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Conference or Workshop Item

Title: Not only academically oriented, but supportive and friendly. A comparative study of students' idea of a good school in three European countries

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“Not only academically oriented, but ~~supportive and friendly~~”.

A comparative study of students' idea of a good school in three European countries.

Valentina Grion – Università di Padova (IT)

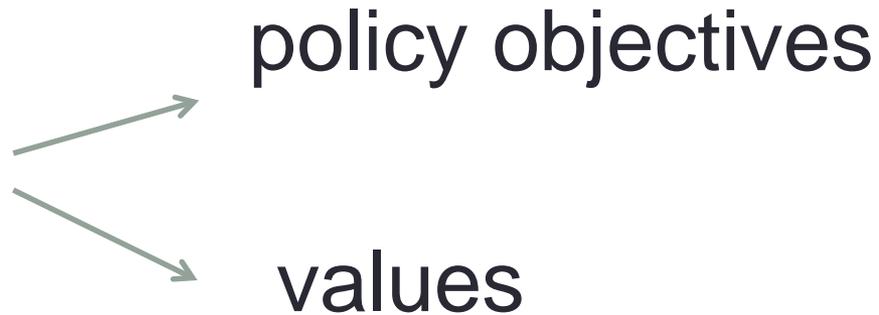
Cristina Devecchi – University of Northampton (UK)

Séverine Colinet – Université de Cergy-Pontoise (FR)

September, 24° September, 2014

The social capital of participation by young people: A European dimension

- Horizon 2020
- Erasmus+



- renewed European cooperation in the youth field
- emphasis on developing citizenship and participation.



Also in Educational Research...

Need to give young people a more significant role in decision making

(Cook-Sather, 2002; Fielding, 2001; 2012; Grion, Cook-Sather, 2013)



Sargeant (2013:1 'Despite the mounting evidence of its value, in many aspects of education and social provision, the child's voice remains absent'.

Transitioning – CD comments

- It is not clear to me how we go from one slide to the other and I wonder whether the audience will get it either.

Evaluating schools and identifying quality: two issues to consider

1. Criticism of passive role of stakeholders

Some authors call for 'more productive approaches to assessment and accountability: support stakeholders' expressions of their values and aims

(Broadfoot, 2007; Gardner et al., 2010; Stobart, 2008; 2010).

2. Criticism towards implicit idea of 'quality'

Educational systems built with no regard to students' perspectives

(McNess, 2006, p. 517)

“The next step” of the research on quality evaluation

(Greek, 2009)

Hard QAE forms

inspection, national testing, league tables, performance management, benchmarking, national targets

Soft QAE forms

self-evaluation, school plans, parental consultation

Measurement
Paradigm

Learning
Paradigm

The research: the “good school” pupils’ ideas

Main Aim:

To look at identifying an assessment method which relates more closely to what students think makes a quality school

What do you think makes a good school?



Other more specific aims

1. Identify **commonalities and differences** in the idea of school quality across three distinctive European countries.
1. Gain **insight into fundamental questions** such as: What do students in three different countries expect from their teachers? What do pupils consider is the purpose of schooling? What do students look for in schools?
1. Start to build and share a **new European idea of school quality**, coming from student's perspectives, overtaking that linked to the adult-driven Measurement paradigm (Broadfoot, 2007).

Participants



Country	School	Students	Researchers
France: Mid-sized town, in north	Collège 11-15 years	130, f=65, m= 59	Colinet S., Université de Cergy-Pontoise (FR)
Italy: Mid-sized town, in N-E	Scuola Media 11-14 years	145, f= 72, m= 73	Grion V. and Grosso M., Università di Padova (IT)
England: Mid-sized town, in East	Low-Secondary 11-16 years	m=146 (Boys' school)	Devecchi C., University of Northampton (UK), Grion V., Università di Padova (IT)

Methodological framework

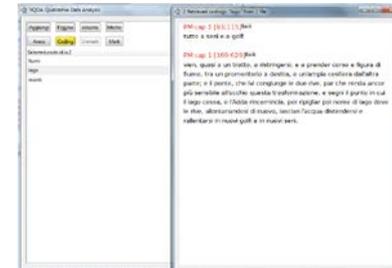
Data collection

- An **open-ended questionnaire** was used in each country, which enabled participants to respond personally and honestly, (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p.330).



ANALISI

- **Bottom-up, Interpretive analysis** : first phase - 3 series of individual data; second phase – comparison of key issue emerging across individual data analyses (by videochat or ftf)



Ethical issues

Respect for the person:

- All participants were invited to participate
- Participation was voluntary
- All data was anonymous, names were not collected
- All researchers followed their local educational research guidelines

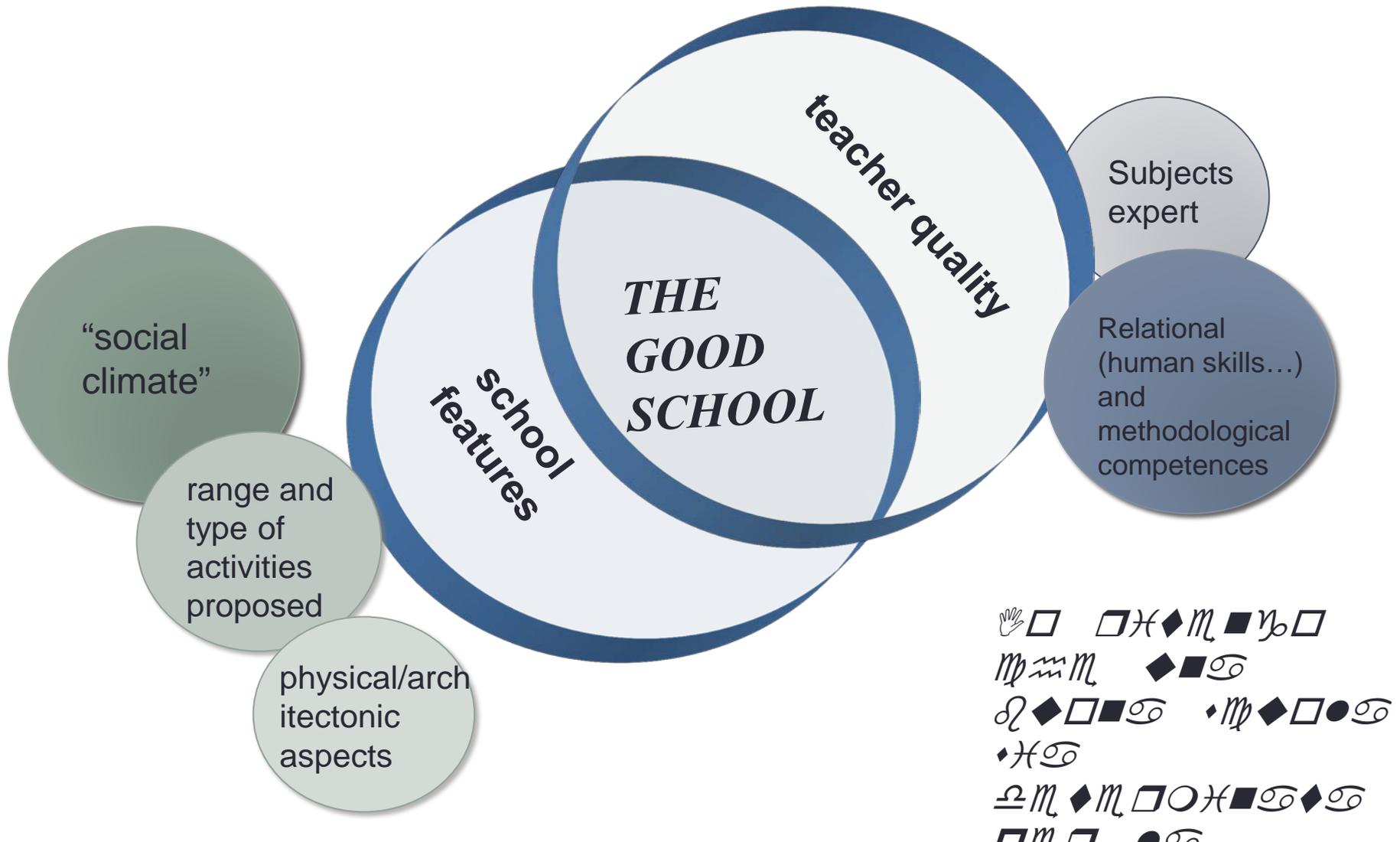
Informed consent

- Parental consent for participants was via the Head Teacher at the school, using an opting out approach
- Participants were briefed by the researchers and any questions answered
- Students' assent was sought through briefings

Write to withdraw

- Participants chose how much information they included in response to questionnaires

(Initial) findings: commonalities among countries



Some commonalities/similarities

The good teacher

- At least one reference to the quality of teachers in nearly all the texts analyzed.
- This reference is frequently the first comment which pupils write in order to express their idea of a good school;
- the number of codes which refer to relational and methodological competencies (managing class and way of teaching, is much higher than those related to subject competencies (i.e. “friendly” “strict and fair”, “compréhensif et attentif à leurs élèves”, professeurs encourageant, “che aiutano e capiscono gli alunni ...)

The good school

- The most important features are at the **social, affective level** (*friendly and supportive*), more cited than strictly cognitive ones
- References at a more “practical school” (learning by doing) less directed by theory, (less “*accademically oriented*”)
- Reference to a school preparing to the children (**professional**) future
- References to importance to physical/architectonic aspects

Social climate of school



A good school for me, this is a school where there is no fighting, no racism, where older students respect us (French, Y1)



[A good school] is the one where you feel well, where you get along with teachers and school mates, where you are not anxious about tests (Italian, Y2)



I think that a good school is a place where it is easy to learn without interference (talking or bullying) and a place where there are open opportunities. [Y7]

I believe that a good school should be when a pupil can go to school without fear of other students. [English, Y7]

Some points to reflect (1)

- When pupils speak of about “a good school”, they express an idea that is very close to the “supportive school” model as designed by Gray et al. (2011), rather than to the “academically effective school” model (Gray 2012).

Gap between the adults ideas of a good school and children'one.

Key factors of the “Supportive School” model (Gray et al., 2011)

General · satisfaction · with · educational · experience ☒

The feeling of membership of the school as a learning community ☒

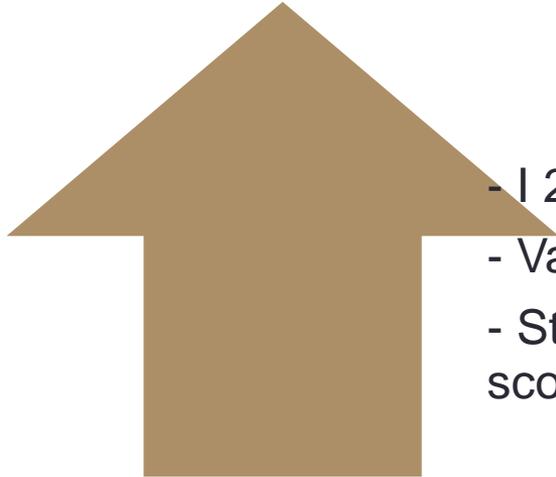
Schools · which · avoid · the · pressure · of · schoolwork ☒

Relationships with teachers and peers ☒

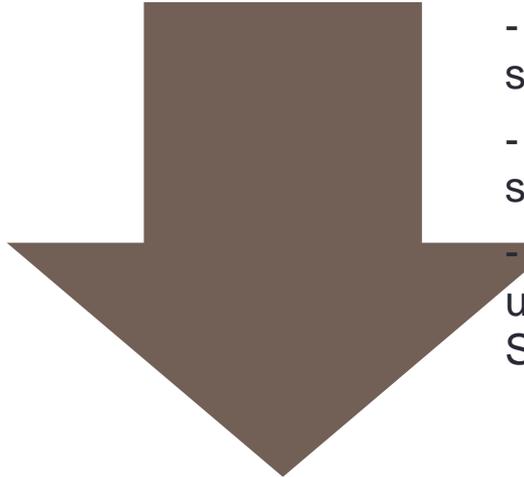
Thinking “small” (i.e. attention to size and organization of schools/classes). ☒

Può la “qualità” del sistema scolastico risultare da una costruzione sociale che esclude le idee degli studenti?

Aspetti significativi/limiti della ricerca



- I 2 ricercatori principali conoscono le tre lingue
- Valorizza il punto di vista degli studenti
- Stimola la discussione sull'idea di "qualità" del sistema scolastico



- Campioni non rappresentativi della popolazione scolastica di quell'età nei 3 paesi
- La ricerca non tiene conto degli specifici contesti socio-culturali delle scuole
- Nessun ritorno della ricerca alle scuole e ai ragazzi: uso strumentale degli stessi? Contro l'approccio Student Voice

The good teacher

:...there should be kind and helpful teachers who do not make students feel bad if they find it hard to study and they do not understand things, teachers should help them instead. (Y3)

Elementi di riflessione (2)

- I nostri risultati potrebbero anche essere considerati in altra prospettiva, maggiormente critica, ossia quella della reificazione e della riproduzione sociale dei discorsi predominanti da parte dei ragazzi, allora dovremmo mettere in luce il limite del metodo e degli strumenti utilizzati nella ricerca.
-si aprono prospettive diverse di discussione....

In ogni caso...

«C'è qualcosa di fondamentale sbagliato nel costruire e ricostruire un intero sistema senza prestare mai ascolto a coloro per i quali verosimilmente si edifica tale sistema. L'inefficacia di questo approccio sta diventando sempre più evidente [...] E' giunto il tempo di considerare gli studenti fra coloro che hanno il diritto di partecipare sia alla riflessione critica sull'educazione che al rinnovamento della stessa»

A. Cook-Sather, in Educational Researcher, vol. 31 (4) 2002, p.

