

NATIONAL RESEARCH REPORT (BELGIUM)

Abstract

This research report covers the Flemish results of a six-country research conducted as part of a Comenius Multilateral Project. In a qualitative part of the research the general structure of the Flemish education system is presented and laws and regulations in the Flemish education system are investigated. Academic studies on effective schools conducted in Flanders are summarized.

In a quantitative part a common list of effective school indicators is prepared according to indicators collected from all the partner countries. This list has been converted into a 23 item five point Likert type questionnaire and applied in 10 secondary schools in Ghent metropolitan area, Flanders, from May to June 2008. 150 questionnaires are distributed to the target groups. In total, 30 school managers, 50 teachers from different branches and 50 parents completed the questionnaires.

It is found that school managers, teachers and parents appreciate the investigated school effectiveness indicators concerning the areas 'Physical conditions', 'Education and Training' and 'Management and Planning' the most.

Comparative results of this research can be found at the project website.

Introduction

A six-country research on school effectiveness has been conducted as part of the Pro-School project (Project Based School Management). This report is the result of the research on school effectiveness in Flanders. The report is composed of two parts. The first part of the report covers information about the general structure of the Flemish Education System, effective school indicators according to laws and regulations in Flanders as well as a brief summary of the academic research carried out on 'effective schools' in Flanders.

The second part of the report contains the results of the research on 'effective school indicators' according to school managers, teachers and parents. This part also covers the in-service training needs of the school managers.

Part 1: General Structure of the Flemish Education System

1.a. Flemish Education System

Belgium is a double federation of three communities (the Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities) and three regions. The communities are amongst others responsible for education (Eurydice, 2009). The following four general principles illustrate the core of the Flemish Education System.

(I) Freedom of education

Every natural or legal person has the right to organise education and to establish institutions because of the constitutional freedom of education in the Belgian education legislation. It also gives pupils and their parents the freedom to opt for a school of their own choice. The 'organising body' ('school board' in elementary education) is responsible for one or more schools and is comparable to a board of directors in a company. They enjoy considerable autonomy (own teaching methods, own philosophy or educational view, own curriculum and timetables, appoint own staff). To qualify for subsidies/financing, schools must abide by the decretally-established educational structure, follow a curriculum containing which unambiguously features the final and developmental objectives (where pupils must attain the final objectives and pursue the developmental objectives), facilitate inspections by the

inspectorate, participate at local-consultation-platform level and engage in decretally laid down participation (Euridyce, 2009).

(II) Educational networks

An educational network is a representative association of organising bodies and often takes over some of the responsibilities of organising bodies. There are three educational networks:

- *GO! education of the Flemish Community* is publicly run education organised by the public body called ‘het GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’ acting under the authority of the Flemish Community. GO! is attended by 16.5% of all secondary-school pupils.
- *Publicly funded, publicly run education (OGO)* comprises municipal education (organised by local authorities) as well as provincial education (organised by provincial authorities). (OVSG – Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities and POV Flemish Provincial Education). Subsidised official education is attended by 7.8% of all secondary-school pupils.
- *Publicly funded, privately run schools (VGO)* deliver education organised by a private person or private organisation. Privately run education mainly consists of catholic schools (VSKO – Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education). Furthermore there are protestant, Jewish, Islamic,... schools and schools, which have no affiliation with a particular religion, but adopt particular educational methods (Freinet schools, Montessori schools, Steiner schools,...). Subsidised private education is attended by 75.7% of all secondary-school pupils.

(III) Autonomy

Flemish policy makers tried to give a new impetus to education by placing greater responsibility on education providers and by making pupils, students and parents accountable as well, as far as possible (for example: the special Flemish Parliament Act of 1988 on secondary community education)

(IV) Compulsory education for all children from six to eighteen

Under the Belgian Constitution, every child has a right to education. In order to guarantee this right to education, compulsory education was introduced. All children who reside in Belgium are subject to compulsory education. In Belgium, compulsory education does not mean compulsory school attendance (children do not necessarily have to go to school to learn).

The structure of the Flemish Education System is illustrated in Table 1. Elementary education is followed by secondary education, which gives access to tertiary education. In Belgium high school-level is called 'secondary education'. Students are between 12 and 18 years old.

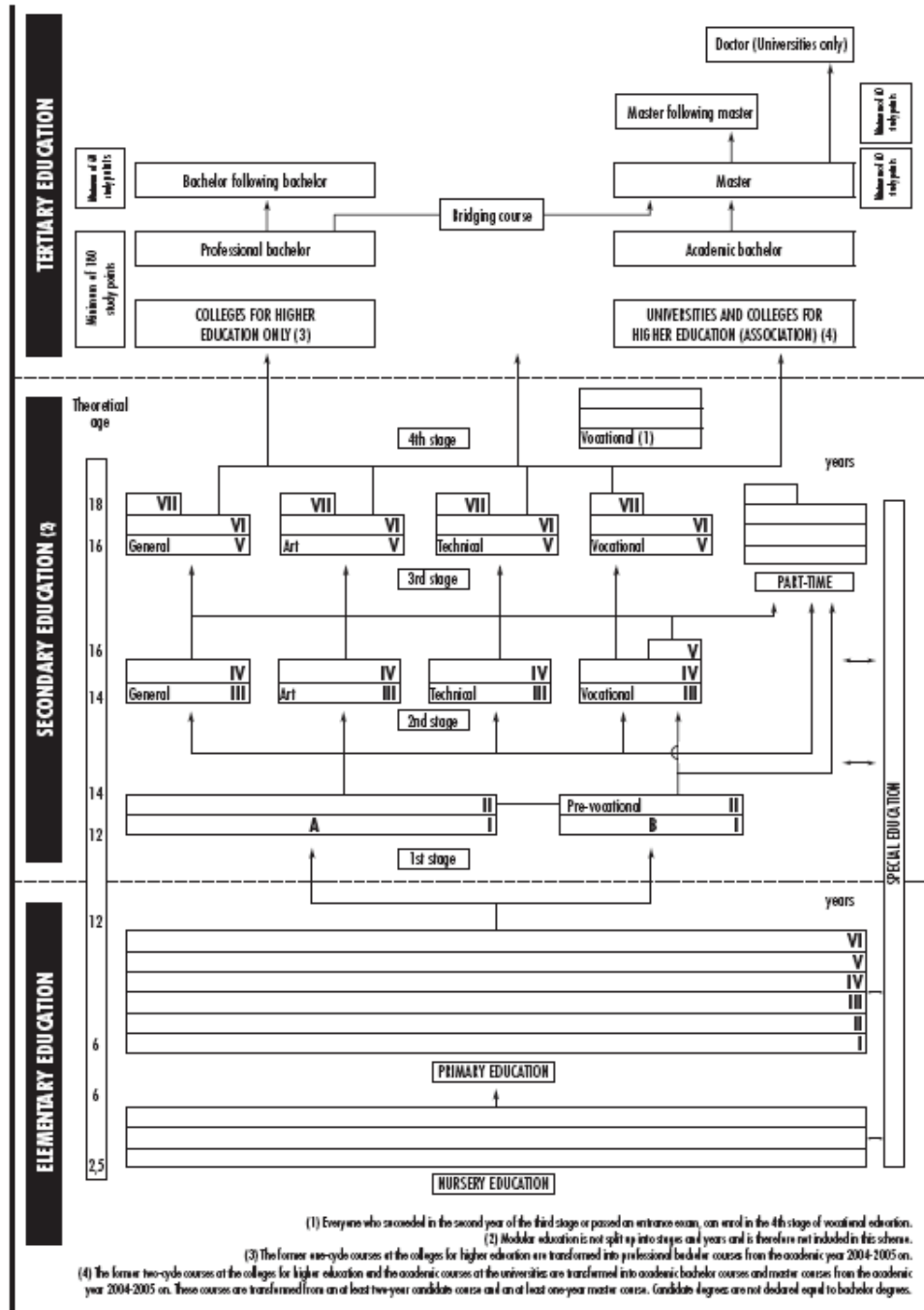


Table 1 Structure of Flemish Education (school year 2007-2008)

In secondary education there are four different education types from the 2nd stage onwards. The student chooses a specific study pathway within one of these education types, listed in Table 2. The 2nd and 3rd stages have a common part per education form and an optional part which is more extensive in technical, artistic and vocational secondary education than in general secondary education.

Classification	Type
Secondary Education	General secondary education (ASO)
	Technical secondary education (TSO)
	Secondary education in the Arts (KSO)
	Vocational secondary education (BSO)

Tabel 2 Classification of Secondary Education in Flanders

A pupil is awarded a diploma of secondary education once he/she has successfully completed six years of ASO, TSO, or KSO, or seven years of BSO.

The secondary education certificate, from any school, education type or study pathway, gives students unrestricted access to higher education.

Table 3 shows the number of secondary schools, students and classes in Flanders. The data represents the four education types, as described above.

	Local level- school	Regional level – school communities	(National level) Flanders
Schools (associated with a school manager)	Approx. 2 to 3 schools per school community; whereas each school has its own school manager	367 school communities in Flanders (OECD, 2006)	939 schools in Flanders (Flemish Authorities, 2008)
Students	Approx. 360 students in 1 school (average), multiplied by 2.5 = 900	Min. 900 students/school community (OECD, 2006)	438315 (Flemish Authorities, 2008)
Classes	Approx. 14 in 1 school, multiplied by 2.5 = 35	Approx. 12700	Approx. 16905

Table 3 Number of secondary schools, students and classes in Flanders

1.b. School Effectiveness Studies in Flanders

Historically different types of research on school effectiveness have taken place such as input-output studies (outlierstudies), the evaluation of school improvement programmes and research based on the correlation between schoolfeatures and students performance (Van Petegem, 2005, p. 41).

In Flanders effective school studies have become a trend since 1990s. Van Petegem, P. (1992, 1993, 2002, 2003), De Maeyer, S. (2002, 2003, 2004, 2007), Van den Bergh, H., Rymenans, R. (2002, 2003, 2004) and Daems, F. (2002) published on school effectiveness the past decennium.

Student characteristics such as intelligence and socio-economic status correlate with student performance but after statistical refining, schools still make a difference in student performances (Van Petegem, P., 1998).

In Flanders studies on school effectiveness are based on integrated models, such as the conceptual model of Scheerens (1990). These models describe input-, proces-, output- en context variables. They define indicators on different levels such as students, teachers, classes, schools and school environment. Relations between variables and different levels can be drawn (Van Petegem, P., 2005). Not only student performance but also students well-being has become an important variable in school effectiveness research. Therefore researchers of school effectiveness use multivariate multilevel models (De Maeyer, S. e.a., 2004).

Recent studies focus on the 'added value' of effective schools (value-added approach). Van Petegem considers Mortimore's definition of an effective school: 'one inwhich students progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake' (Mortimore, 1991, p. 4).

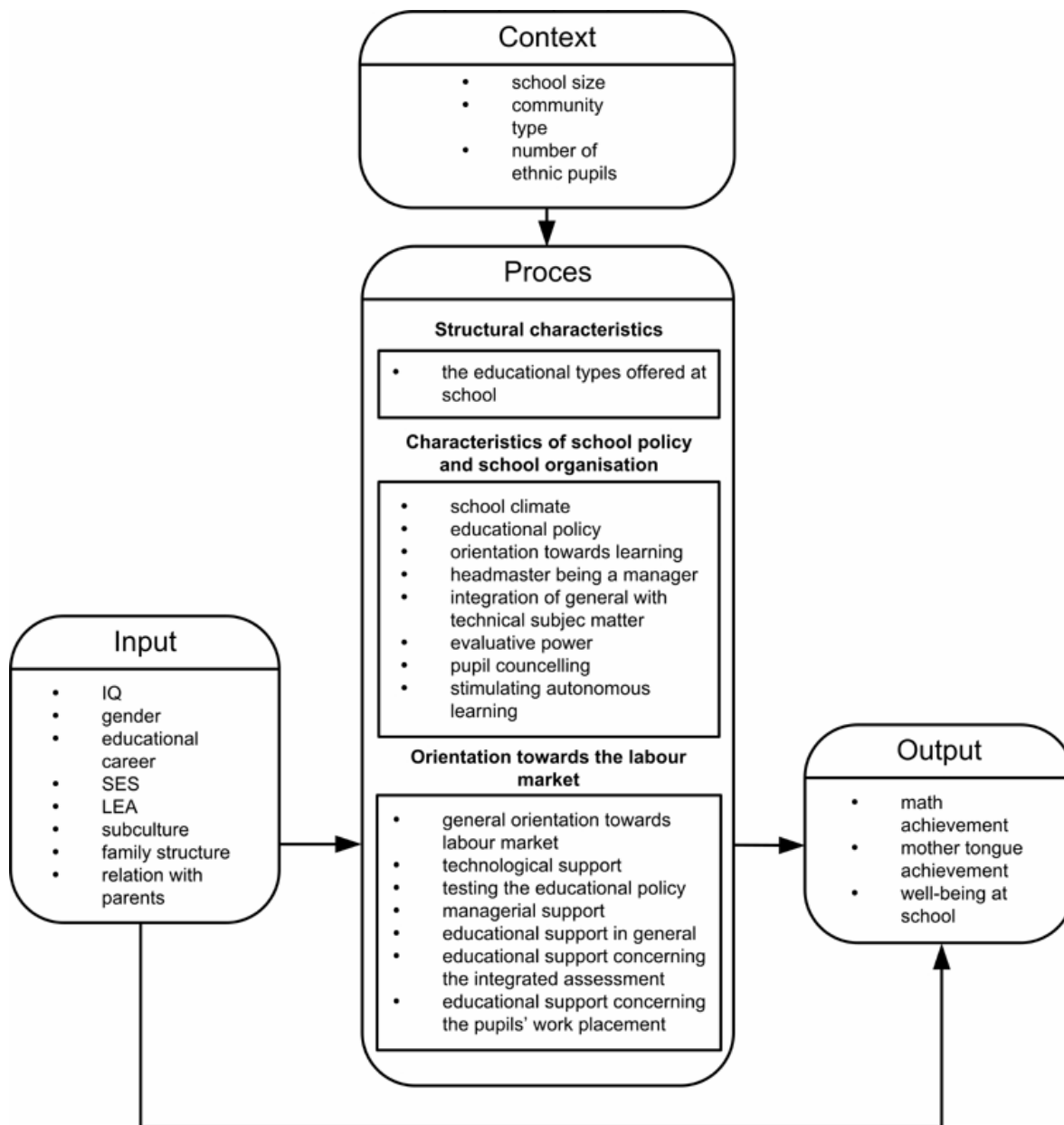


Figure 1 Example of a CIPO-model based on Scheerens (1990)

1.c. National School Effectiveness Indicators

By means of full inspections the inspectorate checks whether the schools fulfil their social task and/or whether the funds provided by the Community are used sensibly. The CIPO-model (Context-Input-Process-Output) is used because the inspectorate sees the functioning of teachers and the principal within the overall functioning of the school and the functioning of the school within the local context. It is used from a perspective of accountability and school development. The school inspection is both a means to check data within the school (accountability) and may be an occasion for the school to optimise the quality of the education it provides (development). In addition, the inspection team checks whether the schools infrastructure is adequate (safety of work and learning environment) and whether statutory provisions are properly adhered to. Table 4 illustrates a few indicators of the CIPO-model.

Context <i>stable information regarding location, organising body, physical and structural conditions under which the school must operate and on which it hardly has any influence at all.</i>	Input <i>information on the conditions under which and the resources with which the school must develop its processes, but which it can influence to a certain extent such as staff (profile, further training and training), financial resources, courses of study offered, pupils (offer, profile)...</i>	Process <i>all the pedagogical and school-organisational characteristics which indicate what efforts the school makes to achieve the objectives laid down by the government.</i>	Output <i>both the hard output data which show to what extent the objectives (final objectives, curricula, progression/transition...) to be attained are achieved and the softer output data such as the well-being of students and teachers.</i>
School size	Gender	Structural characteristics	Students performance
Community type	SES	Characteristics of school policy and school organisation	Students well-being
Number of ethnic pupils	Educational career	Specific Final Objectives¹	
		Cross-curricular Final Objectives²	

Table 4 Indicators of the CIPO-model

¹ Specific final objectives are established for the subjects or modules of a branch of study (e.g. science, construction or child care) within an education form.

² Social organisations and interest groups have been demanding the schools' attention for consumer education, health education, environmental education, road safety education, leisure education, global education, citizenship education. The cross-curricular final objectives describe a basic package of themes on which the school can be called to account by society.

The full school inspections concentrate very much on the realisation of the final and developmental objectives. These objectives are developed by the Curriculum Entity within the Department of Education and Training and ratified in a decree after been positively assessed by the Flemish Education Council (VLOR).

On this basis, the inspectorate issues advice on whether or not schools should be recognised or subsidised. The inspection team has authority over all the subjects taught at school, with the exception of the philosophy-of-life courses. In addition there is a separate philosophy-of-life-course inspectorate. The inspectorate has also an advisory function in relation to policy. The inspectorate's obligation to publish an annual 'Report on the State of Education' has been enacted by decree. Under the terms of this decree, this report is in first instance intended for the Members of the Flemish Parliament. For some years now, this report has been published under the name 'Mirror of Education' (Onderwijsspiegel). Furthermore, every three years a more detailed report is written based on the full-inspection reports of the three previous years. That report then focuses on the specific aspects investigated during each full inspection. In the two intervening years the 'Onderwijsspiegel' features themes which have been determined in advance and which are investigated in a more targeted fashion (either in the course of the full inspections or separately). The tasks of the inspectorate, enacted by law, are:

- Checking whether the educational institutions develop and realise the **curricula** which were approved by the government;
- Checking whether the **subject-related final objectives** are attained and whether the educational institutions adequately pursue the **cross-curricular final objectives**;
- Checking and enforcing **school times**;
- Checking the **hygiene** in school accommodation, the compliance with the **language legislation**, the **educational and school equipment**;
- Issuing advice on the funding of educational institutions;
- Issuing policy advice on education.

The inspectorate does not merely check whether a number of **statutory regulations on education** are complied with, but also pays attention to the wider **school context** such as the school climate, the relationships between the various actors within education, the infrastructure.

The following legislation is significant for the Flemish Education System (Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, 2008):

- Decree of 17 July 1991 concerning the inspectorate, the Educational Development Division and the pedagogical counselling services.
- Decision of the Flemish government of 17 July 1991 to implement the Decree of 17 July 1991 concerning the inspectorate, the Educational Development Division and the pedagogical counselling services.
- Decree of 1 December 1993 concerning the inspection and guidance of philosophy-of-life courses.
- Decision of the Flemish government of 15 December 1993 to implement the Decree of 1 December 1993 concerning the inspection and guidance of philosophy-of-life courses.
- Decree of 23 October 1991 amending article 19 and article 108 of the Decree of 17 July 1991 concerning the inspectorate and the pedagogical counselling services.
- Decision of the Flemish government of 2 February 1999 concerning the manner in which some of the tasks of the inspectorate of the Flemish Community are carried out.
- Decree of 31 March 1999 amending the decrees concerning the inspectorate and the pedagogical counselling services.
- Decree of 28 June 2002 concerning Equal Educational Opportunities I.
- Decree of 14 July 1998 concerning Education IX.
- Decree of 16 April 1996 concerning teacher training and further training.
- Decree of 2 April 2004 laying down the ratification and implementation of the treaty between the Royal Netherlands and the Flemish Community of Belgium on the accreditation of programmes within Dutch and Flemish higher education, signed in The Hague on 3 September 2003.
- Decision of the Flemish government of 9 July 1996 laying down the ratification of the operational rules of the pedagogical counselling services within education.
- Decree of 4 April 2003 concerning the restructuring of higher education in Flanders.

1.d. In-service training opportunities

Because of the educational networks in Flanders, there are different pedagogical guidance centres for each type of school, which organize in-service training courses:

- **community schools (GO!):** guidance centre for community schools
- schools organised by a city or province: guidance centre of that **specific city or province (OVSG, POV)**
- **publicly funded, privately run schools**, for instance religious schools (most of them are catholic schools in Belgium-Flanders: VSKO): guidance centres for catholic schools

Table 5 illustrates the in-service training opportunities provided for school managers

GO!	OVSG	POV	VSKO
Self-evaluation at school (Zelfevaluatie op school. Hoe krijg je het team mee?)		Internal Quality Assurance (Interne kwaliteitszorg)	Quality Assurance and self-evaluation (Kwaliteitszorg en zelfevaluatie)
Job evaluation conversation and performance review (Functionerings- en evaluatiegesprekken voeren)	Training on job evaluation conversation and performance review (Opleiding voor het voeren van functionerings- en evaluatiegesprekken)	Job evaluation conversation and performance review: an instrument for school managers (Het functionerings- en evaluatiegesprek als instrument van leidinggeven)	Training communication skills: job evaluation conversation and performance review (Training gespreksvaardigheden bij het voeren van functionerings- en evaluatiegesprekken)
Project management		Strategic management (Strategisch management: het hoe, waarom en wat van strategische planning)	Sanction policy (Brokkenmakers maken het weer goed. Op weg naar een herstelgericht sanctiebeleid.)
Problem solving techniques (Crisiscommunicatie: hoe omgaan met een crisissituatie op school?)		Problem solving techniques (Crisiscommunicatie, Hoe moet ik het zeggen? Moeilijke boodschappen brengen en ontvangen, Onderhandelings-technieken in schoolbeleidscontext)	Equal opportunities in education (Elke leerling telt!)
Student support (De leerlingenbegeleiding op maat van je school)		Ethical leadership (Ethisch leiderschap)	
		Policy on extra training (Nascholingsbeleid)	

Table 5 In-service training opportunities provided for school managers

Part 2: Research on School Effectiveness

2.a. Definition of the Problem

- (I) What are the effective school indicators according to school managers, teachers and parents?
- (II) In which areas schoolmanagers feel the need of having an in-service training? As the school managers are the most crucial aspect in schools during this report we focus on especially managers.

2.b. Research Methodology

In Flanders (Flemish speaking part of Belgium), there are 939 high schools, 438315 students and 16905 classrooms. This research is conducted in 10 secondary schools of the educational network GO! and city schools in Ghent metropolitan area. 'Effective School Indicators Questionnaire' which is prepared by leading partner of the WP2 of the Pro-School Project with the contribution of all partners, is applied. This questionnaire was structured on six areas of interest, as follows: 'Physical conditions', 'Management and planning', 'Education and training', 'Social life', 'Financial aspects', 'Relations with environment'. 150 questionnaires are distributed to the target groups and collected by the researcher. In total, 30 managers, 50 teachers from different branches and 50 parents completed the questionnaires. Gathered data are analyzed by using SPSS Inc. 13.0 version.

2.c. Results and Discussion

The following information covers the research results of the interrogated school managers which are the focus of the research.

Gender: 55 % of managers is male, 45 % is female.

Age: According to data there aren't school managers of 20-30 years old, 36 % of them are 31-40 years old, 19 % of them are 41-50 years old. This means that 55 % of school managers is younger than 50 years old. 45 % of them are older than 50 years old.

Level of Education: The data shows that a majority of school managers have masters degree, 6% have bachelor's degree. None of them have doctoral degree.

Years of Experience: Data shows that 32 % of school managers have 20 or more years experience, 3 % have 16-20 years experience, 10 % have 11-15 years of experience. 26 % have 6-10 years of experience in education sector. 29 % of the managers have 0-5 years of experience. The data shows that 55% of the managers have less than 10 years experience in education sector.

Results and comments on research questions:

The first research question was “What are the effective school indicators according to school managers, teachers and parents?” In order to answer this question, school managers, teachers and parents are asked to fill out the questionnaire. Arithmetic means of the results of the questionnaires are listed starting from most important to less important. Listed results can be seen in table 6 according to the three groups.

MANAGERS		TEACHERS		PARENTS	
Indicators	Mean μ	Indicators	Mean μ	Indicators	Mean μ
School climate	4.722	School climate	4.400	Staff and human resources management	4.569
Staff and human resources management	4.471	Hygiene, safety and security system	4.380	School results in terms of outcome	4.510
Effectiveness of school operations	4.434	Student's behaviour coherent with students role	4.380	Guidance	4.490
Infrastructure, classes and laboratories	4.433	Infrastructure, classes and laboratories	4.320	Student's behaviour coherent with students role	4.451
ICT and the internet	4.432	Staff and human resources management	4.300	Schoolresults in terms of outputs	4.451
Documentation	4.400	ICT and the internet	4.280	Absenteeism of teachers and staff	4.431
Effective use of budget	4.400	Effective use of budget	4.280	Effectiveness of school operations	4.412
Management style and participated decision making	4.324	Guidance	4.260	Hygiene, safety and security system	4.373
Hygiene, safety and security system	4.292	Effectiveness of school operations	4.200	School climate	4.333
Guidance	4.211	School results in terms of outcome	4.180	ICT and the internet	4.314
Absenteeism of teachers and staff	4.143	Documentation	4.100	Effective use of budget	4.255
Student's behaviour coherent with students role	4.103	Absenteeism of teachers and staff	4.060	Documentation	4.196
Teaching activities	4.064	Schoolresults in terms of outputs	4.060	Infrastructure, classes and laboratories	4.176
Curricular offer	3.961	Teaching activities	3.860	Management style and participated decision making	4.176
Schoolresults in terms of outputs	3.955	Management style and participated decision making	3.840	Teaching activities	4.137
School results in terms of outcome	3.922	Curricular offer	3.780	Curricular offer	4.020
Quality system	3.777	Quality system	3.760	Ability to attract Financial resources	3.706
Parents involvement	3.711	Ability to attract Financial resources	3.700	Quality system	3.686
Relations with community	3.622	Parents involvement	3.160	Extra curricular offer	3.471
Ability to attract Financial resources	3.485	Participation in social life	3.060	Parents involvement	3.353
Participation in social life	3.445	Extra curricular offer	3.020	Participation in social life	3.157
Extra curricular offer	3.003	Relations with community	2.820	Relations with community	2.961
Other services to community	2.919	Other services to community	2.440	Other services to community	2.686

Table 6 Comparative Table of Highly Ranked Indicators for School Managers, Teachers and Parents

The table shows means between 2.440 and 4,722. Parents are more concerned ($\mu = 4.481$) with the indicators related with the 'output and results of the education' than managers ($\mu = 3.939$) and teachers ($\mu = 4.120$). The common feature in all three groups is that the indicators related with the 'schools' relations with its environment' are considered least important (managers: $\mu = 3.329$, teachers: $\mu = 2.773$ and parents: $\mu = 2.935$). In other words; all three groups consider the 'inside' activities of the school more important than the activities 'outside' of the school.

According to school managers the most important three areas are ‘Physical conditions’ ($\mu=4.389$), ‘Management and Planning’ ($\mu=4.116$) and ‘Education and Training’ ($\mu=4.011$).

For teachers the following areas are considered most important: ‘Physical conditions’ ($\mu=4.270$) and ‘Education and Training’ ($\mu=4.12$). The area ‘Relations with environment’ scores the lowest appreciation for an effective school according to teachers ($\mu=2.807$).

For parents the areas ‘Education and Training’ ($\mu=4.387$), ‘Physical conditions’ ($\mu=4.265$) and ‘Management and Planning’ ($\mu=4.176$) are considered most important to school effectiveness.

Table 7 shows the arithmetic means of the importance of the indicators according to managers, teachers and parents ranked from higher to lower means.

	Indicators	Mean μ
1	School climate	4.485
2	Staff and human resources management	4.447
3	Effectiveness of school operations	4.349
4	Hygiene, safety and security system	4.348
5	ICT and the internet	4.342
6	Guidance	4.320
7	Effective use of budget	4.312
8	Students behaviour coherent with students role	4.311
9	Infrastructure, classes and laboratories	4.310
10	Documentation	4.232
11	Absenteeism of teachers and staff	4.211
12	School results in terms of outcome	4.204
13	Schoolresults in terms of outputs	4.155
14	Management style and participated decision making	4.113
15	Teaching activities	4.020
16	Curricular offer	3.920
17	Quality system	3.741

18	Ability to attract financial resources	3.630
19	Parents involvement	3.408
20	Participation in social life	3.221
21	Extra curricular offer	3.165
22	Relations with community	3.134
23	Other services to community	2.682

Table 7 Appreciation of indicators according to Managers, Teachers and Parents

Table 7 shows that according to means of all three groups the most important effective school indicators ($4.485 \leq \mu \leq 4.020$) are 'School Climate', 'Staff and human resources management', 'Effectiveness of school operations', 'Hygiene, safety and security system', 'ICT and the internet', 'Guidance', 'Effective use of budget', 'Students behavior coherent with students role', 'Infrastructure, classes and laboratories', 'Documentation', 'Absententeeism of teachers and staff', 'School results in terms of outcome', 'School results in terms of outputs', 'Management style and participated decision making' and 'Teaching activities'. On the other hand the following effective school indicators were considered less important ($2.682 \leq \mu \leq 3.920$): 'Other services to community', 'Relations with community', 'Extra curricular offer', 'Participation in social life', 'Parents involvement', 'Ability to attract financial resources', 'Quality system' and 'Curricular offer'.

The most important areas for the school managers, teachers and parents concerning the investigated school effectiveness indicators are 'Physical conditions' ($\mu= 4.308$), 'Education and Training' ($\mu= 4.173$) and 'Management and Planning' ($\mu= 4.083$).

The second question of the research was ‘In which areas the managers need in-service training?’ Table 8 shows in-service training needs of school managers.

Areas	NO		YES	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1. Physical conditions	19	61.29%	12	38.71%
2. Management & planning	11	35.48%	20	64.52%
3. Education & Training	9	29.03%	22	70.97%
4. Social life	17	54.84%	14	45.16%
5. Financial aspects	21	67.74%	10	22.26%
6. Relations with environment	20	64.52%	11	35.49%

Table 8 In-service Training Needs of Managers

It is found that the school managers need in-service trainings especially in the following areas: **‘Education and training’ (70.97%)**, **‘Management and planning’ (64.52%)**.

When the highly voted indicators are considered, it can be seen that the indicators of the area **‘Management and planning’** are also voted highly important. These are ‘School climate’, ‘Staff and human resources management’, ‘Effectiveness of school operations’, ‘Guidance’, ‘Students behavior coherent with students role’ and ‘Management style and participated decision making’.

The areas ‘Financial Aspects’ and ‘Relations with environment’ have the lowest scores (22.26% and 35.49%) for need for in-service training.

Part 3: General Conclusion

Results of the school effectiveness research in Flanders, Ghent metropolitan area (GO! and City Schools) concerning the first research question show that the most important aspects for the school managers, teachers and parents concerning the investigated school effectiveness indicators are 'Physical conditions', 'Education and Training' and 'Management and Planning'.

For managers these three areas are also considered most important, although the ranking differs: 'Physical conditions', 'Management and Planning' and 'Education and Training'. These results show the importance of infrastructure, hygiene, safety, ICT facilities and accessibility to information and documentation resources ('Physical conditions') to school effectiveness. The results also emphasize the importance of management aspects of the school effectiveness for school managers.

For teachers the following areas are considered most important: 'Physical conditions' and 'Education and Training'. The area 'Relations with environment' scores the lowest appreciation for an effective school according to teachers.

For parents the areas 'Education and Training', 'Physical conditions' and 'Management and Planning' are considered most important to school effectiveness.

Concerning the second research question it is found that the school managers need in-service trainings especially in the following areas: 'Education and training' and 'Management and planning'. The areas 'Financial Aspects' and 'Relations with environment' have the lowest scores for need for in-service training.

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Useful Websites:

Education in the Flemish Community of Belgium

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/>

University College Ghent

<http://www.hogent.be/>

Faculty of Teacher Training

<http://lera.hogent.be>

Faculty of Social Work and Welfare Studies

<http://soag.hogent.be/soag/index.asp>

Pro-School Website

<http://www.pro-school.eu/>

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