Toolbox for teachers
Tool 1: Task-based learning

How to support learning by setting tasks

Interactive teaching and learning plays a key role in most of the activities in the teaching suggested in this manual. The objectives of interactive teaching are cognition (that is, thinking and understanding), learning, and action. Every stage of planning the lessons, monitoring the tasks, evaluating the results and reflecting the whole process has a lot of hidden learning potential for the students.

The basic approach of integrating thinking and doing has implications for the whole process of learning. It does not mean that active handling of learning objects is confined to the preliminary stages of "real" learning, which is then understood to involve only the minds of learners. Rather, integration of learning and doing can give all learners a clear idea of why they are learning by doing: they have a task to do, and this requires many abilities and skills. In this kind of teaching, the learner must define his or her learning needs in each new situation that arises. Learners will then also require instruction by the teacher, which means that students set their teachers tasks, and not vice versa. Task-based learning produces ideal combinations of constructivist learning and learning by instruction.

In task-based learning, students face problems that they wish to solve. Learning is not an end in itself, but leads to something useful and meaningful. Students learn by exploring ways to solve a problem, setting themselves, and their teacher, the tasks that pave the way to the solution of the problem. School is life – this *leitmotif* of EDC/HRE also applies in task-based learning. Many real-life situations consist of finding solutions for problems. Task-based learning prepares students for life by creating real-life situations as settings for learning.

Task-based learning follows a pattern that can be described in general terms. If the teacher keeps to this pattern, the potentials of learning by doing, that is, active learning, will unfold almost by themselves:

Elements of task-based learning

The students face a task that needs to be solved (presented either by the teacher or a textbook).

The students plan their action.

The students implement their action plan.

The students reflect on their process of learning and present their results.

It is important for the students to experience the principles of task-based learning frequently in different contexts. A good task that gives rise to many problems that need to be solved is the best means to create a productive and exciting learning environment.