make a trial edit before you start to make sure that everything is working. It is easy to replace machines or cables if things don't go well, but very disappointing to find out there are problems only when you have finished. You may find that you have to change the speed of your countdown. Some RECORDERS are a bit slow to get going when you release the pause button and you may miss the start of each new shot. A few practices will settle the procedure for your equipment. Write it down (with pictures if they help) and keep a copy on the wall for everyone to see.

Now that you have got to grips with these basic technical things you can start with "Teach Yourself The Model". Get a group of colleagues, friends or parents together and within a few weeks you and your class, your youth group, your management course, or your organisation will be in business.

SECTION EIGHT

PRACTICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE MODEL IN ACTION.

The model can be used in various ways with different emphases. In this chapter we will describe two examples which show the flexibility of the model and the way it works in practice. The first concentrates on the early stages of the model and describes a group who explored an important issue but (partly because of their age) did so without producing a formal Supposition. The second example describes a project which followed all the stages more closely.

Example One.

The first is an example of a large project. A group of 11-13 year old primary school children in Holland, who had already used video to compile short research reports decided to make a longer documentary. After the programme was finished three of us (Dirk Schouten who acted as facilitator, the class teacher and one of the pupils) tried to reconstruct the course of events. The emphasis in this example is on the stages 1 to 8 of the model. The first stages are fully described because they show how to organise such a complicated and difficult project with a group of 26 pupils.

Selecting a Subject. At the beginning of the school year the teacher had mentioned the possibility of the class working on a documentary video as their end of year project. There was some discussion on exactly what a documentary was, and the the pupils had come up with examples from the television;

nature documentaries etc. Then school life went on and in March the project started with the question: "What is worth working on?" A few subjects were suggested: 'Studio Aalsmeer' (the local television studio); 'Hospital'; 'Convent' and 'Schiphol Airport'. The class discussed the potential of all of these and whose cooperation would be needed. Which of these people did the children know? What could be gained from making it?

'Studio Aalsmeer' was recognised as a chance to learn how television is made, what dressing rooms are, how applause is encouraged by people waving signs, the make-up, how the recording of a television programme works from beginning to end. Cindy had suggested the subject because she would love to do it. She had no contacts but had once watched a recording of a programme.

'Hospital' would be about nurses, operations and everything connected with them. The subject was abandoned because it seemed too large. Everybody expected to work on it for at least a year and that was much too long. The subject had been brought in by Hanne, probably from her own experiences of it. Her father had died two years previously and she had experienced examinations, operations and many of the processes associated with hospitals.

'Convent' was brought in by Jorika because her mother works

Which of these people did the children know? What could be gained from making it?

in a convent in Heemstede (a nearby village). So that would be a good contact person and a way in to the convent. It would become a documentary on convent life. The group did not like the idea in the end. Later in the year they paid a visit to the convent where they could see everything and talk to everybody. It was very interesting but not thought suitable for a video.

'Schiphol Airport' was brought in by Jasper. His parents have a small advertising agency and the whole family would welcome the expansion of Schiphol because they depend on it for much of their work (a lot of small companies on the airport order their advertising material from them). Everybody knew it was a controversial issue around the school and saw a lot of potential in it so the subject was supported by a number of pupils and the teacher. The subjects mentioned above were collected over two or three days but they did not all come easily. At first no one made any suggestions and the teacher had told them they would have to abandon the whole project. After that pupils started to bring in their ideas.

Self-Research. When 'Schiphol Airport' was finally chosen we looked at the range of people we had access to and which of them might be prepared to contribute to the project. Among our list of contacts were a lot of parents and acquaintances who had dealings with Schiphol. At that point everybody saw that this subject had potential if only because we could collect a lot of information.

Choosing a Theme. We then held a brainstorming session on possible subjects related to Schiphol. Our guiding question was: 'What do you think of when you think about Schiphol'. Everybody raised their hands and 32 subjects appeared on the blackboard: Tax-free shops, customs, the runway and the

flight-path, freight, the number of passengers disembarking, the transport belts, the noise pollution, stench, soot, and so on. There were all the things the children had experienced when flying: the departure lounge, the baggage hall, etc. They came up with exclamations and little stories. The whole subject was becoming unworkable for nobody could now see the wood for the trees. How were we to identify the central theme?

Then we returned to the original issue of the expansion of Schiphol Airport. It concerned everybody in some way or another and it is a hot issue. We examined the list generated by the brainstorm and checked each item in turn to see whether or not it fitted with the theme of expansion. Each suggestion was marked with a + or a - and gradually the main themes emerged. Discussion was the key for this process. Many children were concerned about the environment and were against expansion, but others had parents who worked at Schiphol and were in favour of it. Each could see the other's point of view and everyone started to get an overview of the pros and cons of the expansion.

Gradually seven themes emerged for the project:

1. Houses that would need to be demolished if the airport were to expand.
2. Environment (sound pollution).
3. Environment (pollution by stench and soot)
4. Transport.
5. Employment.
6. Exports and passengers.
7. Safety.

The class divided into 7 groups - 5 groups of 4 and 2 groups of 3 - and they discussed which theme they preferred. Everyone wanted to study "environment" or "employment" as their first choice and it was clear that this would not work. So everyone wrote their first second and third preferences on a slip of paper. The votes were counted and most of the class were satisfied with the results, even those who were not able to have their first choice.

Forming a focus. The next thing to settle, according to the model, would be the Supposition. Such a formal process was not necessary with children of this age and it was much more a question of letting them focus on the precise issues that each group wanted to research. We asked each group to discuss their theme and to think of the sorts of areas within it which local people might disagree about. The employment group, for example, realised that people would probably have different opinions about the future of work in the area. They expected that some would argue that expansion would bring more jobs, others that smaller businesses would be closed. Both groups looking at environmental issues identified possible tensions between the extra pollution and the economic growth for the area. From these discussions each group prepared a list of topics they could discuss with particular people during the research period: To the employment agency: "How many jobs will the expansion bring?" To the owner of an office that may have to move: "Will there be many other businesses like yours that will close?" To the airport authority: "How much noisier will the airport become?" All the questions were discussed by the whole class.

Research/Production. Then each group made a list of the visual material they would need for their section (planes taking off and landing, airport signs, etc). These lists were also discussed. "When you go to the platform, we would like a shot of a plane being filled up with kerosine". After that a recording schedule could be made. Simple material was recorded first (general views of the airport, etc) so that everyone could get used to the equipment. It was important for everyone to get started after spending so much time talking. We were also a bit behind schedule.

The first group was filming in a car park and was immediately sent away by the airport police, who were concerned that they might meet up with some men who were selling pornographic magazines to overseas visitors. The children were quite shocked that they had apparently broken an unknown 'rule' so easily. One moment there was nothing around them, the next moment there was a bus with policemen right in front of them. It was a frightening feeling. The airport police advised them to get permission to film from the bureau of external relations. The group called the office on the Friday and by Wednesday they had a fax lying on some desk in a Security building confirming their permission to film. But they were another three days behind.

The amount of security astonished them. Some things were not allowed at all: filming on the airport apron, in the control tower and at the sound-testing area. The children learned an incredible amount, especially that things are not as simple as they appear from the outside. They also learned that they were

The children learned an incredible amount, especially that things are not as simple as they appear from the outside.

dealing with worldwide companies that are involved in global politics and global dramas which were preventing them from recording some of their material. But they also got a lot of cooperation from a wide range of organisations and people. Only the Social Services in the Bijlmer (an area in South-East Amsterdam where an El-Al plane crashed into a block of flats in 1989) refused to cooperate. The children telephoned a dozen times but were finally turned down and decided to speak directly to people who lived in the nearby flats.

Altogether the children talked to:

1. The chairman of the village board of Halfweg/Zwanenburg (the area most affected by the plans).
2. A spokesman from a catering company which does the catering for seven airlines.
3. Mrs. Blauw who has a business under the flight path.
4. The Public Relations Officer from Schiphol Airport.
5. A civil servant from the environment department.
6. People who live in a 'dreamhouse' that will be demolished when the fifth runway is built.
7. A doctor who has done a lot of research on the influence of the airport on health.
8. A family that lives in a farm where the airplanes pass very low.
9. People that live in the Bijlmer.
10. A representative from the employment services.

Analysis. Whenever a group returned to school, the class formed a circle and recounted their experiences. It is important to tell others what you have done, how the work went in the group, the cooperation (or lack of it) that you met, and so on.

It is important to tell others what you have done, how the work went in the group.

Material was viewed, sometimes with the whole class, sometimes only in the subgroup. The group that interviewed the PR officer from Schiphol came back to school very angry. "This man does not tell a real story. He is paid to tell us things, but he never told us anything about himself or his own views".

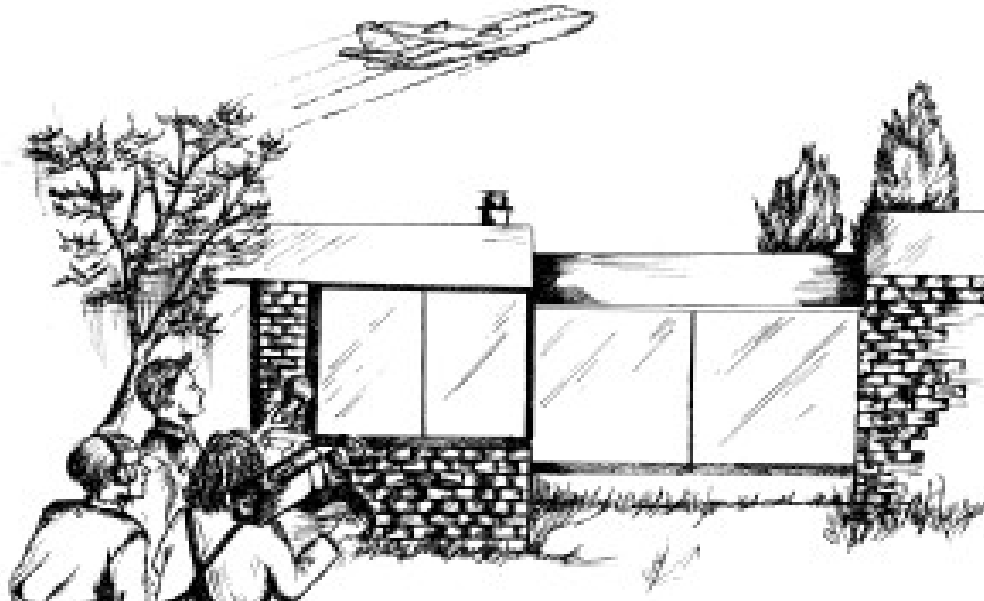
All the material was logged on a player, indicating minutes and seconds of every shot or every bit of interview. The children were not bored by logging, but were convinced of the necessity of this work. "We did not do it because the teacher wanted it from us, but because you cannot make a documentary without it. You must write down what you have and where you can find it, or it would take you a year to finish the film. You would have to search whole tapes again and again to look for just one bit of material".

When everything was on tape there was a big session with the complete class. All the material (about 4 hours in total) was shown and every group could decide which material they wanted to use and for what reason. In this way every bit was seen by everybody and discussed for its value and usefulness. The sheets of paper with the logging details were next to the tv set so any group could immediately take notes on a part and write the time next to it (the time could also be seen on the player). The contributions of the four parents who helped the children when they were recording were carefully scheduled. Two of them had a flexible agenda, the others had to plan ahead since they were only available on particular days. In this way everybody knew when shooting could be done.

Making a Rough Structure. Once everybody had seen all the material, each subgroup had an idea of the material they would use. Then they had a long session (5 hours) in the gym to decide the rough structure. It was a hot day and very uncomfortable because there were no seats. Dirk gave a short account of the six functions that material can fulfil in a documentary (see Section Three). He explained that not all of these were necessary and compared the process with the recipe for a cake which needs certain ingredients like flour and eggs, and can sometimes have extras like chocolate and fruit. Their recipe would need to be quite simple so that everyone could be clear about what they were doing.

Then we made a start by asking who had any ideas about the way the whole programme should look. It was important that anyone speaking was not interrupted. Each idea was written up as a time line (see Section Three) and sometimes bits and pieces from one structure were used in another. It was a long and fatiguing day. The children tried their best but sometimes had trouble keeping an overview on the documentary as a whole. It was the only time in the project that Dirk and the teacher had some influence in keeping an overview on the main ideas and summarising them for the children. They were sometimes so emotionally involved that they forgot the good pieces in their own material. Dirk told them that the same things happen with adults who make documentaries.

Making an edit scheme. When the rough structure was done and approved by everyone we explained how to make an editing scheme out of a rough structure. Because they had already had this experience from producing research reports (this was the same class that had worked on a series of short videos - see Section Five), this was an easy job. But then we hit a problem: one group had never done any editing. We decided to turn this drawback into an advantage and this group made a very small editing scheme and tried out some possibilities. They faced a problem with the PR man. When he was asked a question he often made a start with his answer but then stopped and made a new start where he put matters slightly differently.



He had mentioned that these false starts could be edited out later. Some of the children who had felt misled by his answers wanted to keep the false starts in and get their revenge. Others wanted to edit his story without the false starts because they thought he would be embarrassed by them. I advised them to keep the false start in this trial edit and to show it to the others later.

When the class saw the trial edit they had a thorough discussion on how to handle the PR man. Should they let him stumble on his own mistakes or not? A few children suggested that while it would be easy to show his mistakes it was "too easy". Rose said that you should tackle him with arguments. You have to tackle his statements by presenting counter arguments. She also suggested that a voice-over could tell the audience that the children had not trusted him because of his one sidedness. It was a serious moment for the group and that was what they eventually decided.

The class decided to elect a small group of eight children who would make the edit scheme. This would free a part of the class to work on the preparations for the screening and others to do their schoolwork. A schedule was made for the eight editors so they could work in pairs: one hour working on the editing scheme, three hours off. Right at the beginning they found a mistake in the rough structure that upset everybody. There was something that could not be found in the logging sheets nor in the material. Were all the numbers wrong? Panic! It was decided that Rose, Annemiek and Nesrine would check the complete rough structure by searching for all the material required by the structure and finding out if everything was there

as indicated. It took them a few hours, but it proved that was only the one fault in the rough structure. What a relief! The editing scheme was expected to take 4 days, but was actually done in three.

Editing. The editing was done by the whole class in groups of four or five. There was only one spot where it was decided to deviate from the editing scheme. A few seconds after they had interviewed the doctor, a plane had flown over. The children doing the editing at that point decided to leave the noise in the programme because it was a perfect aural illustration of what the doctor had just said. Because the editing scheme was so precise they could make little improvements in editing pauses in interviews etc. The editing took just one and a half days.

Screening. On the evening of the premiere there were a lot of people in the school: parents and family; people they had interviewed; the press; the Director of Education; several people from the department of education, etc. Afterwards there was a lively discussion between people of different persuasions who were now able (some of them for the first time) to talk about these things face-to-face with the clear focus provided by the children's work. The PR man did not show up. The Class is planning to screen the documentary again.

Evaluation. The children clearly felt that they had learned a lot about the issue and the process of producing useful material. Jasper said, "At first I was completely against the expansion. Now that I've seen and heard the arguments I'm less sure. I was worried mainly about the environment at the beginning, but now I do see that employment is really important for people

and the economy. But it still seems a pity that people and homes and the environment will have to put up with so much for the sake of a few lousy jobs. I also learned that you have to plan things ahead when you are making videos. And you have to stick at it, or the whole thing can crash to pieces."

The teacher learned that the whole process took longer than he had expected. Originally he had expected that the job could be done in about 80 hours, divided among several groups, "but you can double that time. There is a lot of work in organising, calls, appointments, letters etc. Maybe that's something you have to consider when you select the subject. Schiphol Airport is an extremely difficult place to get access to. The next time we must pay more attention to beaconing and focusing. They make the work easier. Also, working democratically takes extra time. If I tell them the subject and how to work on it, it can be done faster, but with less joy. Now the whole enterprise was difficult, but also an enjoyable undertaking. Maybe we should have started earlier in the year, for example after the autumn holiday. The deadline is not so pressing then and it gives you some more time in the end of the year to plan and organise the farewell evening and the end-of-year show. The positive side of it is that children are capable of much more than you think. They perform extremely well and gain an insight into the way the world operates. The overall impression is very positive and we will certainly do it again".

We can see from this account that the work was never intended to exploit the model to the full. The children's work concentrates mostly on the generation, exploration and problematization of themes (stages 1,2,3,5 and 6) and does not explicitly formulate Suppositions or Positions (stages 4 and 7).

Understandably for children of this age the production and presentation (stages 11 and 12) are more to do with raising questions, encouraging debate and (hopefully) promoting a new process of problematization for the audience who will be encouraged to think again about the issues and challenge some of their own assumptions about the future of the airport and the local community.

Example Two.

A group of students on a Masters course at the University of Nottingham had been exploring issues around social and urban policy, particularly those aspects of training and support which were aimed at young people. Having done some preliminary work at a nearby college (which gave them some experience of research and the model) they eventually undertook an action research project at a city-centre for young homeless people.

Some details of this project have already been referred to in previous sections of this book, and we would like to summarise the work they did in the early stages of the model before looking more closely at the final stages.

Self research.

Members of the group already knew each other from their earlier video work about the college. But on moving to their second project they needed to re-establish their relationship and to consider their own experiences of the new subject - which they knew would be to do with the provision of services to homeless youngsters

The audience will be encouraged to think again about the issues and challenge some of their own assumptions about the future of the airport and the local community.

Problematizing.

One member of the group worked at the centre and was relied upon to give a factual briefing to the others, who (along with the course tutors) questioned her about the details of its operation and philosophy. As the group gave their reactions to this there was an opportunity for them to consider their assumptions in the light of other things they were learning on the course and their own experiences of youth training and welfare provision.

Choice of theme.

At this stage the group decided to focus their attention on the connections (and possible shortcomings) between two teams of workers at the centre: one who gave advice and support on housing issues, and one who ran a training course to prepare the youngsters for work.

Forming a Supposition.

During their discussions and early research, the group began to settle on a more precise focus for their work. They expressed this in their Supposition:

The Employment advisors only have weak links with the housing team at the Centre. If there was more collaboration between the two teams the whole philosophy of resettlement followed by work or training could become more effective.

Research.

During their research the group set their ideas against other people's by recording conversations with workers and young people at the centre. They made three visits altogether (though they recognised in their evaluation that this should have been more).

Analysis.

As they analysed and worked with their material the group began to realise that it was not the day-to-day relationships between the two groups of staff that were concerning them. They knew from their observations and from their own experience that such links always have their strengths and weaknesses and they had also heard how the centre was already looking at possible improvements in this liaison. What struck them more intensely was their concern (which seemed to be shared by some of the people they had been talking with) that the two teams were being forced by government and funding policies to place training (and thus "lack of skills") at the centre of their work rather than unemployment and homelessness. They were unwillingly being sidetracked and the group decided they wanted to encourage the staff to think about this.

The Position.

The group now reformulated their Supposition as a Position which in their case took the form of a question:

Can personal development courses run by the centre be effective in raising the self-worth of young people, if that self worth is only measured in job and housing status?

Choice of target group.

The group now confirmed their earlier decision that the principal target group for their work would be the staff at the centre, though they also wanted some of the young people to see it. The requirements of the course meant that the video would be shown to students on linked courses in Amsterdam and Belfast, and to an audience of policy makers, practitioners and young people at three sites in England.

Choice of medium.

Since the course was centred on the production of video material (as part of the funding requirements) the group had no real choice here, but they were encouraged to think of the influences this had on their work.

Choice of form.

The group decided to present their material as a series of excerpts from their conversations with people at the centre. These were linked with captions which showed facts about the centre, the group's Position, the questions raised for them by their research, and an appeal to the staff of the centre to consider their own response to these questions.

Production.

The tape was completed in about 40 hours (longer than the students had expected). Most of the extra work went into the production of the rough structure and the edit scheme, though the tutors insisted this was done thoroughly to reduce the demands on the editing machinery which was in constant use by other groups. Eventually the 15 minute tape was edited in about 7 hours. This was also longer than expected (and longer than the model generally proposes) due to some technically

demanding operations and some remaining uncertainty in the group about the structure of the tape. Groups often find it hard to predict exactly how their material will work on the screen and, in the end, they will have to find it out for themselves. It is up to the facilitator (and the budget) to help them decide whether there is time to re-edit sections that don't work as expected, or whether it is better to let things go. In this case it was decided to restructure the central part of the tape before moving on to the final section. This added about two hours to the process but made for a clearer exploration of the issue.

Presentation and evaluation.

When the tape was shown (by satellite in this case) to an audience of student colleagues in Amsterdam and Belfast, and simultaneously to groups of professionals and young people throughout Britain, it prompted a lively and stimulating debate. Many of the audience were able to recognise many of the issues raised by the tape and offered their own experiences and opinions.

But the most important audience, in the end, were the staff and young people at the centre. Two of the programme makers took the tape to them one afternoon, introduced it and explained the sorts of positively critical response they were hoping for. When they showed the tape, however, there were two principal reactions. One group of staff were immediately defensive and began to question some of the facts in the tape and the Proposition and called for support from the young people. This group of staff clearly felt attacked by the tape which, while they had always known it was a risk, was not the intention of the makers.

*An uneasy truce began to develop.
Change is rarely easy.*

A second group, however, were more open to the Proposition with two staff in particular defending the makers and suggesting that there was more that the staff could do to avoid the problems that the tape identified. An uneasy truce began to develop and the Director started to outline a range of initiatives which he said were "in the pipeline" including the appointment of new staff. The audience began to agree that these could help but someone stressed that the centre needed to adopt a policy of educating funders about the real nature of their work and the expectations that could realistically be made of them.

No great decisions were made that afternoon. Change is rarely that easy. But the production and screening of the tape had highlighted a number of key issues for the centre and had, in its own way, problematized some of the assumptions behind its operation.

SECTION NINE

The Authors

Dirk Schouten is one of Europe's most innovative media trainers. He has worked as cameraman, editor and sound engineer for many of the Dutch broadcasting companies before studying at the Dutch Film Academy where he majored in 'Media in Social Processes'. Since that time he has worked as a media-facilitator for UNESCO (consultancy and media projects in Portugal, Austria, Zambia, Nepal), Leiden University (Dept. of Clinical Psychology), Erasmus University Rotterdam (Faculty of Business Administration), Nottingham University (Med) and many others, varying from liberation movements to bureaucratic institutions.

Most of the groups he facilitates use video as a research tool in projects aimed at changing conditions of life and work. He has published articles on a variety of subjects including local radio and television, media-education and innovative uses of media. His latest projects are about the use of video as a "feedforward" tool in facilitating organisational change.

Dr Rob Watling is a Research Associate at the University of Nottingham School of Education. One of the UK's leading experts on practical media work, he has over 20 years experience of using video, photography and film in education and community work. He has worked as a dramatherapist, community development worker, and media trainer – always promoting media activity in communities and political movements. After studying English and Folklore at the University of Stirling and Media Education at the Polytechnic of Wales, he wrote his PhD at the University of Nottingham on the links between practical media work, education and community development. He has taught on innovative media courses at the West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education, Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham. He writes regularly for practitioners and academics, and has lectured on his work throughout the UK as well as in Spain and France. He introduced the use of Media Action Projects to the UK, and has developed powerful new uses for the model in Action-Research projects and in the evaluation of urban programmes. His most recent research in this field has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the European Social Fund, and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

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"When the manuscript arrived, even I was astonished by its detail and coherence. There was nothing in the available literature to compete with it ... The re-opening of a debate about the nature of a high-quality demographic education is long overdue. I hope that this monograph will not only be a fitting tribute to Dirk Schouten's work, but provide a relevant starting point for that debate."

Len Masterman, author of Teaching the Media and Teaching About Television

Media Action Projects is a new practical guide for teachers, pupils and parents who want to use video in education, training and community development.

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