



The impact of collaborative approaches on learning is consistently positive

Cost	Evidence strength	Impact (months)	Effect size
£££££		+5	0.38

What is it?

A collaborative (or cooperative) learning approach involves pupils working together on activities or learning tasks in a group small enough for everyone to participate on a collective task that has been clearly assigned. Pupils in the group may work on separate tasks contributing to a common overall outcome, or work together on a shared task.

Some collaborative learning approaches put mixed ability teams or groups to work in competition with each other in order to drive more effective collaboration. There is a very wide range of approaches to collaborative and cooperative learning involving different kinds of organisation and tasks. [Peer tutoring](#) can also be considered as a type of collaborative learning, but in the Toolkit it is reviewed as a separate topic.

How effective is it?

The impact of collaborative approaches on learning is consistently positive. However, the size of impact varies, so it is important to get the detail right. Effective collaborative learning requires much more than just sitting pupils together and asking them to work in a group; structured approaches with well-designed tasks lead to the greatest learning gains. There is some evidence that collaboration can be supported with competition between groups, but this is not always necessary, and can lead to learners focusing on the competition rather than the learning it aims to support. Approaches which promote talk and interaction between learners tend to result in the best gains.

A limited number of published studies on collaborative learning are available in the Arab world. There is, however, some evidence of promise where the approach has been applied. Studies in Libya, Saudi Arabia, and UAE have examined the effect of the collaborative learning. Reported benefits include interpersonal skills, self-confidence, student attitudes, productivity, alongside academic outputs.

However, researchers have highlighted some potential barriers to implementing collaborative learning approaches in the Arab world. Examples include: the hierarchical education systems, overloaded curriculum, lack of resources and lack of high quality teacher training in the region. Researchers have suggested selecting textbooks that embed collaborative learning activities, as one way of implementing the approach.

How secure is the evidence?

Over 40 years a number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses have provided consistent evidence about the benefits of collaborative learning. In addition to direct evidence from research into collaborative approaches, there is also indirect evidence that has shown that collaboration can increase the effectiveness of other approaches such as [Mastery learning](#) or [Digital technology](#). Collaborative learning appears to work well for all ages if activities are suitably structured for learners' capabilities and positive evidence has been found across the curriculum. Not all of the specific approaches to collaborative learning adopted by schools have been evaluated, so it is important to evaluate any new initiative in this area.

What are the costs?

Overall the costs are estimated as very low. Ongoing training for teachers is advisable, with estimated costs of about 500.0 GBP (643.2 USD, 456.0 JOD) per teacher, or about 20.0 GBP (25.7 USD, 18.2 JOD) per pupil per year for a class of 25 pupils.

Costs originally calculated in GBP; USD and JOD calculated via oanda.com on 22/09/20.

As yet there is no information about local costs.

What should I consider?

Pupils need support and practice to work together; it does not happen automatically.

Tasks need to be designed carefully so that working together is effective and efficient, otherwise some pupils will try to work on their own.

Competition between groups can be used to support pupils in working together more effectively. However, overemphasis on competition can cause learners to focus on winning rather than succeeding in their learning.

It is particularly important to encourage lower achieving pupils to talk and articulate their thinking in collaborative tasks to ensure they benefit fully.

Have you considered what professional development is required to support effective use of these approaches?

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