



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Young Lives 
An International Study of Childhood Poverty



Observing Learning in Ethiopian Primary Classrooms

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. What learning practices are expected of primary students in Mathematics in 2010?
- 2. How do students spend their time in Mathematics classes?
- 3. What school, class and teacher factors influence variations in student learning practices?

Methods



- Documentary analysis (plans, curricula materials, evaluations)
- Teacher interviews
- Timed observations in 776 classes of *six YL children* per class at two minute intervals across 30 minutes (15 observations per child)

Official Expectations

- Strong emphasis on student-centred methods:

“pair work and group work, individual work, experimental work including students observing and recording what they see, students discussing their own experiences about the mathematics they are learning, students asking questions (of) the teacher and each other.” (MOE, 2008, Mathematics: Grade 3, iii)
- Target : Teachers should employ student-centred methods at least 30% of the time

Observing Teaching and Learning

TEACHER ORIENTED



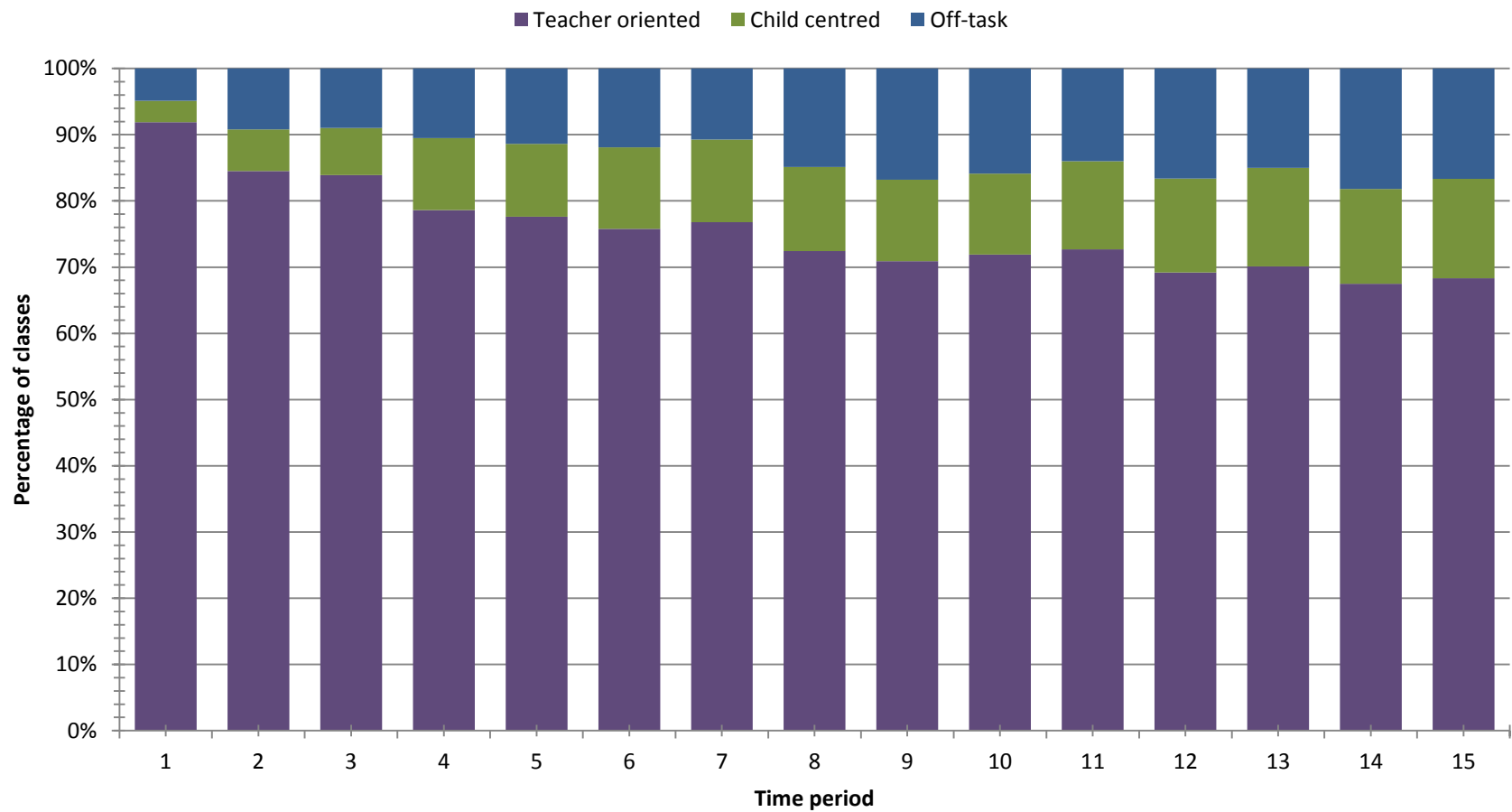
STUDENT CENTRED



Distribution of Student Activities

	Activity Type	% of Observations
Listening/watching teacher	Teacher-oriented	38.6
Writing/drawing	Teacher-oriented	20.6
Off task	Off task	11.9
Individual task/activity	Child-centred	7.2
Chanting in unison	Teacher-oriented	6.3
Offering to answer question	Teacher-oriented	6.1
Responding	Teacher-oriented	2.9
Group task/activity	Child-centred	2.7
Others	Off task	2.1
Conversation with teacher (indiv or small group)	Child-centred	0.8
Asleep/daydreaming	Off task	0.6
Being disciplined	Off task	0.1

Learning activity, Ethiopia



Summary picture

74.5% Teacher oriented

10.7% Student-centred

14.6% Off Task

Factors affecting variations

- **Policy reference points:**
- Teacher Qualifications: shift in requirement, from certificate to diploma level in 2009/10
- Reduction in class size (By 2009 P:T ratio 62.1 to 50.1)
- Teacher supervision
- **Research reference points:** class materials, school infrastructure, teacher experience

	ON TASK	STUDENT-C
SECOND CYCLE	MORE	LESS
TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS	MORE	MORE
SUPERVISION	MORE	
TEACHER ABSENT	LESS	
FEMALE		MORE
CLASS SIZE		LESS

Limitations and Implications

- Observations and children's mental activity
- Observer bias?
- Positive value attached to 'Student-Centred'?
- False dichotomies
- Learning-centred pedagogy