



Education and Culture DG

Larnaca
15-17 October 2012

Migrants in education. An asset or a problem?

Prof. Dr. Piet Van Avermaet



What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - Language
- ❏ Challenges for the future

What can I offer you?

- ☐ **Current trends in Europe**
- ☐ Frames of reference
- ☐ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ☐ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - Language
- ☐ Challenges for the future

Current trends

- ❏ Migration patterns are rapidly changing
 - Globalisation
 - Localisation
 - Migration
 - Mobility
- ❏ From diversity to 'super diversity'
 - Glocalised super diverse societies

Current trends

- ❏ In most European countries strong focus on:
 - Language
 - Parental involvement
 - Preschool and early childhood education
 - Testing
- ❏ Makes sense, however, the validity of our choices, policies and actions of “what?” and “how?” is determined by the definitions of the concepts we use.

Within a context where ‘super diversity’ is becoming the norm it is important to reflect on the boundaries of the current recipes (policies) that are being used in systems of (language) education to increase migrant childrens’ school success and to promote and strengthen social and civic activity.

What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ **Frames of reference**
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - Language
- ❏ Challenges for the future

Frames of reference

How do we define concepts in super diverse 'glocalised' contexts?

- **Integration:** unidirectional or reciprocal
- **Diversity:** group or individual; static or dynamic
- **Migration:** static or dynamic (mobility)
- **Language proficiency:** condition or outcome
- **Learning and education:** formal or informal; instructivist or constructivist; plurilingual repertoires as obstacle or asset for learning

What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ **Diversity and migrants seen as a problem**
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - Language
- ❏ Challenges for the future

Migrants = problems!

- ❑ Learning problems; language problems; integration problems; arrears; lowering level of education; ...: a deficiency model
- ❑ Is normatively one-sided.
- ❑ Leads to stigmatization, exclusion, drop out, push out, aggression

Interpretations are known

- ☐ SES
 - ☐ Ethnic/cultural background
 - ☐ Home language is not L2
 - ☐ Language arrear
 - ☐ Low parental involvement
 - ☐ ...
-
- ☐ One sided analysis?

Not unproblematic

- ❏ Deterministic
- ❏ Causality?
- ❏ Responsibility lies with the migrants: 'blame the victim'
 - Language summer courses
 - Remedial teaching programmes (pull out classes)
 - Educational interventions (education courses for parents)
 - Pressure on parents to come to school
 - ...
- ❏ One-sided actions?
- ❏ What about the school system, the school culture, the teachers, ...

Our fundamental thinking about diversity and education disaffirms
diversity as a starting point

We acknowledge and value diversity, but we find it difficult to
consider it as the norm in education.

What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ **Binary thinking**
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - Language
- ❏ Challenges for the future

Binary thinking

- ❑ Our thinking about diversity is predominantly binary;
- ❑ In which one side is seen as the legitimate (non negotiable) norm and the other as the deviant one

- ❑ Multicultural - monocultural
- ❑ Segregation - desegregation
- ❑ Assessment - testing
- ❑ Instructivist - constructivist
- ❑ L2 submersion – bilingual education
- ❑ ...

What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - Language
- ❏ Challenges for the future

What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - **Social mix**
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - Language
- ❏ Challenges for the future

What research tells us

Is school segregation a problem? Do we accept 'white' and 'black' schools?

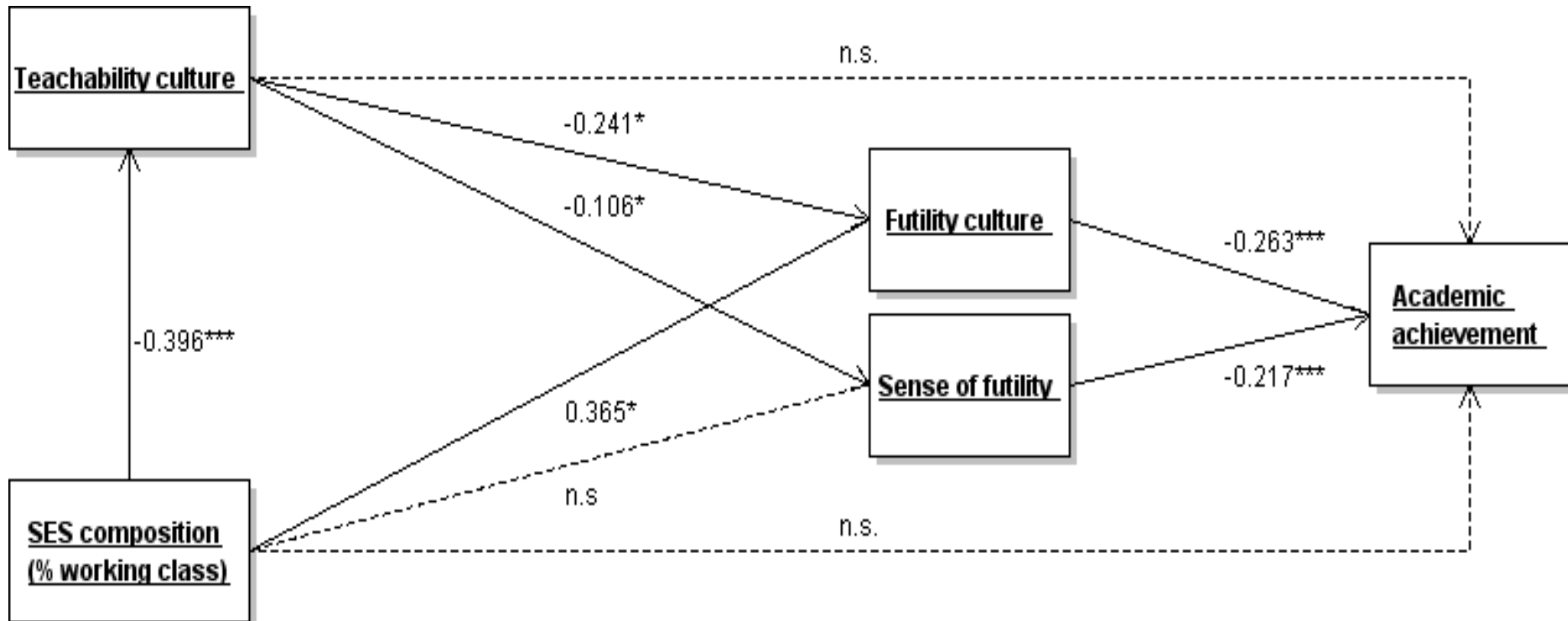
- ❑ Mixed schools have a limited 'uplifting' effect on cognitive school performance of low SES children. No effect for high SES children
- ❑ Individual SES-background more impact than SES composition of school
- ❑ School composition: social class is more important than ethnic background
- ❑ Low SES schools can achieve high standards and quality
- ❑ More positive effects on non-cognitive:
 - Voluntary basis instead of forced
 - Mix is not automatic better integration (conflicts, avoidance, active role of the teacher)

What research tells us

‘Black’ schools:

- Pragmatic solutions: invest in quality, more financial means and support
- Arguments:
 - Inevitable in certain urban areas
 - Social mix is difficult to reach in the short term
 - High quality education is possible in ‘black’ schools
- Conditions:
 - Research on effective ‘black’ schools
 - Strategies for dissemination of good practices in ‘black schools’
 - Professionalization and coaching of teachers

How can impact of SES-composition on academic achievement be explained?



What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - **Managing diversity in classrooms**
 - Testing
 - Language
- ❏ Challenges for the future

The role of education

- ❑ Its main task: acquisition of those competencies that enable a person to function in society
- ❑ In certain social environments more competencies, that are perceived as relevant by schools, are developed than in others
- ❑ To compensate for this inequality is a very specific emancipatory task of education and schools in particular
- ❑ Education and schools have to aspire that the opportunities of children in society do not only depend on the opportunities they are provided with from home

“Although mainstream children are also subject to cultural influences, the linguistic and cultural knowledge that mediates their academic performance is more likely to parallel that which guides the action and interpretations of teachers, researchers and test developers. Thus, the tacit knowledge of mainstream children is more likely to facilitate their performance than to interfere with it.” (Luykx et al., 2007: 900).

“It is necessary to recognise that texts are socio-cultural constructs.” (Macken & Rothery, 1991: 4).

Dealing with diversity in classrooms

- ❑ High expectations
- ❑ Reciprocal teaching
- ❑ Taking the socio-cultural context of the learner as a starting point
- ❑ Contextualised education
- ❑ Increase the contribution of the learner
- ❑ The teacher as a mediator (between learner and learning objective)
- ❑ More interactive, cooperative and problem solving learning
- ❑ Heterogeneity as an asset
- ❑ Avoid pull out classes
- ❑ Continuous assessment

Competences for professional teaching

1. Observing diversity in the classroom, at school and in the world outside.
2. Approaching diversity in a positive manner.
3. Guiding pupils to achieve effective interaction with each other and with others.
4. Integrating diversity into the total educational process of pupils.
5. Dealing effectively with diversity among colleagues, parents and external partners.
6. Being aware of one's own social responsibility and acting accordingly

What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - **Testing**
 - Language
- ❏ Challenges for the future

Please God may I not fail

Please God may I get over sixty per cent

Please God may I get a high place

*Please God may all those likely to beat
me get killed in road accidents and
may they die roaring.*

(Shohamy, 2001)

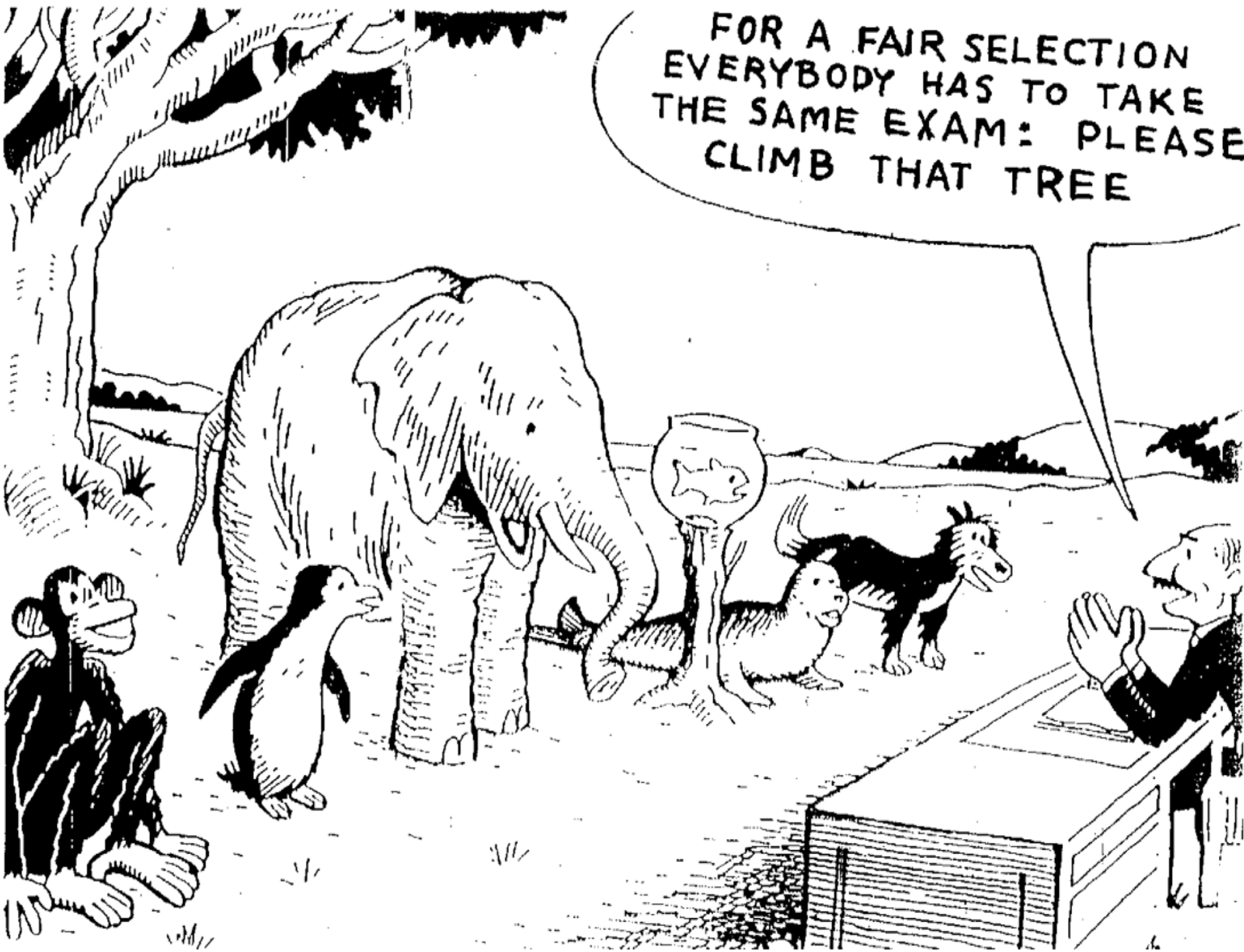
Culture of testing

- ❑ A test is an attempt to measure reality.
- ❑ This reality is embedded in social reference frames.
- ❑ Consequently, each test is a social construct.
- ❑ Tests are never neutral, objective, value-free. They are constructed by men.
- ❑ Often mechanism for exclusion; to keep children out of the regular classroom
- ❑ Focus on what children cannot instead on what they can
- ❑ Not everything is measurable (quantifiable).

“Most research of the past two decades, starting from Messick, demonstrated that the introduction of tests is not an isolated event; rather it is anchored in political motivations and intentions. Research also shows that these tests lead to impacts, in the form of intended and unintended consequences”

(Shohamy, 2010).

FOR A FAIR SELECTION
EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE
THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE
CLIMB THAT TREE



Broadly based and continuous assessment

- ❏ Not informal versus formal
- ❏ Broadly based assessment
 - Product and process
 - What candidates can instead of what they cannot
 - Mapping development
 - Capturing individual learning paces
 - Learning processes are whimsical and individually different

What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - **Language**
- ❏ Challenges for the future

Language ideologies prevail

- ❑ How do I manage the plurilingual reality of the classroom?
 - Suppress?
 - Functional exploitation?
 - Teach?
 - Assess?
- ❑ What is the effect of suppression/exploitation on children?
- ❑ How do I communicate with immigrant parents?
- ❑ What do I advise immigrant parents concerning communication at home?

What do we observe?

- ❑ Plurilingualism is often seen as a problem, a deficit, no language
- ❑ At school often only allowance of standard variety of the host language (L2)
- ❑ Promotion of FL as an asset in Europe versus plurilingualism as a handicap, a disadvantage
- ❑ FL as a means for cognitive development versus home language as an obstacle
- ❑ However, plurilingualism is reality in schools

Multilingual education vs. L2 submersion

- ☐ Central question: which language (education) model is more effective for L2 acquisition?
- ☐ Search for 'one-size-fits-all' model -> polarization
 - **L2 submersion (L2-only):**
 - Time on task / frequency of input: maximum L2 exposure & exclusion of L1's
 - **(Bi)-Multilingual education:**
 - Positive relationships between higher-order language skills (Cummins)
 - Positive transfer L1-L2
 - Scaffolding (constructivist learning)

Functional plurilingual learning

- ❏ Super diverse neighbourhoods, schools and classrooms
- ❏ Exploiting the plurilingual repertoires of children as didactical capital for learning: functional use of home languages in multilingual, L2-dominant environments; in mainstream classrooms

What can I offer you?

- ❏ Current trends in Europe
- ❏ Frames of reference
- ❏ Diversity and migrants seen as a problem
- ❏ Binary thinking
 - Social mix
 - Managing diversity in classrooms
 - Testing
 - Language
- ❏ **Challenges for the future**

Challenges

☐ Macro level:

- Fundamental changes in education: e.g.
 - Break down homogeneous annual grades
 - More structural cooperation within and between schools and tracks
 - Invest in extended schools
- an input-output accountability model:
 - Not only quantitative measurements; not only cognition
 - Also qualitative; non cognitive and intermediate, interaction variables: learning to cooperate; creativity development; critical thinking; innovative thinking; learning from mistakes; learning to share ideas; being able to deal with differences; ...
- Researchers and schools have to cooperate more in action research

Challenges

☐ Meso level:

- Change negative school culture
- Schools have to develop a sustainable diversity policy
- Opting for larger classes (team teaching) and interaction between grades
- Professionalizing (and intensive coaching) of teams
- Continuous assessment
- From parental involvement to parent-school cooperation based on equality
- Structural cooperation with other sectors
- the school breathes diversity

Challenges

Meso level:

– Teacher training schools:

- Incorporate diversity in all subjects and courses and through the whole curriculum
- Not teaching about but IN diversity
- Professionalizing teacher trainers

Challenges

□ Micro level:

- Team teaching: observation of children's competencies; break through stereotypical thinking and behaviour
- Exploiting diversity as an asset for learning; Create more powerful learning environments and within classroom differentiation
- Students as active actors in learning (reciprocal teaching) and assessment
- Education is more than knowledge and handbooks
- Intercultural competencies, diversity, ... is not a subject but is central in all subjects
- The classroom breathes diversity

In conclusion

- ❑ Diversity is the norm. Dealing with it and exploiting it the challenge.
 - In our thinking; awareness; discourse; attitudes; policies; actions
- ❑ From the periphery to the heart of education
- ❑ For more than 40 years we denied migration to be a permanent phenomenon
- ❑ Currently we value diversity, however, as deviant from the norm; as a deficiency
- ❑ If we maintain this policy for another 40 years:
 - more segregation will be the outcome
 - We will keep losing children or even a whole generation

In conclusion

- ❑ We must outspokenly opt for a societal model where 'conflict' is the driving force of change.
- ❑ Multilingualism and multiculturalism are and will maintain to be a reality. We will have to learn to deal with it and use it as an asset instead of a problem
- ❑ The economic, political and societal cost and impact of doing nothing will at the end be higher than to take action in equal opportunities and diversity.

CODA

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=aRG4ySdi_aE&vq=medium



Education and Culture DG

Larnaca
15-17 October 2012

THANK YOU

piet.vanavermaet@ugent.be



steunpunt
diversiteit & leren 

