

## Toolbox for teachers

### Tool 2: Co-operative learning

This form of teaching is not about simply letting students work in groups in the hope that the work will somehow get done. What is meant by this is a learning process in some shape or form which is delegated to the area of social learning for lack of visible cognitive success. The expression “co-operative learning”, however, is concentrated on the achievement of the learners.

Clear role distribution among the members of the group is a prerequisite for successful teaching according to a co-operative model. In this, formal tasks that provide equal status among the members are distributed and practised and this thus leads to successful learning. It is, however, clear that not every task is suitable for this type of teaching and therefore a polarised relationship between co-operative learning forms and teacher-centred teaching is not meant. In this model of teaching, the teacher plays a clear and meaningful role. The success of co-operative learning, as many class comparisons have shown, is dependent on basic elements. The following procedure seems to be tried and tested by many teachers:

#### Co-operative learning: how to go about organising a group

1. The names of the group members are listed alphabetically.
2. Each person in the group is assigned one of the following roles.

**Moderator:** This person ensures that all the members understand the task and is, as well, the group’s speaker.

**Reporter:** This person organises the presentation or final product.

**Materials manager:** This person ensures that all the necessary materials are available and makes sure that everything has been cleaned up at the end.

**Planner:** This person makes sure that the group manages its time well and checks that the group sticks to its schedule. This person makes sure that the group plans out its course of action in a reasonable way at the beginning of the assignment and adapts this plan accordingly.

**Mediator:** This person solves any problems within the group.

#### 3. Rules:

a) Some members of the group have special tasks/roles, but every single person is responsible for the entire process and the group’s results.

b) If a question is to be asked to the teacher or student-leader, then the whole group must decide which question is to be asked. Like this, the group decides upon the question collectively. The leaders do not answer any individual questions during this group process.

c) Each group is responsible for the presentation. Each member of the group is responsible for answering any questions.

Teachers who often work with the group method say that it often makes sense for learners to keep their roles for a longer period of time. This provides a certain security, speeds up learning, and improves group performance.