



Seven 'Lamps': Key Problems and Proposed Solutions for Overcoming Inequality in the Irish Education System

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**There is more than one Early
School Leaving problem and
more than one set of supports
and structural reforms needed**

Problem 1

Hunger in school

(Downes, Maunsell & Ivers 2006; Downes & Maunsell 2007)

HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that 20.9% of schoolchildren in Ireland report going to school or bed hungry because there is not enough food at home. This figure represents an increase from 16.6% in 2006.

There has been an increase in the percentage of younger children who report going to school or bed hungry from 18.3% to 26.9% in 10-11 year olds and from 15.6% to 20.7% in 12-14 year olds.

Large sample 12,661 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

Downes & Maunsell, (2007)

'How often do you feel too hungry to do your work in school?'

7 DEIS Primary schools, Dublin 8: Average 18%

The pupil responses from 5th and 6th class in all the participating schools revealed extremely high levels of variation across schools (from 6% to 33%) regarding pupil hunger in school affecting their learning. In two schools, there was an exceptionally high level of pupils (33%) who stated that they were either often, very often or every day too hungry to do their work in school.

Solution 1

National Strategy for Hunger in School
Prevention: Infrastructure Investment of
Kitchens in Schools

Problem 2

Flawed Emotional Support Systems in
and around School: Limited Outreach for
Family Support Services – need to go
Beyond Home School Liaison Teacher
model

- Beyond a 'Pastoral Care' model of emotional support through Year Head, Chaplain, School Principal and Career Guidance Counsellor
- Evidence also suggests that the emotional support needs of withdrawn students, who are at risk of early school leaving, may be missed by teachers compared with those students displaying and externalising problems through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 (2004) 'being ignored because your head is down working is like a slap in the face'
- 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

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”*

What is missing ?

A systemic strategy of emotional support for potential early school leavers – at national, regional, local and school levels

Emotional support services at child, family, teacher and school level

Outreach dimension to emotional support team to engage with family support issues

Early intervention and prevention strategies for emotional support for those at risk of early school leaving

Need to bridge a divide between Departments of Education, Children and Health

Edwards & Downes 2013 'The multi-faceted nature of risk requires a multi-faceted response'

- Beyond 'passing on bits of the child' (Edwards et al 2009)
- Beyond referral models
- Prevention and early intervention focus
- Continuum of care
- Bridging health and education

Genuine inter-professional collaboration - teachers, social workers, outreach care workers, therapists/counsellors, nurses, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists

Lessons from Reinke et al's (2009) review of US combined school and family support interventions

- Malleable risk and protective factors
- Multifaceted ecological models
- Multiple domains (e.g., family, school, groups, individual, community)
- System change (Institutions and environment)
- Individual change

Solution 2

Community-Based Early Intervention and Emotional Support Multidisciplinary Teams that work also in Schools and have a Family Outreach Dimension in Areas of Highest Need: Like Familiscope, Ballyfermot

www.familiscope.ie

Problem 3

Inadequate In-service for Teachers on
Conflict Resolution Skills – And
Inadequate Pre-service, Especially at
Second Level on Teacher Conflict
Resolution and Diversity Awareness
Skills

Downes, Maunsell & Ivers (2006):

Approximately 74% of pupils at primary level (6th class) state that they *are* treated fairly by teachers in school

Approximately 55% of students at secondary level (first year) state 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

Approximately 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 i.e., there is a statistically significant increase in perception of being treated unfairly by teachers in secondary school compared to primary school.

NO SUNLIGHT !

Downes and Maunsell (2007)

Responses from students who perceived that they were not treated fairly by teachers include the following:

“No some think they own the school”

“The students aren’t treated fairly, I don’t know why, they just don’t and it’s very clear”

“No they pick on certain students”

“Fairly by some but teachers that hated another family member they think you’re like them when you’re not”

“Most of them are very, very nice but there is just 1 or 2 that I don’t like one bit”

“Mainly yes but 1 or 2 can be discouraging towards me. I am a good student and do my work mostly so they shouldn’t have a reason to be unfair”

“No some teachers would talk to you harshly & then act so sweet in front of your parents”

“No they pick on certain students”

“No, because some teachers are bullies towards the students”

“I’m leaving after the Junior [Certificate] because I hate it”

Would change *“the way the teachers treat the students”*

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

Solution 3

Ensure that Teaching Council makes it an explicit requirement of all pre-service education courses that significant time is allocated to teacher conflict resolution skills: Compulsory in-service education at second level for teacher conflict resolution skills

Problem 4

Alternatives to Suspension

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).

Downes & Maunsell (2007)

“Suspension is stupid, just gives them a break”

“About 8 out of 17 suspended, she suspended 7 people in one day”

Worst thing about school *“getting suspended”*

One service provider suggests that: *“suspension used a lot, need to put something in place if suspended, not much endeavour to keep them in school”*.

Solution 4

Extend the National Behavioural Support Service nationwide and include primary in its remit: Fund it to adopt Multidisciplinary Intervention Approaches

Problem 5

Literacy Scores in DEIS schools

	2 nd	2 nd	3 rd	3 rd	5 th	6 th	6 th
	2007	2010	2007	2010	2010	2007	2010
Mean raw score	22.6	24.1	21.6	22.5	19.1	17.6	18.0
At or below 10 th percentile	22.1	16.3	28.1	23.7	21.5	30.0	27.0
At or above 90 th percentile	2.1	1.9	2.2	0.9	2.8.	2.2	2.1
	N=2,5 83	N=2,72 3	N=3,17 1	N=3,33 3	N=3,31 4	N=3,07 7	N=3,21 0

The reading achievements (raw score, and percentages scoring at or above the 90th percentile and at or below the 10th percentile) of pupils in schools that were in previous schemes for disadvantage, in 2007 and 2010, by grade level. ERC (2011)

	2 nd	2 nd	3 rd	3 rd	5 th	6 th	6 th
	2007	2010	2007	2010	2010	2007	2010
Mean raw score	23.4	25.1	23.8	23.6	20.4	19.6.	19.8
At or below 10 th percentile	21.3	14.4	20.4	20.5	17.5	20.5	20.7
At or above 90 th percentile	2.1	3.2	3.4	1.7	5.0	3.6	4.1
	N=653	N=744	N=892	N=983	N=939	N=842	N=928

The reading achievements (raw score, and percentages scoring at or above the 90th percentile and at or below the 10th percentile) of pupils in schools that were *not* in previous schemes for disadvantage, in 2007 and 2010, by grade level. ERC(2011)

Solution 5

Not narrow curriculum but a) integrate literacy with the arts, b) more family literacy programmes, c) speech and language therapists to work with parents, teachers
(CDI Tallaght 2012)

Problem 6

- Dismantling of the Community Sector, including Community Education in Recent Years
- Need for community wide strategies to challenge fatalism which is a risk factor for drug use and other self-harming behaviour, including a fatalism associated with early school leaving (Kalichman et al. 2000, Downes 2003; Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes 2010)
- Complexity of meaning of 'community'

Solution 6

Community leadership strategy, especially for 16-30 year olds – building on expansion of community lifelong learning centres and youth drop in centres. Establish the National Adult Education Committee recommended in the White Paper (2000)

Problem 7

State support of Private Schools influencing
Access to Higher Education

Sunday Times School League Tables 2013

Sunday Times School League Tables 2013					
"TOP 10" POSTPRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH DUBLIN					
B=Boys G=GIRLS M=Mixed Fee-paying schools in bold.					
		Type	2013 National Rank	2012 National Rank	% at University
1	Colaiste Iosagain, Booterstown, Co. Dublin	G	3	3	88.9
2	Gonzaga College, Ranelagh, Dublin 6	B	4	2	87.5
3	Holy Child Secondary School, Killiney, Co. Dublin	G	5	4	86.1
4	Mount Anville Secondary School, Goatstown, Dublin 14	G	7	8	84.3
5	Rathdown School, Glenageary, Co. Dublin	G	9	6	81.1
6	The Teresian School, Donnybrook, Dublin 4	G	10	7	80.0
7	Loreto College, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2	G	11	5	80.0
8	Alexandra College, Milltown, Dublin 6	G	14	9	78.1
9	Colaiste Eoin, Booterstown, Co. Dublin	B	17	16	77.0
10	St. Conleth's College, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4	M	23	24	73.1

NB: Cost to taxpayer is proportionately much greater for subsidy of those at third level than at primary/post primary

Socio-economic group	% of new entrant respondents socio-economic group 2011/12	% of new entrant respondents socio-economic group 2010/11
Employers and managers	18.9%	17.9%
Higher professional	11.0%	10.7%
Lower professional	9.3%	8.8%
Non- manual	9.3%	9.7%
Manual skilled	11.9%	12.1%
Semi-skilled	5.5%	5.3%
Unskilled	2.4%	2.4%
Own account workers	8.4%	7.6%
Farmers	7.6%	7.9%
Agricultural workers	0.8%	0.8%
All others gainfully occupied & unknown	15.0%	16.8%

Table 7.3 Socio–Economic Group of Respondents 2011/12&2010/11

http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/hea_key_facts_figures_1112.pdf

% of	Universities	Universities	IoTs and National Colleges of Ireland	IoTs and National Colleges of Ireland
	2011/2012	2010/2011	2011/2012	2010/2011
Employers and managers	21.1	20	16.0	15.3
Higher professional	15.1	14.9	5.5	5.7
Lower professional	11.4	10.7	6.6	6.5
Non- manual	9.2	9.6	9.4	9.8
Manual skilled	9.5	9.4	15.1	15.3
Semi-skilled	4.5	4.6	6.8	6.1
Unskilled	1.6	1.7	3.3	3.3
Own account workers	7.7	7.2	9.2	8.1
Farmers	8.0	8.2	7.0	7.4
Agricultural workers	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.9
All others gainfully occupied & unknown	11.1	12.9	20.1	21.5

Table 7.4 Socio-Economic Group by Sector 2011/12 – 2010/11

http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/hea_key_facts_figures_1112.pdf

The largest socio-economic group in the University sector is the Employer and Manager group followed by the Higher Professional group. The participation of new entrant respondents within these groups has increased slightly between 2010/11 and 2011/12.

Percentage of population that has attained below upper secondary education only	2011	2000
25 -64 year olds	27%	43%

Students' socio-economic background: In Ireland, students from low socio-economic backgrounds are 2.40 times more likely to be low performers than their peers with high socio-economic status, according to PISA 2009, which is slightly above the OECD average (2.37 times). Students whose parents have low educational attainment have twice a higher risk of low performance (2.05 times)

Solution 7

Reallocate this unjust State subsidy to invest in State School System and Third Level Grants – Take the Educational Power from the ‘Golden Circle’

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