

# From Early School Leaving Prevention to Promoting Inclusive Systems of Concentric Spatial Relations of Assumed Connection

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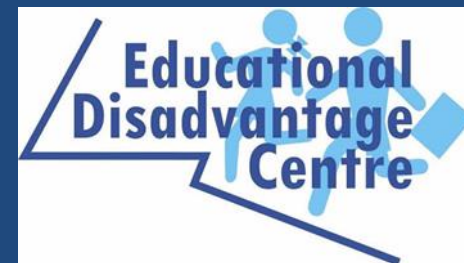
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1. The Emotional-Relational Turn for Early School Leaving Prevention
2. Promoting Inclusive Systems as Concentric Space beyond the Tangled Web of Diametric Space

# Universal Strategies

- **Preventing Grade Retention and Postponing Tracking (OECD 2007, 2010)**
- Manage school choice so as to contain the risks to equity.
- In upper secondary education, provide attractive alternatives, remove dead ends and prevent dropout.
- Offer second chances to gain from education.
- Identify and provide systematic help to those who fall behind at school and reduce year repetition.
- Strengthen the links between school and home to help disadvantaged parents help their children to learn.
- Respond to diversity and provide for the successful inclusion of migrants and minorities within mainstream education
- **Preventing Child Poverty and its Impact on Mental Health (Kessler 2009, Annie E. Casey Foundation 2009, WHO 2003)**



## The Emotional-Relational Turn for ESL and Inclusive Systems

The OECD's *10 Steps to Equity in Education* (2007, 2010) omitted a key range of dimensions with regard to prevention of early school leaving, namely, emotional-relational aspects (Downes 2010, 2011, 2017).



## The Emotional-Relational Turn for ESL and Inclusive

**Systems** : Bridging health and education (Downes & Gilligan 2007, Downes & Maunsell 2007)

Simply reframing school dropout as a health issue has the potential to bring new players into the effort — parents, health institutions, young people, civil rights groups — and to encourage public officials to think of the dropout problem as central to community health and as a long-term solution beneficial to population health (Freudenberg and Ruglis 2007)

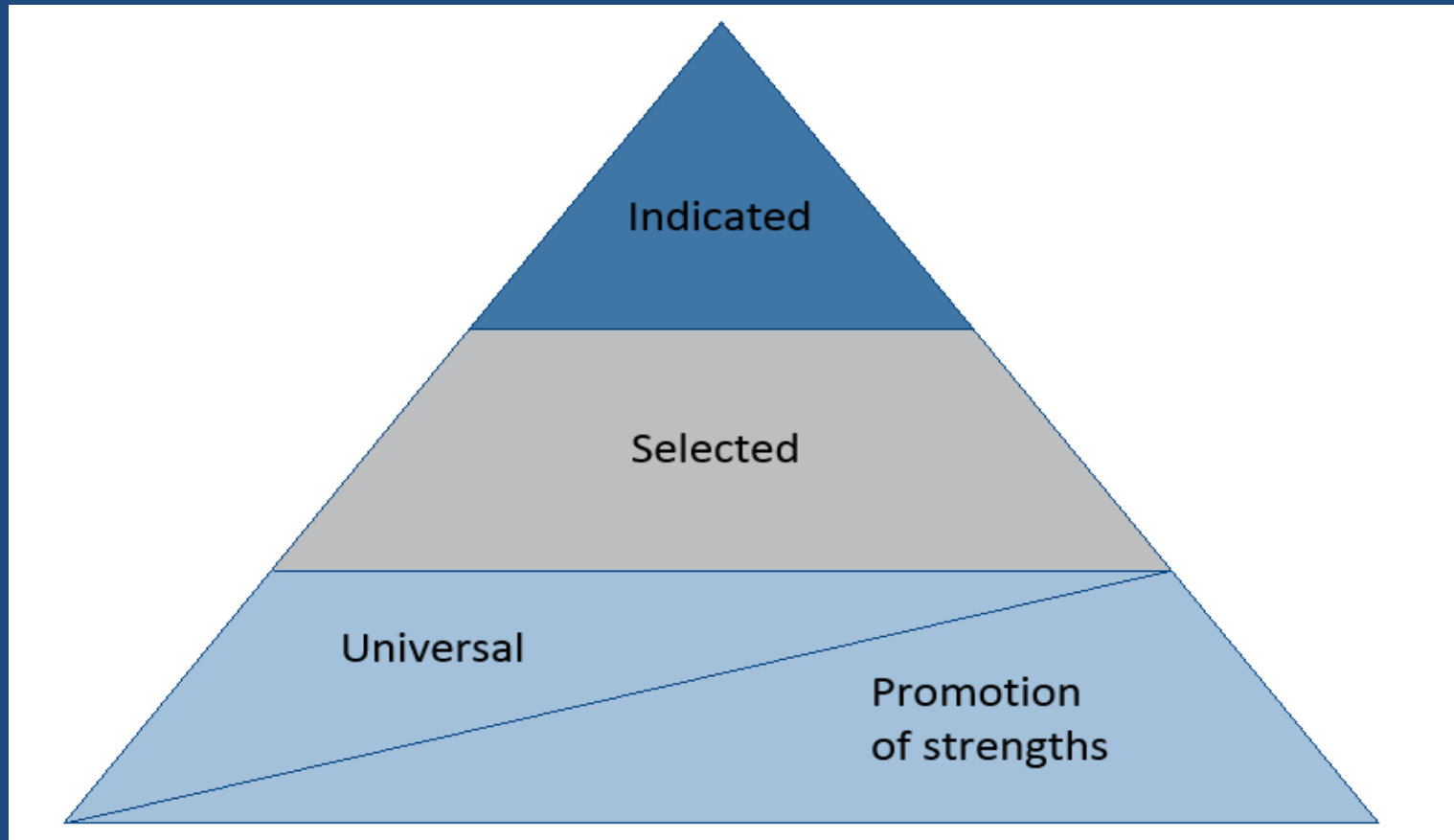


# Differentiated Strategies in Place - for Meeting Individual Needs at Different Levels of Need/Risk for Transition

Universal – *All*

Selected – *Some, Groups, Moderate Risk*

Indicated – *Individual, Intensive, Chronic Need*





## The Emotional-Relational Turn for ESL and Inclusive Systems: Selected and Indicated Prevention

Even apart from poverty related depression, emotional distress contributes to early school leaving: **LONELINESS**: Frostad et al. 2015 – intention to drop out



Quiroga et al. (2013) 493 high-risk French-speaking adolescents living in Montreal

\*depression symptoms at the beginning of secondary school are related to higher dropout mainly by being associated with pessimistic views about the likelihood to reach desired school outcomes; student negative self-beliefs are in turn related to lower self-reported academic performance and predict a higher risk of dropping out.

Quiroga et al. (2013) “interventions that target student mental health and negative self-perceptions are likely to improve dropout prevention”.

**The downward spiral of mental disorders and educational attainment: a systematic review on early school leaving Pascale EschEmail author, Valéry Bocquet, Charles Pull, Sophie Couffignal, Torsten Lehnert, Marc Graas, Laurence Fond-Harmant and Marc Anseau. BMC Psychiatry 2014 14:237**

When adjusted for socio-demographic factors, mood disorders (e.g. depression) were significantly related to school dropout

Among anxiety disorders, after controlling for potentially confounding factors, social phobia was a strong predictor of poor educational outcomes

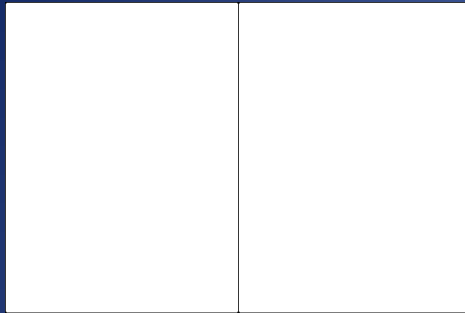
...as indicated by early school leavers themselves, were feeling too nervous in class and being anxious to speak in public, both representing symptoms of social phobia

**Holistic Systemic Issues:** Percentage of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students who Agree/Disagree with the Following Statements: School Belonging and Feeling Like an Outsider (PISA 2012) (OECD 2012)

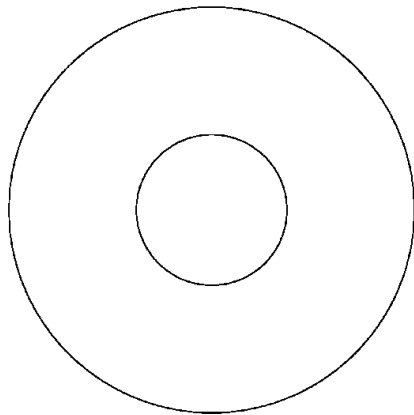
Countries	I feel like I belong at school, % Agree (S.E)	I feel like an outsider (or left out of things at school), % Disagree (S.E)
Turkey	84.2 (0.7)	82.7(0.7)
Belgium	63.5 (1.6)	88.4 (1.0)
Czech Republic	73.6 (1.9)	80.5 (1.6)
Denmark	69.3 (1.6)	90.3 (1.0)
Estonia	78.2 (1.8)	90.0 (1.3)
Finland	80.5 (1.1)	89.2 (1.0)
France	38 (1.7)	73.2 (1.8)
Germany	83.8 (1.6)	89.7 (1.4)
Greece	87.8 (1.2)	83.9 (1.4)
Hungary	83.5 (1.1)	85.6 (1.6)
Ireland	76.7 (1.5)	91.6 (1.0)
Italy	75 (0.9)	89.3 (0.6)
United Kingdom	74.9 (1.5)	86.9 (1.1)
OECD Average	78.1 (0.3)	86.2 (0.2)

- A Relational Space Focus for Inclusive Systems: Key Limitations to Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1995) ecological systems theory and to resilience theory
- Macro-Micro-Meso-Exosystems plus Chronosystem
  - Neglects system blockage, inertia and fragmentation (Downes 2014),
  - Neglects resistance, displacement and power relations (Downes 2016),
  - Static concentric space model (Downes 2014, 2016)

- **Dynamic Concentric Space underpinning Resilience (Downes 2017)**
- A spatial preunderstanding or metaphor built into conceptions of resilience as a regaining of shape, a bouncing back into shape (Ungar 2005, 2015).
- Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework assumes concentric structured spaces as nested systems of relation, with the 'ecological environment...topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next'
- This concentric spatial understanding of Bronfenbrenner did not engage with cross-cultural understandings of concentric spatial structures and systems interrogated in more detail by structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1962, 1963, 1973).



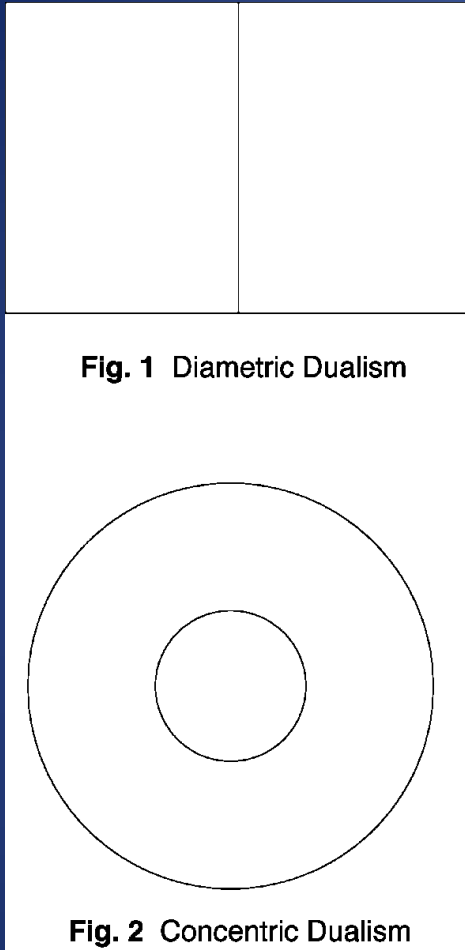
**Fig. 1** Diametric Dualism



**Fig. 2** Concentric Dualism

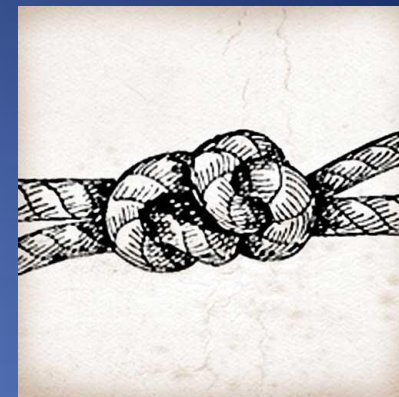
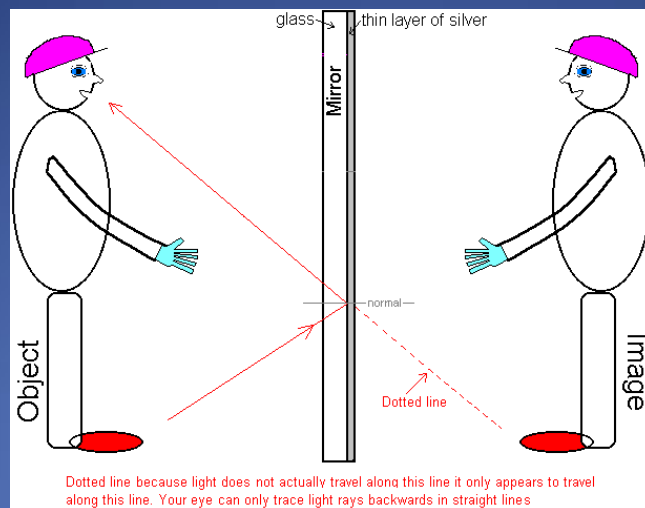
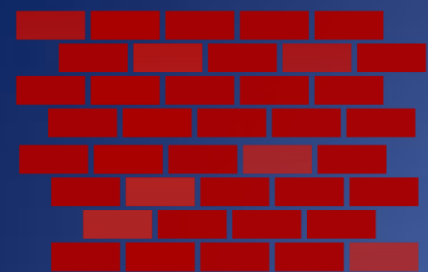
A diametric spatial structure is one where a circle is split in half by a line which is its diameter or where a square or rectangle is similarly divided into two equal halves (see Fig. 1).

In a concentric spatial structure, one circle is inscribed in another larger circle (or square); in pure form, the circles share a common central point (see Fig. 2). (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 1963, 1973; Downes 2012)



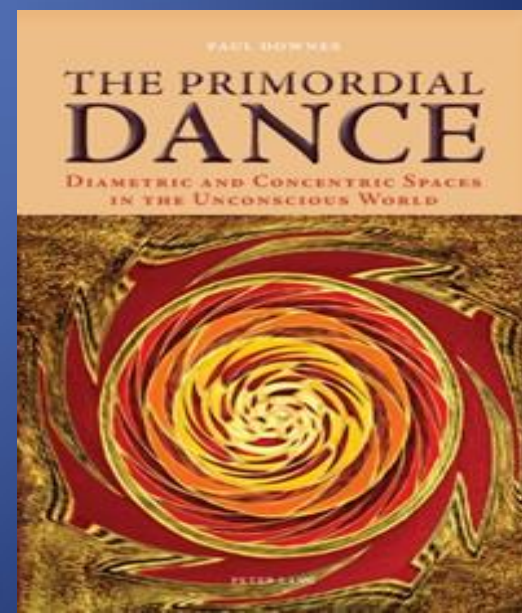
- 1) First entailment of the relative differences between concentric and diametric spaces: **Assumed connection and assumed separation**
- 2) Second entailment of the relative differences between concentric and diametric spatial relation: **Symmetry as unity and mirror image inverted symmetry**
- 3) Third entailment of the relative differences between concentric and diametric spaces: **Foreground-background interaction versus non interaction** (Downes 2012)





Diametric Space as Bricks in Wall, Knots, Tangled Web of System Blockage (Downes 2014): Assumed Separation, Splitting, Closure, Hierarchy, Mirror Image Reversals

Concentric Space as Flow of Connection, Web, Spirals: Assumed Connection, Openness, Two Way Flow of Communication (Downes 2012)





## System Change from Diametric Spaces of Exclusion, Closure and Mirror Image Opposites to Concentric Spaces of Inclusion, Openness to Background.

- Transition points in relational space, moving from diametric spaces of splitting to concentric spatial relations of assumed connection across different system levels.

Where are the system splits, closures, exclusions, oppositional labels and hierarchies as diametric space to be restructured towards concentric spatial systems of inclusion ?

Concentric structures can be found also in Islamic, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Jewish, Celtic, African, ancient Greek and Estonian contexts, while Jung locates the concentric mandala structure in Buddhist, Hindu and Christian traditions (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 1973; Downes 2012)

# **From Resilient Systems (Ungar 2005) to Inclusive Systems as Concentric Relational Space Challenging Diametric Spatial Systems of Blockage and Exclusion**

**A. Beyond Authoritarian Teaching and Discriminatory Bullying as Diametric Spatial Systems – Assumed Separation, Splitting and Mirror Image Hierarchies of US/THEM, GOOD/BAD, POWERFUL/POWERLESS**

**B. Beyond Suspensions/Expulsion as Diametric Structure of Exclusion**

**C. Diametric Splits as System Blockage in Communication – Transitions**

**D. Students Voices to Challenge Hierarchical Mirror Image Splits as System Blockages in Communication**

- **E. Challenging Diametric Space as Closure:  
Opening School as AfterSchool Community  
Lifelong Learning Centre**

## **A. Beyond Authoritarian Teaching and Discriminatory Bullying as Diametric Spatial Systems – Assumed Separation, Splitting and Mirror Image Us/Them Hierarchies**

Teacher discriminatory bullying of students in a sample of 1352 immigrant and Roma students as part of a wider sample of 8817 students across 10 European countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain) (Elamé 2013).

# Classroom Climate and Discriminatory Bullying as Diametric

## Oppositional space and Diametric Mirror Image Hierarchy

Elamé's (2013) 10 country European study regarding 'the fundamental importance' of teacher influence on discriminatory bullying

-Those immigrant and Roma students who think the teacher exhibits similar behaviour towards 'native' and immigrant and Roma children in the class are those bullied least in the last 3 months.

In contrast, 'those who declare that their teacher favours native children over immigrant/Roma students are more vulnerable to suffer some form of bullying.

Specifically less than half (48 %) of the 123 [immigrant/Roma] children [across the 10 countries] who sense bias in the teachers' attitudes towards native classmates declare to have never been subjected to violence' (Elamé, 2013).

# Discrimination Creates US/THEM Diametric Space of Mirror Image Hierarchy

- Greek study (Kapari and Stavrou, 2010) of 114 secondary school students (58 female, 56 male) drawn from three Greek public middle schools.
- In schools with high levels of bullying, students consider their treatment by adults to be unequal, the rules to be unfair, and student participation in decision-making to be very limited.



## Diametric Spatial Systems as GOOD/BAD Identity Splitting and Mirror Image Hierarchies

A school principal from Estonian national report:  
*“schools can create circumstances where unwanted students feel that they have to leave... and they do...”*  
(Tamm & Saar 2010, in Downes 2011).

The secondary education system in Lithuania according to a school management representative: *“The attitudes towards students have to change and then they will feel better at schools. [...] at the moment students are selected under the criteria „good“ and „bad“ and those who get the „bad“ label do not want to stay at such school – they leave it”*  
(Taljunaite et al 2010, in Downes 2011)

## Authoritarian Teaching as Diametric Spatial System (Above/Below)

WHO (2012) Modifications that appear to have merit include:

- establishing a caring atmosphere that promotes autonomy;
- providing positive feedback;
- **not publicly humiliating students who perform poorly;**

Cefai & Cooper (2010), Malta review of qualitative research: 'the autocratic and rigid behaviour management approach adopted by many teachers in their response to misbehaviour. Their blaming and punitive approach was seen in many cases as leading to an exacerbation of the problem...It looks...that perceived victimisation by teachers was more prevalent and had more impact than victimisation and bullying by peers'





# Authoritarian Teaching as Diametric Spatial System (Above/Below)

**No sunlight ! (Downes & Maunsell 2007)**



“I can’t wait to leave, I would leave tomorrow if I had the choice because I get picked on by a teacher”

“No some[teachers] think they own the school”

## Authoritarian Teaching as Diametric Spatial System (Above/Below)

Downes' (2004) student centered research in Ballyfermot, Dublin, 12 focus groups and 173 questionnaire responses from secondary students:

“Have anger management courses for teachers” (female, focus group):

“The teachers shouting at you. That makes me really, really down” (Age 13, F)

“If the teachers didn't roar at you” (Age 13, F)

“Have an equal teaching system and sack ignorant snobby teachers...very harsh teachers usually make me stay out of school” (Age 16, M)



## Authoritarian Teaching

In Poland (CBOS 2006), a national survey of 3,085 students, 900 teachers and 554 parents, across 150 schools

-Experience of school violence from teachers towards students was reported directly as being hit or knocked over by 6% of students with 13% reporting having observed this occur for others. Teachers' use of offensive language towards students was reported by 16% as having been experienced directly individually and 28% as observed towards other students.

Pyhältö et al. (2010) Finland, 518 students, 9th grade, 6 schools:  
'unjustified and authoritarian behaviour that undermined pupil's agency was considered as a source of burden, anxiety and danger'



## B. Alternatives to Suspension/Expulsion to Stop Diametric Relational Structures of Exclusion

The Irish post-primary figure of 5% for suspension, applied to the total population of 332,407 students equates to well over 16,000 students suspended from post-primary schools in 2005/6 (ERC/NEWB 2010).

An English study by Rennison *et al.*, (2005) found that young people in the NEET [Not in Education, Employment or Training] group were over three times more likely previously to have been excluded from school than young people overall.



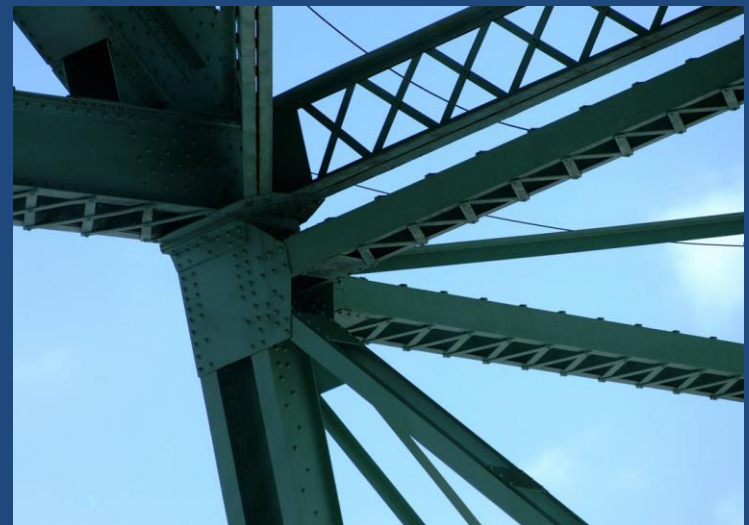
# A Differentiated Approach to Involving Parents : Family Support Services for High Risk Chronic Need (Multidisciplinary teams Edwards & Downes 2013)

Systematic review by Lereya et al. (2013)  
involving 70 studies which concluded that both  
victims and bully/victims are more likely to be  
exposed to negative parenting behaviour,  
including abuse and neglect and maladaptive  
parenting.



Need lead agency to coordinate  
Services for migrants (Downes 2015)

Community/Youth Arts/LLL as Gateway  
for Youth to Access Multidisciplinary  
Teams (Downes 2015a)



## C. Diametric Splits as System Blockage in Communication – Transitions

Hopwood et al. (2016) Australia: one-on-one interviews with primary (Year 6) and secondary (Year 7) teachers.

- The primary teachers revealed that their role in preparing students for secondary school was passive, based around accommodating requests from the secondary schools.
- The primary teachers also reported little or no input into the way students were prepared for transition, as one primary teacher explained: We talk about what they might experience at secondary school but I don't do anything specific to deal with teaching them about secondary school [Primary Teacher 4].

## **D. Students Voices to Challenge Hierarchical Diametric Mirror Image Splits as System Blockages in Communication**

\*In Iceland, Brigisdottir (2013) highlights a process of communication with those dropping out from school, whereby the students are interviewed individually by an education Ministry official to find out why they are leaving school early.

\*Yet this dialogue with students arguably comes too late in the process and needs systematic expression at a range of earlier stages as part of a Europe-wide prevention focus (Downes 2013)

EU Commission Thematic Working Group on early school leaving report (2013):

“Ensure children and young people are at the centre of all policies aimed at reducing ESL. Ensure their voices are taken into account when developing and implementing such policies.”

# Students' Voices – A Clear Gap in the EU Council and Commission Documents (2011) on Early School Leaving Prevention





Beyond Epstein – Integrating Health and Education to go  
beyond Diametric Spatial Split as Knots and Walls  
= Joint Strategy for Family Support and Parental  
Involvement

Epstein's (2001) 'Framework of Parental Involvement'  
identifies six ways in which schools and parents can be  
involved  
i.e. Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering,  
Learning at home, Decision Making, Collaborating with the  
Community.

# Diametric Mirror Image Power Hierarchy for System Blockage as Resistance – Parental Involvement to address pseudopartnership

In a Swedish context, Bouakaz & Persson (2007) ask ‘do the teachers’ distrust parents ?’

the ‘apparent’ official organization and the ‘below the surface’ unofficial organisation (Scholtes 1998).



Resistance as it is perceived as peripheral to main job (Downes 2014) – put parental involvement in teachers’ contracts and promotional posts (O’Reilly 2012)

• **E. Challenging Diametric Space as Closure: Opening School as AfterSchool Community Lifelong Learning Centre**

Country	On a scale of 1-3 where 3 means at least 80% of schools in your municipality open their doors after school hours for lifelong learning classes and 2 means at least 30% of schools do so and 1 means less than 30% of schools do so – which number best describes the situation in your municipality? (Downes 2014a)	
The Hague	3	
Gijon	3	
Tallinn	2	
Stockholm	2	
Antwerp	1	
Usti	1	
Munich	1	
Nantes	1	
Oslo	1	

**Inclusive Systems as Concentric Relational  
Spatial Systems: Common System Response to  
Traditionally Distinct Issues of Early School  
Leaving and Bullying Prevention (Downes & Cefai  
2016)**

**Paris Declaration (2015) – Broader Framework  
linking violence, alienation from society with  
poverty and social exclusion.**

**\* Implies a rationale for combining prevention  
strategies for promoting inclusive systems**

Reframing the problem through a focus on solutions:

- Issues previously treated separately, such as early school leaving and bullying prevention, can be addressed through common system responses for inclusive systems. (Downes & Cefai 2016)



## School Climate, Teasing, Bullying

In a sample of 276 high schools, Cornell et al. (2013) found that risk of early school leaving increases if a student experiences an atmosphere of teasing and bullying even if s/he is not personally bullied.

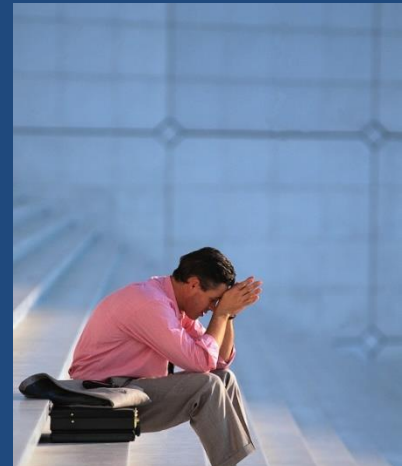
Cornell et al. (2013) “ Notably, the increased dropout count that was associated with Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying was quite similar to the increases that were associated with FRPM [i.e., poverty] and academic failure”.

## Common system supports needed for bullying and early school leaving prevention (Downes & Cefai 2016)

A striking commonality of interests with regard to strategic approaches for bullying prevention in schools and early school leaving prevention:

- Direct and indirect effects of bullying on early school leaving relevant to perpetrators, victims
  - school absence,
  - negative interpersonal relations with peers and conflict with teachers,
  - low concentration in school, decreased academic performance,
  - negative school climate influences, lower school belonging, satisfaction, and pedagogical well-being, with the effects of bullying exacerbated for those already at risk of early school leaving.

- Common systems of supports (transition focus from primary to post-primary, multiprofessional teams for complex needs, language support needs, family support services and education of parents regarding their approaches to communication and supportive discipline with their children, outreach to families to provide supports, addressing academic difficulties).
- Common issues requiring an integrated strategic response, including the prevention of displacement effects of a problem from one domain to another, such as in suspension/expulsion which may make a bullying problem become an early school leaving problem.
- Common causal antecedents (negative school climate, behavioural difficulties, trauma)



- Teacher professional development and pre-service preparation focusing on developing teachers' relational competences for a promoting a positive school and classroom climate, including a focus on teachers' conflict resolution and diversity awareness competences
- Early warning systems.





Where are the system splits, closures, exclusions, oppositional labels and hierarchies as diametric space to be restructured towards concentric spatial systems of inclusion ?

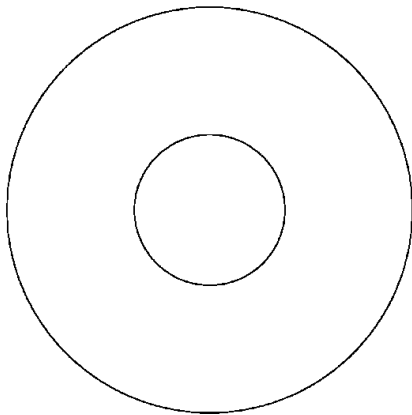
Concentric and Diametric Spaces as Deep Structures of Space – Primordial Spatial Systems of Relation – Connection/Separation, Openness/Closure, Mirror Image Inversions

Relevant to System Change in Education – Embedded Possibility of Shift from Diametric to Concentric Spatial Systems

Contextually-Sensitive yet Universal Spatial Discourse for System Change

Key Background System Conditions Affecting Foreground Causal Interventions

**Fig. 1** Diametric Dualism



**Fig. 2** Concentric Dualism

# Key Governance Principles for Quality for Inclusive Systems

Inclusive Systems in and around Schools: Key Principles  
(Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite 2017)

1. *System wide focus*
2. *Equality and Non-Discrimination*
3. *Children's Voices, Participation and Other Rights*
4. *Holistic approach*
5. *Parental Participation in School, including Marginalised Parents*
6. *Differentiated focus on different levels of need for prevention and early intervention*
7. *Building on strengths*
8. *Multidisciplinarity as a multifaceted response for students with complex needs*
9. *Representation and participation of marginalised groups*
10. *Lifelong learning*



Ungar's broader environmental model of resilient systems does not include a focus on State systemic supports, as integrated services (Edwards & Downes 2013), in its role of developing inclusive systems of care.

Ungar's (2012) socio-ecological broadening of Rutter's (1987) resilience needs to go further in its systemic concerns:

- to include a systemic focus on outreach to marginalised families (Downes 2014a)
- a relational space of assumed connection between individuals and system supports.

## Assertive Outreach (Downes 2017, EPALE): Beyond Information to Abstract Other (Said 1978, Benhabib 1987, Downes 2014) for Engaging Family, Community Systems and High Need Groups

- At times interventions seem to be based on the idea that leaflets, websites, posters and other forms of information will suffice to engage 'hard-to-reach' groups.
- Implicit in this very terminology is that when such marginalised groups are not reached by these information-reliant approaches, they are disinterested, and that they are therefore 'hard to reach'.
- Need to **question the communicative approach itself**, rather than blame the individuals who do not become enchanted by such 'information'.

## Assertive Outreach: Beyond information processing to construction of meaning (Bruner 1992) for concrete other

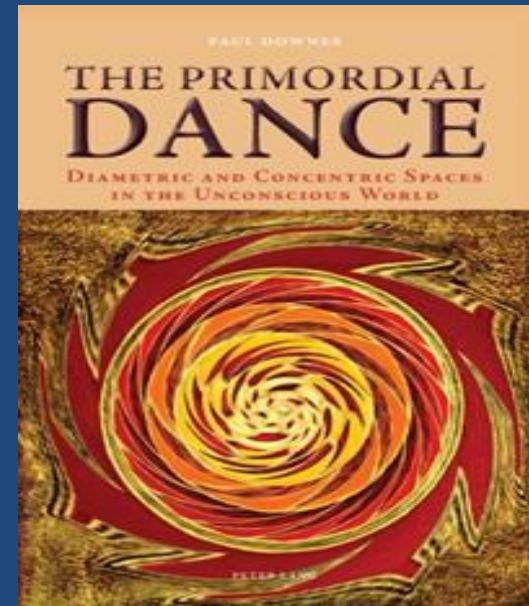
- Information-based communication approaches focus on the *what* question. But need to focus on the *where*, the *how* and *who* questions:
- The **where** question asks about the location from which the early school leaver is engaged with.
- The **how** question asks about the way the person is being communicated with.
- The **who** question not only asks about the specific needs of the person being reached out to, but also asks who is the person communicating to that early school leaver.
- In some approaches in Europe, there is recognition of the *where* question, through the need for a *community outreach* approach. Services are located in easy-to-access and culturally familiar places to reach those on the edges of society.

# *Foundations: A Quasi-Language of Space prior to Language !*



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Spatial-Relational Systems in Education



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Spatial-Relational Systems as Projected Dynamic A Priori (Post-Kantian) Structures of Relation

Annie Casey Foundation

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