AN OVERVIEW OF THE QUALITY OF INTERACTIONS IN BELGIAN PRE-KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS

Sandrine Leroy¹, Lise Desmottes¹, Lisandre Bergeron-Morin², Caroline Bouchard² & Christelle Maillart¹
¹ University of Liège  ² Laval University

Introduction

Context

Early childhood education context
Language input
Quality of child's language development
Academic success
Socio-professional integration

Quality of teacher/children interactions is the most determining aspect of the educational quality, in particular regarding language development.

Quality of teacher/children interactions plays a protective role on language and communication development for vulnerable children (Dickinson, 2011).

Participants

23 pre-kindergarten classrooms (4-5 years old) in the French-speaking part of Belgium
23 volunteer female teachers
Socioeconomic status of schools: between 3 and 17 (/20)
Number of children in classrooms: between 10 and 23
Multilinguism in classrooms: between 10% and 100% of the children

Procedure

CLASS Pre-K (Classroom Assessment Scoring System®, Pianta et al., 2008)
3 domains: Emotional Support - Classroom Organization – Instructional Support
Likert scale of 7 points: 1-2 low quality, 3-5 mid-range quality, 6-7 high quality
Observation of interactions during four 30-minutes cycles (20 minutes of observation – 10 minutes of rating)
No imposed activity - Several activities are observed: “big group” activities – “little groups” activities

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAINS AND DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>RANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional support</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>3.00 – 6.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive climate</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>3.25 – 7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative climate*</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.00 – 5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher sensitivity</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>2.75 – 6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regard for student perspectives</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3.00 – 5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom organization</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3.17 – 6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior management</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>3.00 – 6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>3.75 – 7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional learning formats</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.75 – 6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional support</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.33 – 4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept development</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.00 – 4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of feedback</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.00 – 4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language modeling</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.75 – 5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Inverted score, 1 = absence of negative climate

Discussion

Objectives

In Belgium, there is a need to prevent, during early childhood, an educational gap that too often depends on the socio-economic status of a child’s family (Vandenbroeck, 2015).

Supporting the quality of teacher/children interactions in kindergarten may be a way to preventively support language development and educational achievement.

But to date, little is known about what children experience in Belgium kindergarten, regarding language development support.

The objective of this study is to document the quality of teacher/children interactions, in the second year of nursery school (4-5 years old)

Instructional support

• Domain with the lower quality
• Results already observed in other countries
• Influence of the type of activities on results: better quality during “big group” activities than during “little groups” activities
• Very few “child-centred” activities

Emotional support

• Good quality in general but...
  ... important heterogeneity between classrooms
• Questions: Where are more vulnerable children? Why is there a so high level of negative climate in some classrooms?

Importance of improving teacher/children interactions

• To offer a better support for teacher: it is necessary to propose and evaluate feasibility and effectiveness of professional development models