



Teachers' perceptions and behaviour in dealing with diversity in the classroom

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Research project

- ❑ Research project *“How effective are teachers in Flemish priority policy schools”*

- ❑ Carried out by: Flemish Centre for Equal Educational Opportunities
 - 3 units:
 - Centre for Language and Education,
 - Centre for Experiential Education and
 - Centre for Diversity & Learning.
 - Research project: 2006-2009



Research project

□ Why this research?

- Large differences in outcomes between schools (with same pupil composition)
- How do teachers make a difference: in depth research, actual classroom behaviour.

□ General Research question

- How do teachers perceive and deal with heterogenous (and underprivileged) groups in the classroom?
- What makes the difference?
- What is the relation between teachers' beliefs, classroom practice and learning outcomes?



Research project

- Different research focuses
 - Writing skills
 - Knowledge construction
 - Well-being and involvement
 - Diversity

- Within the same schools
 - Educational Priority Schools
 - schools with 40-70% and 70-100% priority pupils
 - use of language monitoring system (VLOT)
 - 3th (age 8), 4th (age 9) & 6th (age 11) year of primary schools
 - 10 'focus' children



Diversity: research question & methodology

□ Research questions

- What are teachers' beliefs about their students and classroom practices?
- How do teachers act? What do they do? How do they deal with the diversity present in class?
- How does this influence students?

□ Methodology

- 3 schools, 2 classes/school (4th & 6th year)
- Ethnographic research (2 weeks – full time)
- Videodata of 2 groups of children working (2 weeks: 2 hours maths, 2 hours Dutch, 2 hours world studies (and at least 2 hours groupwork) – (focus children in those groups)



Diversity: Instruments

- Interviews
 - children
 - teachers (2 times)
 - school head
 - teacher in charge of Educational Priority Policy
- Questionnaires
 - children
 - teachers
 - team
 - school head
 - parents
- School documents
 - school policy (plan: equality of education policy of the school)
 - school regulations



First analysis

- ❑ What do teachers do? How do they deal with the diversity in class? (stimulating dynamics of classroom teaching)
 - How do they use the learning time?
 - Do they use cooperative learning methods? When do they use them and how?

- ❑ Learning time
 - Importance? (Duru Bellat, 2004): “Effective teachers manage the time during which pupils are active in terms of learning”.



First analysis: learning time

- Learning time: Summary 6 schools

		Summary (2 weeks/mean - minutes)			Not included: religion, music, physical training					Total
		starting classes too late	administration	cleaning	Mathematics	Dutch	World Studies	Project	Contract	
School 1										0
4th year		111,5	56,5	43	292	116	114,5	157,5	86	977
	planned		25		400	375	225			1025
6th year		71	56,5	96	226,5	116,5	189	57	196	1008,5
	planned		25		275	375	250			925
School 2										0
4th year		33	65	27	223,5	192,5	232,5	186,5		960
	planned				300	350	300			950
6th year		19	43	45,5	312	182	250	50		901,5
	planned				300	250	239			789
School 3										0
4th year		100	78	56,5	273,5	235	300	33	33	1109
	planned				350	350	163,5			863,5
6th year		89,5	38		242,5	176	139	175	12,5	872,5
	planned				300	350	250			900



First analysis: Learning time

- First conclusions
 - Big differences between schools and teachers
 - Starting classes too late!
 - Administration takes also a lot of time, as well as 'cleaning' ('cleaning is not counted when end of learning activity')
 - Planned time is different from actual time spent on different courses.
 - Of course: also projects, contract work, etc.
 - Shows interests of teachers: e.g. School 2, 6th year: much more learning time was spent on math.



First analysis: didactical practice

- Didactical practice

- Cooperative learning

 - What?

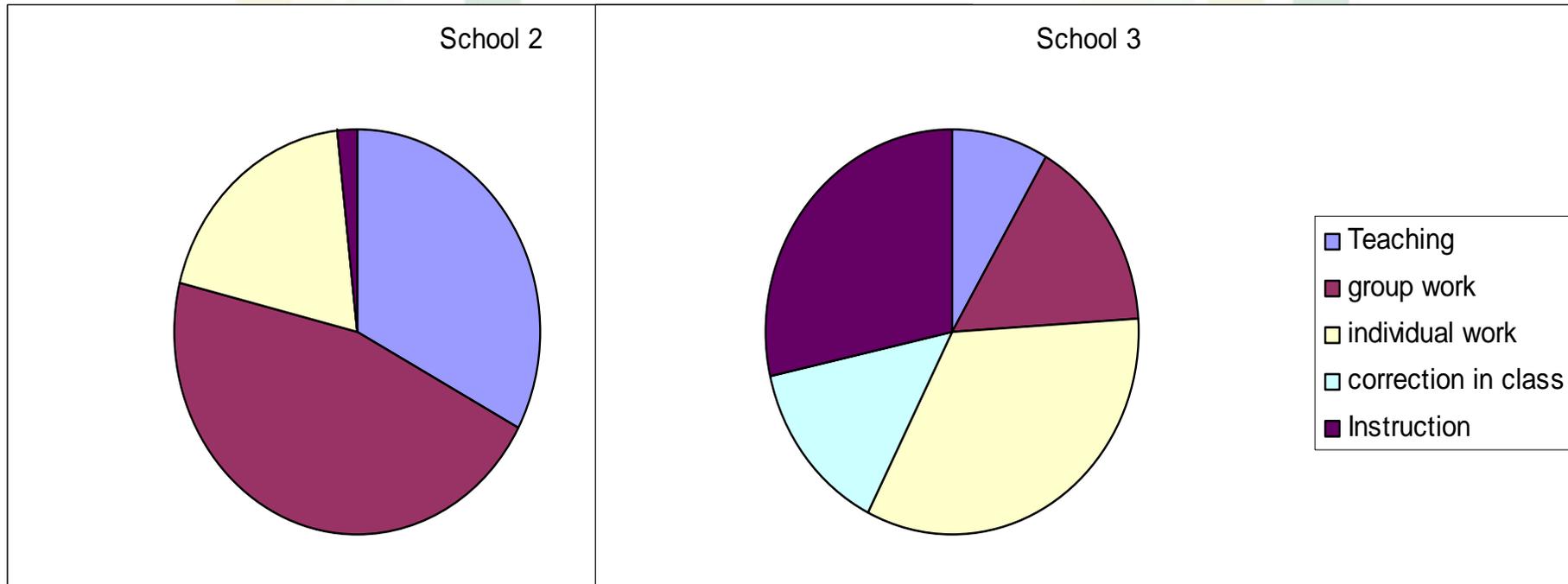
 - positive interdependence
 - individual accountability
 - interactions
 - social skills
 - group processing

 - Importance (intercultural education/dealing with diversity)



First analysis: didactical practice

- Data: focus on two classes (4th year)
Amount of groupwork (minutes/week):



First analysis: didactical practice



First analysis: didactical practice

- First conclusions
 - Amount of group work differs.
 - Groupwork: mainly in “world studies”.
 - Individual work = important
 - characteristics of cooperative learning: when analysing two classes of groupwork (during world studies) in 2 classes: big differences.
 - positive interdependence
- School 2: Work with complementary roles, divided resources
- School 3: no roles, same texts for everybody



First analysis

- interactions
 - school 2: a lot of interaction, students discuss the task, talk about their experiences, what they know, what they think ...
 - school 3: almost no interaction, 1 student draws, the others watch and wait.
- social skills
 - school 2: teacher evaluates the way they work together, and children learn social skills, heterogenous groups.
 - school 3: children say they work in groups: the good children in one group and the bad ones in another.
- group processing
 - school 2: process is important (although less attention on the product), evaluation of group process by members.
 - School 3: no evaluation of group process, only presentation
- Children in school 2 work on their own, in school 3: instructions are given by teacher during the group work.



Conclusions

□ First conclusions

- Learning time: in some schools a lot of time is wasted.
- Teaching: differences between teachers.
 - Individual work is important as well as teaching and instruction.
 - Groupwork: differences between teachers!
 - Amount of groupwork
 - The way it is organised: more or less cooperative
 - Amount of instructions given



Conclusions

□ Next steps

- Analysing teachers' discourse: how do they talk about the world (what is their world view they communicate to their students)?
- What are their beliefs (about student population & their background)?
- How do they organise group work? Is it cooperative? Tasks, instructions, role of the teacher, pupil interaction during groupwork (opportunities to interact and learn), ...
- How is this related with learning outcomes?



Thank you!

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