

Problem Tree Instructions and Advice

- Spend a few quick minutes discussing with participants how traditional teaching often prefers to tell students what the answer to a problem is. By contrast, this exercise will encourage children to think about the causes and effects of the problem. This exercise is not designed to find a solution. It is designed to give students a deeper understanding of the problem and to think analytically.
- Now you want to demonstrate how we use the Problem Tree to analyze cause and effect. So first you will need to decide what problem or issue to choose. Try and find out what the group thinks is an issue that they all feel strongly about. Use that for your analysis.
- Draw an outline of a tree on a big piece of paper with a marker (see Appendix F)
- Make sure that the participants recognize that the illustration is a tree! Ask them what role the roots play in a tree (*'they feed it and make the tree grow bigger'*) and ensure they can recognize the branches.
- Write or draw the name of the problem on the trunk of the tree.
- The next step is to identify the causes of the problem. Ask the participants to identify causes ("Why is the problem there? What are the causes of this problem"). Listen to their answers and ask them to justify their reasons. (***'Why do you think that? Who has a different opinion?'***)
- When people have agreed on a cause write it down on a card or a piece of paper. Keep going until you have found five or six causes for the problem. Alternatively, simply write the answers directly onto the roots.
- If you have time, ask the participants to place the cards on the roots in such a way that the most serious are to the left and the less serious are to the right.
- Now repeat the process by asking them to identify the effects. Again ask them to justify their answers (***'Why do you think that? Who has a different opinion?'***)
- Write or draw them on separate cards. Ask them to place the cards on the branches so that the most serious are to the left and the less serious are to the right.
- Once the diagram is ready, ask them to explain the whole thing. Also ask them to reflect on the diagram and what it means.
- If there is time, start a discussion among the participants exploring possible 'solutions' to deal with the causes and effects of the problem. Make it clear that many people themselves can be responsible for many of these solutions. From solutions you can move to the actions
- that people might take. You might even add the solutions to the tree in the form of fruit.

Applying Problem Trees for key subjects in the national syllabus

Problem Trees are flexible and can be used to analyze cause and effects in many different contexts. However they will work better for some subjects than others. Encourage teachers to experiment with the tool. Here are examples of subjects and lessons, drawn from key subjects typically found in a national curriculum and where Problem Trees might prove useful.

Music

Topic: National or regional music and the influences on it. Elicit the following influential factors on music from the students and place them against the roots of your tree.

- Changing life styles
- Proximity of different ethnic groups
- Effects of social interaction
- Effects of tourism
- Electronic and print media
- Modern technology
- Impact of alien cultures

Then ask the students what the effects of these influences have been and place those across the branches.

Social Studies

The following themes might lend themselves to analysis with a Problem Tree.

Resources and Economic.

- *Problems facing forests in our country*
- *The effects of mining on the environment*
- *Causes of conflict in society*
- *Urbanisation: explain the problems associated with the growth of urban centres*

People and Populations

- *Identify factors influencing population growth*
- *Describe the consequences of population growth*

Physical Environment

- *Effects of climate change on migration and economic activities of people in this country.*
- *Explain the factors that influence climate change and explain the impact of climate change on human activities.*

Agriculture

- *Describe different types of pollution and their causes*
- *State the effects of pollution on the environment*

Health Education

HIV/AIDS

- *Modes of transmission*
- *Impact of HIV/AIDS on the individual, family and nation.*