

Teamwork in Inclusive Classroom



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Why is teamwork important in an inclusive classroom?

- ☺ Provides a valuable opportunity to achieve high quality learning outcomes;
- ☺ Stimulates collaboration and develops pupils' confidence and active participation in learning;
- ☺ Brings together pupils with different experiences and perspectives, so it leads to creative and innovative solutions;
- ☺ Encourages pupils to challenge assumptions;
- ☺ Gives pupils a chance to perform a number of different roles;
- ☺ Develops different skills such as: project management, problem solving, conflict resolution and negotiation;
- ☺ Prepares pupils for the workplace.

What is teamwork?

A team is a group of people who **work together** to accomplish a **common goal**.

The concept of teamwork is defined as “the work done by a group of pupils which has a **shared awareness of identity and rules**, the same **aims and commitment** to help the others” (Arnaiz, 1988)

What is teamwork? Qualities of a team

- Team members **share** their **goals**
- Team members **understand their roles** and **scopes for contribution**
- Team members work together and independently to **complete tasks**
- Team members **give each other emotional support**

What is teamwork? Stages of team development



How can I develop teamwork in my class?

- **Plan for each stage of group work.** Think about how you will introduce, organise and evaluate pupils in teamwork.
- **Carefully explain to your class how the groups will operate and how pupils will be graded.** Explain the objectives of the group task and define any relevant concepts and tasks.
- **Give pupils the skills they need to succeed in groups.** (skills like active and tolerant listening, helping one another in mastering content, giving and receiving constructive criticism, managing disagreements and so on).

How to introduce pupils to teamwork

If you have never done teamwork in your classes:

- You can ask pupils to reflect about their **previous ideas/schemes and experience in teamwork**
- You might want to experiment first with **informal learning teams.**
- After, you might propose **formal learning teams** and **long-term teams** progressively.

Types of teamwork (complexity criteria)

Informal learning teams are ad hoc temporary groups of pupils within a single class session.

Informal learning groups can be initiated, for example, by asking pupils to turn to a neighbour and spend two minutes discussing a question you have posed.

You can also form groups of three to five to solve a problem.

You can organise informal groups at any time in a class of any size to do sample tasks.

Types of teamwork (complexity criteria)

Formal learning teams are teams established to complete a specific task, such as perform an experiment, write a report, carry out a project and so on.

These groups may complete their work in a single class session or over several sessions. Typically, pupils work together until the task is finished, and their project is graded.

Types of teamwork (complexity criteria)

Long-term teams (usually existing over a long period of the course) with stable membership whose primary responsibility is to provide members with support, encouragement, and assistance in completing course requirements and assignments.

How to organize learning teamwork

- **Decide how the groups will be formed.**

- ❑ Some teachers prefer randomly assigning pupils to groups to maximise their heterogeneity: a mix of males and females, verbal and quiet pupils, the cynical and the optimistic.
- ❑ Some teachers let pupils choose with whom they want to work, although this runs the risk that groups will socialise too much and that pupils will self-segregate.
- ❑ Still other teachers prefer to form the groups themselves, taking into account pupils' prior achievement, levels of preparation, work habits, ethnicity, and gender. They try to sprinkle the more able pupils evenly among the groups
- ❑ A middle ground, is to ask pupils to express a preference.

How to organize learning teamwork

▪ **Decide how the groups will be formed**

Learning teams work best when they are balanced in terms of their abilities and have members with varied characteristics. Ideally, group members have:

- various levels of prior achievement
- various levels of prior experience
- a gender mix
- an ethnic and linguistic mix
- various learning styles

How to organize learning teamwork

- **Be conscious of group size.** In general, teams of four or five members work best. Larger groups decrease each member's opportunity to participate actively.
- **Keep teams together.** When a team is not working well, avoid breaking it up, even if the group requests it. It's important to learn solving problems together.

How to organize learning teamwork

- **Help groups plan how to proceed.** Ask each group to devise a plan of action: who will be doing what and when. Review the groups' written plans or meet with each group to discuss its plan.
- **Regularly check in with the teams.** Teachers can establish checkpoints with the team.
- **Provide mechanisms for groups to deal with problems** (uncooperative members, conflicts among members ...)

What to check in with the teams: Members' role

Behaviour in the group can be of 3 types:

1. that which helps the group accomplish its task
2. that which helps group members get along better (relationships)
3. self centred behaviour which contributes to neither group task nor group relationships

What to check in with the teams: Members' task roles

Team leader

- Responsible for ensuring that the team achieves its goals on time
- Provide structure and guidance to allow maximum participation

Facilitator

- Responsible for ensuring that every member participates in the team and manages conflicts

Team Recorder

- Responsible for documenting group activities

Team Reflector

- Responsible for the development of the team's process skills

Team Explorer

- Responsible for expanding the team's focus and providing energy to motivate the team

What to check in with the teams: Members' relationship roles

Harmonising

- Attempting to reconcile disagreements
- Reducing tension
- Getting people to explore differences

Gate keeping

- Helping to keep communication channels open
- Facilitating the participation of others
- Suggesting procedures that permit sharing remarks

Encouraging

- Being friendly, warm, and responsive to others
- Indicating by facial expression or remarks the acceptance of others' contributions.

What to check in with the teams: Members' self-oriented roles (toxic roles)

Dominator: interrupts others; launches into long monologues; is over-positive and over-dogmatic; tries to lead group and assert authority; is generally autocratic.

Negativist: rejects ideas suggested by others; takes a negative attitude on issues; argues frequently and unnecessarily; pessimistic. **Aggressor:** criticizes or blames others; tries to get attention; shows anger or irritation against group or individuals; deflates importance or position of others in group.

Storyteller: likes to tell long "fishing stories" which are not relevant to the group; goes off on long tangents.

Interrupter: talks over others; engages in side conversations; whispers to neighbour.

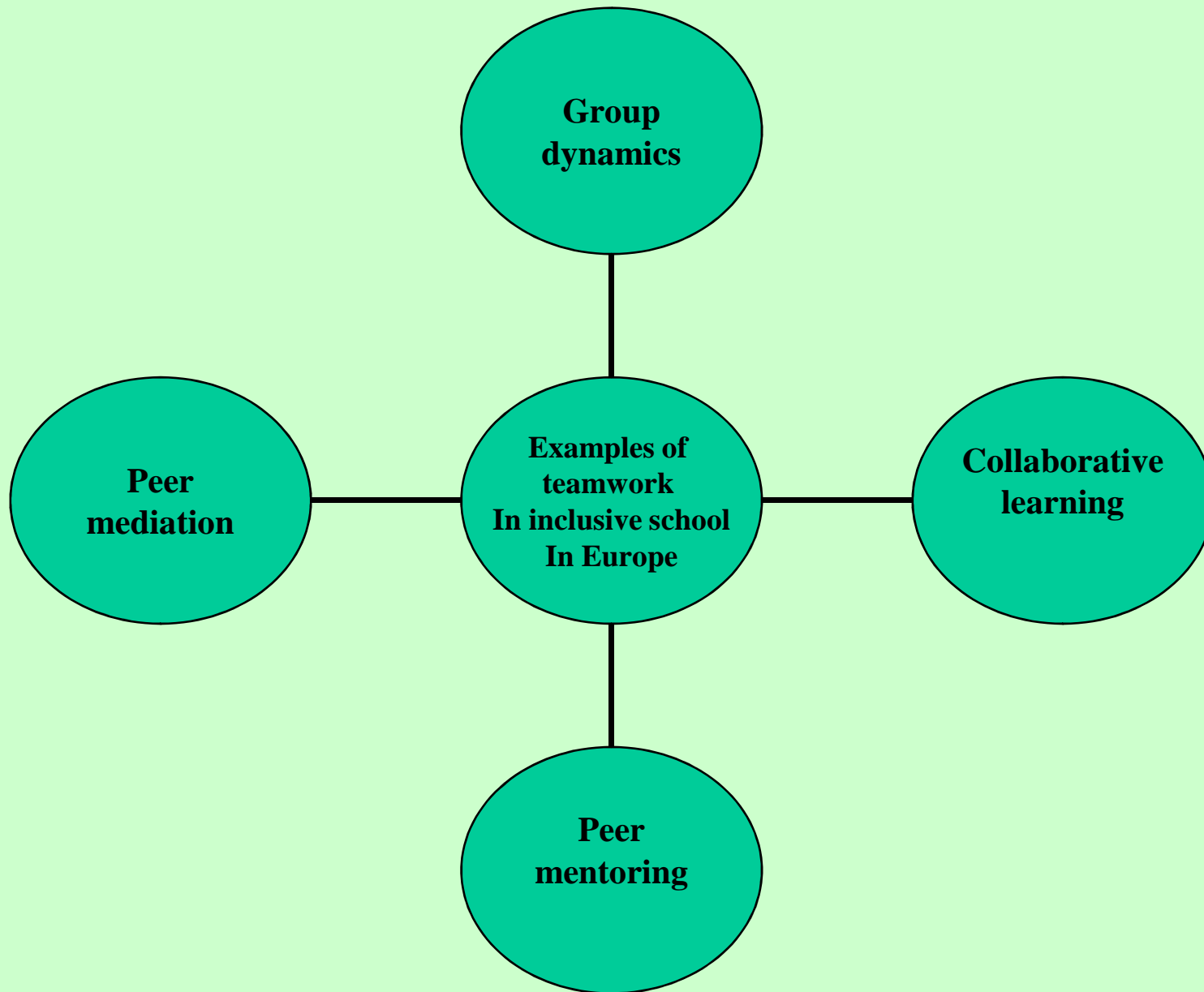
Poor me: tries to get the group's attention to deal with own personal concerns, discomfort, bad luck and so on.

How to deal with problems (Norms for team)

- Standard or group rules always develop in a group in order to control the behaviour of members.
- Norms usually express the beliefs or desires of the majority of the group members as to what behaviours should or should not take place in the group.
- These norms may be clear to all members (explicit), known or sensed by only a few (implicit), or operating completely below the level of awareness of any group members.
- Some norms help group progress and some hinder it.

What to evaluate the teamwork

- Goals and objectives
- Trust and conflict
- Expression of differences
- Leadership
- Control and procedures
- Utilisation of resources
- Interpersonal communication
- Problem solving /Decision making



What is teamwork among professionals in inclusive schools?

- Teamwork is a form of collective work where educators and school professionals come together to *share* ideas, strategies, even possible solutions. Each member has their own *individual task*, but these separate tasks can benefit from hearing what colleagues are doing or have done with similar tasks.
- School professionals must articulate a mission and work collaboratively to achieve it.
- School professionals must collect and interpret a wide variety of information to insure that their pupils are succeeding at higher levels of achievement.

What do I need to participate in teamwork among professionals?

- Skills of planning work.
- Skills of communication
- Skills of responsibility.
- Skills of supportive diversity.
- Skills of feedback and evaluation.

To sum up, working in a team is a question of skills but it also presupposes the conviction that cooperation is a positive professional value.

What have I learnt about teamwork?

- Why is teamwork important in an inclusive classroom?
- What is teamwork?
- How can I introduce teamwork in a classroom?
- How can I organise teamwork in a classroom?
- How can I evaluate teamwork in a classroom?
- Which examples of teamwork are carried out in inclusive schools in Europe?
- What do I need to participate in teamwork among professionals?
- How can I transfer these course contents to my professional situation?