1. **Conditions dependent on school organization**

A project team developing teaching materials for schools in 10 different European countries must bear in mind that conditions for the use of these materials can vary greatly, depending on school organization.

- There are schools with a strict lesson time of 45 to 60 minutes for individual subjects
- Some schools have double periods with 90 to 120 minutes
- Few schools allow for project work with the time for different subjects being reserved for a particular project or topic, which can take up to a week or longer.

Because of these differences the teaching material was arranged so that the parts could be taken and used as in a construction kit.

2. **Principal contents**

- In Topic 1 „Debate on values" fundamental religious and ethical ideas are discussed.

- In Topic 2 "Intercultural dialogue" we are concerned with the integration of immigrants and the problems involved.

- Topic 3 "Transformation process" deals with socio-economic and political change that started after the end of the Cold war and is still taking place.

- Topic 4 "Regional conflicts" is dedicated to problems that have a strong regional dimension.

Between the individual topics there are many cross references and connections; for example in the integration of immigrants religious questions sometimes play an important role, as we have seen in Germany, France and the Netherlands. In the transformation process we are concerned with values that are partly dealt with in the areas of Topic 1 or Topic 2. Similarly regional conflicts also flare up because of different religions, different ideas on values between social groups and because of economic and political conduct and behaviour.

The main emphasis in the contents to be used in the actual teaching depend on:

- Curricular requirements
- Teaching time available
- Interests of teachers and pupils
- Availability and willingness of additional staff for teamwork
- National or regional problemls
- Teaching aims in general

The question of the most suitable teaching method is only the second step. Of course, arriving at particular teaching aims will depend greatly on the teaching method chosen. Certain aims can only be reached with certain methods. There is, for example, little sense in trying to develop pupils' creativity through a method that does not provide for any pupil activity.

3.   Teaching organisation

3.1 Traditional way of teaching and learning

Even at the beginning of the 21st. century this way of teaching is widespread.

Abb. 1   Frontalunterricht
Fig.   1   Traditional way of teaching and learning

S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S

T
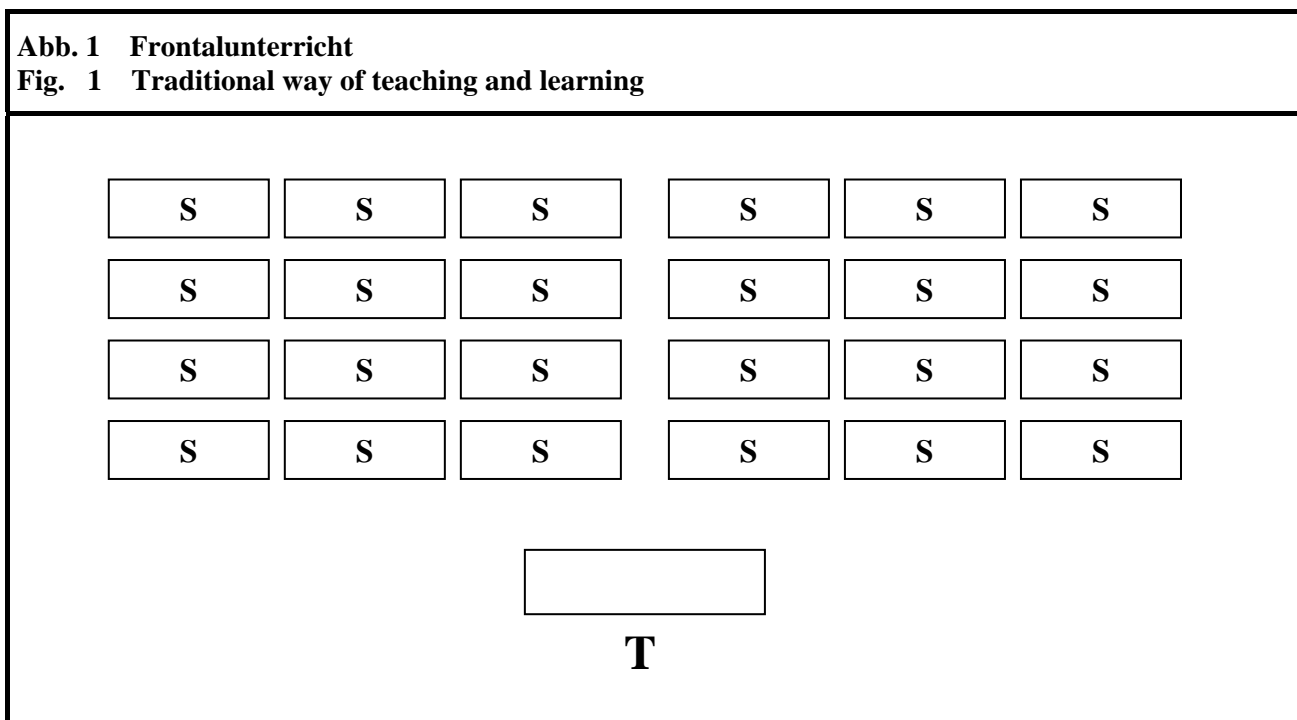
With the teacher standing in front of the class, more or less all stimuli are given by the teacher (**T**) and the students (**S**) as a rule are receptively active. This kind of lesson – in order to be effective – demands a large measure of discipline, willingness to learn and powers of concentration from the pupils. All three characteristics were already more and more difficult to find among young people at the end of the 20th. century or had to be imposed by the teacher at times with repressive measures, which can lead to an authoritarian style of teaching.

Although this traditional way is not ideal for all aspects of the COMCULT project, the COMCULT teaching material can be used with the teacher in front of the class, especially when teaching time is short or other reasons leave no alternatives.

The teacher should first of all read the teaching and learning aids for the individual topics and then , bearing in mind his or her national or regional situation, select from the contents the main points that he or she considers important.

At the end of each chapter there is a summary of the essential contents.These contents should be explained to the pupils and understood and learnt by them.

Here, in order to reinforce assertions or assessments, it is of course possible for the teacher to select texts from the relevant materials, hand them out to the students and arrive at appropriate results through interpreting them together.

The teacher standing in front of the class is still a very economical way of teaching and in some subjects to some extent also necessary. There are, however, doubts, especially on two points:

- Does this way of teaching answer the demands of life outside school?

- How long does knowledge acquired through this teaching form remain in pupils' memories?

3.2 Group work

Group work has considerable advantages particularly in encouraging creativity and the ability to solve social and political problems. The need for more time can be reduced to a reasonable level by sharing out the work.

The pupils should be involved in:

- defining tasks and activities
- sharing out work or solving problems
- presentation and evaluation

This helps to develop key qualifications in readiness for coping with tasks outside school, in society and professionally. These key qualifications include:

- competence in the subject
  (knowledge, skills)
- personal skills
  (e.g. willingness to learn, reliability, independence, perseverance, creativity)
- social skills
  (e.g. communication and teamwork skills, solidarity)
- method skills
  (ability to collect and evaluate information and use it in a new way)
- performance skills
  (ability to organize and carry out)

Abb. 2 Gruppenunterricht (arbeitsgleich oder arbeitsteilig)
Fig. 2 Groups of students working in teams (on the same task or on different ones)
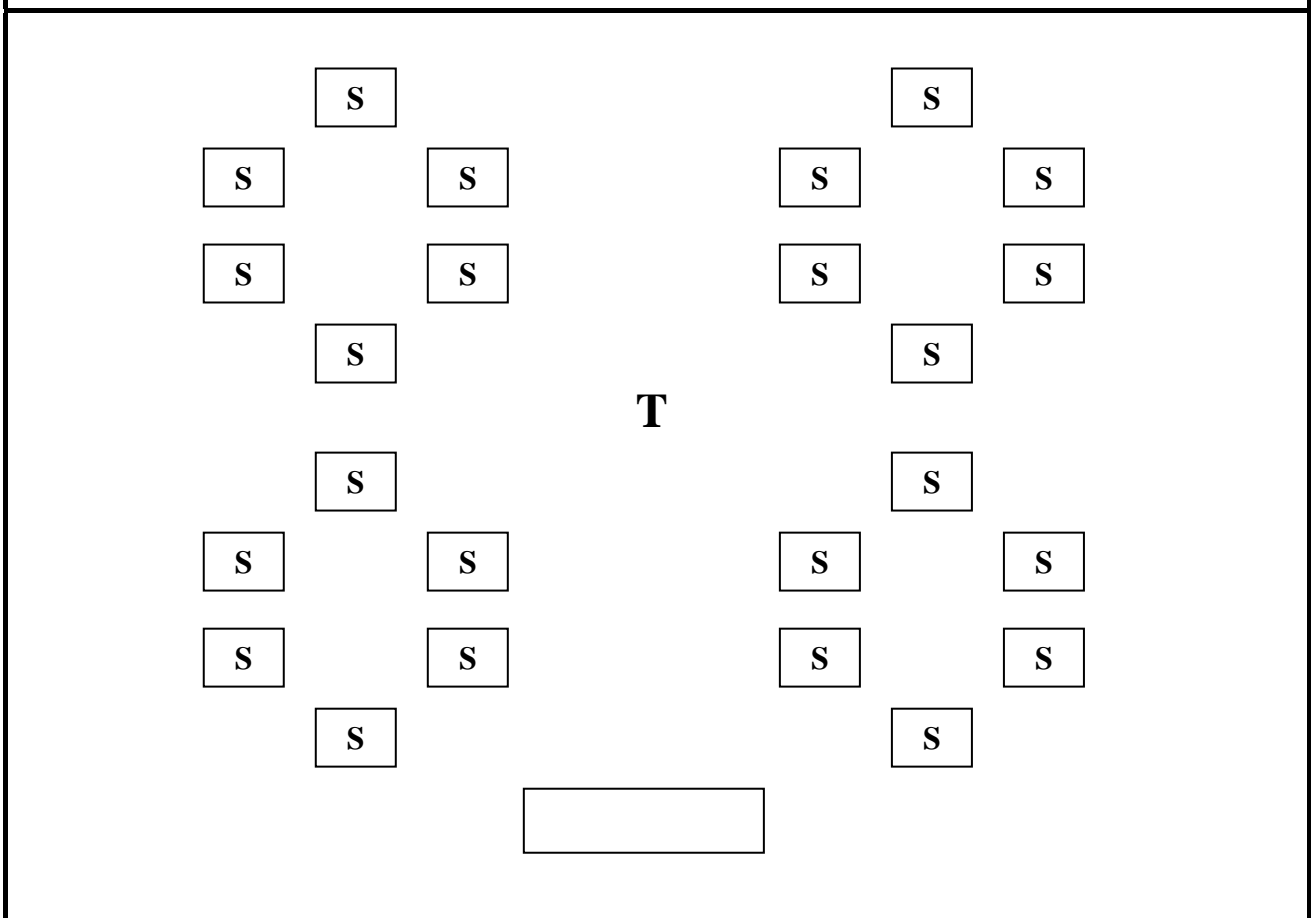
In many cases group work can be organized by one teacher alone, as even with groups working on separate parts of the work different aspects are still dealt with within the same subject or problem. If the teacher is qualified in two or even three subjects, he or she can of course cross subject boundaries.

How can sub-topics be found?

It is advisable to discuss first one or two of the COMCULT topics with the pupils in general in order to filter out sub-topics that can be worked on by individual groups.

Are sub-topics sufficient as tasks for groups?

If pupils in group work have had no experience before, the teacher must write out more precise tasks for each group and hand out particular materials to each group.
If the pupils have had experience in organizing their own work and searching for material, then sub-topics will as a rule be enough. The group must , however, be in a position to organize by itself the search for information, selection , compilation and presentation.

Groups working on the same tasks

If teaching time is short and it is necessary – as for example for class tests – for everybody to have reached exactly the same level of knowledge after precisely the same period of time, all groups should be given the same tasks.

Groups working on separate tasks

In this type of organization each group is given a different sub-topic or different tasks. In this way several areas can be worked on at the same time.

At the end of the work phase each group should of course present its own tasks and results to the rest so that all are at least roughly informed –including on aspects that they themselves have not worked on. Even this level of learning is as a rule sufficient for a class test.

What materials are available for group work?

First of all pupils can use printed out copies of the materials that are already easily accessible in the COMCULT collection of materials. Since these include text quotations that cannot be understood without relatively high proficiency in the foreign language, the materials have been translated into the project partners' own languages.This allows the participation of pupils who do not understand foreign languages or have not reached a sufficient level.

Where the technical equipment of the school permits pupils to access the internet during group work, then this medium should also be used for gathering additional information for carrying out group tasks.

Schools frequently give priority for using computer rooms to IT teaching. In order to offer arts subjects similar technological possibilities the timetable must be organized accordingly, or else pupils must be allowed to have access to the internet in free periods.

Warning! Pupils have a tendency to spend a great deal of time surfing on the internet, as there are always plenty of new things to discover. It does, however, sometimes make more sense to concentrate more on a few pages than to print out a large quantity, if one is not in a position to organize and summarize the mass of information as required by the tasks set.

Advantages of using the internet in group work

Using the internet in group work teaching has a number of advantages:

- It makes possible and encourages the key qualifications mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

- Obtaining information is to an extent much easier for pupils and teachers through internet.

- Pupils' motivation and activity in carrying out tasks with the help of internet is considerably greater than the traditional teacher-in-front-of-the-class situation.

- Information that has been found and worked on by the pupils themselves is retained longer.

- Presenting their own work in internet forces pupils to concentrate on their work and and generally also provides stronger motivation.

Disadvantages of using the internet in group work

- Searching with a precise purpose for information requires a certain amount of knowledge about what one is looking for, otherwise it is impossible to find the right ideas to put into the search engine.This is where the teacher's help is sometimes necessary.

- The information found is often so voluminous and involved that it is difficult for pupils to differentiate between what is important and what is less so.

- The quality and reliability of internet sources are sometimes difficult to check and demand a certain critical distance on the part of the user.

- Information in the internet is not available in the same quantities in all languages, so that without knowledge of foreign languages there is a limit to the information obtainable.

- Rich internet information sources can sometimes only be accessed on payment.

3.3 Cross-subject teaching

If one wants to teach the entire topics of the COMCULT network, this will hardly be possible to organize within the framework of one single school subject.Values have so far been discussed in different subjects in the school, namely:

- Ethics or Religious Instruction
- Mother tongue
- Foreign languages
- Politics or social studies
- Business studies and
- History

In some cases this has been done more or less without reflection or isolated in one specific subject. The COMCULT project does, however, try to put in the foreground the topic of values in its highly complex role in our daily lives. That is, the traditional subjects together contribute from within their areas to illustrating and solving conflicts in values.

This concentration or re-orientation of focus might seem difficult at first in countries with strict curricular rules.But it is sometimes possible to organize a certain synchronization of treatment of the topic of values in different subjects by altering the time-scheme programmed in the curriculum.

Abb. 3 Fächerübergreifender Unterricht
Fig. 3 Cross curricula teaching and learning

Politik, Geschichte, Wirtschaft/
Politics, History, Economics

Muttersprache/
Mother tongue
Ethics, Religion

Datenverarbeitung /
Data processing
Multimedia

Fremdsprachen /
Foreign languages

Beamer
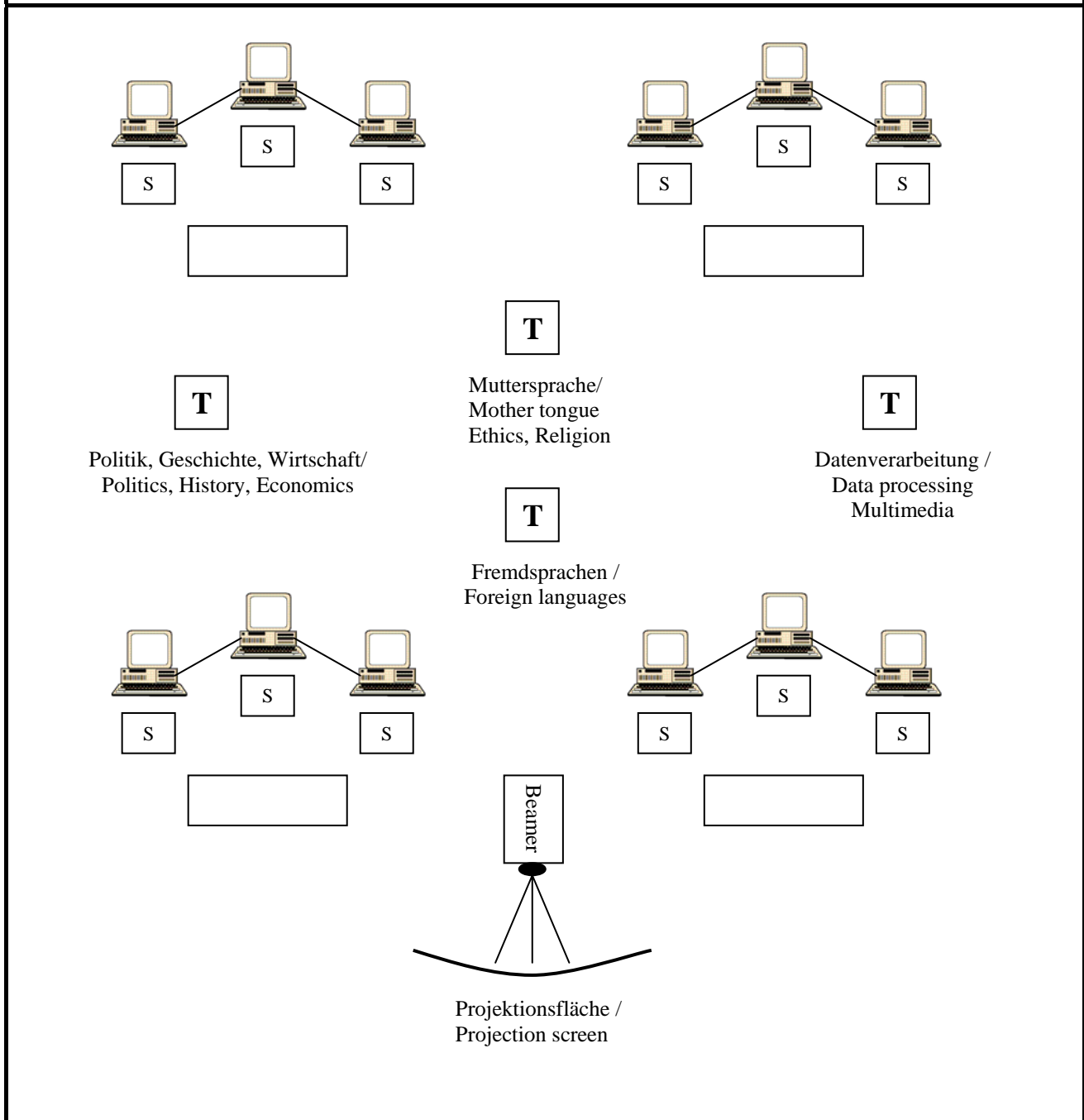
Projektionsfläche /
Projection screen

Fig.3 shows how two, three or even four teachers are involved simultaneously in cross-subject teaching. This does not immediately mean an increase in teaching hours per class, but each teacher sets aside part of the time that he or she has in the timetable anyway in that class for working together (cross-subject) on sub-topics or part-areas of a project.This of course requires of the teachers teamwork for which they have so far not been trained.On the other hand society does increasingly demand that they should teach pupils key qualifications such as the ability to work in a team, and social and media skills.

3.4 Cross-border and project-oriented teaching

The COMCULT project does not only cross the boundaries ot traditional school subjects with its topics and activities, but also tries at the same time to reach across national borders to create at least an understanding of the problems in certain member-countries of the EU. Over and above that it hopes to help people to react fairly to new challenges such as for example immigration, socio-economic transformation and globalization.

Why is cross-border teaching meaningful and necessary?

Political reasons:

- Young people in the member-countries of the EU must be educated better towards peaceful co-existence with no place for xenophobia, racism and nationalism.

- Particular conditions and modes of behaviour in the single countries have to be understood and also seen as an enrichment.

- A European public can be created by working together on topics or problems that regard more or less the lives of all the citizens of the EU. Being part of such a public is the best preparation for the making of a European identity that rests upon common values.

Economic reasons:

- Economic dependence and economic relations between European states are steadily increasing.

- Broader knowledge of these relations are often a pre-requisite for professional success and mobility.

- National loners in the economy are less and less possible, especially with the single currency.

- European and global connections are becoming increasingly important to our essential living conditions. Wherever they threaten our basic values, we must be prepared to put a stop to detrimental developments.

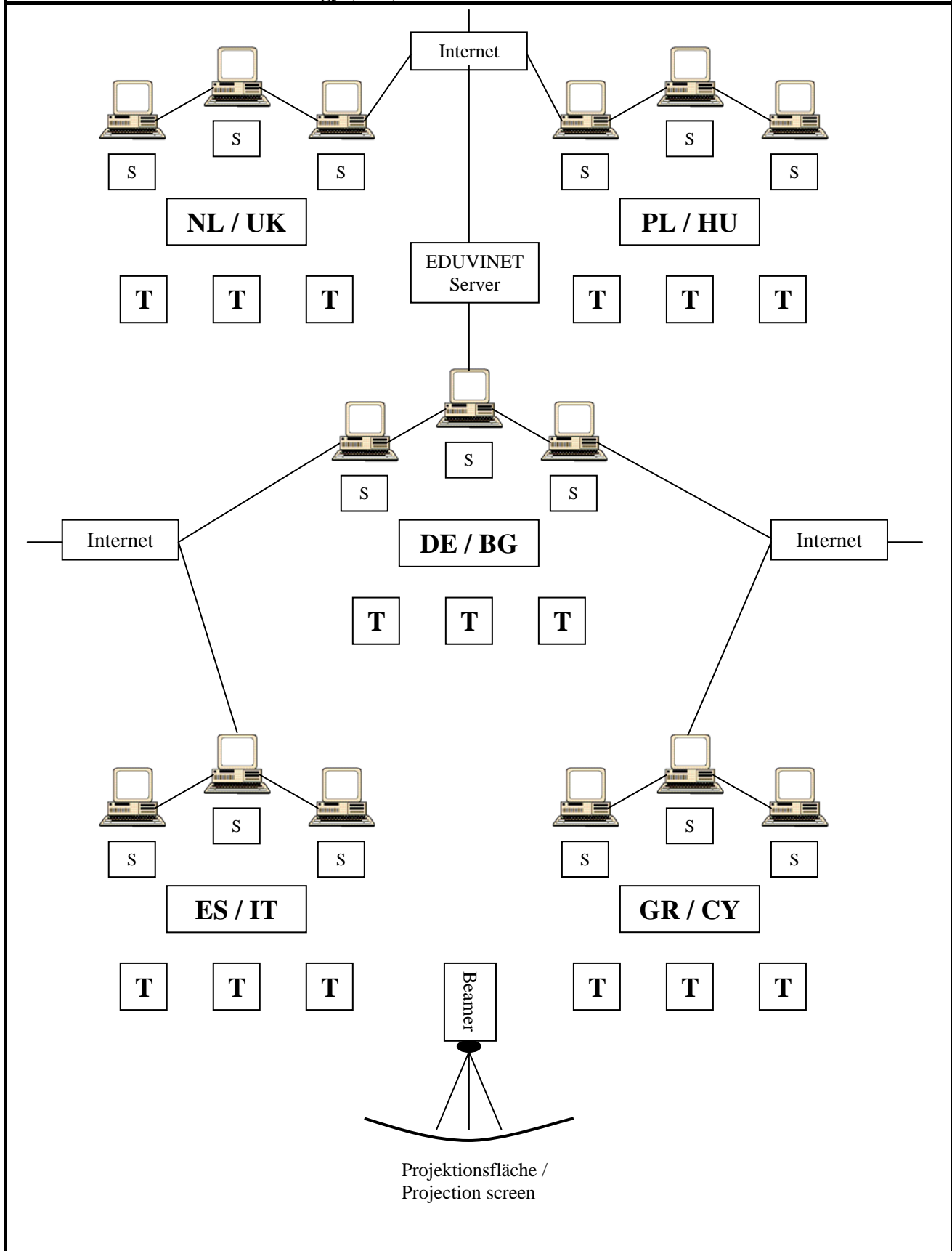**Reasons of psychological importance to learning:**

- Personal accounts, questions or comments from pupils in other member countries have a much more emotional impact than other sources of information.

- Discussion among contemporaries is sometimes more spontaneous and open than with teachers.

- Working on the same topics across borders leads to serious involvement in the matter and to emotional solidarity.

- The need to read or even write in another language provides motivation for improving foreign language proficiency as well as communication skills.

4. Information and communications technology (ICT) at the service of transnationality

Education that crosses national borders is not only desirable but through ITC has also become a feasible new dimension in teaching (cf.Fig. 4).

Abb. 4   Grenzüberschreitender Unterricht mit Hilfe der Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologie (IKT)

Fig. 4   Cross border education by using information and communication technology (ICT)

Internet

S

S

S

NL / UK

T   T   T

EDUVINET
Server

S

S

PL / HU

T   T   T

Internet

S

S

S

DE / BG

Internet

T   T   T

S

S

S

ES / IT

T   T   T

S

S

S

GR / CY

T   T   T

Beamer

Projektionsfläche /
Projection screen

The task of producing together across national borders a video film forces on the groups that are working on it in the individual schools in the COMCULT network the following activities:

- Intensive discussion on possible film sequences in one's own classes or groups

- Filming, scene selection, film cuts and reduction of data quantity by means of techical procedures

- Sending the rendered and zipped versions as E-Mail attachments

- Discussion on the film sequences of other groups

- Working out how to link up the whole product

- Organization of the work undertaken together

Cross-border teaching of this kind is no longer primarily directed at the usual school subjects but at the scope of a particular topic or project. Within this a joint project is developed and produced, during which completely different abilities are encouraged in the pupils.

- Working with complex problems
- Imagination and creativity
- Photography and design
- Technical know-how
- Social and communication skills

 All these are qualities that are nowadays summed up in the expression „media skills".