

Lesson 2

Is it fair? (research)

Minorities and majorities in the school playground

Learning objectives	The students become aware of the situation in their own school by observing other students at break time.
Student tasks	The students conduct research in the school playground by counting the number of students taking part in different activities. They note down the results and conduct interviews with the students who are not involved in any activities.
Resources	A copy of the table for taking notes in the school playground, pencils.
Methods	Groups of four.

Information box

Quantitative and qualitative research at primary level

Quantitative methods of data gathering – statistics – are taught in schools for several reasons: they are useful for daily life, they play an instrumental role in other disciplines and they promote critical reasoning when using real data.

Teaching statistics in primary school is usually done through combining it with natural sciences or covering it as part of mathematics. In many cases, teaching quantitative methods of gathering data remains at a purely instrumental level in primary school and very seldom includes analysis and interpretation of the gathered data. For the purpose of promoting critical thinking processes and reasoning, the teaching of quantitative methods ought not to stop at the presentation of results via graphs or diagrams. It is essential to focus on linking the methods of acquiring data with what has been discovered and to interpret the results.

In order to enhance this process at primary level, the addition of qualitative research helps students to gain more insight into what triggers the data that have been recorded and what the underlying notions are. In this context, it is suggested to let the students come up with ideas for interview questions themselves. By doing this, a real understanding of the issues that are being investigated can be developed. In the following two lessons, the key elements are the use of real data from the students' daily lives and the interpretation of the results.

Lesson description

The teacher divides the class into groups of four. For their research, each group will focus on one aspect of what is going on in the school playground at break time.

Examples of aspects for research:

- the number of boys and girls engaged in activities;
- the sports activities that are taking place;
- the other games being played;
- the topics being discussed;
- the different activities of younger and older students.

Each group will be assigned one aspect of research in order to find out about minorities and majorities in their school. The group has to formulate a research question they want to focus on. They write down their main question on the printed copy of the research table.

Examples of questions:

- “How many boys and how many girls are involved in activities at break time?”
- “What kinds of sports activities are played at break time and by whom?”

In addition, the students should formulate a set of not more than five questions about their aspect of research that they want to ask the other students in the school playground.

Examples:

- “Why do you think are there more boys/girls doing that?”
- “Why do you think that fewer boys/girls play this game?”
- “What would you change?”

During a longer break, the students go into the school playground and conduct their research in their groups. Depending on the organisational level of the class, work could also be divided within the group (two students take down the quantitative results, while two ask the qualitative questions and take notes).

Once the research has been completed, the students return to their classrooms and discuss their results within their groups for a moment. What is their general impression? Do they have similar results?