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De evaluatiepraktijken van leerkrachten. Een beschrijvend onderzoek naar het evalueren tijdens het rekenen in het primair onderwijs

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SUMMARY: THE EVALUATION PRACTICES OF TEACHERS

An descriptive investigation into the evaluation of arithmetic instruction by teachers at the elementary school level

The aim of this research project is to describe the evaluation practices of teachers in primary education. The research is limited to the teaching of arithmetic and particularly to the evaluation of written work, such as written practice or the results of curriculum-embedded and professionally developed arithmetic tests.

In chapter 1 evaluation by teachers is defined as the collection and interpretation of data on learning outcomes with a view to assessment or decision-making. A concise historical survey is given of the attention paid to evaluation by teachers in the effort to achieve for educational innovation. Initially interest in evaluation was limited to test use for assessment and selection within the educational system. There was a turning point in the seventies and as a result of the effort to achieve evaluation was increasingly regarded as a teaching skill for adaptive instruction. Finally, the relevance of the project for test development and for teacher counselling and education is indicated.

In chapter 2 the theoretical aspect of evaluation by teachers is discussed. On the basis of prescriptive literature in this area a description is given of the way in which evaluation should be dealt with. Support for the supposition that systematic evaluation leads to higher achievement is sought in both research into the effect of diagnostic-prescriptive teaching and of research into effective schools. Lastly a description is given the ideal way of to set up an evaluation practice within an educational context which is characterized by a certain degree of differentiation. The way in which following components of the evaluation practice are described can be realized is described:

- * use of evaluation techniques and instruments;
- * three types of evaluation, viz. formative and summative evaluation and the evaluation of entry behaviour;
- * evaluation through written practice and curriculum-embedded tests;
- * use of references;
- * setting up and maintaining a system of record keeping;
- * ways of reporting student progress.

Chapter 3 presents a survey of research in the field of evaluation practices by teachers. The following aspects are considered: the preference of teachers for certain evaluation techniques, -sources and -instruments, the use of various kinds of tests and factors which stimulate their use. On the basis of the available research data the central research questions are specified:

- * How do teachers set up their evaluation practice, do they use professionally constructed arithmetic tests and to what extent do both agree with the intentions?
- * To what extent is the evaluation practice dependent on the teachers' knowledge of evaluation theory, their professional experience and their ability to differentiate?

Chapter 4 describes the research design and procedures. The collection and analysis of data on the functioning of evaluation practice and two types of arithmetic tests is carried out according to an approach of implementation research developed by Hall et al. and Leithwood et al. An important aspect of this approach is the development of a profile which describes both the highest level at which an innovation can be applied, and the various of alternatives which increasingly deviate from the highest level. For research purposes three such profiles have been constructed: one for the evaluation practice and two for the use of series arithmetic tests (norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests). The next step was the collection of data on the evaluation practices of 221 teachers. For all of them the level at which the various evaluation components functioned was established. In 54 cases at which the level two different arithmetic tests were used was also established. Data were also collected on the teachers' knowledge of evaluation theory, their teaching experience and their ability to differentiate. Both interviews and questionnaires were used in order to collect these data. By means of bivariate and multivariate analyses an attempt was made to find out whether or not these factors influence the evaluation practice.

Chapter 5 presents the research outcomes. It turns out that most teachers in primary education do not succeed in realizing the evaluation of entry behavior, summative evaluation, use of references, record keeping and reporting of student progress at a satisfactory level, i.e. according to what may be expected to be an ideal procedure. Only a minority of the respondents manages to perform satisfactorily on all components of the evaluation practice. However, although evaluation practices are generally speaking of a low standard, there are certain differences. In particular, teachers who

strongly differentiate their arithmetic teaching, teachers who have followed additional courses in educational science and teachers who work in schools which have an evaluation policy often function at a relatively high level. Particularly the type of education in which evaluation is carried out turns out to contribute to the evaluation practice. The evaluation practice of teachers who work in schools for special education is particularly well-developed. Teachers hardly differentiate between evaluation through written practice and by means of curriculum-embedded tests: in both cases the results are interpreted in the same way and the same didactic measures are taken on the basis of the results. In the case of professional arithmetic tests it is striking that most users of norm-referenced tests use these tests for the wrong purpose, namely for diagnosis. Criterion-referenced tests are misinterpreted, namely as norm-referenced by a great many users. The research outcomes lead to the conclusion that the implementation of professionally constructed tests is not successful.

In chapter 6 the main research outcomes are summarized and evaluated. The lack of knowledge of teachers in the field of evaluation and the absence of an evaluation policy in many schools are the main causes for concern. The absence of both creates for a climate which is unfavorable to evaluation, resulting in incoherent and idiosyncratic evaluation practices. The research outcomes indicate that teachers practise the various components of evaluation at sometimes very diverse levels, even if these components are interdependent, as for instance summative evaluation and the registration and reporting of student progress. As far as the use of the two professional tests is concerned, it is pointed out that these tests and their manuals should be revised in certain respects. These tests cannot be expected to reach a high degree of implementation, due to the fact that a great number of frequently used curriculum-embedded tests are available. As professionally developed tests are not used in a professional way they remain an important cause for concern. It is suggested that more attention should be paid to the professionalization of teachers in the field of evaluation by means of training and counselling. Apart from that, more attention should be paid to the improvement of everyday evaluation techniques and curriculum-related evaluation instruments, which teachers so frequently apply.