

Pupils' performances deteriorate during summer holiday

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Researchers at the University of Twente, Netherlands, recently demonstrated that differences in pupils' levels arise largely during holiday periods. They investigated pupils' progress in the field of reading proficiency and looked specifically at differences between the summer holiday and the rest of the school year. According to the researchers, if new research substantiates these results, this would argue in favour of measures such as support for weaker pupils during the summer.

The effect of education on the development of children is difficult to measure in practice. After all, the performances of schoolgoing children in the Netherlands cannot be compared with a comparable group of children who are not in school because all children go to school.

Researchers at the University of Twente therefore compared the improvement in reading proficiency of pupils throughout the school year with that during the summer holiday. This is the first time that researchers have used this method to measure pupils' development in the Netherlands. It turns out that inequality between pupils arises particularly when pupils do not go to school. They generally make less progress during holiday periods than outside the holidays and in some cases their skills even deteriorate.

The researchers do not immediately want to make a case for measures such as abolishing the summer holiday on the basis of these results, but feel that if other studies substantiate their results, the government will

indeed have to take action. Possible measures include a better spread of the holidays and support for weaker students during the summer.

This study was carried out by Hans Luyten and Kim Schildkamp, both assistant professors in education at the University of Twente, and Pieter Verachtert, post-doctoral researcher at the Centre for Educational Effectiveness and Evaluation (Centrum voor Onderwijseffectiviteit en -evaluatie) at the Catholic University of Leuven. They investigated improvements in the field of technical comprehension in pupils from groups 4 and 5 (children aged 7-9).

The study was carried out amongst a representative sample (in terms of socioeconomic status and gender of pupils) of 245 pupils attending eleven schools. The researchers presented their research results during the Education Research Days 2008 and in the article ‘Vooruitgang in technisch lezen gedurende het schooljaar en de zomervakantie (Progress in technical comprehension throughout the school year and the summer holiday)’, which will appear soon in the authoritative journal ‘Pedagogische studiën’.

Provided by University of Twente

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