

Towards Research Based Standards for Teaching in Multicultural Schools

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Rationale

Many Western European countries as well as the USA are facing a growing ethnic and cultural diversity within their populations. This diversity is reflected in classroom composition: many schools in the larger cities in these countries have classes with 50 up to 100 percent of students from various minority backgrounds. Many teachers in these countries are predominantly White/Caucasian (e.g. Calderon 1998) and lack both the life experience, the knowledge and skills to recognise, respect and address the various cultural background of their students (Cruz-Janzen 2004). Even more problematic is the fact that many teachers have not been adequately prepared, before or after entering the profession, to work effectively with the increasingly diverse student population they encounter in schools. This is a major challenge for teacher training institutes in the next decade.

Though standards for teaching in multicultural contexts have been defined elsewhere and can be used as a source of ideas (Tharp a.o. 2000, TESOL 2005), teacher education programmes in the Netherlands are in need of empirically supported data on the competencies teachers need in these classrooms. There are only few results of empirical Dutch research on teacher competence for multicultural classrooms.

Knowledge with respect to competences for teaching multicultural classes can be obtained from several domains. Some studies have focussed on *teacher cognitions in multicultural classes or teacher training for multicultural classes* (e.g. Barry and Lechner 1995, Bennett, Niggle and Stage 1990, Capella-Santana 1997, Irwin 1997, Milner 2005, Noordhoff and Kleinfeld 1993, Norberg 2000, Sleeter 1989, Tatar and Horenczyk 2003). According to Milner (2005), research in this domain shows that (beginning) teachers have had only marginal interactions with students from other ethnic origins than their own, resulting in reliance on stereotypes when interacting with these students, that teachers adopt colour-blind ideologies (assume that everybody should be treated

equally and as a consequence ignoring cultural differences in learning and knowledge frameworks between students), and that they often develop deficit thoughts (causing them to lower their expectations or to develop preconceived notions about students' abilities). Characteristic for many of these studies is that they are limited to (knowledge of) beginning or prospective teachers, rather than experienced teachers, or to desired and required strategies, rather than actual or existing strategies (e.g. Brophy 1988). In fact, many of these studies are even limited to knowledge about strategies, rather than the actual strategies themselves.

Second, discussions of required strategies and beliefs can be found in studies like Derriks, Ledoux, Overmaat and van Eck 2002, Renkema, Olde Monnikhof, Bakker and Dekkers 2000, Nieto 1996, Craft 1996, Ecchevaria and Short 2000, EUNIT 1996, TESOL/NCATE 2005). These studies focussed explicitly on *teacher competencies for multicultural classes*. Important elements, according to these studies, are understanding learning and teaching styles (across cultures), understanding and being aware of culturally laden values, understanding communication between cultural groups, recognizing and dealing with prejudice, being aware of the own cultural frame of reference, having high expectations of all students, and being able to deal with differences in language skills of students. Similar to the teacher training and teacher thinking studies, these studies did not show actual or existing strategies and beliefs. Also, many of these studies outcomes were the result of review of existing literature, or interviews with teacher trainers, policy makers and school leaders.

Third, knowledge can be obtained *within various sub domains* of teaching and learning, such as research on classroom management, language learning, et cetera. Many studies, for example, have been conducted on teacher *classroom management strategies*. While this research has provided useful insight in relevant *general* interpersonal competencies,

these studies are not (explicitly) related to multicultural contexts and never report on teacher knowledge with respect to this context. In fact, this literature is indecisive with respect to the question if the multicultural classroom requires different or specialised knowledge by teachers (e.g. Phuntsog 2001, Roux, le 2001, Zeichner 1996) and whether such knowledge would even be useful, rather than potentially dangerous for stereotyping certain groups or individuals (Brophy 1988).

We conclude that in order to take informed decisions on the focus and curriculum characteristics of teacher training in a multicultural context, more empirical studies are needed. Studies that help identifying specific or general teaching competences for providing high quality teaching to all students. The body of observational data is growing, however, the link to teacher competences and training is often absent. Previous studies can offer relevant focuses of analyses, such as classroom research in content-based instruction, that integrates language development in content area teaching. Short (2000) studied U.S. middle school teachers using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol and interviewed teachers. She found that teacher behavior led to little student oral participation, particularly due to the heavy use of yes/no or simple factual recall questions and the lack of prompting on the teachers' parts to request elaboration or extensions of utterances from students. Hajer (1996), Van Eerde et al. (2002), and Elbers et al. (2005) investigated middle school teachers in Dutch multicultural classrooms and also used a combination of video taping and interviewing to collect teacher data. These studies revealed different teacher strategies for teaching content through the second language and different learner outcomes, but could not yet explain why these differences occurred. Teachers provided comprehensible input, but oral student participation as well as teacher feedback occurred infrequently, thus leading to insufficient language and content learning opportunities.

Because there are differences in the teachers' behaviors, it would be valuable to conduct more studies that connect the behavior to the teachers' thinking. Beliefs about learning, language proficiency, student expectations, language awareness, and the value of classroom interaction can all influence interactional practice, but there is little knowledge about the interplay between teacher cognitions and teacher behavior in this specific context. Educational research has shown how different instruments can be used to get a better understanding of teachers' reasoning, such as think aloud protocols, reflection journals, focus groups, interviews, surveys and strategies (see Martin and Kompf 1996, Meijer 1999), but studies of content teachers in multicultural classrooms are not yet available (Johnson 1994, 1996, Freeman 1996). To provide effective teacher training that would enable teachers to fully implement integrated content and language teaching, this gap should be filled.

Formulation of standards for teachers and teacher training should take into account the specific requirements of teaching in multicultural schools. In 2002 Utrecht University of Professional Education started a task force to strengthen teacher training through practice-oriented research, the main questions being

- what competences do teachers need to fully promote the learning of students in multicultural classrooms;
- how can these competences be included in the teacher training curriculum and professional development; and,
- what competences do teacher trainers need in guiding their students towards the formulated competences?

This paper provides an overview of these studies, their methodology and research results (if available). The results

form the starting point of a more specific and elaborated set of competences and suggestions for how to incorporate these in teacher training and professional development.

Competence framework

In this contribution, we use a framework developed by the Association for the Professional Quality of Teachers (SBL) to map competences and to structure the results and other outcomes of our research projects. This framework distinguishes between various competence domains, both within and outside the classroom. A teacher's competence can be displayed by looking at four roles he or she fulfils while being at work, and also at several contexts he or she works in. The different competence domains of SBL are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 Teacher competencies (source: SBL, <http://www.lerarenweb.nl>)

	With students	With colleagues	With the working environment	With him/herself
Interpersonal	Competence 1			
Pedagogical	Competence 2			
Expert in subject matter and teaching methods	Competence 3			
organizational	Competence 4	Competence 5	Competence 6	Competence 7

In the present paper, we limit our report on competencies displayed in the classroom, in particular the *interpersonal competence* (competence 1) and the *expert in subject matter and teaching methods competence* (competence 3). The SBL-framework describes these competences as follows:

Interpersonal competence:

"An interpersonally competent teacher displays good leadership. He/she creates a friendly and cooperative atmosphere and stimulates and achieves open communication. He/she encourages the students' autonomy, and in his/her interaction seeks the right balance between guidance and counselling, between steering and following, between confrontation and reconciliation and between corrective measures and stimulation"

Expert in subject matter and teaching methods competence:

"A methodologically competent teacher with a thorough knowledge of subject matter helps his/her students to acquire the necessary cultural baggage knowledge every citizen needs to function as a full member in our society. He/she gears the curriculum content as well as all his/her doings to the students and is considerate of individual differences; determines, together with the student, an (individual) learning route with for instance possibilities for extra-curricular activities, and learning in the context of professional practice; motivates the students for their learning and working tasks, challenges them to do their best, and helps them accomplish their tasks successfully; and, teaches the students how to learn and to work, both from and with each other, in order to enhance their learning autonomy."

The case studies, carried out at the Research Center on Teaching in Multicultural Schools aimed at giving more detailed information on these two fields of competences, based on empirical research.

Research in school and in the classroom: Toward competences

In order to make the previously described competences more specific and concrete, and in order to validate and build them on empirical knowledge gathered within multicultural schools, we started a series of research projects. In this section we describe the methodology and set-up of these projects, as well as the (preliminary) outcomes of these projects. The research will be described in terms of three separate sections: general research projects (3.1), case studies on teacher interpersonal behaviour (3.2) and case studies on didactical methods and content-based language teaching (3.3). Table 2 displays an overview over the studies.

Table 2 Overview over studies carried out by the Research Center on Teaching in Multicultural Schools

Studies in Utrecht	Level and focus	Main data
	Various competences	
Den Brok a.o. 2004/5	Secondary schools; effective strategies on all competences	Interviews, questionnaires
Patist, Soeterik, 2004-5	Preservice teachers beliefs and attitudes	Observations, concept maps, interviews
	Pedagogic and interpersonal competences	
Hijlkema 2005	Upper primary	Participant observations, videoregistrations, interviews, Questionnaires (VIL)
Den Brok (2004)	Secondary	Video registrations, SR-interviews, questionnaires (VIL)
	Didactic competences	
Swank 2005 Tahitu 2005	Primary – math and social Studies	Videotaped lessons SR-interviews Concept maps + Interventions
Haitsma 2005	Secondary, geography	Videotaped lessons, SR-interviews, concept maps
Van Eerde 2004 Haitsma 2005	Secondary – Math	Design experiment, new materials, videotaped lessons, SR-interviews
Riteco 2005, Riteco/Hofman 2005	Adult/vocational Training Health, Economy	Videotaped lessons, SR-interviews, concept maps, professional dev. activities
Beijer 2005	Higher Education	Participant Observation SR-Interviews with T and L Videotapes

General, comprehensive school projects

In one major project, teachers' (and school leaders') competences along the full spectrum of being a teacher in a multicultural school were investigated. This was specifically done by collecting practical knowledge of experienced teachers through a series of interviews and a written survey (e.g. Brok, den et al. 2004). These interviews and surveys were collected in two multicultural schools with respect to a variety of themes and competencies. The schools were selected because they were multicultural in nature, at least 90 percent of the students were of non-Dutch or minority origin, and because the school was closed due to a decline in the student population. This decline in students was directly related to the percentage of minority students at each school, and both schools were reported in the (national) media several times because of their problems. The study is descriptive in nature, and uses a Delphi-like method. First, the researchers studied a variety of sources, such as school documents (reports, school guides, reports from the inspectorate, local government documents, videotaped lessons and photo material), relevant Dutch and international research literature

on teacher cognitions, educational effectiveness and teacher competencies for multicultural classes, and other materials (video recorded lessons, photo materials, lesson materials). The second step consisted of contacting school management of both schools, and interviewing them on the topics relating to school management, policy and team cohesiveness. Third, key-informants were interviewed in a semi-structured interview procedure. Within each of the two schools, four key informants were interviewed. Also, in one of the two schools six pupils were interviewed. Interviews were recorded on audio-tape and transcribed for further analysis. All of these sources led to the development of a questionnaire. Approximately 60 percent of the teachers (N=57 teachers) in the schools completed the questionnaire and returned it to the researchers.

Based on the questionnaires and interviews with teachers, the following themes and strategies were mentioned by teachers (see Table 3).

Table 3 Themes and strategies mentioned by teachers and school leaders for teaching in a multicultural school (source: den Brok, Hajer, et al., 2004)

Competence (domain) and themes	Strategies mentioned
Interpersonal - Creating a safe atmosphere (contact)	<i>Creating personal contact with students:</i> - taking into account their background (knowing their names, countries of origin, cultural festivities, home situation, etc.) - high frequency of contact in the classroom before, during and after the lesson - establishing contact outside the classroom (greeting in the hallways, etc.) <i>Correcting students:</i> - clear rules and procedures - restore relationship/limit damage to relationship - address students on their personal responsibilities <i>Motivating students:</i> - provide positive feedback - setting high expectations - limit use of negative feedback
- Creating a working atmosphere (leadership & control)	<i>Maintaining order:</i> - clear lesson start - clear procedures and structured lessons - smoothing transitions <i>Negotiating with students:</i> - take a clear position, be precise - discuss effectively; listen but don't give in <i>Coping with student emotions:</i> - being calm and relaxed - correct small and individually - provide explanations for corrections
Being expert in subject and teaching methods - Language (differences)	- use language-based teaching methods (understandable output, opportunity to produce language, feedback on language) - use complex and real life content - explain by connecting concepts to student language - establish rules for using first language
- Teaching for independent learning	- provide clear structure and procedures - use a variety of methods and presentation tools - keep tempo sufficiently high - check for understanding
- Teaching methods/books	• adapt or create additional materials • provide students with opportunities to bring in their own background and culture

This study underlined mainly teachers concerns as they existed in daily practice. Also it gathered reported practical knowledge. However, the need for validation of these statements can only be derived from observations in classrooms. Hajer (2002) showed as a pilot study how detailed analyses of classroom interaction data could help to refine definitions of competences. Therefore, a series of case studies in classrooms, combining observed and reported behaviour were designed. In 3.2 we will briefly outline those, focused on interpersonal competences, in 3.3. those oriented on teaching content in a multilingual and multicultural classroom.

Case studies on interpersonal teaching competencies

First, the literature was consulted in order to distinguish between (higher order) interpersonal competences. Two categories including teacher behaviour and teaching strategies

and one about underlying knowledge and attitudes could be distinguished:

- *creating a working atmosphere* by (a) monitoring and managing student behaviour and (b) teaching for student attention and engagement; this includes e.g. clear and well paced instruction: this includes formulating and implementing rules and procedures for (resolving inappropriate or disrupting) student behaviour, and assessing student behaviour and making students accountable
- *creating a safe atmosphere* by creating positive teacher-student (and peer) relationships; this includes for example showing personal interest in students

Then, in a first study, (Wubbels, in press) we studied a small number of teachers in two secondary schools. In the first phase of the study we conducted *focus groups* in two schools twice with groups of four experienced and beginning teachers. Teachers were selected because they were particularly interested in the topic of teaching in multicultural classes. The teachers taught in urban schools one with about 75 and the other about 90% students from ethnic minorities. The focus groups aimed to elicit all teachers' experiences in multicultural classrooms from which potential important elements of competence could be derived. Also the teachers were invited to mention not only interpersonal, but *all* necessary aspects of competence. The focus groups were videotaped and transcribed. In the second phase of the study data were collected on one experienced, male History teacher in secondary education in one of his classes. This teacher was considered by the school principal and a teacher supervisor as an expert in teaching in multicultural classes. The data have been collected in an urban school with 90% students from ethnic minorities. The following data were collected:

- two in-depth interviews with the teacher on his general educational attitudes and his expectations, and perceptions of and knowledge about individual students,
- a video recording of one lesson,
- a teacher stimulated recall interview about interpersonal and pedagogical teacher knowledge and attitudes in relation to the teaching strategies and actions in the videotaped lesson.

These two phases resulted into a set of themes and strategies that were considered relevant for the interpersonal competence of teachers. This complete set of themes and strategies is displayed in appendix 1. The following conclusions can be drawn. First, the themes and strategies found to be of importance in this study fit well into the existing knowledge base on interpersonal competence for the multicultural classroom (Derriks et al. 2002, Hajer 2002, Renkema, et al. 2000). Second, the results indicate that interpersonal competence in a multicultural class generally can be considered to be an aspect of generic teaching competence. The aspects mentioned in our study have been mentioned before as important for good teaching in every classroom. This is particularly true for the importance of clear and structured lessons, of giving feedback and of correcting students. Third, the results of this study show that experienced teachers knowledge and experiences can be very helpful in building a more comprehensive, detailed and specified set of competencies and teaching strategies.

A second study addressing interpersonal competences was carried out in upper primary school (Hijlkema 2005) This explorative study addressed the question how teachers in multiethnic primary schools can successfully identify and deal

with students with behavioural problems. The investigation was designed as a case study with two teachers, teaching the same group 8 (students about 11 years of age). After a period of participant observation, four students from ethnic minority background were identified as potentially in danger. In the following, several datatypes were collected to gain insight in the teacher's practice with the four children within the group: through observations, video registrations, stimulated recall interviews with teachers while watching to the videotapes, Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI) and interviews with teachers and students about the QTI. Findings show that children with (potential) behaviour problems are doing well when teachers make contact with them. This contact isn't self-evident because there is a cultural discontinuity between the school and the family.

Case studies on language-based teaching competencies

A series of 7 case studies from primary up till higher education explores the teachers' potential role in processes of inclusion and exclusion. (e.g. Eerde, van and Hajer 2005, Riteco 2005, Swank 2005). The studies all consist of observation and video-registration to describe teachers' and students' behaviour in classroom interaction, in combination with data that provide insight in teachers' thinking and practical knowledge, by means of (stimulated recall-) interviews and concept mapping tasks. Some also include interventions, e.g. professional development activities and personal feedback on teaching strategies. Recordings of classroom interactions were transcribed and analyzed on patterns in student participation, from the angle of opportunities to build and negotiate new meanings. Interview data were also transcribed and analysed on teachers views on language and accounts for his/her interaction practices. In the longitudinal studies, changes were identified both in interaction practices as well as in teachers' thinking.

Hajer (2005) provides first overall analyses over these language oriented cases studies. Two major findings are the following. First, a pattern can be found in the development of teachers' engagement, both in thinking and acting in their classrooms, following the following steps:

Step 1: Awakening awareness.

During this phase teachers/ teacher students become aware of language demands in all content teaching. Also, they stretching the concept of language from a very rigid one (grammar oriented) to a more functional view.

Step 2: Making content comprehensible.

Once teachers recognize the language requirements in teaching, they tend to focus on strategies to make content comprehensible. They are inclined to use reading strategies, vocabulary techniques or to expand their choice of teaching materials, using more visuals.

Step 3: Towards more productive L2-use

However, and this is a sincere threshold, children do not learn by listening and reading. The next step that is documented in teachers development is their recognizing the value of writing and talking. Once they take this step, they are inclined to posing more open questions, promoting group work and interactive tasks and delaying feedback to give the floor to students.

Step 4: Towards expanding language proficiency in the content area

In order to really scaffold students' learning, second language teaching strategies can be acquired by teachers, using feedback – on form – strategies, using writing frames and speaking frames and including L-form-focused practice.

One of the major thresholds in this development seems to be that between 2 and 3: recognizing the value of writing and speaking in learning and language development. Taking this step, opens the way to focus attention on students language production and fostering further language acquisition.

These findings on teacher's interaction strategies and their beliefs about language acquisition seem to reflect the development of language acquisition theory (Gass 2004). Hajer hypothesizes that the development of teacher competences therefore could be characterized as a process of 'guided reinvention' of how languages are learnt (a term borrowed from mathematics education, Freudenthal 1991). Reasoning with teachers about the role of language in their classrooms should become one leading principle in the preparation of teachers for multicultural schools.

The second main finding of the series of case studies is the close connection between teachers' thinking and behaviour in pedagogical aspects and in didactical aspects. The eagerness of teachers to get a real contact with students is related to their interaction patterns, inviting students to really participate in classrooms. The Swank (2005) and Riteco (2005) studies underline this. Investing in a better relationship with students, raising expectations a.o., could therefore be an effective way of creating more space for learning in classroom interaction.

Conclusion and discussion

Though it clearly is too early to formulate a complete set of standards for teacher training in a multicultural society, the case study approach proved to be a fruitful way of identifying in more detail the competences teachers will need in their (future) practice. The more general studies showed the major concerns of teachers in building interpersonal relations and providing high quality teaching. Close observations of classroom interactions reveal more subtle processes of how teacher strategies have impact on students learning and interpersonal relationships.

The findings also show how closely teachers thinking about diversity and the role of language in learning is connected to their interaction practices. Based on our research, we argue that frameworks of teacher competences should be refined in order to formulate standards for multicultural settings specifically on three main areas:

- pedagogical, interpersonal aspects of teaching, where teachers need a deepened understanding of their interethnic relationship with students and an extended pedagogical repertoire
- didactical and organisational aspects, where specific attention is needed for the inclusion of language development through the content areas
- establishing contacts with parents and school environment.

The results of our case study research not only provide insights that can be used in curriculum development. The data gathered in classrooms also can be used as input in actual training courses. The research center which undertook the research reported here, is now working on a training manual on 'learning to observe in a colourful classroom', using transcriptions as well as original recordings of classroom interaction and interviews from this research.

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