

Educational Strategies for Diverse Learners: A Comparative Analysis of French School Systems

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Abstract: This article elucidates strategies for instructing students of differing proficiency levels within the same classroom setting, specifically examining the educational systems in French and Uzbek schools. Focusing primarily on the Jules Ferry B school in France and its implementation of double-level classes, the article highlights the prevalent practice in French primary education aimed at consolidating previous learning for older students while simultaneously introducing new material to younger ones. The advantages accruing to students and parents from this model are also discussed. Drawing from an analysis of a lesson taught by Carol Gouchi in one such class, the article delves into various aspects including instructional organization, prioritized content, accommodating students with learning disabilities, and optimizing time utilization. Furthermore, it sheds light on parental motivations behind enrolling their children in double-level classes. The overarching goal of this article is to equip novice educators with insights into effectively teaching heterogeneous student groups, offering guidance on suitable approaches and methodologies.

1 INTRODUCTION

Education holds paramount importance as it serves as a cornerstone for leading a fulfilling and prosperous life. It elevates the quality and significance of life experiences. Regarded as a fundamental human entitlement, education contributes significantly to the growth and advancement of individuals, societies, and nations. By ensuring equitable access to education for all, particularly girls, we can dismantle the enduring cycles of poverty, as education stands intricately interconnected with various developmental objectives. These include fostering gender equality, enhancing maternal and child well-being, addressing nutritional deficiencies, mitigating the transmission of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and alleviating poverty-related afflictions.

Education serves as a catalyst for economic prosperity and fosters harmony within societies. It serves as a gateway to knowledge and advancement in contemporary civilization. The presence of a significant illiterate population within a country represents a missed opportunity for societal advancement and intellectual growth across various domains. The human mind is inherently wired to evolve through the acquisition and assimilation of

new information, which is then processed internally to yield a diverse and rational array of thoughts, emotions, knowledge, and sentiments. In light of this understanding, the imperative to engage in learning becomes evident. Education emerges as the optimal avenue to streamline and enhance this learning process, tailored to individual needs, thus maximizing its effectiveness.

Time appears to accelerate rapidly, with each passing day inundated with a plethora of global news. Dubbed as the "century of news," the twenty-first century witnesses a surge in discoveries across all fields. Particularly in education, numerous innovative teaching methodologies and novel directions emerge continuously. The ever-evolving landscape of the world signifies a profound transformation in modern society. For instance, the education system undergoes a complete overhaul: teachers now transcend the traditional role of imparting knowledge to become creative and adept "guides," facilitating students in constructing their own understanding.

2 OBJECTIVES

Each nation prioritizes its education system by fostering connections with other countries to glean valuable insights. In this vein, France and Uzbekistan have established a partnership between two educational institutions—the Uzbek State University of World Languages and the Versailles Academy. Students partake in exchange programs to acquire firsthand experience, language proficiency, and to analyse educational frameworks and pedagogical approaches. This endeavour presents significant opportunities for young individuals. Over a duration of four and a half months spent in France, participants engaged in contemplation regarding the French education system, and instructional methodologies, and conducted a comparative analysis of the educational paradigms and organizational structures between the two countries. At Evarist Galois College, observations were made regarding the operation of two distinct programs: the UPEA2, designed for newly arrived foreign pupils in France, and a conventional class. Comparative analysis of these classes was conducted under the guidance of two instructors. Additionally, insights into French culture were acquired throughout the exchange. Gratitude is extended to both institutions for affording participants the opportunity to expand language proficiency, engage in critical reflection on educational systems and methodologies, and to immerse in diverse cultural experiences.

Every profession comes with its unique set of characteristics, challenges, responsibilities, and benefits. However, teaching stands out as one of the most demanding professions due to the necessity of simultaneously managing the dynamics of the entire class group while also catering to the individual needs of each student. Despite its challenges, teaching offers a significant advantage: witnessing the progress and success of students.

The focus of my research is to explore the intricacies of teaching in a double-level classroom, examining both the difficulties and advantages associated with this instructional setting.

To achieve this objective, I conducted observations within a CE1/CM1 class at Jules Ferry Elementary School in Nanterre. Through this process, I had the opportunity to witness numerous innovative teaching methodologies, observe the classroom's organizational structure, examine the textbooks utilized, and assess the teacher's responsibilities and instructional approach.

This article comprises three distinct sections. The first section delineates the concept of double-level

classes, presenting various definitions and elucidating the principles underlying both double-level and multi-level instructional settings. Additionally, it explores the rationale behind the establishment of double-level classes in French educational institutions.

The second section delves into the advantages and challenges inherent in teaching within a double-level classroom, while also examining the teacher's organizational strategies. This portion entails an in-depth analysis of the obstacles and benefits associated with instructing students across multiple grade levels within a single classroom.

The third section focuses on the logistical aspects of teaching time management within a double-level class. It delineates the material, spatial, and temporal organization inherent in this instructional approach, shedding light on the practical implementation of instructional strategies within this unique classroom setting.

2.1 Understanding the Double Level in a Class

Each country boasts its own distinct educational framework, with Uzbekistan's system diverging significantly from that of France. A multitude of disparities exist in educational practices between these two nations. For instance, the concept of double-level classes, prevalent in France, is absent in Uzbekistan's educational landscape. This disparity is influenced by various factors, including governmental regulations. In France, the government has stipulated an average class size of 27 students, prompting school administrators and their teams to determine the most effective student distribution to ensure optimal educational outcomes. Consequently, double-level classes may be established either out of necessity due to student enrolment fluctuations or as a deliberate choice by the teaching staff. Consequently, it is not uncommon to encounter a considerable number of multi-age classes in certain schools in France.

The concept of double-level education occurs within a graded school system, where a single classroom accommodates students from two or more levels of schooling simultaneously. This contrasts with the conventional model of classroom organization in classified systems, where each classroom typically comprises students of a single level. In graded systems, age and level are often aligned, meaning that a particular school level corresponds to a specific age group. However, in double-level classes, this alignment may vary, with

students from adjacent (e.g., CE1/CE2) or distant (e.g., CE1/CM2) school levels sharing the same classroom space. The decision to implement double-level classes may be influenced by various factors such as enrolment fluctuations, resource allocation, and pedagogical considerations.

Typically, there are multiple rationales behind opting for a double-level setup in a classroom:

- Primarily, double-level classrooms are frequently found in small, rural schools situated in remote and thinly populated regions. These schools might have just one, two, or three teachers, yet they provide comprehensive primary education programs.
- Secondly, this arrangement enables children to receive education near their homes.
- Thirdly, it fosters peer-based learning, promoting cohesion and cooperation among students, which enhances interpersonal skills and fosters positive attitudes toward others.
- Fourthly, it compels teachers to enhance their planning skills and utilize time more efficiently.
- Fifthly, the diverse teaching methods employed in double-level classrooms by teachers contribute to students' cognitive development and foster their autonomy.
- Sixthly, teachers occasionally accompany their students for two years or longer, facilitating continuity in learning.

From a political standpoint, implementing double-level classroom education could serve as a crucial and suitable strategy to advance the goal of universal education, especially for children residing in small, impoverished, and isolated communities. Importantly, this approach empowers schools and teachers in such areas to effectively cater to their students, offering a high-quality and pertinent education.

Similar to other classroom settings, there are three sequential teaching models employed in double-level classes. These models include:

- a) The "collective" model of education fosters collaborative group work among children, where they engage in tasks collectively.
- b) The individual working model emphasizes independent work, with each child focusing on their own tasks such as writing, dictation, and self-assessment.
- c) The model of working in small groups involves 3 or 4 children collaborating. In this approach, children explore various perspectives as each student shares their opinion on the task and engages in dialogue with their peers.

Throughout my observation of the CE1/CM1 class, I paid particular attention to the time management, classroom organization, teaching strategies employed by Ms. Gouchi, and the resulting impact on the students.

2.2 Advantages and Challenges of Teaching in a Double-Level Classroom

Teaching is widely regarded as one of the most challenging professions, particularly when educators are tasked with teaching in multi-level classes. The demands of organization, instruction, and classroom management can be complex and intricate. Teaching various subjects across different school levels, catering to students with diverse psychological and cognitive development levels, presents a significant challenge. It necessitates engaging students consistently in meaningful learning activities, demanding a high level of organization and a willingness to empower students to take ownership of their learning. The implications of this for both teachers and parents are considerable.

Teaching in a double-level class presents a more significant challenge for the teacher compared to a single-level class. With increased diversity among students, the cognitive and emotional demands on the teacher are heightened. Through my work in the double-level classroom at Jules Ferry Elementary School in Nanterre, I have identified key pedagogical dimensions essential for success:

- Classroom organization: utilization of educational resources and creation of a conducive physical environment to enhance learning;
- Effective classroom management and discipline encompass establishing structured programs and routines within the classroom, fostering predictable pedagogical frameworks, and notably, enhancing students' accountability for their own learning;
- Organization and Curriculum design: implementation of teaching strategies and routines aimed at maximizing learning outcomes. Instruction is tailored based on diagnosed student needs, incorporating efficient time management practices.
- Pedagogical grouping: techniques enhancing teaching quality, encompassing strategies for organizing individual, group, and collective learning activities.
- Independent learning: fostering students' abilities and strategies to achieve a high

degree of autonomy and effectiveness in individual learning, either independently or collaboratively with peers;

- Peer tutoring: developing students' abilities to act as "teachers" to their peers across various grade levels, facilitating learning both within and across different levels.

Double-level classrooms operate on the principle that diversity is not a barrier to be overcome, but rather a valuable asset and resource that enhances the learning process. Furthermore, students contribute a diverse array of approaches, abilities, interests, experiences, cultural perspectives, and personalities to the classroom environment.

The diverse composition of a double-level classroom offers distinct advantages for learners, particularly in cases where teachers accompany students for a minimum of two years:

- Each student progresses through their learning journey at their own pace, prompting the teacher to tailor instruction to the individual developmental stage of each learner. This personalized approach minimizes competition among students, as they understand and acknowledge that each peer is at a different point in their learning trajectory. Additionally, students cultivate the ability to establish personal learning objectives, self-assess their progress, and engage in reflective practices to enhance their own learning experiences;
- In double-level classrooms, students have the chance to develop self-awareness through interactions with both older and/or younger peers;
- Double-level classrooms facilitate continuous advancement. In such environments, students can bypass concepts and skills they've already mastered, allowing them to focus on areas where they need further development. Moreover, students who haven't attained certain learning objectives by the end of a school year can strive to achieve them in the subsequent year;
- Double-level classrooms offer students stability and establish enduring relationships with their teachers.

2.3 Advantages and Challenges for Educators

Numerous experienced teachers cite several benefits of instructing in double-level classrooms:

- Teachers have the opportunity to cultivate a deeper understanding of each student's strengths and needs over the course of two or more years, allowing them to tailor instruction to each student's developmental level.
- Teachers are tasked with familiarizing themselves with fewer students each year. Consequently, the orientation process at the beginning of the school year is streamlined and requires less time. Additionally, students at higher levels are already acquainted with the routines and assist newcomers in integrating them, easing the transition process.
- In designing programs spanning two years or more, teachers enjoy increased flexibility with curricula, enabling them to plan projects aligned with students' interests.
- Teachers can foster stable relationships with parents, which is crucial for effective collaboration between students, teachers, and parents, a practice particularly emphasized in Uzbekistan.
- The double-level teacher must give careful consideration to each student, striving to understand their individual challenges, such as why they may struggle with learning or comprehension. However, this responsibility applies to all teachers, regardless of whether they teach in single-level or multiple-course settings.

When discussing the varying learning levels of students with Ms. Gouchi, she outlined the potential challenges as follows:

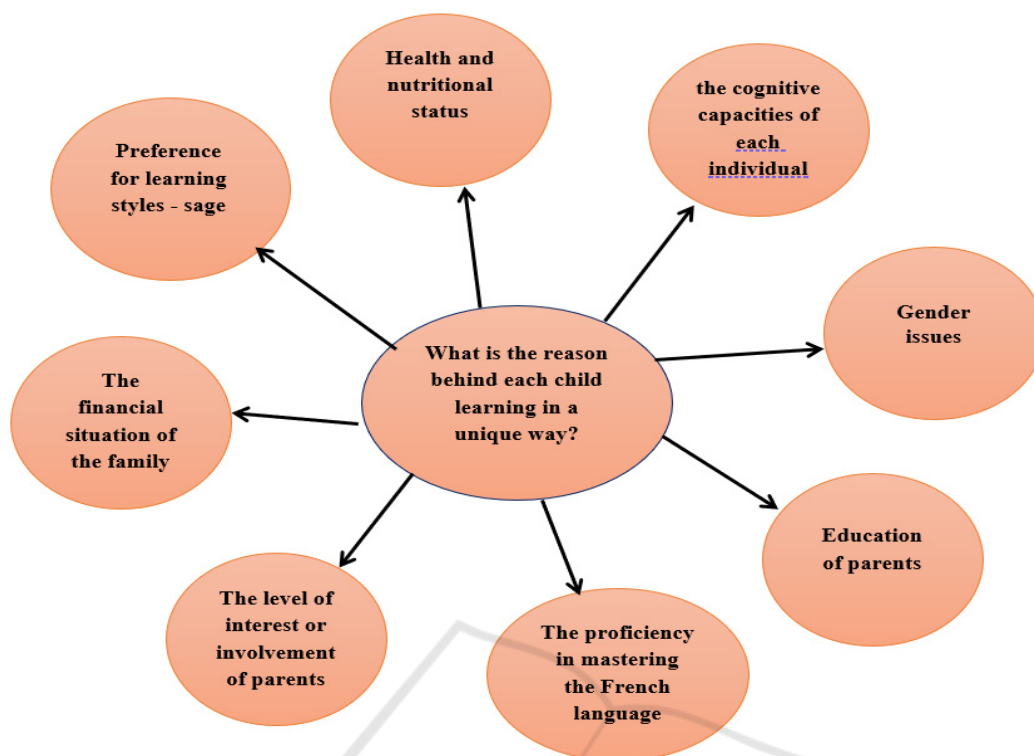


Figure 1: The management of a double-level class revolving around three dimensions

2.4 Advantages for Parents

Parents find that programs that enhance their child's learning are clearly advantageous. They value the stable learning environment of double-level classrooms and the teachers' dedication to their child's education, particularly in fostering interpersonal skills, emotional maturity, and independence. "Double-level classrooms offer various benefits for parents:

- Parents can build a trusting relationship with the teacher, creating a partnership focused on enhancing the child's academic performance and overall well-being, thanks to the long-term nature of their interaction.
- Parents value the fact that their child experiences reduced stress at the start of a new school year because, having the same teacher, the student is already familiar with the teacher's routines and expectations.

2.5 How to Schedule Teaching Time Effectively in a Multilevel Classroom

Teaching in a double-level classroom requires many skills in class organization, student management and, ultimately, the successful transmission of level-

specific programs. It is the responsibility of teachers as a teacher of a double-tiered class to plan and organize their class to achieve the best results based on the space and resources available to them.

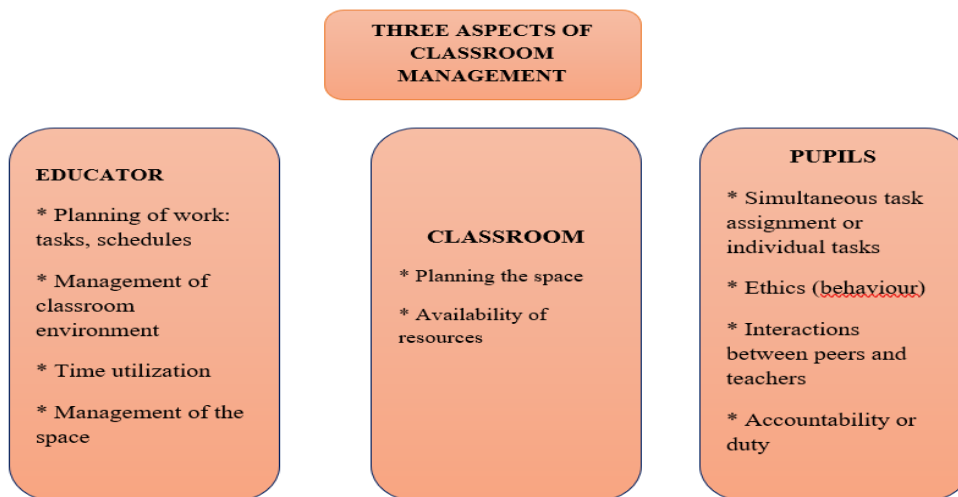


Figure 2: Depicting the three aspects of classroom management.

As a double-level educator, effective planning, designing, and management of diverse activities are crucial for keeping children engaged in learning. This involves creating a conducive learning environment through a variety of stimulating activities, including basic work, independent study, and project-based learning.

"Teachers hold a pivotal position in classroom management through the following means:

- Planning the utilization of classroom "space," which should be flexible and adaptable to various types of activities.
- Organizing the arrangement of tables and chairs for both them and their students.
- Efficiently planning lessons for each grade level simultaneously.
- Designing engaging activities to actively involve children in learning.

- Creating, organizing, and utilizing teaching and learning materials effectively.
- Setting clear behavioural expectations for students to foster a conducive learning environment".

The schedule was meticulously organized, ensuring that each subject is taught according to the respective grade levels. CE1 and CM1 have separate topics for various subjects. For instance, mathematics is taught concurrently but separately for CE1 and CM1, as are dictation and spelling. Subjects like sports, foreign languages (English and German), EMC, computer science, and visual arts are taught simultaneously and often cover identical content. Before commencing the lesson, the teacher displays the daily schedule on the board. One of the examples:

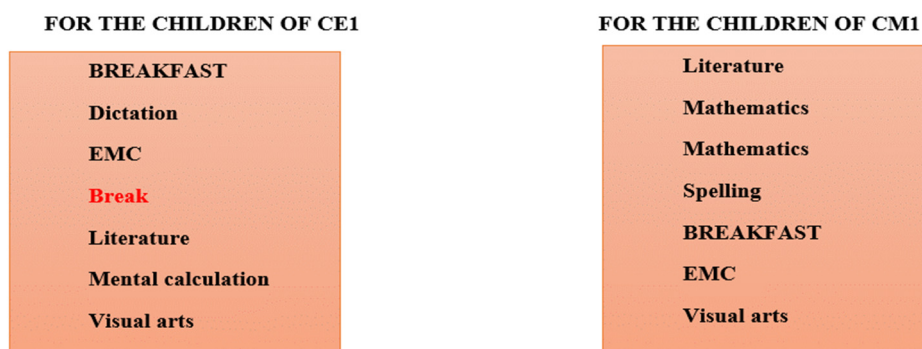


Figure 3: Comparison between the children of CE1 and CM1.

This practice ensures that students are aware of the day's learning objectives, reducing the need for

constant inquiries to the teacher. The schedule is visible to all students. During my time at Jules Ferry

Elementary School in Nanterre, Ms. Gouchi divided the students into four groups, each comprising 5 students of mixed ages and genders. For instance, a group might consist of 3 students from CE1 and 2 from CM1. This arrangement encourages collaboration among children, with younger students gaining insight from their older peers. Additionally,

CM1 students assist CE1 students with tasks such as calculations, dictations, and conjugations. Teaching in a double-level classroom requires more than just competence, experience, and knowledge. It demands expertise in organizing classroom space. Ms. Gouchi's double-level class is structured as follows, a common arrangement in such settings:

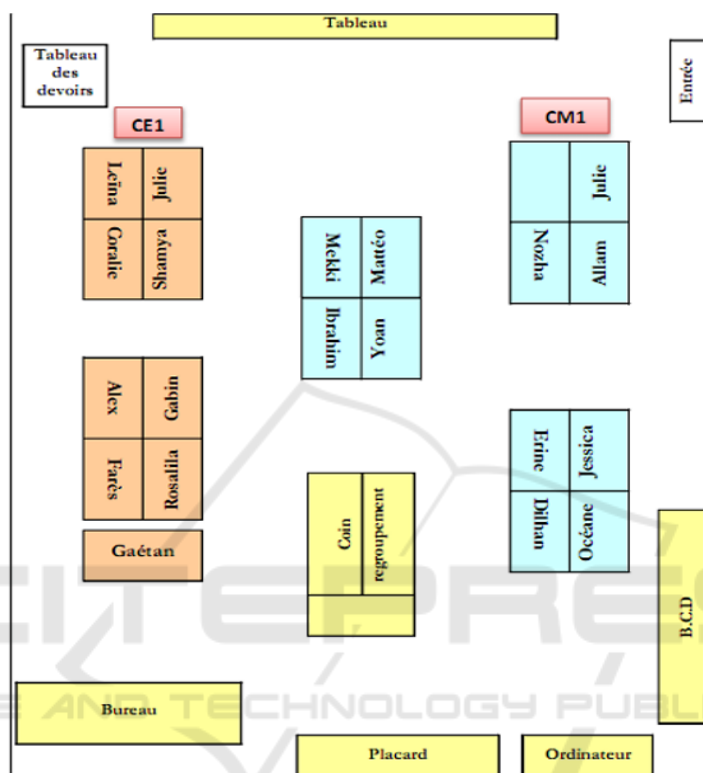


Figure 4: Explaining the architecture between CE1 and CM1

The double-level teacher must be attentive to several factors:

- Ensuring that each student comprehends the teacher's explanations, writings, and instructions.
- Ensuring that every student has clear visibility of the board; if any have difficulty seeing, the teacher arranges seating to improve visibility.
- Maintaining legible and exemplary handwriting, as students often mimic the teacher's writing.
- Having materials prepared to avoid wasting time and ensuring accessibility for students.
- Planning for adequate space for student movement without disruption, considering traffic flow within the classroom.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The insights gained from observing a CE1/CM1 classroom experience can prove invaluable for teachers seeking to enhance the quality of student learning. Schools and their representatives can benefit significantly from sharing experiences with others. In a double-level classroom, the teacher holds a vital role in fostering relationships among students and facilitating the acquisition of knowledge. This involves meticulous planning of both time and space, as well as thoughtfully programming various activities to cultivate an environment conducive to knowledge construction. This endeavour is significant, albeit exhausting at times. Given that each child learns differently, the teacher strives to tailor explanations and methods to accommodate everyone.

Effective collaboration between the teacher and parents is essential for the well-being and learning of the child.

During my four and a half months in France, I had the opportunity to observe the education system closely. I noticed both similarities and differences compared to the education system in Uzbekistan. Unlike in Uzbekistan, where there are no double-level classes, France incorporates this approach alongside regular classes.

In my view, teaching in a double-level class presents significant challenges. However, when led by experienced and highly organized teachers, it can yield positive outcomes.

Hence, it's imperative to train skilled professionals who can drive the development of the country forward. The future lies in the hands of the youth.

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