

# Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools

Dr Paul Downes

Director, Educational Disadvantage Centre

Senior Lecturer in Education (Psychology)

Member of the European Commission Network of Experts on the Social Aspects of Education and Training (NESET) (2011-2016)

Institute of Education

Dublin City University

Ireland

[paul.downes@dcu.ie](mailto:paul.downes@dcu.ie)



# Structural indicators for inclusive systems in and around schools

- At national level, to be implemented by governments through strategic and cross-sector initiatives;
- At school levels, to be implemented by schools and/or local authorities, in line with the national strategic initiatives.

# Main policy documents relied upon for developing the framework of these structural indicators are:

- The European Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (2011),
- European Council Conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school (2015),
- The Paris Declaration by the European Council of Education Ministers on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (2015),
- The Final report of the Thematic Working Group on early school leaving (2013),
- The Policy messages of the ET2020 Working Group on Schools Policy (2015),
- The Commission Recommendation, *Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage* (2013) and
- The Commission Staff Working Paper on Early School Leaving (2011).

Paris Declaration by the European Council of Education Ministers on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, March 2015.

EU COUNCIL, Council Conclusions of 23 November 2015 on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school (14441/15).

European Commission, 'A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving. Policy messages', Education & Training ET 2020, Brussels, 2015.

European Commission Recommendation, 'Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage', C(2013) 778 final, Brussels, 2013

European Commission, 'Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support', Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, 2013.

EU COUNCIL, Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving COM (2011) 19 final SEC (2011) 98 final SEC(2011) 97 final SEC(2011) 96 final.

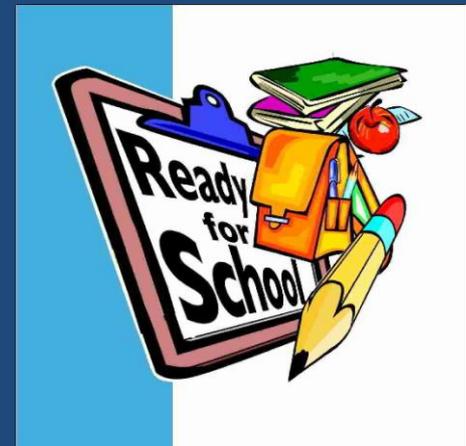
Commission Staff Working Paper, Reducing Early School Leaving. Accompanying document to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce Early School Leaving, 26th January 2011

# The Paris Declaration (2015) commits to:

- ‘Fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs... encouraging outreach and cooperation with civil society and social partners’
- ‘Ensuring inclusive education for all children and young people which combats racism and discrimination on any ground, promotes citizenship...Combating geographical, social and educational inequalities, as well as other factors which can lead to despair and create a fertile ground for extremism’

# The Paris Declaration (2015) commits to:

- Recognising the centrality of a relational school climate, the ET2020 School Policy Working Group document (2015) treats learner-centred, welcoming and caring environments as part of inclusive education
- ESL & school bullying and violence - a commonality of system level responses (Downes and Cefai, 2016).



# Inclusive systems in and around schools

- A focus on a supportive, quality learning environment
- A welcoming and caring school and classroom climate,
- Addressing holistic needs of students, whether emotional, physical, cognitive or social, and recognising their individual talents and voices,
- Preventing discrimination
- Open to the voices and active participation of parents and wider multidisciplinary teams and agencies.
- A particular focus on the differentiated needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups, including those at risk of early school leaving and alienation from society.



# Structural indicators:

- Address whether or not key structures, mechanisms or principles are in place in a system.
- Go beyond the quantitative/qualitative distinction as they are factual, being generally framed as potentially verifiable yes/no answers;
- Both for external evaluation and self-evaluation.
- Offer strategic direction as to *what* issues are addressed at system level, while also offering flexibility at local or national level as to *how* to address these issues.

# Outside the scope of the current framework of structural indicators:

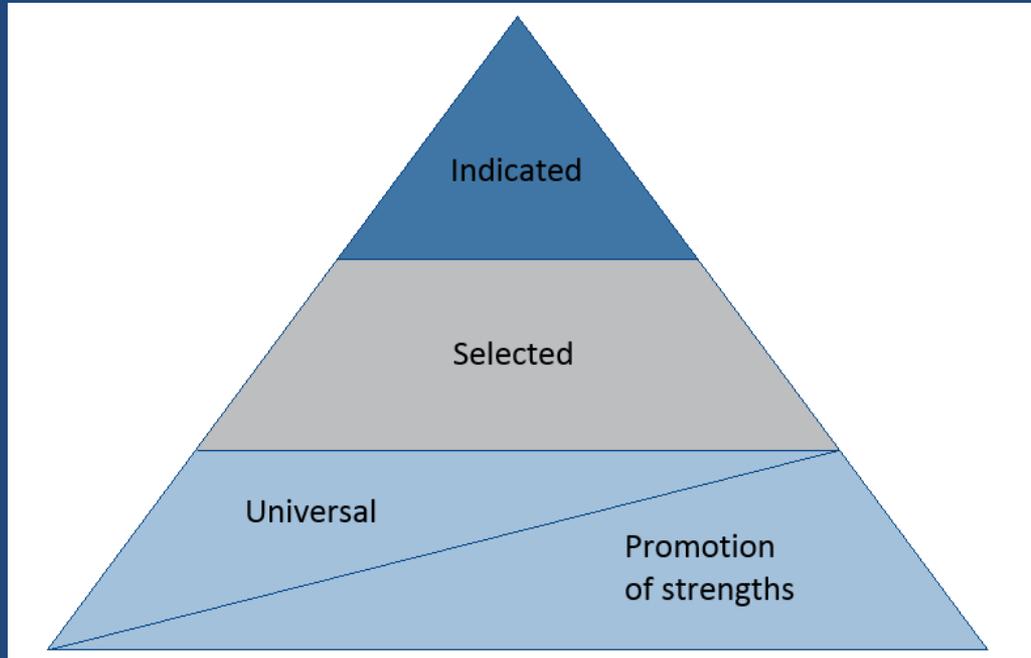
- Poverty prevention,
- Local area based community development initiatives involving a range of community agencies, collective impact initiatives (Lawson and van Veen, 2016),
- Children in care and intervention for homelessness
- New school designs
- Literacy
- Digital literacy
- Gender and sexual identity inclusion
- Limited focus on SEND and VET (see Cedefop 2016, forthcoming)

# Ten Key Principles for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. SYSTEM WIDE FOCUS  | Schools, agencies and families are distinct and connected systems bringing sets of relationships and mutual influences upon the individual – both system blockages as barriers and system supports   |
| 2. EQUALITY AND NONDISCRIMINATION   | <p>-Substantive equality involves a commitment to educational success for everyone irrespective of social background; to achieve this, different groups may need additional supports.</p> <p>-Nondiscrimination includes a right to equality of concern and respect in a supportive environment free of prejudice.</p> |
| 3. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO EXPRESSION OF VOICES AND PARTICIPATION AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS | Children's voices have a right to be heard on issues directly affecting their own welfare, with due regard to their ages and maturity  |
| 4. HOLISTIC APPROACH  | A holistic approach recognises social, emotional and physical needs and not simply academic, cognitive ones of both children/young people and their parents  |
| 5. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN SCHOOL, INCLUDING MARGINALISED PARENTS                | Parental input into school policy and practices, as well as their children's education involves both a general strategic commitment, as well as a distinctive focus on marginalised parents' involvement   |

6. DIFFERENTIATION IN PREVENTION APPROACHES

Different levels of need require different strategies, including for students and families experiencing moderate risk and chronic need



Indicated Prevention (Chronic need – Individual Intensive)  
Selected Prevention (Moderate risk – Some – groups)    Universal –  
All in a school or area

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>7. BUILDING ON STRENGTHS</b>  | <b>Promoting strengths challenges negative deficit labels of vulnerable groups and seeks to promote growth rather than simply prevent.</b>   |
| <b>8. MULTIDISCIPLINARITY AS A MULTIFACETED RESPONSE FOR STUDENTS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS</b> | A range of actively collaborating professionals is needed to address complex, multifaceted needs of marginalised groups  |
| <b>9. REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS</b>                        | Marginalised groups include those experiencing poverty and social exclusion, risk of early school leaving, those experiencing bullying, mental health difficulties and/or special educational needs, as well as some groups of migrants and ethnic minorities. Such groups need a distinct focus on processes and structures for their representation and participation. |
| <b>10. LIFELONG LEARNING</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- educational focus on active citizenship, personal and social fulfilment, intercultural dialogue across communities, as well as on poverty and social inclusion, and employment</li> <li>- informal learning, as well as nonformal and formal education classes relying on active learning methodologies.</li> </ul>             |

# Social and Emotional Education/Learning

A study of more than 213 programmes found that if a school implements a quality SEL curriculum, they can expect better student behaviour and an 11-point increase in test scores (Durlak et al., 2011). The gains that schools see in achievement come from a variety of factors — students feel safer and more connected to school and academic learning, SEL programmes build work habits in addition to social skills, and children and teachers build strong relationships. Durlak et al. (2011) highlight SEL benefits for outcomes on SEL skills; attitudes, positive social behaviour, conduct problems, emotional distress and academic performance.

Sklad et al. (2012) meta-analysis: SEL programmes showed statistically significant effects on social skills, anti-social behaviour, substance abuse, positive self-image, academic achievement and prosocial behaviour

Durlak et al (2011) classroom teachers and other school staff effectively conducted SEL programs so these can be incorporated into routine educational activities and do not require outside personnel.

SEL - Not the same as civic/citizenship or religious education !

Downes (2010) SEL across curricular areas: empathy in history, language and emotion in English, conflict role play in drama etc.

# Developing Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion

The American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement (2013) recognises that ‘the adverse effects of out-of-school suspension and expulsion can be profound’

- Such students are as much as 10 times more likely to leave school early, are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system and ‘there may be no one at home during the day to supervise the student’s activity’ if the parents are working.
- ‘They can also be very superficial if, in using them, school districts avoid dealing with underlying issues affecting the child or the district, such as drug abuse, racial and ethnic tensions, and cultural anomalies associated with violence and bullying’

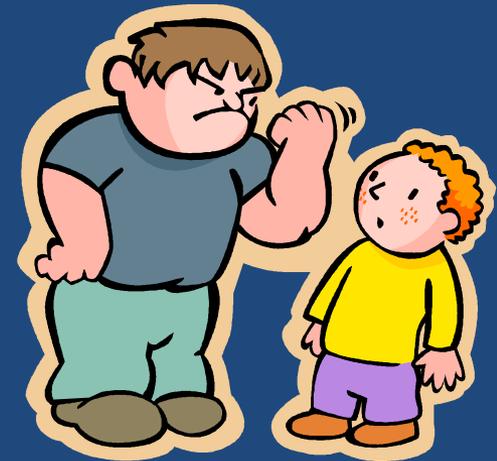
# Promoting Adequate Sleep for Students

- Most children need at least 9 hours of restful sleep each night (Taras and Potts-Datema, 2005).
- Impact on the wide spectrum of cognitive functioning, including attention, reasoning and memory, moreover during prolonged periods of sleep restriction, the negative effects accumulate (de Bruin et al, 2016).

# Promoting Adequate Sleep for Students cont.,

- Sleepiness, tiredness and other insomnia related symptoms are correlated with reported or factual school performance (Dewald et al., 2010; Boschloo et al., 2011; Kronholm, 2015).
- A review by Blunden et al (2001) found that reduced attention, memory, intelligence and increased problematic behaviour resulted from sleep-related obstructive breathing.
- Sleep deficiency is interwoven in complex ways with substance abuse (Loureiro et al., 2014), aggressive behaviours (Lemola et al., 2012) and eating disorders (Maume, 2013).

# 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, lower school belonging, satisfaction, and pedagogical well-being, with the effects of bullying exacerbated for those already at risk of early school leaving, negative school climate influences).

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

- 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).

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

- 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)

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

- 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.

# School Climate, Teasing, Bullying

Cornell et al. (2013)

A basic conclusion from our study (Cornell et al. 2013) is that the Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying in high schools deserves serious consideration by educators in addressing the problem of dropout. In a sample of 276 high schools, the level of teasing and bullying reported by both ninth-grade students and teachers was predictive of cumulative dropout counts over 4 years after the cohort reached 12th grade.

Cornell et al. (2013) “Because educators are often concerned about the impact of student poverty and academic capability on dropout rates in their schools, these findings suggest that a climate of teasing and bullying in the school also deserves consideration. 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”.

Cornell et al. (2013) note that dropout programs often focus too narrowly on changes in individual students, without considering broader peer and school influences.

# Classroom Climate and Discriminatory Bullying

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).

# Improving ITE and CPD for Teachers for Inclusive Education

The ET2020 School Policy Working Group document (2015) recommends that student teachers be offered practical exposure to the everyday reality of early school leaving, e.g. through participation in work placements in schools with high ESL rates or high levels of socio-economic exclusion or in supervised activities with vulnerable families.

\*This would provide student teachers with the opportunity to consider their role as teachers and how they address the educational needs of children in need.

Resonant with the concerns for school climate, the ET2020 School Policy Working Group document (2015):

\*need to 'reinforce relational and communication expertise (including techniques/methods to engage with parents and external partners), and provide teachers with classroom management strategies, diversity management strategies, relationship building, conflict resolution and bullying prevention techniques'

## Establishing National Coordination Structures for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools and Local Cross-School Cooperation Structures

The TWG report (2013) recommends, 'A coordinating body such as a dedicated unit within the Ministry of Education with cross-department links or a separate agency can support cooperation at national level and collaborate with ministries/institutions in related policy fields (e.g. education, economy, employment, youth, health, welfare and social policy). It can facilitate collaboration with stakeholders, but also help to raise awareness and ensure long-term political commitment for ESL. It could be responsible for policy development, monitoring and assessment of ESL measures at national level and the dissemination of good practice'.

The Eurydice (2014) report echoes this, while observing that although only four countries/regions have established a formal coordinating body as part of their comprehensive strategy for tackling early leaving (Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, Malta and the Netherlands), 'the reported initial positive outcomes of their work could serve as an example for other countries'.

The composition of such committee needs to be representative to ensure that marginalised groups voices and interests are substantially heard at national policy and implementation level. These committees are to be based on the principles of inclusive systems, such as the ten key principles outlined

# Developing Structures such as School Coordination Committees for Inclusive Systems as Part of a Whole School Approach

A structure such as a school level coordinating committee for inclusive systems is needed as a key implementation mechanism to drive a systemic whole school approach.

Such a committee needs a strong focus on developing a positive school climate. As a committee it gives recognition to a systemic focus which does not rely simply on an individual to drive system change.

Structures based on distributed leadership principles seek to disperse leadership roles and responsibilities throughout a school organisation

# Avoiding Grade Repetition

- Concerns of the OECD (2007, 2010) on the need to ‘Identify and provide systematic help to those who fall behind at school and reduce year repetition’
- In France, Germany and the Netherlands, migrants as well as native students commonly repeat a grade, while in other countries, this practice is very rare (Borodankova and de Almeida Coutinho, 2011).



*What are the best ways to implement these structural indicators ??*

## References

- American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement: Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion, *Pediatrics*, 131, 2013, pp.1000-1007.
- Blunden S, Lushington K, Kennedy D., 'Cognitive and behavioural performance in children with sleep-related obstructive breathing disorders', *Sleep Med Review*, 5, (6), 2001, 447-461
- Borodankova, O. & de Almeida Coutinho, A. S. 'Le redoublement dans l'Enseignement obligatoire en Europe: réglementation et statistiques', Brussels: EACEA, 2011
- Boschloo, A.; Krabbendam, L.; Dekker, S.; Lee, N.; de Groot, R.; Jolles, J., 'Subjective Sleepiness and Sleep Quality in Adolescents are Related to Objective and Subjective Measures of School Performance.', *Frontiers in psychology*, Vol. 4, No. February, 2013, p. 38.
- Cedefop, Putting VET centre stage: The size and cause of early leaving in Europe, Volume I, Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2016 forthcoming.
- Cedefop, Putting VET centre stage: Policies to tackle early leaving in Europe, Volume II, Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2016 forthcoming.
- Cornell, F.; Gregory, A.; Huang, F.; Fan, X., 'Perceived Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Predicts High School Dropout Rates', *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 105, No 1, 2013, pp. 138– 149.
- de Bruin, E. J.; van Run, C.; Staaks, J.; Meijer, A. M., 'Effects of sleep manipulation on cognitive functioning of adolescents: A systematic review.', *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, 2016. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2016.02.006.
- Dewald, J. F.; Meijer, A. M.; Oort, F. J.; Kerkhof, G. A.; Bogels, S. M., 'The influence of sleep quality, sleep duration and sleepiness on school performance in children and adolescents: A meta-analytic review', *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2010, pp. 179–189.
- Downes, P., 'It's the heart, stupid'. Emerging priority issues for prevention of early school leaving: A solution-focused approach, Invited presentation, Belgian EU Presidency Conference, Breaking the cycle of disadvantage – Social inclusion in and through education, September 28 and 29 2010, University of Ghent, Belgium.

Downes P.; Cefai, C., How to Prevent and Tackle Bullying and School Violence: Evidence and Practices for Strategies for Inclusive and Safe Schools, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.

Durlak, J. A.; Weissberg, R. P.; Dymnicki, A. B.; Taylor, R. D.; Schellinger, K. B., 'The impact of enhancing students social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions', Child Development, Vol. 82, No 1, 2011, pp. 405–432.

Elamé, E., 'Discriminatory bullying: A new intercultural dialogue', Springer Verlag, Berlin, 2013.

European Commission ET2020 WORKING GROUP ON SCHOOLS POLICY (2015)

European Commission, 'A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving. Policy messages', Education & Training ET 2020, Brussels, 2015.

EU COUNCIL, Council Conclusions of 23 November 2015 on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school (14441/15).

ET2020 Working Group on Schools, European Commission, Directorate-General, Education and Culture, Rue Joseph II Brussels, Sept 15-16, 2016a

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop, Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures, Eurydice and Cedefop Report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014.

European Commission Recommendation, 'Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage', C(2013) 778 final, Brussels, 2013

European Commission, 'Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support', Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, 2013.

EU COUNCIL, Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving COM (2011) 19 final  
SEC (2011) 98 final SEC(2011) 97 final SEC(2011) 96 final.

Commission Staff Working Paper, Reducing Early School Leaving. Accompanying document to the  
Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce Early School Leaving, 26th January 2011

Kronholm, E.; Puusniekka, R.; Jokela, J.; Villberg, J.; Urrila, A. S.; Paunio, T.; Välimaa, R.; Tynjälä, J., 'Trends  
in self-reported sleep problems, tiredness and related school performance among Finnish adolescents  
from 1984 to 2011', *Journal of Sleep Research*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2015, pp. 3–10.

Lawson, H; van Veen, D., 'A Framework for Planning and Evaluating the New Design'. In: Lawson, H; van  
Veen, D. (eds), *Developing Community Schools, Community Learning Centers, Extended-service Schools  
and Multi-service Schools*, Springer, Cham, 2016a, pp. 49–76:

Loureiro, N.; de Matos, M. G., 'Associations Between Health Compromising Behaviors and Sleep Patterns  
in Portuguese Adolescents', *Studies in Sociology of Science*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2014, pp. 28–33.

Maume, D. J., 'Social Ties and Adolescent Sleep Disruption', *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol.  
54, No. 4, 2013, pp. 498–515.

OECD, *Reviews of Migrant Education - Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students: Policies, Practice and Performance*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2010.

OECD, *Ten Steps to Equity in Education*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2007.

Paris Declaration by the European Council of Education Ministers on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, March 2015.

Sklad, M.; Diekstra, R.; Ritter, M.; Ben, J.; Gravesteyn, C., 'Effectiveness of school-based universal social, emotional, and behavioral programs: Do they enhance students' development in the area of skill, behavior, and adjustment?', *Psychology in the Schools*, Vol. 49, No 9, 2012, pp. 892-909.

Taras, H. & Potts-Datema, W., 'Sleep and Student Performance at School', *Journal of School Health*, Vol. 75, No. 7, 2005, 248-254.