

## Basic information on the project method



For leaders in children's and youth work it is certainly one of the most beautiful tasks to promote and use the gifts that God as Creator has given to every human being. It is truly (Lord)ly to see how the Lord has placed them in individual human lives and very regrettable how much lies follow that could actually be used for the good of all.

### Principle Thoughts on the Project Method

The point of teen ministry (and not just teen ministry) is not to look for gifts in a big way, but rather to use types of programs and methods that bring out the gifts of the individual. Some people in our churches spend so much time looking for gifts that they forget to serve. In fact, the opposite should happen, namely that the gifts serve the good of the whole. Have courage to use the project methodology because there is much more in our teens in terms of dreams, ideas, and creativity than we can ever dream up. We can, may, and must trust our teens with much, much more. Are you convinced that your teens can take responsibility for themselves? It doesn't take an old age to make decisions (even spiritual decisions)! But you do need to make room for experimentation and allow the teens and you to make mistakes.

I am now weaving in some basic ideas about the project method, the source of which is Willi Erl's book "Methods of Modern Youth Work II".

When working with a group in a project-like way, one distinguishes between different group-related project characteristics.

#### 1. Leader-structured projects

In leader-structured projects, the Leider helps the group in a way that clearly shapes the realization of the project. He introduces the topic or task. He gathers ideas, opinions and questions about it. He distributes research and design tasks to individuals, pairs or subgroups. He has the results presented or reported to the whole group. The leader-guided project work makes sense especially when groups that have been led in a strongly authoritarian way are to be encouraged to take the initiative and to act independently. The process of steering the projects is, in a sense, a preliminary exercise for the self-structuring application of the method.

#### 2. self-structured projects

The shaping of the projects by the group members themselves - this is the culmination of the method. In the self-structured project situation, the leader stands on the sidelines of the group events. He observes the process and the relationships of the group members. He draws attention to the consequences of decisions if they have not been considered. He can also point out organizational necessities if they are forgotten. But he always intervenes at the last minute, so to speak, so that he does not interfere with the self-development of the group and its members by moving on too quickly. The leader must be especially on guard when the group members turn to him for help. If he gives the desired help at once, the group will become accustomed to seek advice

from him whenever the work becomes more difficult. Finally, he will structure the project in place of the group.

### **3. Self- or other-interest projects**

For the leader-structured ventures, the question is whether the group also identifies with the project and accepts the venture as theirs. In the case of self-structured ventures, the question does not arise in this way; the project is, from the outset, a venture supported by the group members. Of course, this does not mean that all group members are behind it. In order to motivate the group and the individuals, but also to assess the importance of a project, it is important to gain clarity about whose interests the realization of a project actually lies. We can distinguish between external and self-interest. I will give an example of each.

#### **Project in self-interest:**

A project group that has formed in a village to solve leisure problems of young people, first proceeds in such a way that it explores the needs and interests of young people. From this, a possible goal for the project group can be derived. It is in the young people's own interest that something meaningful comes out of it.

#### **Project in someone else's interest:**

Young people organize something to help in emergencies here in Switzerland or in developing countries. A group of teenagers collects money for building materials, a total of Fr. 20'000 with which the residents of the slum build their school night after night with these materials. For such aid to be effective, it is often necessary to undertake larger projects or to carry out a whole series of individual projects as part of an overall project. Incidentally, when it comes to solidarity projects for others, the groups can be more demanding and act more admonitory than would be appropriate for asserting their own interests.

The decisive prerequisite for the project method is the motivation of the group members. In leader-structured ventures, the leader may first have to motivate the group to get on with the tasks by trying to make clear the purpose, benefits and importance of the project. In the self-structured ventures, it sometimes falls to him to encourage the group to follow through with the work they have begun.

When you work in projects, you are working with your teens toward a goal. Set as broad a scope as possible so that the young people can create as much as possible on their own. Project methodology is going to be a bigger and bigger part of our programs in the next few years because this is where God and the gifts He has given to each individual are taken seriously.

For several years now, I have been working primarily with project methodology in my camps. Since that time, many more teens are choosing to live with Jesus. This is certainly not only, but also related to the project-like work. The teens feel that the gifts God has placed in them are good and that they can use and develop them. This Lord who has created them with these wonderful gifts and always takes them seriously, this Creator who means it so well with them, they now want to trust more, even entrust themselves completely to Him.

When I work with the project methodology, I take seriously this Lord who has put so much into our teens. I take seriously these teens that God loves so much, and I take seriously His commission because I want to give the best I can.

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## Source reference

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