

# Giving early school leavers fresh opportunities: Prevention and second chance measures

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## **Neglected Aspects to Prevention of Early School Leaving:**

4 key issues in the formal school system requiring reform and development that are greater strengths in second chance (Ecory's 2013) and non-formal (Downes 2011a) education

# 4 Key issues: ESL Prevention in the formal school system

- 1) Conflict resolution strategies for teachers and professional development to promote the social support role of teachers



- 2) Emotional Supports

- 3) Alternatives to suspension/expulsion



- 4) More prominent role for 'multi-professional working' in second chance than in mainstream schools (Ecory's 2013, 10 EU countries)

# 1) Conflict resolution strategies for teachers and professional development to promote the social support role of teachers

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



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



Cefai & Cooper (2010) Malta : highlight a pervasive theme of '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'

Pyhälto et al. (2010) Finland: 'unjustified and authoritarian behaviour that undermined pupil's agency was considered as a source of burden, anxiety, and anger'



Downes (2011a): Lithuanian secondary school management interviewee:

“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)

## **2) Neglected need for emotional supports (Downes 2011b, 2013) – not simply career guidance: Bridging health and education**





The Polish national study (CBOS, 2006) with regard to communicative processes between student and teacher is that only 21% of primary students, 15% of gymnasium and 10% of post-gymnasium students reported feeling appreciated in school.

- 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 2001).
- 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).

# Early school leaving is a mental health issue !

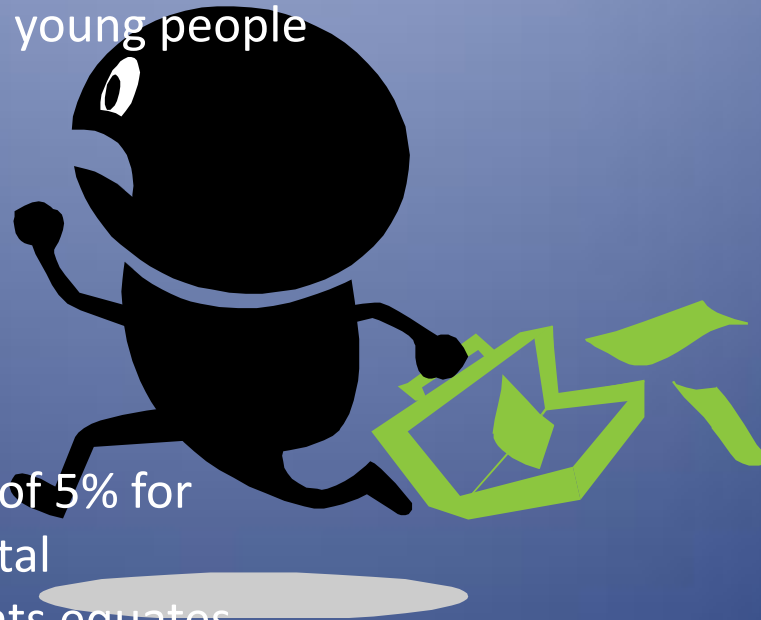
Kaplan et al's (1994) North American study of 4,141 young people tested in 7th grade and once again as young adults which found a significant damaging effect of dropping out of high school on mental health functioning as measured by a 10-item self-derogation scale, a 9-item anxiety scale, a 6-item depression scale and a 6-item scale designed to measure coping.

This effect was also evident when controls were applied for psychological mental health as measured at 7th grade. The significant damaging effect of dropping out of school was also evident even when controls were applied for gender, father's occupational status, and ethnicity



### 3) Alternatives to suspension/expulsion

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.



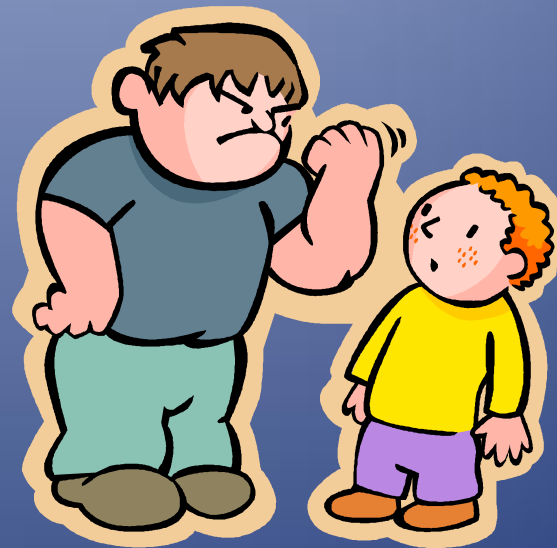
The Irish post-primary figure of 5% for suspension, applied to the total population of 332,407 students equates to well over 16,000 students suspended from post-primary schools in 2005/6 (ERC/NEWB 2010).

Taljunaite et al.,(2010) provide the following Lithuanian example:

According to [secondary school] management and the teacher interviewed, approximately 10 percent of students are expelled from school in each year.

The reasons are usually:

- behaviour problems
- bullying
- harassment
- aggressiveness



#### **4) More prominent role for 'multi-professional working' in second chance than in mainstream schools (Ecory's 2013, 10 EU countries)**

Teams to go beyond 'passing on bits of the child' through referrals (Edwards & Downes 2013)

Teams linked with schools such as outreach care workers, therapists, nurses, social workers, speech and language therapists and housing officers (Edwards & Downes 2013)

- Clarity on which levels the education service is targeting: Three widely recognized prevention approaches in public health.

- \* **Universal** prevention applies to school, classroom and community-wide systems for all students – reform mainstream schools

- **Selective** prevention targets specialized group systems for students at risk of early school leaving/early school leavers with strong potential for reentry to education

(Microlycee, France: Ecorys 2013 – colocation, common management structure/headship, specialist teachers but interaction with mainstream staff, same progression routes)

- **Indicated** prevention engages in specialized, individualized systems for students with high risk of early school leaving/chronic need/multiple risk factors

(Fairbridge, Middlesbrough, Ecorys 2013 – learn by doing, fishing, canoeing, cooking, outdoor activities for learning – expensive)

– **ALL 3 levels need to be focused on in a national strategic approach**

# Key issues – Second Chance/Lifelong Learning



1. Community based lifelong learning centres – Life-wide, Co-location of non-formal and formal (Downes 2011)
2. The need for more proactive outreach strategies to marginalized groups than simply information based ones (Downes 2011a)
3. Motivation and Literacy: Holistic Initial Assessment
4. Embedded Learning - through doing and through emotional engagement



# 1) Community based lifelong learning centres – Life-wide, Co-location of non-formal and formal

## *Co-location of non-formal and formal education*

\*The OECD (2007, p.75) highlight that Finland has over 260 adult education centres, which have evolved from adult vocational training to offer wider learning opportunities for the entire adult population.



## *Co-location of non-formal and formal education* **An Cosán, Dublin (Downes 2011a)**

It caters for wide variety of courses and people. There is the option of progression through levels of courses for participants. The starting point is courses on Personal Development and Communication Skills, Basic Literacy and Numeracy. An Cosán caters for ethnic minorities who need to improve their English language skills, confidence or parenting skills. A second series of courses reflect the needs of the local community for training in leadership e.g. training for community drug workers and community development.



The third series of courses are most important as they allow people to access further education. These courses include those run under the Young Women's Programmes. Some of their past students have gone on to third level colleges and universities, gaining certificates, diplomas and degrees.

The fourth series of courses have, as their immediate goal, retraining or formalising skills for employment

An Cosán supports participants 'to plot out a career path' and to access the programmes that they need to achieve this (Dooley et al., 2010).



This community centre adopts both a lifelong and life-wide focus.

# *A life-wide, community based lifelong learning centre model to engage ethnic minorities*

## **The Balkan Sunflowers, Kosovo (Downes 2011)**

The Balkan Sunflowers' four Community Learning Centres in Fushë Kosova, Gracanica, Plemetina and Shtime respectively support the development of over 600 children from Roma, Ashkanli and Egyptian communities.

A parenting life skills programme has also been developed, which is in addition to the regular meetings with parents and home visits. Each community receives at least 4 programmes during the year inviting parents to participate in parenting skills exchanges.

Their project work involves a school preparatory programme for ages 5-7 and a language club for ages 7-9. For adults, in 2009-2010, women's literacy programmes were initiated in two centres.



# Balkan Sunflowers

Volunteers for Social Reconstruction

According to figures from Balkan Sunflowers NGO in Fushë Kosova, early school leaving rates over the two years of the Learning Centre operation decreased dramatically, from 120 in 2007-2008 to 14 in 2009-2010. Primary school enrolment has more than tripled in Gracanica since the Centre's opening in 2004 from 25 to 85 children.

None of the children attending Gracanica Learning Centre dropped out of primary school in 2010, while only one child in Plemetina dropped out of school that year. 75% of all registered Roma children in Plemetina attend the Learning Centre, while girls' school attendance has increased and there are currently 58 girls in primary school

## 2) The need for more proactive outreach strategies to marginalized groups than simply information based ones



Outreach to marginalised groups is a strong feature of Citizienne, Flanders:

- **Within communities**

According to the staff interviewees, it is critical to ensure various learning opportunities as close as possible to the adults. Both interviewees accentuate that one can not expect all participants to come into a classroom. The educational activities should be 'home delivered'. Therefore the organisation makes efforts in providing education within the communities, decentralised all over Brussels (in mosques, sports clubs, pubs, etc.) (Vermeersch & Vandenbroucke 2010).

The weaknesses of informational type approaches have already been recognised in psychology internationally with regard to drug prevention strategies (Morgan 2001)

Beyond information processing to construction of meaning (Bruner 1990)

The Sociale School Heverlee Centrum voor Volwassenenonderwijs vzw (SSH-CVO) also uses printed press (programme brochure, local newspaper, flyers, adverts, documents, etc.) and online tools (such as a website) to increase the access to their educational provision. Although this type of advertisement reaches the most people, a recent evaluation research by the SSH-CVO has shown the effects of this strategy are rather minimal (Vermeersch & Vandenbroucke 2010).

Festivals, Slovenia (Downes 2011a)

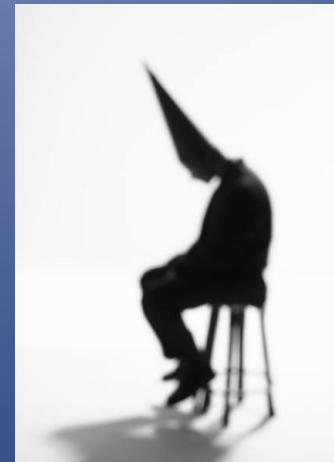


### 3) Motivation and Literacy: Holistic Initial Assessment



## ***Fear of failure – Internalising a failure identity***

A wide range of educational theorists and educational psychologists recognise the danger of labelling students as failures (e.g. Glasser 1969; Warnock 1977; Handy & Aitken 1990; Jimerson 1997; Kellaghan et al 1995; MacDevitt 1998; Kelly 1999; Downes 2003)





## *Fear of success (Ivers & Downes 2012)*

Ivers, J. & Downes, P (2012). A phenomenological reinterpretation of Horner's fear of success in terms of social class. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, Vol 27, Number 3, 369-388



Carrigan & Downes (2010) international review - Recommendation of four dimensions for initial assessment of adult learners regarding basic literacy skills (*Holistic initial assessment*)

1.	An initial semi-structured interview involving self-assessment.
2.	A piece of writing on a theme of relevance and interest chosen by the learner to be examined according to simple and transparent standardised criteria
3.	A short tool with a menu of options for examining literacy with thematic content which can be chosen by the learner from a range of possibilities and which have been proofed for cultural sensitivity and social class bias
4.	Development of an individual education plan in dialogue with the learner, where the learner retains ownership over all of the needs and skills check information and is assured from the outset that the results are not being used in an exclusionary way.

## 4) Embedded Learning



Embedded learning through doing – Fairbridge, Middlesbrough;  
Youthreach, Dublin,

Gardening – kinaesthetic learning



Embedded learning through emotional engagement - 'The  
emotional bridge to relevance' (Glasser 1969)



## 4 'Quick Wins' - Inexpensive

- Build in a social aspect – meet new friends (LLL2010 sp3)
- Staff and students eat together/drink tea together (Ecorys 2013, Youth School Lithuania; Youthreach, Harmonstown, Dublin 2013)
- Staff exchange between education sites – more than isolated individuals (Ecorys 2013)
- Public ceremonies to recognise achievement and create new stories about people's lives (Hegarty 2007; Ecorys 2013)



# *Key Principles for Engaging Marginalised Groups*

Assumed Connection: Start where the person is at

Meaning and Control: Beyond Information based approaches to Active Outreach

‘The emotional bridge to relevance’ (Glasser 1969)

Build on strengths of the learner

Developing mediating spaces for engagement: Attention to location

Cultural competence and communication skills of teaching staff

Holistic view of needs

Student voices being central



# Key issues - Prevention

- 1) Conflict resolution strategies for teachers and professional development to promote the social support role of teachers



- 2) Emotional Supports

- 3) Alternatives to suspension/expulsion



- 4) 'More prominent role for multi-professional working' in second chance than in mainstream schools (Ecory's 2013, 10 EU countries)



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