INTERACTION IN TWO MULTICULTURAL MATHEMATICS CLASSROOMS

Mechanisms of Inclusion and Exclusion

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Typifying and sorting:
The construction of pupil-identity types in staff meetings

In this chapter we leave the classroom and enter the meeting room where the teachers discuss pupils' results and decide on their promotion to a next level. In these meetings pupils can be referred to lower level schools, thus showing processes of inclusion and exclusion from the school itself, in a context different from the classroom. In a qualitative analysis of the interaction among the teachers, it is shown how teachers discuss pupils. When giving arguments for promotion or demotion teachers refer either to a pupil's results, or to an assessment of general cognitive capability, or to the pupil's behavioural disposition. Moreover, is it shown that these arguments get a different weight according to the status of the pupils as either well or less performing.

1   Introduction[1]

One of the primary functions of schools is allocating pupils to school types. Mehan has called this the "sorting work" of schools.[2] It can be observed in all kinds of formal tests and other types of standardised assessment formats, but sorting is also accomplished in the interaction between teacher and pupils.[3] Both kinds of assessments, but especially informal interactional evaluations and identity constructions, have consequences for the self-perception of pupils. These interactional evaluations have an effect on children's performance on formal tests too. That is why the *Pygmalion-in-the-classroom mechanism* is often related to interactional practices concerning informal pupil assessments.[4]

However, selection is not only the work of an individual teacher in the classroom. Teachers also accomplish sorting work collaboratively in staff meetings. The team of teachers discuss pupil performances periodically, and at the end of the school year, the team has to decide whether and how a pupil will continue his school career.

In this chapter we will discuss how pupil identities are constructed in staff meetings in two schools, The Sun and The Rainbow. We will examine how teachers characterise individual pupils so as to eventually account for the decisions that are taken about them. In an unpublished paper, Soeterik already made an inventory of topics related to individual pupils who were discussed in one of The Sun meetings, using the methodology of content analysis.[5] She suggested that nine dimensions could be discerned in the way teachers speak about pupils in the staff meeting: performance, atti-

tude towards school work, social behaviour, motivation, school contentment, capacity, school and teacher role (in problem solving), role of the social background (in problem solving) and an unspecified dimension. From an analysis of the way teachers describe the problems of two boys (Moroccan-Dutch and Dutch), she concluded that very different images (related to the nine dimensions) were built of these two boys who both had very poor school results. Especially the role of the social background is constructed negatively for the Moroccan-Dutch boy and positively for the Dutch boy. Besides that, the annoying social behaviour (in class and outside class) is discussed in the case of the Moroccan-Dutch boy and not in the case of the Dutch boy, who is treated as a victim of the group. Starting from this finding, we will use a discourse-analytic methodology which is informed by conversation analytic and ethno-methodological work on interactional practices for doing membership categorisation and identity construction,[6] to find out what practices are used by teachers in their staff meetings to accomplish that kind of differences between pupils. In the next two sections, we will first summarise earlier discourse-analytic work on teacher-staff meetings.

2 Sorting work and pupil-identity construction

There is earlier work that studies the ways teachers talk about pupils. Leiter already discerned different ways of talking about young children and how they are consequential for the child's allocation to pre-school level or to the first grade.[7] He concluded that there may be different, institutionalised orientations in the ways teachers characterise pupils: whereas teachers in one school referred to personality types, the teachers in the other school typified pupils primarily in terms of their performance. Of course, the typification that teachers make of a pupil does not have to be the only basis for deciding about their future. Other kinds of expertise may also be involved. Hugh Mehan, for example, examined assessment meetings in which pupils with physical handicaps are 'sorted out' for special programs.[8] He focused on the role of experts in those meetings and the ways they structure the discussion in meetings with parents. The experts influence the discussion in a way that forestalls a more favourable career for the handicapped child. Mehan describes how different types of participants – teachers, parents and experts – characterise pupils differently and how these characterisations are valued differently. Psychological typifications of experts may overrule the images that teachers or parents have of a child.[9]

Cedersund and Svensson discuss different types of teacher characterisations of pupils.[10] They show how teachers in staff meetings in secondary schools in Sweden not only categorise pupils by formal, 'objective' descriptions and evaluations – e.g., regarding absence and low grades –, but also by 'subjective comments and evaluations' that may explain poor performances. Decisions about pupils are based upon both types of characterisations.

Baker describes how categorisation work is locally organised in staff meetings, although it may rely on pre-existing criteria.[11] She examined staff meetings in a secondary school in Australia. Pupils were rewarded or punished for their behaviour with positive or negative tickets. At the end of each week, pupils were levelled from +4 to -4. Already after a couple of weeks, the 'moral career'[12] of a pupil could be glanced over in a table listing all the week scores. Baker shows how the teachers based qualifications of individual pupils upon the scores listed in the table. They discursively corroborated their shared understanding of normative rules of behaviour. The characterisation of pupils in staff meetings had consequences for 'the distribution of sympathy'[13] and it resulted in the construction of a moral order in the school. The effect of pupil classification affects the structure of the school as a whole.

The fact that categorisation work and the decisions that are based upon it are locally organised does not imply that teachers act arbitrarily. Teacher activities in which pupils are assessed unfold within a complex discursive history of ways of interacting with and talking about pupils. The work of teachers constitutes a *community of practice(s)*[14] that has to be actively maintained and reproduced from occasion to occasion. It provides a framework in which discursive practices for the construction and categorisation of identities play a central role.[15]

3 Data and context

Our data consist of four audio-taped and transcribed staff meetings at The Sun and The Rainbow. The teachers discuss the progression and the achievements of pupils in the first year of secondary school. This year is called brugklas – literally: 'bridging class' –, because at the end of this year, the school has to decide at which level a pupil will continue. In the course of the year, the teachers discuss the pupils school performance. Report cards are made periodically and are given to the pupils and their parents.

We examined two meetings in each school, one in Winter term and one in the Spring/Summer term of the same school year. The second meeting in The Rainbow was in May, shortly before the final report card meeting. The second meeting in The Sun was in June. This was the meeting in which the teachers decide about the question whether a pupil will be promoted. The pupils at The Sun can be promoted to either the second year of midlevel secondary school (MAVO) or to a higher level type of secondary school (HAVO). Pupils who are not promoted to a higher grade either have to repeat the bridging year or they are dismissed to a lower-level type of secondary school, like The Rainbow. At The Rainbow the pupils are promoted to a next year at the same level or at a lower level. In this school, pupils usually do not repeat the first year. Staff meetings at The Rainbow thus have less directly to do with *sorting* than at The Sun.

In the staff meetings at The Sun, the team of teachers considers the progress of pupils. In the winter term meeting, the teachers discuss the possibilities of the pupils

till Teacher meeting

for the next year. In the second meeting, the team of teachers assess the achievements of pupils over the whole school year. The staff then has to decide on the future school career of the pupils in the bridging class. In her earlier study of these meetings, Soeterik reports that these discussions were often structured as follows.[16] First the team leader would present a 'state of affairs' with respect to the pupil in question, along with his prognosis of this pupil's possibilities. Then there would be a round in which different teachers reported their experience with this particular pupil. Not all teachers present contributed equally to this phase. A third phase existed of framing the problem – a summarising activity in which the team leader characterised the pupil's problem. The discussion of a pupil would be concluded by a discussion of causes and solutions to the problem.

The two staff meetings in The Rainbow were recorded at similar points in time. The teachers also discuss the achievements of their pupils. However, the discussion is not as much about selection, but rather focuses on problems of pupils. Most pupils in The Rainbow will stay in the school for another year, usually at the same level. Only in rare cases, a pupil is not promoted to the next year. The difference in the scope of decision making not only has consequences for the kind of topics that are discussed in the staff meetings, but is also related to the frequency and the agenda of the meetings. At The

Rainbow, there is a staff meeting every week in which the teachers discuss both the progress and the problems of their pupils. The staff meetings at The Sun are only about the report cards of pupils. These differences in the organisation of work practices do not seem to have drastic consequences for the practices the teachers use for characterising pupils. However, the nature of the decision making in the final staff meeting of The Sun is specific and has considerable impact on the ways pupils are discussed. This is the reason why we will discuss the sorting work in this meeting in a special section.

To be able to understand the data in their context, the reader has to have some knowledge about the secondary school system in the Netherlands. We refer to the introduction to this volume for a description of the general structure of the secondary school system. For this paper, it suffices to know that pupils in the bridging class of The Sun may continue at different levels of secondary school, most importantly MAVO-level (a midlevel type of secondary school[17]) and HAVO-level (a higher level secondary school). Pupils who do not meet the criteria to continue at MAVO-level have to leave the school and are assumed to continue at a less theoretical, more practical type of vocational school. Since schools in the Netherlands are free to determine how the decision making process is organised, the procedure may differ from school to school. The only thing that matters is the final decision of the staff, not the route to that decision. We will give a more detailed impression of this for one of the schools later in this chapter.

4   Characterising pupils

In the staff meetings, the teachers spend most of the time discussing individual pupils. They exchange and discuss various sorts of descriptions of pupils. See, for instance, the fragment below which is taken from a discussion in a report card meeting. When the chair of the meeting raises the question whether Petra can be promoted to the next year, the biology teacher reacts as follows: (*see abbreviations on p. 265 and 304-5*)

Fragment 1   The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2, Petra[18]

```
BIO:          ik vin' t heel moeilijk. (1.2) ik vind ze::h (0.7)
              I find this very difficult. (1.2) I think she::h (0.7)
   →₁         ze heeft nagenoeg e:h (1.4) weinig
              she has as good as no u:h (1.4) few
              voldoendes gehaald.
              sufficient grades.
   →₂         ' t hangt echt steeds vier punt zes.
              it is really all the time four point six.
              vier punt nege,
              four point nine,
```

```
          vijf punt vie:r:.
          five point four.
          (0.5)
          en 'n paar keer 'n uitblinker,
          and a couple of times a positive exception,
    →₃    maar, (0.3) ik vinn'r HEE:L erg °zwak.
          but, (0.3) I think she is very: very weak.
```

The biology teacher characterises Petra in two ways. She first gives a report of her results for biology (arrow numbers 1 and 2). In Dutch education, grades go from 1 to 10. Scores from 5.5 upward are pass, thus Petra's 4.6, 4.9, and 4.4 are fail. Following Petra's results, the biology teacher assesses her cognitive level (arrow number 3). Although the order in which these statements are presented is not arbitrary – the first one may be retrospectively heard as providing the empirical basis for the second one –, the second is not shaped as a conclusion from the preceding observations. The speaker rather presents them as two statements that are in line with each other.

The two ways in which the biology teacher characterises a pupil differ fundamentally. The first one is a *description* of empirically controllable facts, the second one is an *ascription* of a personal *attribute*. Although the ascription of an attribute is regularly accounted for or objected by empirically based descriptions, they do different things. Whereas a description reports facts and perhaps enables inferences about personal features of a pupil, ascriptions of attributes make claims about the kind of person a pupil is. Attributions transform – and re-ify – observable behaviour into a stable feature of a pupil's personality.

The teachers characterise not only the level of achievement, but they also qualify pupils at the level of their behaviour. The descriptions in the fragment below – taken from the same report card meeting as fragment 1 – document both types of characterisation. The English teacher first characterises Marianne's level of achievement (arrow numbers 1 and 2). She then continues with a series of qualifications at the behavioural level (arrows 3-5):

Fragment 2 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Marianne

```
ENG:  →₁   e:hm (1.7) ze is erg e:h, (0.6) wisselvallig,
           u:hm (1.7) she's very u:h, (0.6) unstable
           (1.6)
      →₂   e:hm (0.2) ze is inzichtelijk (0.3) zwak,
           uh:m (0.2) she is as far as insight is concerned (0.3) weak
      →₃   en ze is e::h (1.3) zs:- snel in paniek.
           and she u:h (1.3) panics vf:- easily.
           (0.4)
```

```
BIO:        °jah!=
            yes.
ENG:  →₄    =en ik moet haar heel vaak geruststellen.
            and I have to put her mind at rest very often.
            (0.4)
            en dat gaa:t wel goed
            and this works well
            (0.6)
      →₅    (°hè dat vooral) (.) ·hh ze is
            (you know, particularly this) (.) ·hh she's
            niet- erg onzelfstandig.
            not- very dependent.
```

The teacher's characterisation of Marianne's achievement level is very similar to the one we have seen in fragment 1. The qualification begins with a factive statement about the overall pattern of Marianne's scores – *she is very unstable* (in results) – and this description is followed by an ascription of a cognitive disposition – *she is weak, as far as insight is concerned*.

The pattern can be observed one more time in the subsequent qualification of the pupil's behaviour. The English teacher first describes a behavioural feature in a generalising way – *she panics easily* (arrow number 3) – and then as a way of accounting for the positive effect of her own interventions (arrow number 4), she attributes the personal trait 'dependence'. She stops after *she is not* – and then self-repairs to say that Petra is – *very dependent* (arrow number 5).

Note, by the way, that the order of statements – first a report with a transparent empirical basis and then an ascription of a personal attribute – is again open to the suggestion that the latter one is inductively legitimised by the former one.

Although descriptions may be packaged in neutral, factive terms, they are often evaluative. This is very clear for reporting grades. See the report of Latifa's grades in the fragment below. It is taken from another meeting in the other school (The Rainbow). Latifa has an unsatisfactory mark for maths and also one for biology (arrow number 1). Two other teachers immediately respond with very strong evaluative assessments. They qualify her scores as *bewilderingly weak* and *very weak* respectively (arrows 2 and 3):

Fragment 3 The Rainbow, 141299, staff meeting-1; Latifa

```
TL:   →₁    een vijf voor wiskunde een vijf voor bio,
            a five for maths a five for bio(logy)
MA:   →₂    onthutsend zwak.
            bewilderingly weak
```

BIO: [ja heel zwak]
yes very weak

TL: →₃ [heel zwak.] oei!
very weak. gosh!

MA: ja ik had ook een vier kunnen zetten.
yes a four would have been reasonable still
(0.5)

GEO: ZO!
WELL!

TL: →₄ aaah:(.) dus ze- ze redt het waarschijnlijk op
oh yes I see. so she probably manages because of
e:h (0.8) [inzet.
u:h (o.8)   ardor

GEO: [inzet.
            ardor.

Although the speaker's report is phrased in factive, descriptive terms – he is just listing Latifa's grades –, the list is immediately framed evaluatively by two colleagues. This practice is also reported by Verkuyten in his analysis of teacher's justifications in staff meetings of pupil's unsatisfactory school marks.[19] What is interesting is not so much that a grade label is always and unavoidably evaluative when you know the ranking order of the scale it is taken from,[20] but rather that the selective report of two mentionable facts about Latifa is taken as a basis for classifying the pupil's achievement level. Latifa's scores are not just commented upon as *bewilderingly weak*, they also warrant a typification of the pupil as a person with weak capability. Compare the way teacher TL draws a conclusion in her next turn: "so she [Latifa] probably manages because of ... ardour" (arrow number 4). The inference is something like 'a pupil who is so weak can only manage when she works dedicatedly hard'. Latifa's weak scores are retro-actively reifyed into a personal attribute: she is a pupil with a – cognitively – weak capability.

The teachers have systematic ways to move discursively from facts to ascriptions. The step from generalising over facts to attributing dispositions is easily made. Typifications of personality features not only provide an inferential basis for ascribing further attributes to a person, they are also oriented to as resources for generating explanations for facts that are not directly compatible with the reported ones. In the fragment above, the fact that Latifa manages satisfactorily for the other subjects is explained by her dedication. Her cognitive skills are excluded beforehand as a reasonable explanation, probably because she already has been disqualified in this area. She *is* – cognitively – weak, so her satisfactory scores for other subjects must have a different ground.

The explanation of behaviour by invoking pupil dispositions is different from explaining behaviour by specific local and situated reasons.[21] Compare the following report of unsatisfactory marks and the way it is accounted for subsequently:

Fragment 4 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Assad

GEO: ja hij werkt e:h behoorlijk regelma:tig
yes he works e:h quite regularly
't is eh echt 'n zesje wat
it is eh really just a six [just sufficient] what
eh (0.4) wat ie e:h met proefwerken
eh (o.4) what he e:h compensates
weer 'n beetje omhoog haa:lt.
again a little bit with tests.

→₁ maar met de es o's gaat ie onderuit,
but with the small tests, he fails,

→₂ heeft ie gewoon niet geleerd ofzo, denk ik.
he simply didn't learn it or something like that, I think.

→₃ maar ik denk dat ie e:h dat ie e:h
but I think that he e:h that he e:h
wat mIJn vak betreft
as far as my subject is concerned,
e::h mag ie mavo wel aan kan,
u::h he is allowed- able to manage mavo(-level)
(0.5)
°mavo twee.
mavo-two.

Assad has failed the small tests (arrow number 1), and the speaker explains for this by giving a specific, local reason for it: "he simply didn't learn it" (arrow 2). Note that Assad's poor results for one type of assignment is not made consequential for his overall assessment (arrow 3). Assad's failure is not hindering a general positive advice. A positive vote would be less self-evident, however, if Assad's failure had been attributed to his lack of capability. By providing just a specific explanation for his underachievement, the geography teacher does not block a subsequent move towards a positive advice.

The explanation by a specific reason in fragment 4 is fundamentally different from an explanation by ascribing a disposition, as in fragment 3. The unsatisfactory scores of Latifa are explained by making inferences about the make up of her person. The discursive construction of a type explains for the pupil's performance and it eventually accounts for the decision that is taken about her. We can already observe this mechanism in a nutshell in the fragment below. In this discussion, the teachers' attribution of a disposition is used as a basis for making predictions about a pupil's future school career:

Fragment 5 The Rainbow, 141299, staff meeting-1; Nordin

```
DU:      →₁    (...) en dan (.) hh jôh dan > komt 'ie
               (...) and then (.) oh boy, then > he comes
               -komt ie voor de ↑klas
               he comes in front of the class
               dan [ neemt ie de hele LES OVER
               then he takes over the whole lesson
DR:                [ nou ja
                     well, yes
DU:            bij wijze van spreken,
               so to speak,
               zo goed doet 'ie het dan=
               so well he is doing then=
BIO:          =[ maar
               =but
HIS:          =[ ja.
               =yes
DU:            maar ↑ja::
               but ↑ye::h
BIO:     →₂    die hele houding [ van hem.
               this whole  air of him.
DU:                             [ die (hele) -ja
                                 this (very) - yes
BIO:     →₃    [ oh wat een ver] waande kwast zeg
               oh what a conceited fob he is, you know
DU:            [ °daar heb ik ook moeite mee]
               I find this hard to take too
               (...)
BIO:          hij denkt zelf echt dat 'ie alles kan maken hoor,
               he really thinks he can do everything he likes you know,
HIS:          ja [ (        )
               yes  (        )
BIO:             [ alleen omdat] hij[ Nordin is
                  just because  he is Nordin
DU:                              [ ja voor hem zijn-
                                 yes for him there is-
               voor hem zijn er geen grenzen
               for him there is no limit.
DR:      →₄    dus, houding zeggen we ook tege::h moeder
```

```
               so,  attitude we tell his mother as well
               °> die 's hier geweest,
               >°  she's been here
               kennismakingsgesprek, zEker nog tegen zeggen,
               for the acquaintency conversation, tell her for certain
               dat' niet plezierig ↓is en dat (.) als iemand
               that this is not very pleasant and that (.)  if somebody
               dat in-in de brugklas al ten toon [ spreidt,
               already exhibits this in the bridging class
BIO:                                             [ ja
                                                  yes
TL:      →₅    hhh dat we het idee hebben van [ e:h
               hhh that we have the feeling like u:h
BIO:                                          [ j=ja
                                               yes
DU:                                          [ mjahh
                                              hm, yes
TL:           dat dat niet goed zal gaan. ↑hè
               that this will not go well you know
```

The teachers agree upon a typification of Nordin's personality that accounts for very disapproving reactions and even for admonishing his mother with a prediction of failure in his future school career. The teachers blame Nordin for being arrogant and they categorise him as a *conceited fob* (arrows 2 and 3). This typification is then used as a warrant for making a pessimistic prediction about his future school career (arrows 4 and 5). Despite Nordin's undeniable qualities (see arrow 1), he is ascribed a personal disposition that accounts for a negatively loaded assessment and a corresponding pessimistic prediction regarding his chances. The moral characterisation of his behaviour outshines his current achievements.

The discussions about individual pupils in the staff meetings permanently move from the description of empirically controllable facts to the ascription of capabilities and traits. The teachers regularly frame factive reports evaluatively, and their assessments provide a basis for typification of a pupil's personality. The teachers orient to personality typifications as warrants for making inferences, giving explanations and making predictions. By discussing their observations and experiences, the teachers cooperatively work towards characterisations they can agree upon and that may provide a basis for deciding how to deal with a pupil. Characterisations may be rejected and negotiated, but eventually, when it comes to making a decision as a team, they have to find a manageable degree of conformity with respect to how they assess a pupil. The process of building a workable consensus expands the framework of a single meeting.

The teachers discuss pupils on various types of occasions over the course of a whole school year. A characterisation of a pupil on one particular occasion may have a long history of previous talk about this specific pupil.

An example of this is the discussion about Petra (see fragment 1) and Marianne (fragment 2). The scores of these girls are largely the same and their achievement levels are characterised as 'very weak' and 'weak', respectively. In the previous staff meeting (April), only Petra was discussed at great length. The teachers characterised her in observational terms and supplemented this by evaluations of her attributed capacities. The fragment below is from this meeting. In his summary assessment, the Maths teacher eventually evaluates Petra's performance as 'extremely alarming':

ıent 6 The Sun, 200400, staff meeting-1; Petra

BIO: `maar °het het z-zit er niet in, een goeie (    ).`
but it it i- is not in for her, a good (   )
        `(2.0)`
        `moe 'k echt (gewoon eh) de de meest eenvoudige`
need really to (simply eh) the the most simple
        `dinge, ze gooit`
matters, she mixes
        `al:::les door mekaar waar 't maar kan.`
up e::::verything wherever she can.
        `2.3`

MA: `is dat bij jou ook niet zo [ Dolf]?`
isn't it the same with you [Dolf]?
        `dat het leerwerk gaat wel,`
that the learning is all right,
        `maar zo ↑gauw het °wat [ (    ) -`
but as soon it is a little[(   ) -

HIS: `[ nee: het leerwerk eh`
                           no the learning eh
        `(deed ze ook) gewoon drieë!`
(she also did) just threes!
        `(1.1)`
        `ze snapt niks! (h)ier wat, (h)ier wat,`
she doesn't get anything! something (h)ere, something (h)ere,
        `(h)ier wat, en dan is het helemaal door el↑kaar`
something (h)ere, and that's it all mixed ↑up
        `(...)`

MA: →   `maar wel (.) werke en dan ↑OOk nog tweeë`
but she is (.) working and nevertheless getting two

`en drieë hale >is dan`
and three marks
`toch < uiterst zorgelijk!`
> it is quite worrying!
`(1.2)`
HIS: `ja was het dus (0.9)(....)`
yes it was also (0.9) .....

This discussion ends up with the problem what to do with this girl. One teacher suggests that she should be tutored on a personal basis, but no one has the time to do that, unfortunately. Eventually, no action is taken, but the perspectives are already awkward for Petra. In the second staff meeting – the report card meeting in June –, it turns out that she has better results than in spring. But as we will see in fragment 11, she still gets the same negative characterisations as before. The final outcome is that she has to leave school. Marianne was not discussed in the April meeting. In terms of achievements, she was not a 'disputable case' at that time. But her achievements have deteriorated during the last term and she has become a disputable case by now, with scores that are quite similar to those of Petra. Nevertheless, Marianne is not evaluated so negatively, although she is qualified as weak. It seems that she does not have to bear the burden of a formerly constructed, negative pupil identity. Although the teachers are very undecided about her, she gets the benefit of the doubt and is promoted to the next year.

5 Cognitive and behavioural characterisations and actions to be taken

We now turn to a feature of teacher talk about pupils that was already observable in the fragments presented in the previous section, most notably in fragments 2 and 3. In fragment 2, for example, the English teacher discusses a pupil both regarding her *cognitive skills* (arrow number 1) and regarding her *behavioural traits* (arrow 2):

Repeated fragment 2 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Marianne

ENG: $\rightarrow_1$ `e:hm (1.7) ze is erg e:h, (0.6) wisselvallig,`
        u:hm (1.7) she's very u:h, (0.6) unstable
        `(1.6)`
  $\rightarrow_2$ `e:hm (0.2) ze is inzichtelijk (0.3) zwak,`
        uh:m (0.2) she is as far as insight is concerned (0.3) weak
  $\rightarrow_3$ `en ze is e::h (1.3) zs::- snel in paniek.`
        and she u:h (1.3) panics vf:- easily.

When they discuss pupils, the teachers discern systematically between a cognitive perspective and a behavioural approach. They sometimes make the distinction explicit in meta-communicative comments. See, for example, the remarks in the fragment below. Both the teacher for maths and the biology teacher distinguish between talking about the cognitive side of a pupil and talking about the behavioural side:

Fragment 7 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Maktoub

MA:		maar (0.3) i- ik wil geen <u>twee</u> dingen door elkaar
		but (o.3) I- I don't want to mix up two
		halen.
		things.
	→₁	(want dit is [(dit is) DIT] IS GEDRAG:! en wij
		(because this is – THIS IS BEHAVIOUR:! and we
ENG:		[NEE::H!]
		NO::!
MA:	→₂	zijn [aan 't kijken of ie havo <u>twee</u> rijp is.
		are looking whether he is ready for havo-two.
ENG:		[jaAh:
		ye:s
		(...)
BIO:	→₃	E<u>É</u>:N ding nog. >dat is niet zozeer over
		ONE other thing. >this is not so much about
		cognitief,<
		cognitive,<
		maa:r wat me <u>op</u>valt van Maktoub ook
		but what strikes me about Maktoub also
		als (ie) na na:h de:h <u>les</u>
		when (I) after class
		's met 'm kletst, (0.6) hij <u>hee</u>ft (.) <u>thuis</u>
		sometimes have a chat with him (o.6) he doesn't (.) have (o.3)
		(.)
		<u>he</u>lemaal niets te doen. (0.4) DUS: (0.3)
		anything to do at home. (o.4) SO (o.3)
		hij gaat (1.0) z'n boeke <u>alle</u>maal uitwerke.
		he is finishing off (1.0) all of his books completely.

The maths teacher – who is also chairing this meeting – tries to redirect a discussion about Maktoub's classroom behaviour by qualifying it as topically not fitted to the activity (arrow number 1). When they have to decide whether he has the – cognitive – matureness for promotion to a higher type of secondary education (HAVO), the

team is not supposed to talk about his behaviour (arrow 2). A little later in the same discussion round – and possibly in response to the topical constraints just articulated by the chair –, the biology teacher prefaces a telling about Maktoub's home situation as "not as much about the cognitive".

The teachers explicitly name two ways of discussing pupils. The first one has to do with *cognitive skills* and most importantly includes the pupil's scores and his or her level of comprehension. The other one has to do with *behavioural dispositions* and covers a wide range of pupil features that are oriented to as not directly cognitive. Discussing the cognitive side is not automatically complemented by discussing the behavioural side of a pupil. Moreover, an orientation towards discussing the cognitive side of a pupil may put constraints on the topicalisability of the behavioural side. We will see presently that the direction of these observations is not reversable.

This dual orientation is strongly guiding the discursive conceptualisation of pupils. The *behavioural* component is even explicitly translated into evaluative categories in the report cards of the pupils at The Rainbow. The pupils are given grades for their behaviour and for their working attitude – good/moderate/insufficient – for each subject, as a supplement to their achievement marks. The teachers at The Rainbow thus have surveys at their disposal in which both types of pupil performance are recorded. They discuss problems with pupils with an eye on these written reports. Discussions about pupils may start with behavioural problems that do not have to correlate with achievement problems. See fragment 8:

Fragment 8 The Rainbow, 141299, staff meeting-1; Oumnia

TL:	Oumnia ja een vrolijke meid
	Oumnia yes a cheerful girl
	af en toe wordt je d'r helemaal gek van
	sometimes she makes you completely mad
	omdat ze d'r mond niet kan houden
	because she can't keep her mouth shut
	maar men vindt
	but in general one has the
	over het algemeen twee erretjes
	opinion with) two ars*
	dat het nog wel te hanteren is e:h
	that this is uh:: still managable uh:
	(.)
	Latifa (.) een lieve meid ook,
	Latifa (.) a sweet girl too,
	doet altijd aardig mee,
	is always contributing nicely,

```
          een vijf voor wiskunde een vijf voor bio.
          one five for math one five for biology.
```

* Pupils may get an extra mark, like an R, indicating misbehaviour in class.

This is all what is said about Oumnia in this meeting. The team leader (TL) – who is also chairing the meeting – only remarks about her behaviour in class. After having pointed at a possible negative consequence ('she makes you mad sometimes') of her nature ('cheerful'), TL provides a summary assessment by quoting the general opinion about Oumnia ('but in general one has the opinion that this is still manageable'). The assessment is evidenced by a reference to marks that were given for Oumnia's behaviour, – only two 'moderate' marks in this respect. The record keeping of the pupil's behaviour is thus used as a resource for making a general assessment of the pupil.

The teachers in the other school almost never treat behavioural reports as a starting point for initiating a discussion about a pupil, – perhaps because they do not maintain a standardised system of record keeping of the behavioural performance of pupils. In The Sun meetings, behavioural characterisations are always discussed in relation to cognitive achievements. They may *explain* a pupil's weak performance or they may be put *in contrast* to either good or bad achievement. See for instance the way they describe Ionica in the fragment below:

Fragment 9 The Sun, 200400, staff meeting-1; Ionica

```
GEO:          j[a het gaat eh inderdaad e:h (de)
              yes it is going uh: indeed uh:
MATH:          [ja
               yes
GEO:          laatste tijd heel erg slecht,
              very bad recently
              (0.6)
GEO:    →₁    enneh het is altijd ook eh °hh
              and uh it's always also uh °hh
              als ze (de) les
              when she enters (the) class
              inkomt e:h dat ze iets niet bij zich hebt,
              u:h she has something not with her,
              of ze is d'r
              or she has
              WErkboeke verge↑te of dat soort dinge, (0.6)
              forgotten Workbooks or things like that, (0.6)
              hè enneh (0.4) ze
              eh? and uh (0.4) she
```

```
        →₂    is gedragsmatig ook niet pRETtig hoor?
              is in terms of behaviour really not plEASant
              of heel KNORrig ↓dan als je
              or very GRUMbling ↓ then if
              d'r wat van zegt °ja dat KAN toch? ik eh hè?
              you say something about it ° yes that IS possible, isn't it? I uh eh?
              zo dat idee (1.9) °hh [ enne
              that idea (1.9) °hh and
MATH:   →₃                          [ in de verdediging
                                      defensive
```

The geography teacher characterises Ionica's achievements as 'very bad recently' and he then correlates this with a list of generalising behavioural reports (arrow number 2). Note that the maths teacher reacts affiliatively by proposing a behavioural typification that is in line with prior speaker's perspective (arrow number 3). He is not only demonstrating his understanding of prior turn, but also working towards the kind of agreement that eventually provides the basis for collaborative decision making about a pupil.

The two schools differ in the ways reports on pupil behaviour are deployed in the talk about pupils. In The Sun, a pupil's cognitive achievement is given precedence over his or her behavioural characteristics. Behavioural characterisations are oriented to as secondary and subsidiary. In The Rainbow, behaviour is a topic per se. This school has a different approach. It has a different educational philosophy. A school can be modelled either as a *pedagogical* or as a *cognitive* community.[22] Whereas the teachers at The Sun tend to embrace the latter perspective, The Rainbow teachers choose the former. Not only do we find more discussion about behavioural aspects in the staff meetings of The Rainbow, these discussions also more often lead to taking action in the behavioural domain. See fragment 10, for example:

Fragment 10 The Rainbow, 141299, staff meeting-1; Faroek T.

```
D:            (....) goed volgende probleem Faroek T.
              (....) alright next problem Faroek T.
              (2.5)
              geen (broertjes)
              no (little brothers)
H:            ik vind dat een tamelijk problematisch
              I consider him a pretty problematical
              jongetje
              little boy
?:            ja ja
              yes yes
```

```
        ja en dat wordt steeds erger
        yes and it is going from bad to worse
H:      en e:h daar moeten we echt iets mee
        and u:h we really have to do something with it
        (......)((minutes of discussion))
        ik weet niet want ja ik ken het
        I don't know because I know the
        medische verhaal natuurlijk maar e:h
        medical story of course but u:h
        (....) vraag maar es aan Hanneke
        (  ) ask it Hanneke
        of ze onderzoek wil doen
        whether she likes to do some research
        ik heb echt geen idee
        I really have no idea
```

This discussion starts with signalling a problem with Faroek's behaviour. The teachers then collaboratively work towards taking the decision that he has to be tested psychologically. The achievement level of his school work – which is positively evaluated – is only casually mentioned in the discussion. Despite the fact that there is no evidence for a negative effect of his behaviour on the quality of his achievements, this is no reason not to take action. The teachers at The Rainbow expect pupils to stay for quite a long time. If they behave in problematic, deviant ways, they have to be treated if possible. The team does not try to solve the problem by putting the pupil in a class at another level or by sending him to another school. They do not have this latter option.

The teachers at The Sun however, do have this option. In the final meeting of the school year (staff meeting 2), the team has to decide whether a pupil can be promoted or is sent to a lower type of school. Although earlier on in the school year, action can be taken in the behavioural domain, most actions are postponed until the end of the year when the final verdict is made. This means that a pupil's cognitive skills are made into the central issue of the meetings at The Sun. Many discussions concern the likelihood that a pupil be able to continue her study in the school and at the current level. Compare, for example, the discussions about Petra and Maktoub in fragments 6 and 7.

In sum, we find interesting differences in the ways teachers orient to behavioural and cognitive aspects in the staff meetings in the two schools. At The Rainbow, the teachers discuss behavioural problems independently from a pupil's cognitive achievement level. In the staff meetings at The Sun, the teachers give precedence to the cognitive level. Behavioural properties are discussed, but always in relation and subsidiary to the assessment of cognitive skills. At The Rainbow, decision making concentrates on problem solving within the behavioural domain. At The Sun, on the other hand, decision making about pupils centres around the assessment of the cognitive capacity of a pupil.

6 Sorting work: promotion and demotion in The Sun

In our collection of teacher meetings, there is only one meeting – The Sun, staff meeting-2 – in which the teachers decide upon the definitive course a pupil's school career will take. In this meeting, the staff has to decide how the pupils in the bridging class will continue their school career. A pupil in the bridging class of The Sun can be promoted to the second year in high school, either at the same moderate level of secondary education (MAVO: midlevel secondary education) or at a more advanced level of secondary education (HAVO: higher secondary education). Promotion to the midlevel class is the default option (MAVO-2), only pupils with very good overall scores can be promoted to higher level high school (HAVO-2). Pupils with overall scores between regular and very good are discussed separately as to how they will be promoted, – either to MAVO-2 (the regular promotion alternative) or to HAVO-2 (the higher alternative).

Pupils with overall scores that do not qualify for regular promotion but not as low as to be demoted automatically, are also discussed separately. Pupils with low overall scores are demoted. Demotion itself also has two options. The pupil is either allowed to repeat the bridging class in The Sun, or is advised to continue at a lower level type of secondary school – such as The Rainbow – in which vocational training is more important. If a pupil already has doubled the first year and has again scores that are not good enough for promotion to MAVO-2, he is dismissed from the school without any further discussion. A pupil for whom it is the first time that he will not be promoted is discussed with respect to whether repeating the *bridging class* makes sense.

In the preceding section, we pointed out that the teachers generally distinguish between a behavioural and a cognitive perspective in the ways they talk about pupils. This orientation guides the discussion about pupils pervasively and systematically. In the report card meeting at The Sun, the systematics of highlighting the cognitive or the behavioural side roughly displays two types of orders. First – in line with the observations made in section 4 – the cognitive side takes precedence over the behavioural side. That is, when a pupil is judged to be too weak at the cognitive level, he is not nominated for promotion. In this case, behavioural arguments weigh less than the pupil's classification on a cognitive scale. Second, each mode of approaching pupils is selectively mobilised depending on the type of sorting decision that is discussed. Arguments from the cognitive side are decisive in discussions about how to promote a pupil; arguments from the behavioural side are decisive in discussions about how to demote a pupil. We will illustrate this by looking first at two cases in which the teachers have to decide how to demote a pupil and then at the ways the cognition/behaviour contrast is exploited in discussions about how to promote a pupil.

Discussing how to demote

The fragment below is from a discussion in which the team deliberates whether Petra should be demoted. Petra's overall scores are not good enough for a regular promotion to MAVO-2. A part of this fragment was already discussed in section 4 (fragment 2). Petra is first characterised as a very weak achiever (arrow numbers 1 and 2), and after this, she is also qualified as a very nice and sweet child (arrow numbers 3-5):

Fragment 11 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Petra

```
MATH:          e:hm. (0.8) nou lawe es kijh:ke, (0.6)
               u:hm (0.8) well let's just see, (0.6)
               zelfde vraag weer.
               same question again.
               is Petra (0.5) bevorderbaar naar
               can Petra (0.5) be promoted to
               mavo twee °ja of nee?
               mavo-two° yes or no?
               1.5
               e:h (0.3) [ Paula] . ((the biology teacher))
               u:h (0.3) Paula.
               0.5
BIO:           ik vin' t heel moeilijk. (1.2) ik vind ze::h
               I find this very difficult. (1.2) I think she::h
               (0.7)
       →1      ze heeft nagenoeg e:h (1.4) weinig
               she has as good as no u:h (1.4)
               voldoendes gehaald.
               few sufficient grades.
               ' t hangt echt steeds vier punt zes,
               it is really all the time four point six,
               vier punt nege,
               four point nine,
               vijf punt vie:r:. (0.5) en 'n paar keer
               five point four. (0.5) and a couple of times
               'n uitblinker,
               a positive exception,
               maar, (0.3) ik vinn' r HEE:L erg °zwak.
               but, (0.3 )I think she is very very: weak.
MATH:          (°                                          )
```

```
MATH:          °[Peter] . ((the teacher for Dutch))
               1.0
DU:     →2     zwak.
               poor.
               0.7
               ik vind 't heel moeilijk
               it is very difficult for me
               om dat over d'r te zeggeh,
               to say this about her,
        →3     want ik vind 'r (wel) aar::dig,
               because I think she is (rather) nice
BIO:    →4     'n lieve schat is 't.
               a sweet darling she is.
               0.3
DU:            'n hele lieve schat (°op die ma↓nier)
               it's a very sweet darling (in this way)
        →5     maar is e:h ze redt 't niet.
               but is u:h she is not going to make it.
               0.9
        →6     't 't is NU al: 'n lijdensweg.
               I- it's now already an agony.
```

The Biology teacher and the Dutch teacher agree in their assessment of Petra. The cognitive assessment of the Biology teacher (arrow 1) is followed by an aligning, slightly downgraded assessment of the Dutch teacher, from "very very weak" to "weak" (arrow 2). The first behavioural assessment of the Dutch teacher is paralleled by an upgraded assessment of the Biology teacher (from "rather nice" to a "sweet darling"; arrows 3 and 4). The teachers couple their consensus on Petra's weak achievement level with an agreement on her positive behaviour. However, within the framework of the activity of discussing Petra's promotability, a positive behavioural qualification appears to be incompatible with a negative cognitive assessment. The cognitive judgement weighs heavier when it comes to making predictions about Petra's school career: "she is not going to make it", because "it's already an agony now" (numbers 5 and 6). Despite rhetorically articulating how regrettable this is, the Dutch teacher values the cognitive assessment more than the behavioural one.

This way of reasoning is conclusive for the outcome of the discussion about Petra. She is not promoted and she is not allowed to repeat the bridging class either. She has to leave the school and her parents will have to look for a school at a lower achievement level. The general pattern is as follows: if the teachers agree that a pupil does not have the cognitive capability to manage the school, she is given the advice to go to another,

lower type of school. Arguments regarding cognitive skills take precedence over arguments from the behavioural domain.

The second demotion case is from a discussion about a pupil with scores that are not sufficient to promote him to MAVO-2. The team has to decide whether Assad is allowed to repeat the bridging class or should be sent away to a school with more vocational training. Although most teachers agree in their judgement that Assad has the cognitive capacities to be promoted (see fragment 2), this is not an issue anymore because of his low overall scores. At this point of the discussion, the behavioural side is highlighted more strongly than the cognitive side. See, for example, how the Dutch teacher characterises this pupil. Assad takes advantage of the work of his co-pupils in an almost parasitic way (arrow number 1). He does not organise his work so as to secure promotion to the next year, but looks for short-term solutions instead (arrow 2).. The Dutch teacher finally summarises his assessment of Assad by typifying him as *very tricky* (arrow 3):

Fragment 12 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Assad

```
DU:     →₁    (...) hij sluit zich aan. (0.3)
              (...) he joins in. (0.3)
              hij weet heel zich: (.)
              he manages himself very (.)
              hij manoeuvreert zich altijd bij de jongens
              he manoeuvers himself always with the boys
              die heel hard we:rken, >weet je wel.<
              who work very hard, >you know.<
              ja ik doe eve goed ↑mee↓ (.)
              yes I take part very well for a moment. (.)
              enne ja in weze doet ie niks
              and uh: yes it's really that he doesn't do anything
              1.9
        →₂    en (0.4) hij eh hij eh hij hij zoekt
              and (0.4) he uh he uh he he is looking
              zoekt hele korte
              for very short-term
              ter↑mijn oplossinge, (1.0)
              solutions, (1.0)
              hij organiseert zijn werk niet,
              he doesn't organise his work,
              hij zegt niet van oké. ik wil Echt
              he doesn't say okay. I rEAlly want
              e:h o:ver. ik wil eh
```

```
              u:h to pa:ss. I want uh
              en dan ga ik dat en dat
              and then I'm going to do this and that
              en dat doen °d' r voor.
              and that for it.
              (0.6)
              nee ↓joh (0.2) 't is gewoon
              Oh no (0.2) it's just
              op dat moment (zoiets) (0.4)
              on that moment (something) 0.4)
              ben ik lekker rustig be↑zig, (0.9)
              I'm busy so nice and quiet, (0.9)
              °dan kijk ik effe hoe eh
              °then I'm just looking how uh
              Ramasan 't allemaal aanpakt,
              Ramasan tackles it all,
              [ °en:h dan moedig ik 'm 'n
              °and:uh then I encourage him
ENG:          [ jah,
              yeh,
DU:           beetje an, en (dan werk ben ik)
              a little bit, and then (I work I am)
              samen met Ramasan.
              together with Ramasan.
              nou, heb ik 'n acht, (0.4) denkt ie.
              well, I got an eight, (0.4), he thinks.
              (1.8)
              en ZO stee:kt ie 'n beetje in mekaar,
              and that's the way he is made up more or less,
              't is 'n: (.) hEEl vriendelijk jongetje,
              it is a: (.) very kind kid,
        →₃    maar e:h (0.9) heel link.
              but u:h (0.9) very tricky.
```

Eventually, the team agrees on an analysis according to which Assad is too quickly distracted and too easily influenced by other pupils. He lacks the behavioural disposition that is needed for successfully surviving a repeated year in the bridging class. It is better that he continues his career in another school:

Fragment 13 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Assad

ENG: →₁   ik denk dat hij <u>heel</u> ongelukkig wordt bij ons. (1.0)
              I think that he will be very unhappy with us. (1.0)
              ik denk dat dat <u>niet</u> goed komt.
              I don't think this will come allright
              1.5
TM: →₂   (als ie 'n terugslag krijgt, (0.4)
              (when he slips into a setback, (0.4)
              °dat is ook slecht.°)
              (this is also bad.)

Note, by the way, that the advice is accounted for by referring to Assad's well-being (arrows 1 and 2). The teachers present themselves recurrently as *caretakers* who are responsible for the growth, fortune and happiness of the children they have in custody. They construct dual identities for themselves too: a teacher is not just an instructor who supervises a pupil's cognitive growth, but also a parental caretaker who is concerned about a pupil's well-being.

Despite the general opinion that Assad has the cognitive capacities for becoming a successful MAVO pupil, he is considered to be too smart and too versatile to be able to profit from repetition of the bridging class. Assad is sent away to a lower type of school on the basis of behavioural arguments. This conforms the general pattern in the discussions about demotion. When the team is faced with the dilemma how to demote a pupil, arguments from the behavioural side outweigh those from the cognitive side. The assessment of a pupil's behavioural make-up has more impact in discussions about allowing a pupil to double the bridging class than the assessment of his cognitive capability.

Behavioural arguments prevail when the teachers have to decide about demotion. The pattern is different in discussions about promotion. Arguments from the behavioural domain and arguments from the cognitive domain are selectively mobilised depending on the type of decision that has to be made. When the teachers discuss how a pupil can be promoted – to MAVO-2 or to HAVO-2 –, they hardly mention behavioural traits of the pupil in question. At the upper end of the career ladder, behavioural characteristics do not have to be topicalised anymore. What primarily matters is the cognitive side.

Discussing how to promote pupils

When the overall scores of a pupil are high enough, the pupil is promoted. Pupils with average overall scores are routinely promoted to MAVO-2 (the next year in midlevel type of secondary education). Pupils with high overall scores are promoted to HAVO-2

(higher level of secondary education). Pupils with overall scores between average and high are discussed separately in order to choose between these alternatives (MAVO-2 or HAVO-2). A remarkable feature of these discussions is the lack of elaborate deliberations in the behavioural domain. Perhaps, pupils who perform so well, behave in less problematic ways as well. Instead of venturing speculative explanations, however, we want to concentrate on the observation that the discussion of pupils who are in between promotion to MAVO-2 or to HAVO-2 is primarily about cognitive skills.

The most important distinction that is made in these discussion rounds is between types of cognitive skills: *reproduction* and *understanding*. When a pupil is only good in reproducing knowledge, this is decisive for promotion to MAVO-2. When a pupil is considered to have insight – which is supposed to include reproductive skills – he is elected for promotion to the higher type of high school (HAVO-2).

Fragment 14 is an illustration of a teacher who characterises a pupil as not having enough insight. It is taken from the discussion round about Claudia. The maths teacher first undermines the possibility to explain for Claudia's good scores by attributing them to her personal cognitive skills, that is, the pupil's achievements are explained by reference to specific grounds. Her satisfactory marks are due to her collaboration with another pupil (arrow number 1). When it comes to assignments that require insight, she has very low scores (arrow number 2):

Fragment 14 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Claudia

MATH: e:h (2.2) ik vinn' t z<u>E</u>lf helema↑al:
           u:h (2.2) I think this is
           geen Havo twee (   ).
           no Havo-two (   ) at all.
           [1.5
           [((leaves through papers))
   →₁   (°jah m:-°) (1.0) ze ze <u>haa</u>lt e:h n<u>e</u>t
           (yes w-) (1.0) she she just gets
           aan 'n voldoende om: d<u>a</u>t
           a sufficient grade because she (0.9)
           ze (0.9) e:h <u>werk</u>stukken
           u:h makes assignments
           samen met Quincy maakt.
           together with Quincy.
           (1.7)
           en dan doet [ze goed 'r BEst:,   ]
           and then   she does her best,
ENG: [en die is d'r t<u>eh</u>geh?]

```
MATH:         en dan lukt dat, (.)
              and it works then, (.)
              °dan e:[ h°
              then u:h
ENG:               [ hng:.=
MATH:    →₂   =zo gauw 't 'n BEETJE inzichtelijk is:,
              as soon as a little bit of insight is required,
              (dan) haakt ze echt helemaal af:.
              (than) she really drops out completely.
              1.2
              dan haalt ze (d' r e:h-) (0.3)
              then she (it uh-) (0.3)
              >ze kan vieren halen.
              she can get fours.
              (°            voor haar werkstukken.)
              (             for her assignments.)
              (0.5)
TF:           [ja,
              yes,
MATH:         [ waar anderen negens voor halen.
              where others get nines.
              1.0
         →₃   dus ehm: (0.3) ik vind 't dus
              so uhm (0.3) I think she is
              totaal: geen HAvo:leerling.
              not a Havo pupil at all.
TF2:          °m:.
```

The maths teacher concludes his treatise by stating his overall opinion that Claudia is not a HAVO pupil at all (arrow number 3). The main reason he has given for this is that she performs badly in assignments that require insight. She is considered good enough to be sent to MAVO, but he denies she has the cognitive skills that are required to be successful in HAVO.

Fragment 15 is another illustration of this way of looking at the cognitive side of pupils. It is from the THdiscussion about Melissa. The Dutch teacher first admits that Melissa has high grades for regular tests, but she performs disappointingly in tasks that are less routine (arrow numbers 1 and 2). He then gives an explanation for her good scores by ascribing them to Melissa's reproductive skills: she performs well as long as she is familiar with the task. When a task is less straightforward, however, things become too difficult for her (arrow numbers 3 and 4):

Fragment 15 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Melissa

```
MA:           kan dit meisje naar havo twee.
              Can this girl go to havo-two.
              5.6
DU:           ik (0.7) denk 't niet.
              I (0.7) don't think so.
              1.4
              ze::: e:h (0.4) doet 't heel redelijk,
              She:: uh (0.4) is doing very reasonably,
              2.1
              maar dan moet ze 'n aantal e:h (0.9)
              but then she has to do a number u:h (0.9)
         →₁   dan haalt ze eh hoog cijfer
              one time she gets a high grade
              voor 'n proefwerk,
              for a test,
              vervolgens moet ze iets met 'n eh boekverslag
              and the other time she has to do something with a book review
              'n spree:kbeurt, (1.2)
              a presentation, (1.2)
              en da:n zou je juist bij hAA:r
              and then you would expect certainly in her case
              verwachte dat 't 'r goed uit zou ko:↑me (1.1)
              that she would make a good job of it (1.1)
         →₂   en dat valt dan te↓ge
              and then the result is disappointing
              2.3
              dus van eh nou ga je le:hre, (0.2)
              so like uh now you start to work (0.2)
              en dan weet je wat 'r
              and then you know exactly
         →₃   precies wat op je AFkomt, (0.3)
              what you will be faced with (0.3)
              >dan haalt ze het ↑wel<
              then she is making it indeed
         →₄   en (dan:) wijk je daarvan ↑af
              and then you depart from this
              dan wordt het moeilijk voor d' r.
              then it becomes difficult for her.
```

```
            1.4
   →₅       dus ik denk dat ze 'n goeie
            so I think she is a good
            MA:vo leerling is.
            mavo pupil.
            3.1
MATH:       [ Marianne] ?  ((Marianne is the French teacher))
            0.4
FR:    →₆   daar sluit ik me helemaal bij a(f).
            I (.) totally agree with this.
            1.0
            goeie mavo leerling, (0.3)
            good mavo pupil, (0.3)
            havo vin ↑ik (2.9) neeh!
            havo I think (2.9) no!
```

The implication of the Dutch teacher's argumentation is that Melissa lacks insight. She does well when performing routine tasks while new, unfamiliar tasks that require autonomous insight are too difficult for her. This analysis is the basis for categorising her in a summary assessment as a good MAVO pupil (arrow number 5). Note that in the context of the choice between MAVO or HAVO, a categorisation as a *good MAVO pupil* comes down to rejecting the option of promotion to the higher school type. This situated inference is stated explicitly in the subsequent contribution of the French teacher. She affiliates with the Dutch teacher's assessment by repeating his categorisation of Melissa as a good MAVO pupil. In the way she continues, she then points out that this way of articulating her judgement implies rejection of the other alternative, that is, according to the French teacher, Melissa is not eligible for promotion to HAVO-2 (arrow number 6).

The overall observation is that the teachers concentrate on the cognitive side when discussing promotion. The general pattern is that the teachers systematically distinguish between reproductive skills and skills that require insight. Pupils who are typified as routine performers who lack the capacity to deal with cognitively more demanding tasks are allocated to MAVO. Pupils who are ascribed the capability to autonomously understand complex new tasks are nominated for promotion to HAVO, the higher type of high school. The distinction in the cognitive domain between reproductive skills and insight thus provides a system of measurement that enables the staff to differentiate between types of performers. Good reproducers are good MAVO pupils and only smart understanders are promotable to HAVO.

We want to conclude the analysis in this section with pointing briefly at a formal feature of the practices teachers deploy for characterizing pupils.[23] In the fragments presented in the preceding section, both the Dutch teacher (fragment 15) and the Maths teacher (fragment 14) use the category labels mavo pupil and havo pupil as a way of typifying a pupil. This way of categorising a pupil – that is, subsumption under a type by assigning category membership – is relatively rare in our data. Apart from an incidental behavioural categorisation such as conceited fob (see fragment 5) or tricky (kid) (see fragment 12), most of the typifications in the discussions are descriptive generalisations and ascriptions of traits and attributes.

Although typification is part and parcel of the activity of discussing pupils and is also oriented to as accounting for the decisions that are taken in it, the teachers seldomly construct pupil types by categorising them with ready-made, culturally-available categories. On the one hand, this shows the teachers discuss pupils very carefully. They avoid typifications that strongly reify the personality of pupils. Instead, they resort to empirically accessible characterisations of pupils. On the other hand, the skewed distribution of practices for characterising pupils shows that talk about pupils is guided by situated, activity related norms, primarily with respect to how the activity of deciding about pupils is done in accountable ways.

Compare the fragment below. It is taken from the discussion about Assad (see fragments 4 and 12-13). The English teacher reacts to an argument of a colleague who doubts whether Assad should be dismissed from school. She objects against his position by stating that Assad will feel much better when he has 'to do more with his hands.' By saying it this way, the English teacher is recognisably supporting the proposal to send Assad away to a school for vocational training with a larger portion of manual work in it:

Fragment 16 The Sun, 280600, staff meeting-2; Assad

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ENG:    →₁   nee maar als hij wat meer met z'n hande kan ↑doe
             no but if he can do more with his hands,
             denk ik dat hij veel lekkerder in z'n ↑vel zit
             I think that he will feel much better
             0.8
DU:     →₂   nou: dat vink (ja↑:h) vink [ cliché: hoor!
             well: that's (yes,) I think a cliché really!
TF:                                       [ (wel jah.)
                                          (indeed yes)
             0.8
ENG:         nou (0.5) ik denk dat 't op 'm wel
             well (0.5) I think that it
             van °toe- toepassing is.
             ap- applies to him indeed.
```

Note that the English teacher does not put forward her opinion by categorising Assad as, for example, a good trade school pupil, – a way of typifying Assad that is quite

similar to the ways better pupils are being categorised as a good MAVO pupil (see fragment 14). Instead, the English teacher formulates her assessment of Assad in terms of the kinds of activities she considers to be appropriate for him (do more with his hands, arrow number 1). Compared to the use of a school-type category label, the description that is actually used has an almost euphemistic quality. But in spite of its mitigated character, it is still disapproved of by the Dutch teacher (arrow number 2). He disqualifies her way of talking as too much of a cliché.

The terms of disapproval refer to norms how to talk about pupils in the teacher staff meetings. They can even be seen as a way of installing and/or maintaining such norms. Perhaps there is a convergence between the norms guiding how to talk about pupils in a teacher staff meeting and ways of talking that are polically correct. More important for our present analysis, however, is that some types of practices of characterising pupils are actively disapproved of, and openly sanctioned by colleagues.

7 Conclusion

We have shown that the practices for characterising pupils divide into qualifications of the cognitive skills on the one hand, and characterisations of behavioural features on the other. Both ways of representing pupils are used more or less independently, and get priority depending on the level of the school and the philosophy concerning the school's central task. The teachers of the bridging class in The Rainbow – the lower type of school – focus on behavioural problems. The discussion of a pupil with behavioural problems recurrently results in taking action within the behavioural domain (submitting a pupil to a psychological test, developing a program for personal treatment, etcetera). The teachers in The Sun highlight the cognitive capabilities of pupils. Behavioural arguments become relevant only when the teachers have to decide between demotion and dismissal; but neither school team characterises pupils then in terms of ethnicity or language deficiency.

The most important observation, however, is that the teachers use a range of practices for characterising individual pupils. They describe specific experiences, they generalise over them, they ascribe attributes to pupils and they categorise them. By constructing a pupil as a type – e.g., a very weak pupil, or a very good MAVO pupil – the typification is not only used to explain for the pupil's behaviour or for his level of achievement, it also accounts for the kind of decision that is taken. The practices for characterising pupils are not selected arbitrarily. In selecting a specific type of practice for typifying pupils, the teachers orient to the activity at hand, to the stage and to the history of the discussion about the pupil in question, to norms as to how a pupil can be characterised appropriately, to the sorting alternatives that are available, and to the school's ideas about its mission as either a pedagogical or as a cognitive community.

NOTES

1 Part of the content of this chapter was presented at the *xxi Sociolinguistic Seminar* in Gent, April 4-6, 2002.
2 Mehan 1991.
3 E.g. Cazden 1988; Van den Hauwe & Mets 1999; Freebody & Freiberg 2000.
4 Berenst, Hajer & Koole 2001.
5 Soeterik 2001.
6 Cf. Sacks 1972; 1992; Jayyusi 1984; Mehan 1996; Antaki & Widdicombe 1998.
7 Leiter 1974.
8 Mehan 1991.
9 Mehan 1993; 1996.
10 Cedersund & Svensson 1996.
11 Baker 1997.
12 Baker 1997, 79.
13 Idem 87.
14 Wenger 1998.
15 See Antaki & Widdicombe 1998.
16 Soeterik 2001.
17 Officially, the MAVO is the 'theoretical school path' ("theoretische leerweg") in VMBO ('preparatory midlevel vocational education'). Within the VMBO category, MAVO is the highest level. The other ('lower') VMBO levels are:
   • VMBO gemengde leerweg ('mixed school path')
   • VMBO practische leerweg ('practical school path')
   • VMBO geïndividualiseerde leerweg ('individualized school path').
   Pupils who have been adviced to leave the school usually go on in the mixed school path or in the practical school path.
18 Below, we list the *teacher identifications* as used in the transcriptions:

BIO	Biology ♀	MS	Manual Skills ♂
DR	Drawing ♀	MU	Music ♂
DU	Dutch ♂	PE	Physical Education ♀
ENG	English ♀	TF	unidentified speaker (♀ female)
FR	French ♀ (takes part in the documentation of the results)	TL	team leader
		TM	unidentified speaker (♂ male)
GEO	Geography ♂		
HIS	History ♂		
MA/MATH	Math teacher ♂ (MA is the assigned tutor for the brugklas (first year), and chairing this meeting)		

19 Verkuyten 2000.
20 See Pomerantz & Rintel 2004.
21 Cf. Jayyusi 1984, 27 ff.
22 Cf. Berenst & Hajer 2002.

Illustrations on the basis of video stills: Anneloes Berns

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