PROJECTS IN EDUCATION

IN this issue we publish a paper on *Planning a group practice* recounting the experience of four trainee practitioners. We do so not only for the practical information it provides, but also because it is an excellent illustration of the value of projects in education.

Project work places the emphasis where it ought to be—on learning rather than teaching. It aims to create incentives and opportunities for the student to undertake intensive study of a topic and, by direct involvement, to challenge him to draw widely for information, to think critically, and to create his own solutions.

Its educational objectives are thus largely independent of *content*: they are more concerned with *process*. The student's factual knowledge is increased by the project and, more important, he learns thoroughness in collecting data and a capacity to systematise aims, priorities and procedures. He also develops analytical skill, resourcefulness, and imagination in surmounting problems as they arise. At the same time, as the authors note, the students' attitudes and opinions develop. And the relationship of student and teacher changes from a pedagogic pattern into a partnership.

To achieve these objectives the project must motivate the student by direct involvement, by setting clear-cut goals, by providing continuing feedback, and the satisfaction of responsibility and recognition.

It is in the handling of these elements of motivation that the teacher's main task lies. Projects demand careful selection, preparation, and supervision if their potential is to be realised. They must appeal to the student as relevant to his needs. They must also be possible within the time available, and yet must stretch his capabilities. The teacher must have clear objectives in mind, and, while being available for discussion, must allow the student to evolve his own methods. Above all, the teacher should infuse enthusiasm and a sense of achievement. The teacher's role is thus both unobtrusive and active, and demands time, energy, imagination, and adaptability.

Projects provide a valuable learning situation both for the individual and for the group. There will always be loners who are more at home with individually undertaken projects than with group projects. But this paper also illustrates the additional potential of group work. With the insights into relationships which this brings, it is perhaps particularly appropriate for organisational projects.

The Doncaster trainees, and their general-practitioner teachers, are to be congratulated on this stimulating exercise. Perhaps they will tell us sometime how the conflict of preference between health centres and group-practice premises was resolved!