

Teaching essays – class size education



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Class Size Education

Investigating Education

Summary and Review of Two Documents:

- ‘ Does Small Really Make a Difference? A Reappraisal of the Literature on the Effectss of Class Size on Teaching Practice and Pupils’ Behaviour and Attainments.’ Valerie Wilson, June 2002
- ‘ The Effectss of Man-made Phonics Teaching on Reading and Spelling Attainment’ A Seven Year Longitudinal Study, Rhona Johnston and Joyce Watson (commissioned by the Scottish Executive without editorial control) , February 2005

1. Summary and Review of ‘ Does Small Really Make a Difference’

Justifications for research

The possible correlativity between category size and the quality of instruction is ‘ probably the most written about, but least researched, subject in educational research’ (Wilson, 2002) . Policy-makers are expected to establish their determinations on dependable grounds. The consequences of assorted research undertakings into the influence of category size on the quality of instruction (with an accent on pupil accomplishment) are confounding, even contradictory. A literary reappraisal that identifies tendencies from the ‘ best evidence’ in research is justified on these evidences.

Scope

Myriad publications on the subject of category size and quality of instruction were accessed ; the bound was literature published during the past 20 old ages (with exclusions, such as , Glass and Smith (1978) ‘ which is of digesting significance’) in the UK and abroad. Most of the research was conducted in America and was state-funded.

Context

Parents and instructors tend to believe that category size is a important factor in the quality of instruction experienced by the kid. The Government and Ofsted insist that there is no correlativity between accomplishment and category size. The topic is controversial and it polarises research workers.

Purposes

The purpose was to supply an overview of widely differing surveies on category size, pupil accomplishment and related pedagogical issues taking to the designation of the

‘ optimum category size for assorted purposes’ . Last, ‘ can the findings be applied to Scottish instruction? ’ (Wilson, 2002)

Methodology

A cardinal word hunt (e. g. ‘ teacher-pupil’ or ‘ student-ratio’) was used to seek seven databases, and despite excluding Government policy paperss and mentions in newspapers and diaries, more than a 1000 points were identified. The grounds was examined sing category size and student accomplishment, and groups most likely to profit from smaller categories.

Significant Points in Research Results and Conclusion

a) Nature of the Evidence:

Of the four classes of grounds available (literature reappraisals, correlational surveys, meta-analysis and experimental designs) findings from experimental design surveys were ‘ accorded higher credibility’ than from the other three types. The bulk of surveys relied on a narrow set of trials to mensurate pupils’ advancement. The nexus between category size, pupil accomplishment and schoolroom pattern or instruction manners has non been straight addressed and is treated as a minor issue within category size research.

B) Class Size and Pupil Attainment:

The Tennessee STAR undertaking (enforced 1985) was a important experimental survey affecting about 7000 kids in 79 schools. In both reading and mathematics students in little categories (13-17 students) performed better than students in the larger categories (with or without a instructor adjutant) . By the 1990s similar (chiefly publically funded) category use undertakings were underway in the US and in Canada *giving similar consequences* .

There is small dependable British grounds ; harmonizing to this literature reexamine Mortimer (1988) showed that student attainment *increased* as category size increased up to around 25 students and in the 30 to 40 student scope, but decreased between 25 and 30. Massey (1997) and Ofsted (1995) consequences besides showed consequences increased as category sizes

rose to between 28 and 35. However, Ofsted found a important rise in pupil attainment at Key Stage 1 in smaller categories.

The relevancy of consequences for British schools:

Research workers at the London University Institute of Education reanalysed STAR informations (Blatchford & A ; Mortimer, 1994 ; Goldstein & A ; Blatchford, 1997) and conducted their ain category size undertaking (in Britain) . Their reanalysis confirms the STAR consequences that the kids who most benefit from little category sizes are the really immature and those from cultural minorities. When they conducted their ain experimental research at the London Institute of Education (Blatchford et al, 2002) , a strong association was found between category size and pupils' attainment on standardized trials:

- the consequence of the decrease in category size depends on the existent category size itself.
- category size-attainment relation is influenced by pupils' accomplishments and experience on entry to the school system ; their societal background, gender (e. g. male childs benefited less than miss from smaller categories) and cultural individuality (black kids benefit more than white kids) ; age at which they experience the decreased category size
- consequences are partly determined by nature of proving, e. g. whether cognitive and/or affectional properties are assessed

- low winners benefit most from being taught in little categories ' with increasing decreases in their expected accomplishment up to a category size of 30'

degree Celsius) Class Size and Teaching Practices:

Advantages of *effectual* small-class instruction

- more clip to give congratulations and acknowledgment to persons and more elaborate cognition of single scholars
- more ' individualisation of learning' (profiting disadvantaged students, low winners and ' shy' students)
- more (and quicker) feedback on work and more high order oppugning
- less clip spent on everyday supervising, schoolroom control and direction

Many instructors engaged in learning little categories have non been trained to make so efficaciously and are utilizing the same methods they use in larger categories, hence the benefits are being lost. This has an impact on research findings sing the benefits of smaller category sizes. Teachers need to be trained to efficaciously learn categories of assorted sizes.

vitamin D) Class Size and Pupil Behaviour and Motivation

There is small grounds associating to category size and pupil behavior and what there is tends to be based on stakeholders' (instructors, headteachers, governors, parents) perceptual experiences ' which lack the dependability of experimental and experimental data' . (See Bennett, 1994, 1996 ; Pate-Bain

& A ; Achilles, 1986 ; Pate-Bain et Al, 1992 ; Boyd-Zaharias et Al, 1997 ; Glass and Smith, 1978) .

Overall findings:

- pupil misbehavior is more likely in larger categories.
- little categories were quieter with fewer pupil breaks
- pupils in smaller categories were more positive towards each other and were more willing to interact and take part. Possibly an consequence of enhanced self-pride (besides associated with little categories)
- smaller category sizes in formative old ages are associated with fewer suspensions and absences in secondary school (or its equivalent in the US)

Appraisal of Literature Review:

The range, context, justification and methodological analysis of the literature reappraisal are good matched. Overall, the reappraisal is comprehensive, enlightening and clear. However, the chief decision that there is sufficient grounds from the US surveies to demo that smaller category size does positively affect pupil accomplishment is non really good supported by the research for the undermentioned grounds: there are important countries of ambiguity and conflicting consequences that seem to be brushed aside in the reappraisal. 1. Class size (standard, standard with adjutant, and smaller) these descriptions are non uniformly applied. There was some mention to category sizes of 35 – 40 students (without clearly saying whether that was the category axial rotation, or the instruction unit, or the

norm for the school, or the exclusion) and yet most of the surveys used category sizes of 25 as criterion. If we are to utilize the decisions of this reappraisal it is not clear what 'smaller' means: 15, 20, 25? There is a tremendous difference between 15 and 25, but if the bulk of instructors are holding to get by at any one clip with 40 students in one room, the lone research that relates to their state of affairs suggests that their student accomplishments will be high. This is counter-intuitive and is not a decision that would be accepted by parents or instructors.

There are assorted factors that can hold a distorting influence on consequences: the relation between category size, sets and streaming (high accomplishing students intentionally assigned to larger categories) ; student, parent and instructor outlooks (related to streaming) ; the wider educational environment and its effects on students. Since these were not (or could not) be accounted for in the literature reappraisal, the overall consequences and decision are less dependable

One of the purposes of the research was to determine if the consequences were relevant to the Scots system. Since there is small or no grounds emanating from Scotland and really small from Britain, it is improbable that the findings can be used to inform Scots instruction policy.

Last, mention was made to documents or books that did not characteristic in the author's List of Mentions, e. g. Mortimer (1988)

Summary and Review of ' The Effects of Man-made Phonics Teaching on Reading and Spelling Attainment'

Justifications for research

In an earlier survey the writers had detected a nexus between a auxiliary man-made phonic programme and betterments in literacy. This research is the logical following measure and is justified.

Scope

A seven twelvemonth longitudinal survey affecting 300 students in primary schools in assorted socio-economic environments. This is appropriate given the purposes and methodological analysis as it allows the research workers to mensurate advancement over clip. However, a farther survey affecting a larger sample of schools would be utile.

Definitions

Analytic phonics – pupils taught to recognize missive sounds and dealings between phonemes and phonic spelling forms after formal debut to reading (and hence whole words) . The instructor foremost theoretical accounts the pronunciation of each word, so the missive sound forms are emphasised.

Man-made phonics – pupils taught phoneme acknowledgment *before* larning to read whole text. This method moves on to blending of letters (e. g. CVC) really rapidly, but without pronunciation modeling by the instructor. Typically pupils manipulate the letters and work out the synthesised sound for themselves. (See Adams, 1990)

Context

The wider context of this survey is the argument about how best to learn kids how to read. The phonic method of learning to read has been around for centuries (Morris, 1984) and the analytic phonic method was common in British schools, but fell into disfavor as pedagogical patterns changed (for illustration, the move towards more student-centred acquisition) . This led to a impermanent rejection of phonic learning methods. Phonic methods are now being considered once more as appropriate. Hence, the argument is non so much whether to learn phonics, but which method of phonics learning should be developed in British schools. In this instance the research ‘ problem’ is relevant and appropriate.

Purposes

The overall purpose was to see if the evident advantages of the man-made system found in the authors’ old survey could be confirmed and developed. The aim was to plan and carry on a comparative survey of the consequence of different phonic learning methods on literacy attainment and linguistic communication development throughout the primary old ages.

Methodology

This was a seven-year longitudinal survey with elements of experimental design (use of groups) and correlational analyses of informations. Data collected includes: (apart from the obvious inside informations such as age and gender) pupil socio-economic background, student accomplishments on entry to primary school, parent and kid attitudes to reading (and larning) and old experiences of acquisition (including attending at baby’s room, etc) , and trial tonss in linguistic communication accomplishments over 7 old

ages. Some of this information was presented through parent, student or instructor questionnaires. The ‘deprivation index’ was besides used.

Get downing with Primary 1 pupils, one group used man-made phonics programme, a 2nd group used analytic phonics and the 3rd used criterion analytic phonics with an component of intensive ‘phonemic awareness’ preparation. At the terminal of 16 hebdomads the groups were tested and the consequences were compared. The analytic phonics groups were so exposed to the man-made phonics programme (until the terminal of Primary 1) . The same students were tracked through Primary 2 to Primary 7 (to prove for long-run effects gained from Primary 1 exposure to man-made phonics) .

Girls and boys’ public presentations and attitudes to reading were compared. Some correlational analyses of student (and parent) attitudes to books and to reading and acquisition (gathered through direct inquiring of students and through questionnaires) and public presentation were carried out.

Advantaged and disadvantaged pupils’ public presentations were compared. However, no control groups associating to socio-economic background were set up. There was an effort to split students from assorted societal backgrounds every bit among the three groupings (man-made, analytic, analytic with excess preparation) , but this was non possible. So, it was decided to expose the group with the most deprived backgrounds to the man-made phonic programme at the beginning of Primary 1. Bearing in head the recognized historical nexus between socio-economic disadvantage and

hapless literacy, this makes the survey more strict and the consequences more dependable.

Questionnaires were sent out to take parting schools for instructors to notice on what they observed sing the effectivity of the man-made phonics programme.

A instance survey was conducted in relation to pupil underachievement (being more than two old ages behind in public presentation) within the sample. The student chosen for the instance survey was an untypical student because he had been kept behind a twelvemonth due to linguistic communication acquisition troubles. In add-on to the phonic comparing undertaking, this student besides received trim support and follow-up preparation ; his advancement was monitored.

Significant Points in Research Results

At the terminal of 16 hebdomads the man-made phonics group were more advanced than the other two groups (around seven months in front) in spelling and reading ; they were besides better able to place phonemes than the group that had undergone specific phoneme acknowledgment preparation. This early advantage continued to profit the original man-made phonic group through Primary 2 (and for word reading and spelling this advantage increased through to Primary 7, but for reading comprehension the advantage dropped from seven months in front to three and a half months (in front of chronological age) ; some of the analytic phonics groups needed excess aid in Primary 2 ; none of the man-made phonics group needed excess aid.

Girls benefited most from the early debut to man-made phonics. Trials in Primary 2 suggested that early or late exposure to the programme made no difference to boys' abilities. However, in Primary 3, the male children began to surpass the girls in word reading and spelling and this tendency continued through to Primary 7. This is despite the girls' describing more positive attitudes to reading.

Correlational analyses found that those students with more positive attitudes to reading by and large performed better in trials. Feedback from instructors and headteachers at the terminal of the seven-year survey was positive: students were more motivated and more confident; instructors reported raised outlooks, and found that linguistic communication development troubles could be detected earlier. Socio-economic differences between students did impact on public presentation in reading and spelling, but this was merely evident in Primary 7 (and to some grade in Primary 5). Socio-economic differences did not correlate with positive or negative attitudes to reading or learning in general in this sample.

The instance survey student was an untypical instance because he had been kept back a twelvemonth before coming Primary 1, so his public presentation was compared both to the category norm and to chronological age outlook. He was part of the original 'analytic plus training' group. His public presentation lagged behind throughout Primary 3 – 7, but he did do important advancement by Primary 7 in relation to his accomplishments in Primary 1.

Significant Points in Authors' Conclusions

All students can profit from a man-made phonics programme as portion of the reading course of study. Girls benefit most from an early debut to man-made phonics ; the method should get down early in Primary 1. Where most surveies find that misss outperform male childs in linguistic communication development (Mullis et al, 2003) , this survey contradicted that tendency as male childs performed every bit good as, even better than, the misss.

The sample may non be nationally representative. So, consequences, particularly of correlational surveies may non be appropriate for doing nationally important generalizations. Consequences from correlational surveies besides could non to be used as grounds of *causing* sing student background and attitudes on the one manus and student public presentation on the other.

Many of the students in the sample were from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore the overall benefits from utilizing the man-made phonics programme could be even greater. The writers suggest that socio-economic differences would likely impact sooner than Primary 7 without the early influence of man-made phonics learning, although a farther survey utilizing a control group would be needed to corroborate this. One ground why the socio-economic differences impact at Primary 7 may be because that is the age that pupils begin to read more independently ; hence, handiness of reading stuff (and so on) becomes a factor in reading wonts. The instance survey shows that students with important troubles in the country of linguistic communication development can do great advancement in primary old ages through effectual instruction and bespoke support.

The writers of the survey suggest that the ground why student public presentation continues to better is because the man-made phonics programme teaches them a method, ‘ a technique they can utilize for themselves’

Reasoning Assessment of the Study

This survey was good planned, suitably sized and relevant to context (the argument over literacy learning) . The consequences were clearly set-out and the researchers’ decisions match the findings really good (given that non holding control groups and non accounting for the socio-economic variables were pointed out by the research workers themselves, there is non need to detail these failings farther.) Last, the instance survey was so untypical in being held back a twelvemonth before come ining primary school that it would hold been more utile if other important, but more representative, instance surveies were undertaken.

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