

STUDY CIRCLE LEADERSHIP

STUDY CIRCLE GUIDE

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STUDY CIRCLE LEADERSHIP STUDY CIRCLE GUIDE

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STUDY CIRCLE LEADER TRAINING

EXAMPLE AGENDA

DAY 1

Introduction 09h00

Session 1: The Study Circle Method 09h30

- Exercise – democracy
- Information document – what is a study circle
- Exercise – motivation for study circles

TEA 11h00

Session 2: The Study Circle Leader 11h30

- Information document – roles and responsibilities
- Exercise – groups
- Exercise – leadership

LUNCH 13h00

Session 3: Working Together 14h00

- Exercise – groups
- Information document – working together
- Role play – conflict
- Information document – disagreement

Close day 1 16h00

DAY 2

Session 4: The Learning Process 09h00

- Exercise – learning
- Information document – learning
- Exercise – learning support
- Role play – a study circle
- Information document – questions on role play
- Information document – summing up study circles

TEA 10h30

Session 5: Assessment 11h00

- Information document – assessment
- Exercise – assessment
- Info document – evaluation form

Way forward 12h00

Lunch and closure 13h00

STUDY CIRCLE LEADER STUDY GUIDE

I Introduction to study guide

The facilitator and the participants of the 'study circle leadership' training course can use this study guide.

This study circle leadership training study guide is structured in a similar way to how a study circle will be structured. The facilitator should try to run the training like a study circle leader would run a study circle. The facilitator is like a study leader.

The study guide is based on one and a half days' training programme and is divided into five sessions.

The facilitator is free to give more or less time to different aspects of the programme. However all aspects in the study guide are important to give the leaders a full understanding of the study circle method.

In study circle leadership training, participatory methods should be used, as these are essential in the study circle concept. These will also give the leaders a practical tool for their work with study circle groups.

The facilitator should organise the participants into small groups of seven to twelve people each. These groups should stay the same throughout this training course. They are like study circles within a training course.

Boxed text is for the facilitator and explains how to run the training course and what exercises can be undertaken.

Normal text is information to be read by the participants.

WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION SESSION

Open the training as appropriate using, for example

- *Prayer*
- *Song*
- *Welcome and introduction speech*
- *Any other method*

Exercise: Introduction and expectations of participants

Use one of the following exercise options to find out the following from the participants.

- *What is your name?*
- *Where are you from?*
- *What do you expect to get out of this training?*

- *Option 1: Go around the room giving each person a chance to introduce themselves.*
- *Option 2: Get participants to pair off with a partner, find out who your partner is and then go around the room getting people to introduce their partners to the meeting.*

Refer to the agenda and explain it to participants. Ask if anyone has questions or suggested changes to the agenda.

SESSION ONE

THE STUDY CIRCLE METHOD

Read through the following information document with participants.

METHODS TO BE USED IN TRAINING STUDY CIRCLE LEADERS

The study circle method implies active participation and encourages all participants to contribute to the work of the group. The methods described below will take this into account. A mixture of individual reflection and group work followed by plenary discussions and summaries is the method we recommend.

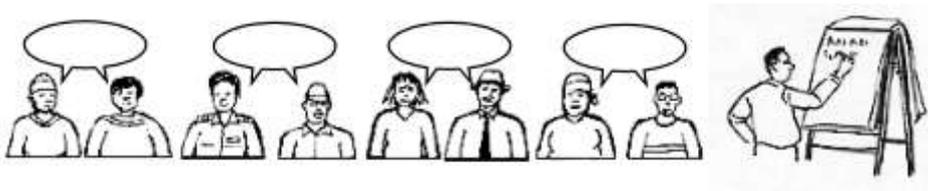
Within the different sessions in this study guide a certain method is suggested for the discussions. This may of course be changed if the facilitator so wishes. It's important that varied methods are used and that all participants are involved in the discussions.

1 Individual reflection

The participants are given a couple of minutes (3 to 5 minutes) to reflect upon a specific question. Words may be written on pieces of paper to be taped on a board or a flipchart by the trainer. The individual reflection may also end up in an oral summing-up. What is important is that **every participant** contributes. If the report is oral the trainer must see to this e.g. by allowing one at a time to give their thoughts/ideas. The trainer notes the contributions on the board/flipchart.

2 “Buzz group”

Sometimes a short “buzz-group” might be an alternative to the individual reflection; two or three persons sitting next to each other discuss an issue for a couple of minutes. One of the participants in the “buzz-group” accounts for the discussion of the group orally, and the trainer notes the reflections on the board/flipchart. In the end the trainer summarises the ideas of all the participants.



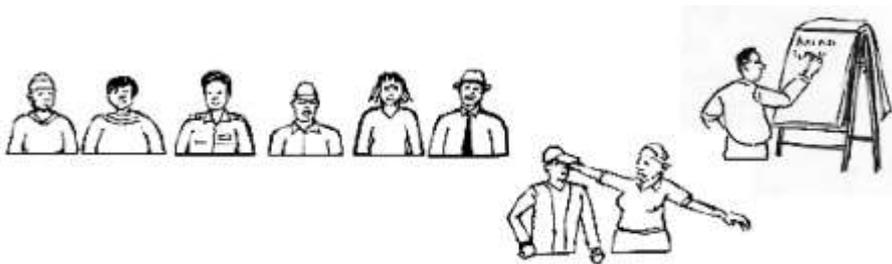
3 Group work

Group work creates a good atmosphere of cooperation and should therefore also be used in the training seminars. The groups may consist of three to six participants. The amount of time for the group discussions may vary depending on the topic. For a single question maybe 15 minutes is enough. For other, more complex issues 45 minutes may be needed. The reports can be oral. Thoughts/ ideas are listed on a flipchart or the board by the facilitator. The group work must always be followed up by a plenary discussion allowing other groups to add their comments. Finally, the trainer does a summary.



4 Role play

As role play in the training seminars is used to exemplify the work of a study circle, the group should consist of at least five participants. The group is given 30 to 60 minutes to prepare the role play. Even if several groups have been given the same task, sometimes only one group can perform their role play. Groups should be asked to comment on other groups and be encouraged to share their experiences and thoughts. The trainer should try to summarise the most important experiences of the role play.



Exercise: Democracy – individual reflection

Give the participants the following exercise.

What does the term “democratic values” imply to you? List one to five words you think of when you hear the word “democracy”.

Read through the following information document with participants.

WHAT IS A STUDY CIRCLE?



Definition

A study circle is a small group of seven to twelve persons who, during a certain period, have five to ten meetings to carry out planned studies under the leadership of an accepted leader.

In a study circle, work is built around:

- The participants' wishes to learn more about a subject that will help them improve their own daily lives.
- Democratic values, where all participants are equal and have mutual respect for each other.
- Effective communication among participants. Therefore study circle members sit in a circle, facing each other.
- Mainly discussions where individuals' sharing of experience and analysis are the guiding factors.
- Study material, providing factual information that will be practically useful to the participants.
- Involvement of participants in the planning and implementation of the work in the study circle with a study plan as a guide.

Aim of the study circle

Generally the aim of a participant in a study circle is to gain knowledge by exchanging ideas and experiences, researching, reading and raising his/her social awareness. This should be done with the ultimate hope of getting a broader and deeper understanding and greater self-confidence.

The purpose of using the study circle method therefore is to increase knowledge and to make people more aware and active in a society that is constantly changing.

Each study circle is naturally formed for a certain purpose, but the participants often join with different expectations and goals.

Nobody gets marks or is tested in study circles. No certificates are provided. The common search for knowledge is the important thing.

People help each other to study and build from their own experiences. The members of the study circle decide how their studies are to be arranged and directed, in relation to their own needs and aspirations.

It is important, however, that this learning leads to action, or to improvements in people's lives.

Study circle participants can take the knowledge they have gained and use it in their own lives, such as how to garden or how better to manage their household money. The participants could also make recommendations, based on knowledge they have gained, to other structures like businesses or projects that they are involved in. For example, how to market the products that are manufactured or how better to manage the finances of the business. In some cases the study circle could decide to undertake some form of project together (e.g. plant trees in their neighbourhood to make it more beautiful).

A study circle is a learning structure and not a decision-making structure (with the exception of decisions *for* the study circle). In other words the study circle does not make decisions about things they are not responsible for.

If members of the study circle are all from the same business or project, the study circle group cannot make decisions on behalf of the business or project (e.g. decide to invest all the business's money in another bank). This is a decision for the participants in the business or project to make during their own meetings.

Principles of a study circle

- Voluntary: Participants study because they want to learn, not because they have been told to.
- Democratic: All participants participate in deciding how the group will work.
- Needs driven: The group decides what to study based on knowledge they need at the time.

- Based on experience: The learning starts off with what people already know and builds on this.
- Learning to action: The learner to improve his/her situation uses new-found knowledge.
- Equality: All participants are treated the same.

Activity: Motivation for study circles

Undertake one of the following three exercises.

1. Individual reflection

Why have you joined your study circle (or this seminar)?

2 Group work

Would the reasons for joining a study circle be the same for the other study circle members who are not in this training session?

What happens if there is no balance between the different objectives, e.g. if the leader only “feeds” the participants with information or if the social aspect (coming together and having a nice time) becomes most important?

3 Role play

This is your first meeting of the study circle. Give special attention to the participants’ expectations. How do you get to know each individual’s aim and how do you integrate this into the work of the study circle?

SESSION TWO

THE STUDY CIRCLE LEADER

Roles and responsibilities of the study circle leader

Read though the following information document with participants.

STUDY CIRCLE LEADER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The leader of a study circle is taking a special responsibility for the work and the development of the group. He or she is also the practical organiser who keeps in contact with the organisation. However, what is equally important is that the leader is aware of his or her role as a participant in the group.

To make a group work well there are four important ASPECTS to be considered:

1. The atmosphere in the group must be relaxed, open and make people feel at ease and secure.
2. The participants must feel accepted and respected and be seen as a resource.
3. Decisions must be collective and agreed upon.
4. The work must be divided/shared among the members of the group.

Leadership

The study circle leader is a participant in the group, but at the same time responsible for the development of the work in the group. The leader is not expected to be an expert on leadership. It is nevertheless important that the study circle leader is conscious of certain basic aspects of leadership.

The most important thing to remember as a study circle leader is to be oneself and not try to imitate someone else. All individuals are different and have lots of capacities and resources that can be used and developed. To be able to do this you must be aware of your strength as a leader and maybe also less developed capacities.

There is no such thing as the perfect leader. All groups consist of people with different needs and backgrounds. This implies that no way of leading a group is better than another. However, with the aims of the study circle in mind (interaction in which the participants contribute, the democratic process, sharing of experience and analysis, etc.) it can be useful to try to identify some good leader qualities. Any person who wishes to learn a topic organises other people who also want to learn this. The group then appoints a leader from among themselves.

The leader is not a teacher. S/he is someone from the group who has some knowledge about the topic. The role of the leader is to organise material, i.e. books, videos, magazines, papers and/or experts on the topic. The leader must ensure that everybody participates in the study circle. Sometimes the leader is nominated because s/he has been involved in study circles and has experience. The group does

not pay any money, except to buy books and other material for the purpose of learning.

Sometimes it happens that the subject that the group wants to learn about is a technical subject e.g. computer skills. The group will then have to pay someone with the necessary skills for his or her time, spent with the group.

Role of the study circle leader

The following provides a checklist.

- Make sure venue is available.
- Keep a register of participants.
- Organise the finances of the group, if any.
- Organise events speakers, tours, etc.
- Ensure everyone has study material.
- Ensure everyone understands the tasks given to them.
- Make sure that a few people don't dominate the group.
- Encourage quiet people to participate.

Activity: Study circle leader

Undertake one or both of the following two exercises.

1 Individual reflection or buzz group

What can the leader do to enable the group to work in the way described in the information document on study circle leaders? Visualise the first meeting: how do you make people feel seen, heard and confirmed?

2 Role play

This is your third meeting of a study circle. Act out the meeting giving special attention to the four aspects mentioned earlier under study circle leader.

Activity: leadership

Choose and undertake one or more of the following exercises.

1 Individual reflection or buzz groups

Note: this exercise is only for individual use and should not be discussed in the group or plenary.

What kind of person am I?

Here are some questions to help:

Am I restrained by conventions and tradition?

Am I too quick to evaluate suggestions and ideas?

Am I dependent and creative?

Do I slow down my own creativity or the creativity of others?

Am I good at listening and helping others?

Do I urge on too much?

2 Individual reflection

Note: This exercise is only for individual use and should not be discussed in the group or plenary.

Make a personal list of qualities from the following lines:

This is what I am good at as a leader:

Together with others I can contribute to the work of the group in the following way:

SESSION THREE

WORKING TOGETHER

Groups

Activity: Groups

Undertake one or both of the following exercises.

1 Individual reflection

Think of a group you have participated in. What made it work well/badly? How was the climate in the group? What was the role of the leader?

2 Group work

What do you feel is most important when creating a good group or a team? List some important elements.

Read through the following information document with participants.

WORKING TOGETHER



The Group

The work of a study circle may be compared to teamwork. Several important aspects must coordinate to make the group work e.g. a good and friendly atmosphere, acceptance of all participants, motivation, active participation, cooperation and equal sharing of work and attention.

All groups consist of different members with different experiences and backgrounds and groups therefore behave in different ways. Every groups nevertheless goes through the same process on its way to becoming a well functioning team.

- In the beginning everybody is a little insecure and waits for someone – the leader – to initiate things. It is important that everyone is seen, heard and confirmed and that expectations are discussed.
- “Honeymoon”. The members of the group start feeling that they belong to the group. Everyone is friendly and generous towards the others.
- “The We-group”. The feeling of “We” is strengthened. A certain role- fight starts. It is advisable to go back to the rules the group stated in the beginning (the first meeting of the study circle).
- Disagreements. Sometimes conflicts about times, rules, responsibilities, how to work, etc. occur. The group chooses either to deal with the problems or to pretend that they do not exist. It is advisable to deal with the conflicts in an open and constructive manner. This makes the participants feel secure in the group.
- Stagnation. Sometimes it feels as if nothing happens and there is no development in the group. This may occur after a conflict. This is acceptable but, at the same time, the group needs to be pushed to continue developing.
- Constructive team. If the group avoids being locked into certain roles and can handle conflicts, it is possible to communicate in a straightforward manner. Everyone may give and take both constructive criticism and positive feedback.

Conflict

Activity: conflict - role play

Undertake the following role play.

List one or more conflicts that a group may have to deal with. What can the leader do to try to solve the conflict? What can the other participants do?

Read through the following information document with participants.

DISAGREEMENTS

In a group working together, conflicts sometimes occur. They can have their origin in different ways of solving problems or different ways of working. They may also relate to different personalities.

There is no easy way of handling conflicts, nevertheless they have to be dealt with. Here are some pieces of advice which may be of help:

- Say “I personally feel...” or “It is hard for me if you say/do so...” when the conflict is a question of relationship between persons in the group.
- Very often conflicts come from misunderstanding. Try to find out why the situation arose.
- If the problem is about practical matters, go back to what you agreed on in the beginning and discuss the conflict from this point of view.
- Ask for practical examples of what the participants feel is wrong.
- Try to have a good climate for discussion – without shouting.
- Direct communication is better than gossip.
- As a leader, try to remind the group that the person/s attacked by others also have made positive contributions to the work of the group.

SESSION FOUR

THE LEARNING PROCESS

Learning motivation

Activity: learning motivation

Undertake the following exercise as an individual reflection.

What makes me learn?

Read through the following information document with participants.

LEARNING

Motivation is essential in learning. To make a person want to learn, three important needs must be fulfilled:

- **Self-respect/self-esteem**
The person must feel welcome and accepted as the person he or she is.
- **Self-confidence/self-reliance**
The person must feel needed; that there is a task for him/her.
- **Meaningfulness**
The person must feel that the work has significance; the goal/aim must feel important.

You also learn better when you:

- Enjoy yourself and have fun.
- Challenge old knowledge and form your own opinion.
- Feel that what you are doing differs from everyday life.
- Use your knowledge for practical work.

Study techniques

Study circles can use different methods to help participants learn

- Watch videos.
- Go on site visits.
- Organise a guest speaker.
- Get all members to read through study material.
- Get someone to summarise the study material for others.
- Ask each other questions about what is not understood.
- Meet with other groups and have debates and discussions.
- Organise role play exercises.
- Set tasks and homework.



The study circle meeting

The meeting itself needs to be managed. Remember a study circle is not a school. You do not want one person, a teacher, telling the others, the students, what to do.

The following points summarise the meeting. The next session goes into more detail on how to run a study circle meeting.

- Have food and a drink available.
- Have comfortable chairs.
- Have a comfortable room (warm in winter, cool in summer, good lighting, good ventilation, quiet).
- Link the study meeting to some other social event, like drinking coffee or having a meal.
- Sit in a circle facing each other.
- Encourage all members to participate.
- Listen to what others have to say.
- Stop people from talking too much.
- Allow the meeting to flow. Don't rigidly stick to the agenda but keep the topic focused.
- Remember to keep the meeting short (less than three hours).

Study circles provide a good opportunity for people who can't read or who do not understand English to learn with people who can help them and read or translate any of the study material that may be written and/or presented in English.

Starting a study circle

Anyone can start a study circle. The following provides a list of the type of decisions that need to be made when starting a study circle:

- Choose a topic and identify the learners. Keep the number of learners small – seven to twelve people. Sometimes the learners come first and sometimes the topic comes first.
- Choose a venue for the study circles. The venue must be easily accessible for

all the participants. The venue must be comfortable, not noisy, have good lighting, be warm in winter and cool in summer.

- Choose a date and time for study circle meetings. Remember that participants have different household and work-related duties. You may have to organise for someone to look after the children while parents study. Don't study for too long. The longest a study circle meeting should be is three hours.
- Agree how many meetings to have. Break big topics up into smaller sessions. If the group carries on over too many weeks without any achievement the participants may get frustrated and bored. Don't have too long breaks between meetings.
- Choose a study circle leader. This person does not have to have any qualifications but must understand the study circle approach.
- Agree what the leader will do. For example organise the venue and study material.
- Identify learning material.

Supporting learning

Undertake one or both of the following exercises.

1. Buzz groups

What do you do as a leader to create commitment and motivation? Try to use information from the learning material as well as information from the individual reflection exercise.

2. Individual reflection/buzz group/ group work

What can you do as a leader to emphasise the aspects of training (see session 2: study circle leader: roles and responsibilities)

Suggest to participants that, in the future, they read the following section before they run a study circle meeting.

The meeting

A study circle meeting can be broken up into three broad sessions:

- The start – where everyone gets to feel welcome and comfortable
- The middle - this is when the learning happens
- The end – to summarise and close off the meeting

At start

1. Arrive: Welcome people to the meeting. Hand out any study material you have. If there are refreshments, offer them to participants.
2. Children: It may be necessary to organise a 'baby sitter' so parents with children can participate in study circle meetings without worrying about their children.
3. Attendance register: Make sure all participants fill in an attendance register.
4. Seating arrangement: The best seating arrangement for a study circle is where the chairs are in a circle facing each other. Each participant can see the others and all participants are treated equally. The study circle leader also sits in the circle.
5. Official opening: Officially open the meeting so everyone can start focusing on the task of learning. Different groups use different methods to open the meeting. For example, a prayer, a song or a simple statement that the meeting is open.
6. First and follow-up meetings: The first meeting may spend more time on these starting activities. In future meetings, when people know each other and know how the study circle works, you may want to skip or shorten many of these start-up activities.
7. Introduction: Get everyone to introduce themselves and give their names. If people don't know each other it is useful to get participants to write their names on paper and either stick it to their shirts or place it in front of them so everyone can read their names.
8. Expectations: Ask participants to explain why they have come to the meeting and what they expect to get out of the meeting. Write participants' comments on a large piece of paper so you can refer back to it at the end of the meeting.
9. Apologies: Make sure everyone has signed the attendance register and give apologies.
10. Agenda: Explain the agenda for this meeting. Explain that the agenda is flexible and can be changed, even during the meeting.
11. House rules: Ask participants what house rules they want during the meeting. This includes things like not smoking, not talking while others are talking.
12. Notes: Make sure everyone knows whether they have to keep their own notes or if handout notes will be used. Ensure everyone has paper and pen to make their own notes if necessary.
13. Comfort: You may want to organise an activity to get people to feel comfortable working and talking together. For example, you could ask people to discuss a topic that is not related to the study circle and no one in the study circle is an expert on.

14. Reflect on last meeting: If it is not the first meeting ask participants to explain what they learnt at the last meeting. If people have thought of something new since the last meeting, discuss it.
15. Report on actions from last meeting: If you were given tasks at the last meeting the participants can report back on what they have found out or done.

During middle

1. This is the main part of the study circle when the participants learn about a topic that is of interest to them. There are different ways this learning can be organised and many of these are mentioned below.
2. Guest speaker: A person who knows about the topic can be asked to give a presentation.
3. Personal experience: Participants in the study circle can give accounts of personal experiences relating to the topic that they have had.
4. Site visit: Participants could visit a project or community to see how other people are dealing with the issue which the group is interested in.
5. Read through material: Participants can read through documents, books, etc. that have been given to them or they have found. They can read it themselves or they can read it to others (in pairs or as a group) or have others read it to them. Reading material must not be used in a way that prevents people who have difficulty reading from participating. Material should also be in a language and at a skills level that is suitable for the participants.
6. Role play: Role play or acting out a specific theme is often a good way to get people to learn about and experience a specific situation.
7. Note taking: Participants should be encouraged to take their own notes during the study circle. This helps them concentrate and also provides a record of what they have discussed.
8. Drawing: The drawing of pictures and diagrams can sometimes help to summarise issues.
9. Reporting back to the study circle: In group work it helps to summarise the discussion and report it back to the other participants.
10. Pictures, comics, posters, photographs, videos and audio tape cassettes are good to use if they are available.
11. Discussion and dialogue: The best way that people learn is through discussion and dialogue. Every study circle should have lots of time set aside for discussion. People need to ask each other questions and the study circle leader must ask probing questions to hear what the participants feel and think. All participants must be encouraged to participate.
12. Short break: During the study circle it often helps to have a short break where people can relax for a few moments.

At the end

1. Set tasks for next meeting: 'Home work' such as reading certain documentation can be given to the participants to complete before the next meeting. Specific and different tasks can also be set for individuals, e.g. find out some special information.
2. Evaluation of meeting: The participants are asked to give their opinion on how well the meeting was run and how it achieved their expectations. The evaluation can be done verbally or people can fill out evaluation forms, if provided. The

purpose of evaluation is to learn from the experience of running study circles in order to make future study circles better.

3. Next meeting: Agree on the date, venue, topic, etc. for the next meeting.
4. Attendance certificates: If it is the last meeting in a series of meetings then participants can be given an attendance certificate to show that they have participated in the study circle series. Certificates can be given if participants only miss a few of the study circle meetings. Study circles do not have tests or exams so no evaluation can be made of how much participants have learnt.
5. Future study circle meetings: Towards the end of a series of study circle meetings the participants can discuss whether they want to carry on with more study circles on different topics. They could decide to learn a new topic together or they can set up new study circle groups.
6. Thanks: Thank everyone who contributed to making the study circle meeting a success, such as guest speakers and participants who completed certain tasks.
7. Close the meeting: Formally close the meeting in a way similar to how you opened the meeting.
8. Social event: At the end of the study circle programme it is a good idea to organise a social event (e.g. a party) so participants can celebrate their attendance at the study circle meeting. Social events, like eating snacks, can be held after all or some of the study circle meetings - you don't have to wait till the end. This is a good way for people to get to know each other and socialise.

Study circle meeting

Organise the following role play.

Role play

You are a study circle group. Choose a topic for the study circle (or let the trainer decide).

Act the meeting of the study circle.

In plenary, answer and discuss the questions.

ROLE PLAY QUESTIONS

Questions to focus on following the study circle role play:

- *Did the group work after a common plan?*
- *How was the leader of the group?*
- *What were the expectations and/or aims of the participants?*
- *Did they all have the same goals?*

Discuss the role play with the following four “corner-stones” of the study circle in mind:

1. **Learning** (seeking knowledge, getting new knowledge through dialogue with others)

Did the learning process work in the study circle?

2. **Solidarity** (sharing experiences, meeting others on an equal level)

Did the role play show this?

3. **Personal growth** (the seeking of knowledge leads to personal growth.

When you are accepted and accept yourself, you can grow as a human being)

Could this study circle lead to personal growth?

4. **Action** (action implies a lot of things, from joining an organisation to becoming more active, e.g. in contact with neighbours)

Do you think that the work of the study circle in the role play could lead to action?

If so, give examples.

Summary of study circles

Read through the following information document. (This information can also be copied and given to others to help explain what a study circle is.)

Study circle information document

A study circle is a small group of people who, over a considerable period of time, repeatedly meet and carry out planned studies or cultural activities under the leadership of a recognised leader. They can come together to learn any topic of their choice, be it cultural, social or technical, e.g. music, computers, a second language, building skills, etc.

These study circles are used for personal development and knowledge building. They help people to communicate and socialise with others. Study circles also build the culture of learning in communities and help people to share experiences.

Any person who wishes to learn a topic, such as how to run a committee, set up a small business, learn a new language, learn how to manage their finances, etc. organises other people who also want to learn this. The group then appoints a leader from among themselves.

The leader is not a teacher. S/he is someone from the group who has some knowledge about the topic. The role of the leader is to organise material, i.e. books, videos, magazines, papers and/or experts on the topic. The leader must ensure that everybody participates in the study circle. Sometimes the leader is nominated because s/he has been involved in study circles and has experience.

The group does not pay any money, except to buy books and other material for the purpose of learning. Nobody gets marks or is tested in study circles. No certificates are provided. The common search for knowledge is the important thing.

Sometimes it happens that the subject that the group wants to learn about is a technical subject, e.g. computer skills. The group will then have to pay someone with the necessary skills for his or her time spent with the group.

In organisations, study circles are a good way for organisation members to come together to learn about things of interest to the organisation. This includes topics such as ownership structures, working in a committee, managing finance, conflict management etc.

Once the group has learnt about one set of topics it can move into other fields, like learning English, cooking, computer skills, health care or Third World debt.

Summary document

What is a study circle?

- Opportunity for adults to learn
- Voluntary participation
- Democratic environment
- Small groups of about ten people
- Less than ten meetings per session
- Not more than two meetings a week
- About two hours per meeting
- Needs no or very little financing
- One of the participants is the leader
- Leader and participants not paid
- The group decides the topic
- The group decides the goal
- Comfortable and nice place for meetings
- Study material available
- 'Guests' can be invited
- 'Tours' can be arranged
- Nice atmosphere
- Participants share experiences and thoughts
- Discussions
- Maybe some homework
- Tea /coffee break
- Attendance certificate for completing session

Study circles versus classes

<p><u>Instead of</u></p> <p>Class Teacher Pupil/student Lesson Classroom Teaching Textbook Term Competence certificate</p>	
<p><u>We say</u></p> <p>Study circle Study circle leader Member/participant Meeting Study room Studies/learning Study material Study season Attendance certificate</p>	

SUMMING UP THE STUDY CIRCLE METHOD

All participants in a study circle are like seeds with lots of possibilities and resources.

Everyone can grow in a good climate with good conditions for growth.

S stimulate

As a leader you can create a space which is conducive to learning, where the participants are stimulated and feel secure.

E equality

All participants must be seen and confirmed as individuals on an equal basis.

E exchange

The participants must be given the chance to exchange ideas and experiences.

D dialogue

Dialogue is the best way of communication. It implies both talking and listening to what others say. In this interaction new knowledge may arise and thus result in progress.

SESSION FIVE

ASSESSMENT

Read through the following information document with participants.

ASSESSMENT

It is important to continuously evaluate the study circle, both to see if the study circle works according to the study plan and to see if the participants are satisfied with the way the group works. If something is not working well, it is always possible to alter the study plan or the methods used. It is therefore advisable to have a check-up at least halfway through the planned study circle. Even better is to end every meeting with a short and simple check-up asking:

- what have we obtained today?
- what could have been better?

During the last meeting of the study circle a more complete, but still simple evaluation should be done to improve the concept and to share with others the experiences of the group.

Here are some simple and useful methods to use:

- Paper.
Ask the participants to write their comments on a piece of paper. The anonymous answers are put in a box.
- Questions with fixed yes-no alternatives. These are good if you want to know exactly what the participants want or think.
- Expectations.
Have a look at the expectations written down at the first meeting. Which of the expectations were fulfilled and which were not? Could be a joint oral assessment or written down individually.
- Questions with a scale.
Ask the participants to make a mark on a line, as in this example:

Bad---x-----Good
- Good – less good.
Ask the participants to write five good things about the work of the study circle and five things they think could be improved.

Exercise: Assessment

Group work

What is most important to evaluate?

Which of the methods mentioned in the information document do you prefer?

What is your experience of assessment?

Explain that the following assessment form can be used as an example.

EXAMPLE - Assessment/evaluation of the Study Circle Leaders Training

1. Can the methods used in the seminar be used even in a study circle?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/Don't know

Comments:

2. Were your expectations of the seminar fulfilled?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/Don't know

Comments:

3. How important was the information given in the seminar for the implementation of the study circles?

Make a mark on the line.

Important _____ Less important

4. How was the venue?

Make a mark on the line.

Bad _____ Good

5. How was the planning of the seminar?

Make a mark on the line.

Bad _____ Good

6. Write three good things about the seminar and three less good.

Good

Less good

WAY FORWARD

Read through the following with participants.

Learning to action

Study circles are mainly a learning tool. However, adults usually don't learn for the sake of learning; they learn because they want to gain some knowledge that will help them undertake some activity or achieve an objective.

What you learn must be relevant to what you want to achieve and do.

Examples of what you can do with knowledge gained:

- Start a business (e.g. a manufacturing business)
- Start a project (e.g. a social club)
- Improve what you are doing already (e.g. running your business, farming)
- Start a new activity (e.g. speak a new language, read financial books)

Examples of who you can work with to undertake activities after you have learnt something new:

- Work by yourself (e.g. to work in your new organic garden)
- Work with others not from the study circle (e.g. to negotiate for land for future houses)
- Work with other members of the study circle (e.g. to start a choir or a sewing project)

Exercise – way forward

Undertake one or both of the following exercises. Encourage participants to be as specific as possible.

1. Individual reflection

Ask yourself what you are going to do as a result of what you have learnt at this workshop.

2. Group

Form yourself into a small group of people who you can work with in future. Discuss what you can do as a group after the meeting to promote study circles.

Ask individuals or groups to report back on what they are going to do as a result of what they have learnt at this training.

Discuss and agree how you are going to monitor that the actions identified under 'way forward' are done.

Use one of the evaluation techniques to evaluate the meeting.

Close the meeting as appropriate.