

Developing inclusive systems across Education, Health and Social sectors for early school leaving prevention

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SECTION A. OVERCOMING SYSTEM BLOCKAGES IN COMMUNICATION

Inclusive Systems as Voice – Voices of Students

**Inclusive Systems as Systems of Care – Conflict Resolution Skills
of Teachers**

*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)

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

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.”

Article 12 (1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which declares: 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'

*Children's voices largely absent from US research as they have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



Key results observed in TALIS
(OECD 2009) include :

- One teacher in four in most countries loses at least 30% of the lesson time, and some lose more than half, in disruptions and administrative tasks – and this is closely associated with classroom disciplinary climate, which varies more among individual teachers than among schools

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 anger'

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

-Concerning conflict with teachers, a clear difference between primary and postprimary students emerged. 33% of students had at least one conflict with a teacher in a school year in primary school, 52% in gymnasium and 54% post-gymnasium.

-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.

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'

A number of US longitudinal studies provide evidence that a teacher's report of a supportive relationship with a student has positive effects on elementary students' behavioral and academic adjustment (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Ponitz, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008).

Dublin, Ireland survey (Downes et al., 2006) of students in 4 primary (n=230) and 2 secondary schools (n=162):

*Approximately 74% of pupils at primary level (6th class) and 55% of students at secondary level (first year) stated that they are treated fairly by teachers in school.

*Approximately 15% of pupils at primary level (6th class) state that they are not treated fairly by teachers in school, whereas 25% of students at secondary level (first year) state that they are not treated fairly by teachers in school.

*These differences between 6th class primary and 1st year secondary are statistically significant.



In the EU Commission public consultation 'Schools for the 21st century', classroom management strategies were raised as an issue needing to be better addressed by teacher initial education.

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;
- identifying and promoting young people's special interests and skills to acknowledge that schools value the diversity they bring



A school principal from the 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)

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”

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)

Magri's (2009) study of girls aged 12-16 in the Inner Harbour of Valetta and Northern regions of Malta illustrates this theme of alienation through authoritarian teaching:

"I remember very clearly phrases from my teacher such as; 'you should really be in the B class', or 'this is above your level'. I felt incompetent compared to the other students and was very much aware of how happier I was in my previous class."

"Disastrous, because they expect everything the way they want it. I cannot take it when they start shouting. They start shouting as soon as you utter a word".

"It's not the subject that I don't like, it's the teacher... she starts shouting in your face"



Acknowledged subsequently in the Council Recommendation (2011), the Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation in relation to early school leaving further highlighted this issue of teacher professional development:

Targeted teacher training helps them to deal with diversity in the classroom, to support pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and to solve difficult teaching situations (p. 12).

Downes (2013): “There is an emerging European and international consensus – not only that teachers need more support regarding conflict resolution skills, classroom management techniques and assistance in fostering a positive classroom and school climate – but that these are key protective factors in prevention of early school leaving”.

How can the EU Parliament contribute ?

- EU Parliament Quality Mark for Children and Young People's Voices and Democratic Communication to be heard in school
- Ensure transparent process for documenting students experiences in school across different age groups, with a focus on those at highest risk of early school leaving
- This process needs to include questionnaires, focus groups including with open questions to allow students' stories to be heard
- EU Parliament could link with municipalities to implement these processes – they must be external to the school for honest responses

- Part of an EU Parliament
Quality Mark for Children and
Young People's Voices and
Democratic Communication to
be heard in school could be not
only at an individual school
level but also at a national level
— here the focus needs to be on
the quality of teacher preservice
training and professional
development engagement in
conflict resolution skills for
teachers

Downes (2013): “The danger exists that it is precisely those teachers who may be most resistant to professional development for conflict resolution skills who need them most; this applies a fortiori if there is no specific requirement or incentive provided to do so”.

*“It is important to emphasise that it is not a matter of shifting blame from student to teacher; it is about going beyond an individual blame type of focus to a systemic one”.



SECTIONB. INCLUSIVE SYSTEMS AS EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Poverty impacts on mental health, mental health impacts on early school leaving

- Mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, disruptive behaviour disorders, eating disorders, or post-traumatic stress disorder, can negatively impact on a child's school success, as well as general well-being (Kessler 2009; World Health Organization 2003)
- Children living in low-income families are especially vulnerable to mental health difficulties (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2009; US Department of Health and Human Services

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”.



**Even apart from poverty related depression,
emotional distress contributes to early school
leaving:**

A troubling number of adolescents showing serious emotional distress and depression symptoms are at risk for school failure and dropout (Quiroga, Janosz, Lyons, & Morin, 2012; Thompson, Moody, & Eggert, 1994; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, & Sumi, 2005).

Emotional trauma (bereavement, rape, sexual abuse, bullying, family break up, sleep related problems) – supports needed to prevent early school leaving

Irish Parliament and Senate Report on early school leaving (2010):
Case studies of those who left school early due to trauma factors of rape, bereavement, sexual abuse

Wider referral processes – reach withdrawn kids

-Evidence suggests that the emotional support needs of withdrawn students, who are at risk of early school leaving, may be missed by teachers compared with those students displaying and externalising problems through aggression (Doll 1996; Downes 2004).

Downes & Maunsell (2007):

“Why do you think some people are dying ? Because there is no one to talk to”

- *“we should do more personal development”*

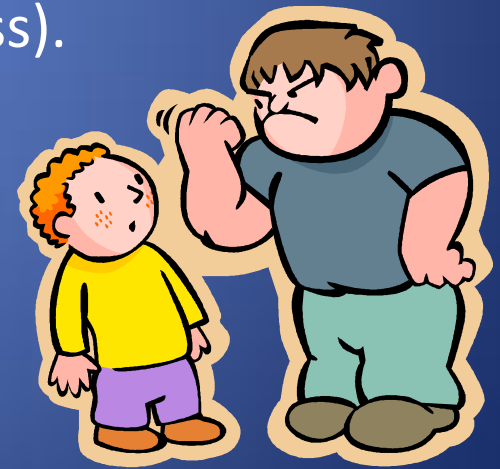
- *“girls slit their wrists”*

- *“girls take tablets and slice their wrists”*

- *“girls sleeping around to hurt themselves, other ways instead of slitting wrists”*

Multiple domains intervention needed for bullying prevention success – a risk factor for ESL

Pervasive teasing and bullying in a school may lead to disengagement and avoidance of school, distraction and inattentiveness in the classroom, and, ultimately, poorer academic performance (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011; Lacey & Cornell, 2011; Mehta et al., in press).



School Climate, Teasing, Bullying

Cornell et al. (2013)

A basic conclusion from our study 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.

Suldo et al., (2010) discuss the supports needed for provision of 'a continuum of tiered intervention services, including prevention and universal intervention (e.g., school wide positive behavioral supports, school climate promotion), targeted interventions for students at risk (e.g., social skills and anger management groups, classroom management strategies), and intensive individualized interventions with community support (e.g., therapy, implementation of behavior intervention plans) in schools'

Language dimension to disruptive behaviour/suspension needs to be addressed by speech and language therapists in multidisciplinary teams

Rates of language impairment reach 24% to 65% in samples of children identified as exhibiting disruptive behaviours (Benasich, Curtiss, & Tallal, 1993), and 59% to 80% of preschool- and school-age children identified as exhibiting disruptive behaviours also exhibit language delays (Beitchman, Nair, Clegg, Ferguson, & Patel, 1996; Brinton & Fujiki, 1993; Stevenson, Richman, & Graham, 1985).

OUTREACH FAMILY SUPPORT FOR CHILD'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AS PART OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM

The Child Welfare Worker will regularly call to the child's home to

- support the parent implement morning time routines,
- enable the breakfast, uniform and schoolbag preparation,
- ensure the child gets to school on time
- support the parent to be firm and follow through when a child is school refusing.

Work is also carried out with the parents to support them with night-time routines i.e. homework and bedtimes. The Child Welfare Worker will often transport the child to school or arrange for the child to take the school bus when available.

Familiscope/
Familibase,
Dublin



What can the EU Parliament do to ensure students at risk of early school leaving have access to adequate emotional support services linked with schools ??

Can emotional support services availability be linked to a Quality Mark framework offered by the EU Parliament ??

SECTION C. OVERCOMING SYSTEM BLOCKAGE: STRUCTURES OF EXCLUSION

Inclusive Systems as Alternatives to Suspension

Inclusive Systems as Overcoming System Blockage

System Blockage as Structures of Exclusion

System Blockage as Fragmentation

System Blockage as Resistance

Theoretical Framework for Understanding System Blockage and Inclusive Systems

Bronfenbrenner (1979) neglected system blockages, diametric splits and displacement (Downes 2013, 2014)

Foucault (1972) described a fundamental 'structure of exclusion': A system blockage focus examines ways of overcoming system structures of exclusion, system level diametric splits in communication and structures (Downes 2012, 2013)

Move beyond a focus even on 'resilience fostering systems' to neutralize risk factors – Rutter's (1985) resilience framework is too individualistic and its recognition of social supports and school's for resilience is not a systemic focus on integrated agencies

Alternatives to Suspension/Expulsion to Stop Diametrically Opposing Strategic Approaches

Alternatives to Suspension

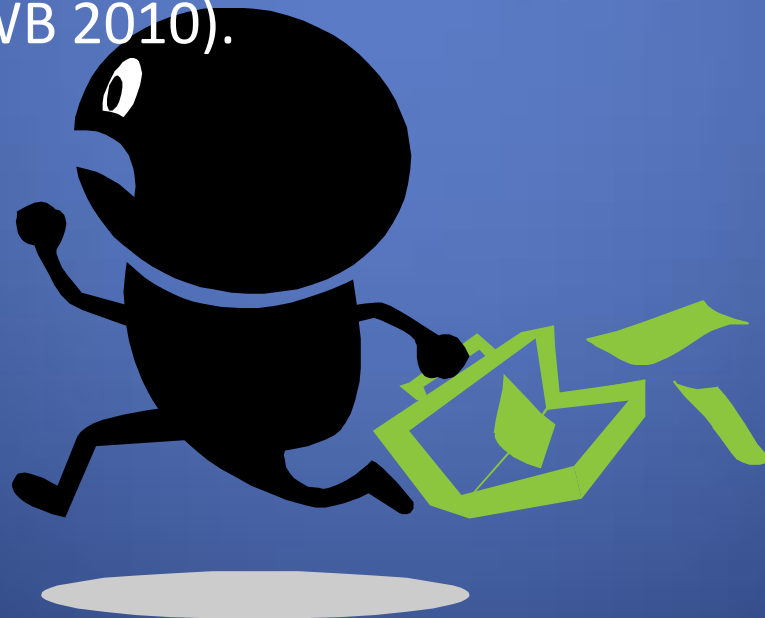
Suspension rates themselves are predictive of dropout rates (T. Lee, Cornell, Gregory & Fan, 2011).

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.



In Polish national research (CBOS 2006), being put outside the classroom was a sanction experienced by 15% of students, with 53% observing this as occurring for others.

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).



A multidisciplinary team plays a key role in devising alternative strategies to suspension in this example from a Russian school:

The school does not practice expulsion or suspension of students. Instead, the psychological support service team regularly conducts preventive meetings and conversations with students who have discipline or study problems. Each school has a Preventive Council aimed at dealing with 'problem' students...Use of preventive measures as an alternative to expulsion shows that the school staff aims to keep as many students at risk of early leaving at school as possible (Kozlovskiy, Khokhlova & Veits 2010).

Markussen et al (2011) longitudinal study following a sample of 9,749 Norwegian students over a five-year period, out of compulsory education and through upper secondary education.

“The higher the students scored on an index measuring deviant behavior, the higher their probability of early leaving as compared to completing”.

Markussen et al (2011) “Students with high scores on an index measuring seriously deviant behavior were in fact less likely to leave early than students with low scores on this index. This last finding is explained by the extra resources, support and attention these students are provided with, making it less probable for them to leave”.



SECTION D. OVERCOMING SYSTEM BLOCKAGE: FRAGMENTATION

Inclusive Systems as Systems of Care – Multidisciplinary Teams in and around Schools

OVERCOMING SYSTEM BLOCKAGE: FRAGMENTATION

Anticipating Territoriality and 'Not Not Doing' Services

Territories

- Local rivalries across municipalities and schools an obstacle to sharing of good practice
- Local rivalries across agencies especially in a recession – to claim resources and credit for gains
- Tensions between schools and community, including community professionals
- Physical location of community service needs to be in a neutral community space (Downes & Maunsell 2007)
- If possible, no more than two agencies to limit fragmentation and provide shared goals focus – restructure agencies for greater focus (Downes 2013b)



From Multiple Agencies to Cohesive Multidisciplinary Teams for Early School Leaving Prevention

- Emotional support
- Outreach family support
- Speech and language



The *Alliances for Inclusion* report (Edwards & Downes 2013) reviewed the enabling conditions for the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams and crosssectoral approaches for early school leaving prevention, building on 16 examples from 10 European countries.

- A policy focus is needed to go beyond multiple agencies -Need to minimise fragmentation across diverse services 'passing on bits of the child' and family (Edwards & Downes 2013)

- the multi-faceted nature of risk requires a multi-faceted response that needs to go beyond referrals to disparate services resulting in this 'passing on bits of the child'

- For genuine interprofessional collaboration for early school leaving prevention, for example, between schools and multidisciplinary teams of outreach care workers, therapists/counsellors, nurses, speech and language therapists, social workers, occupational therapists, policy-led co-location is not sufficient. Efforts are needed to support inter-professional collaborations and overcome resistance.

Need to focus on direct delivery and to minimise 'committee sitting' (Downes 2013a)

- For ESL, to adopt a multifaceted approach via multi-disciplinarity through either one team or two collaborating agencies as a common direct delivery network (Downes 2013a)
- A focus is needed on expanding the multi-disciplinarity of existing teams (2 agencies or one team) in a local area, bridging (mental) health and education expertise

Prevention and early intervention focus

- To engage directly with problems related to early school leaving, for example, nonattendance, trauma, bullying, mental health difficulties, language development, parental support, sleep deficits, substance misuse, suspension/expulsion, conflict with teachers
- Each family has one 'lead professional' to link them with others (Edwards & Downes 2013a)

*Continuum of interventions – all, some, intensive individual

Field et al's (2007, p.97) OECD study illustrates the Finnish approach of adopting a multidisciplinary team as part of a continuum of interventions in schools. These include professionals from outside the school, such as a psychologist and social worker, together with the school's counsellor, the special needs teacher and classroom teacher.

However, a major issue of the need for confidentiality has been highlighted in a range of student centred research in Ireland, with relevance for the needs of potential early school leavers in the context of multidisciplinary teams (Downes 2004; Downes et al., 2006; Downes & Maunsell 2007; Mellin et al 2011).

SECTION E. OVERCOMING SYSTEM BLOCKAGE: RESISTANCE

**Inclusive Systems as Voice – Voices of Parents in
Response to Students**

**Inclusive Systems as Voice – Promoting Democratic
School Culture for ESL Prevention**

System Blockage as Resistance – Parental Involvement

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 (PREVENT 2014) – put parental involvement in teachers’ contracts and promotional posts (O’Reilly 2012)

Ford (2007):

“Pushing on a vision is often overvalued by leaders who would like to assume almost a “clean slate” in their organization...reality is often fraught with disconnects where the aims of a change effort are not meeting reality”

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

“Involvement of pupils and parents: Schools and regional or local authorities need to pay special attention to involving pupils and parents and their representatives in the planning and implementation of measures to reduce ESL.

Parents need to be supported in their engagement with school education, be strongly encouraged to get involved and responsible for their children's school attendance and education. Schools should develop specific outreach programmes to encourage the active participation and representation of vulnerable parents and families...”

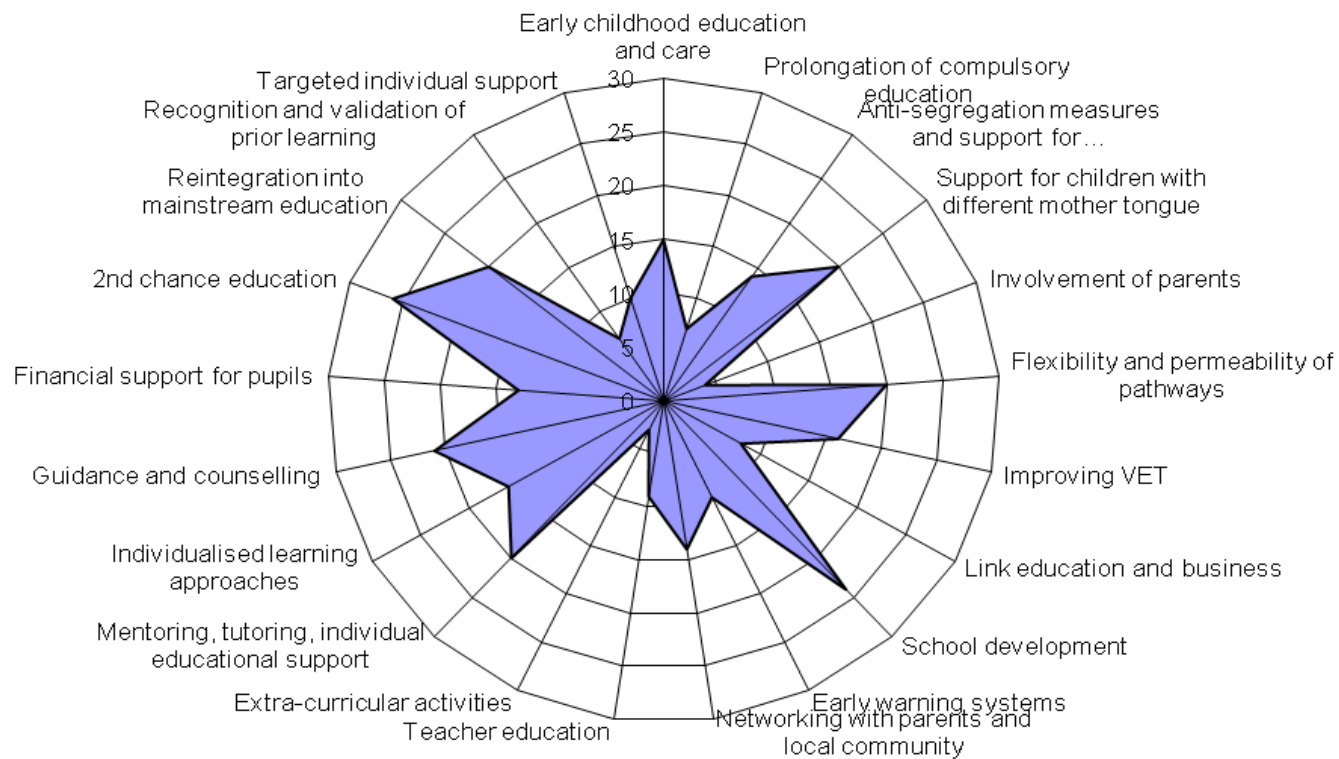
EU Commission and Council (2011)
documents on early school leaving bring
holistic approach that integrates family
support with parental involvement

Annex framework to the Council Recommendation on Early School Leaving (2011):

‘Prevention policies could include:... ‘(5) Enhancing the involvement of parents, reinforcing their cooperation with the school and creating partnerships between schools and parents can increase learning motivation among pupils’.

‘Intervention policies at the level of the school or training institution could include:...

(3) Networking with parents and other actors outside school, such as local community Services...which allows for holistic solutions to help pupils at risk and eases the access to external support such as psychologists, social and youth workers, cultural and community services. This can be facilitated by mediators from the local community who are able to support communication and to reduce distrust’.



Parental involvement in school policy making:

- beyond reliance mainly on formalistic parents council approaches for engaging marginalised parents**
- beyond discussion in the abstract**

***For issues that matter to students and parents**

*** That require school system change (including to hierarchy of communication)**

***Issues of conflict, specific problems with school actors, policies bullying, negative interactions with individual teacher, behavioural difficulties of student, learning problems of student, questioning of quality of teaching instruction**

Communicative processes need to be put in place to address these conflicts – these are system issues and not simply individual parent concerns

Reframing of Parental Involvement

This communication also needs to be as part of the student voices' communication process – parental involvement is both part of respect of the right of the child to be heard and part of an active citizenship process

Can municipalities foster dialogue processes ? Interviews, focus groups in a neutral space...

How can the EU Parliament help such democratization of school culture ?

EU Parliament Quality Mark for Children and Young People's Voices and Democratic Communication to be heard in school together with a similar Quality Mark for Parental Involvement ?

A systematic approach to evaluation and transparency: Structural Indicators

- STRUCTURAL INDICATORS OF A SYSTEM FOR TRANSPARENCY:

YES/NO ANSWERS BY ANALOGY WITH UN RIGHT TO HEALTH (DOWNES 2014)

- Structural indicators (SIs): Generally framed as potentially verifiable yes/no answers, they address whether or not key structures, mechanisms or principles are in place in a system. As relatively enduring features or key conditions of a system, they are, however, potentially malleable.

They offer a scrutiny of State or institutional effort (Downes 2014, see also UN Rapporteur 2005, 2006)

Structural Indicators – Factual, potentially verifiable responses

Structural Indicators: A future framework for the OECD and EU Commission to consider (Downes 2014)

- SIs offer a system focus not simply an individual focus – a policy relevant focus for system review
- Structural indicators (SI); yes and no-questions, something that can be changed (laws, spaces, roles and responsibilities, key guiding principles, potentially malleable dimensions to an education, training and/or community system)

Propose EU Parliament to develop Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems (EU, national, regional, municipality and school levels) for Early School Leaving Prevention:

Alternatives to suspension/expulsion in place (Yes/No)

Teacher Professional Development available for conflict resolution skills (Yes/No)

Teacher Professional Development mandatory for conflict resolution skills (Yes/No)

Teacher Preservice modules on conflict resolution skills compulsory (Yes/No)

Qualified emotional counselling support services available to students (Yes/No)

Multidisciplinary teams linked with schools to engage with students with complex needs at high risk of early school leaving, including with their families (Yes/No)

Open-ended surveys of students of different ages on the experiences of school take place on a regular basis organised through an agency independent of the school (Yes/No)

Opportunities for parents to respond individually and in groups to the findings of the student surveys as part of input to school policy (Yes/No)

Clear role of municipality or other local agency to mediate dialogue between school and parents on policy issues (Yes/No)

**A. Overcoming System Blockages in
Communication:**

**Inclusive Systems as Voice – Voices of
Students**

**Inclusive Systems as Systems of Care – Conflict
Resolution Skills of Teachers**

B. Inclusive Systems as Emotional Support

**C. Overcoming System Blockage: Structures of
Exclusion**

**Inclusive Systems as Alternatives to
Suspension**

**D. Overcoming System Blockage:
Fragmentation**

**Inclusive Systems as Systems of Care –
Multidisciplinary Teams in and around Schools**

E. Overcoming System Blockage: Resistance

**Inclusive Systems as Voice – Voices of Parents
in Response to Students**

**Inclusive Systems as Voice – Promoting
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