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### Case Studies

Analyzing case studies by trainees has become such an integral part of training modules that not much thought is given to content and utility. Case studies are an effective learning technique in certain situations and time-consuming in others. The case study method is beneficial in many ways as it helps:

- Development of diagnostic skills
- Subject and functional integration
- Deep as opposed to surface learning
- Involvement and motivation of participants
- Effective-use of class-time
- Development of team learning
- Analysis of group discussion processes
- Recyclability
- Review of policy and practice

It is essential to know when to apply case studies for effective learning. The following are some pointers:

#### **Valid and specific learning outcomes**

Sometimes case studies are used merely to occupy class time in a training session. They must have valid learning outcomes and justify the time spent studying them.

#### **Reversal of theory and practice**

Trainees often do not understand formally taught theory. An ideal way to teach a concept is to use a case study before explaining it to trainees. Case studies demonstrate the relevance of a theory, which can later be explained effectively in the class through questions and answers.

#### **Student resistance**

Trainees who have been used to the passive ways of conventional education might resist the idea of effectively applying the theory they have learned in practical situations. Trainees might dislike having to make decisions from incomplete information. Specifying the learning outcomes can reassure the validity of the methodology.

#### **Case study progression**

A series of graded case studies can help teach trainees to deal with progressively more complicated situations. The initial cases in the series should be short and relatively simple. The complexity of the cases should then gradually increase. It might involve methods like



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role-playing. However, the case study method is just one learning technique and therefore must not be used exclusively.