

A Holistic Approach to Early School Leaving Prevention in Europe: Key Strategic Priorities for System Level Development

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- A. Beyond 'ineffective policies' (EUNEC 2013): Moving from an Individualistic to a System Blockage (Downes 2013) Focus
- B. Beyond the OECD's 10 Steps to Equity in Education: The Neglected Shadow of Emotions for ESL Prevention - 'It's the heart stupid'
- C. 'Beyond a patchwork' (EUNEC 2013) approach of System Fragmentation in National Policies to ESL
- D. A Strategic Systemic Approach to ESL Prevention – Structural Indicators

A1. Overcoming System Blockages in Communication: Professional Development for Teacher Conflict Resolution Skills and Cultural Competence/Diversity Training

Rumberger (2004) argues that it is important to study dropout and completion not only from an individual perspective, but also within an institutional perspective.

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)

A positive school climate can be created at classroom and school levels. In the classroom, teachers must be adequately prepared and motivated to meet students' needs through sensitive and responsive pedagogical interactions (Danielsen et al 2010).

Strategies and approaches to achieve a positive developmental atmosphere in schools are recommended for pre- and in-service teacher training (Jourdan et al. 2008).

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”.

Implementation Issues:

In Slovenia teachers are formally entitled to 5 days yearly for in-service training...However, it appears from the information collected by our interviews that in-service training is primarily meant for the improvement of professional competences while more soft skills needed for conflict solving, participative learning and the like appear to be more related to individual personality (Ivančič et al., 2010, in Downes 2011).

The TALIS study (OECD 2009) observes an extremely wide variation in teacher participation in continuing professional development across countries.

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”.



Implementation Issues: Need for Transparent System of Quality

Lithuanian [secondary] school management interviewee on teacher professional development generally:

“I think it is a waste of money. It is a huge political fiction...Speaking about this centre – it’s more money making than real knowledge. There are a lot of courses where teachers come the first and the last day. On Monday they come to this centre to register and pay for the courses, and on Friday they come and get the certificate. The course fee is usually paid (or is later reimbursed) by the school. There’s no test, no final examination. Just for being on the list of participants one gets a certificate. Teachers need a certificate, the centre needs money and it is a vicious circle – wasting money. Hundreds of people are paid by the centre and they say that salaries of teachers are low – teachers should get that money, not this Centre” (Taljunaite et al., 2010, in Downes 2011).



Cultural competence and staff from stakeholder groups – Access to Teaching Profession for Diverse Social Groups (Downes 2011)

Lieberman et al (2011) note that, 'The shortage of infant mental health providers from minority groups has a particularly negative impact on immigrant and minority children and families, who need interventions that are provided in their native language by practitioners who understand their cultural values and childrearing practices'

A2. Overcoming System Blockages through a Systemic Focus rather than mainly Individual Risk Factors Focus

Moving to a systemic focus informed by more policy relevant research

- International research on identifying individual risk factors typically fails to analyse the *mediating variable of system supports*, i.e., services to prevent ESL, state supports available for students in schools or community (cf. Cederberg & Hartsmar (2013), Scandinavia: Those who were considering dropping out, but changed their mind, reported that they did so after advice from a teacher or a social worker)
- Risks observed for ESL are *correlations* not necessarily causal inferences
- A focus overwhelmingly on individual ESL risks is not solution focused, simply problem focused: a solution focused approach includes an awareness of risk factors but is not limited to simply stopping risks



- Risk factors are decontextualised stories (see also Bruner 2002), they may lack transferability through problem of ecological validity (Bronfenbrenner 1979) to other cultures/contexts
- Need a focus on silent background enabling conditions for helping young people stay in school – not only individual protective factors but also system level protective factors, supportive systems
- Risk factors can lack policy relevance without a focus on how changeable they are and how they can be changed to protective factors at a system level
- Risk factors as static traits of those likely to leave school early ignores that trait based psychology is highly limited, that people's motivations are dynamic and situational, and they live in dynamic developmental contexts
- Need to move from a models of good practice approach to extracting key structural and process features of such good practice models (Downes 2013b)—rather than simply attempting to transfer a whole model from one complex context to another

Theoretical Framework for Understanding System Blockage

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

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 to a focus on 'resilience
fostering systems' to neutralize
risk factors

A3. Overcoming System Blockages: Beyond Intergenerational Splits in Policy to Lifewide Community Lifelong Centres to Engage Ethnic Minorities such as Roma

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.

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Balkan Sunflowers

Volunteers for Social Reconstruction

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

- **Local community lifelong learning centre**
 - **Life-wide**
- **School as site of community education**

A4. Overcoming System Blockages in Communication: Student Voices to be Systematically Consulted in Policy and Practice across EU

- Gap in EU Commission and Council ESL (2011) documents

*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)

Not enough qualitative research on experience of the education system (Cohen 2006).

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



B1. A mental health/emotional support and early intervention focus for national ESL strategies – depression, trauma, bullying, school climate, family support outreach, substance abuse prevention, fear of failure/success

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 2001).

Early interventions that aim at enhancing student mental health and sense of mastery could be instrumental in preventing premature school exit, as they are likely to increase academic engagement (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006; Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

Quiroga et al. (2013) based on a high-risk longitudinal sample (2000– 2006) of French-speaking adolescents living in Montreal

- recruited from two suburban secondary schools ranked by the Ministry of Education of Quebec (MEQ) in the three lowest deciles of socioeconomic status (SES) according to mother's education and parental employment.

* 493 participants (228 girls and 265 boys).

Quiroga et al. (2013) Results show that depression scores were negatively correlated with self-perceived academic competence but not with self-reported academic achievement –

*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. These findings emphasize that the connection between early depression and leaving school without qualifications is mostly indirect, as it is accounted for by achievement-related self-perceptions.

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).

A meta-analysis of 28 longitudinal studies found that bullying doubled the risk for depression an average of 7 years later, even after controlling for numerous other risk factors (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011).

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).

Swearer et al (2010) conclude from their international review that:

*'Bullying will be reduced and/or stopped when prevention and intervention programs target the complexity of individual, peer, school, family, and community contexts in which bullying unfolds'



School Climate, Teasing, Bullying

Cornell et al. (2013) A one standard deviation increase in school-level poverty was associated with a 16.7% increase in dropout rates, holding all other variables constant.

Notably, one standard deviation increases in student and teacher-reported Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying were associated with 16.5% and 10.8% increases in dropout counts, respectively, holding all other variables constant.

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) “ Although a correlational study cannot demonstrate a causal effect, these findings are consistent with the hypothesis that a climate of teasing and bullying exerts a negative influence on students that contributes to the decision to drop out of school”.

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.

Cornell et al. (2013) “teasing and bullying may be a neglected source of decay to the social capital of schools that generates an atmosphere of mistrust and alienation, animosity and fear that ultimately pushes students to abandon their educational aspirations”.

Teachers and principals consistently underestimate levels of school bullying (Tattum 1997; Downes 2004, see also Young, Glogowska & Lockyer 2007 on related divergences).

Estonian School management interviewee : *“The majority of those who have dropped out of or left their previous school are lower secondary students. They had conflicts with teachers or other problems and could not continue in their old school”* (Tamm & Saar, 2010, in Downes 2011).

Needs a *combined* universal prevention focus (school wide, curriculum), selected prevention focus (groups of students in classes of high levels of bullying/teasing) and indicated prevention focus (intensive emotional support work for chronic level bullies and victims)

Sleep aspects linked to academic achievement, mental health

Taras & Potts-Datema (2005) note that most children need at least 9 hours of restful sleep each night and conclude that:

‘The preponderance of literature that recognises the detrimental effects of sleep disorders is astounding and perhaps not fully appreciated among many primary care providers, school health professionals and educators’.

Other research has shown that adolescents require at least 8.5 hours of sleep per night and more appropriately 9.25 hours of sleep (Carskadon et al., 1980). A review by Blunden et al (2001) of 13 articles demonstrated that reduced attention, memory, intelligence and increased problematic behaviour resulted from sleep-related obstructive breathing. Other international studies have shown a relationship between insufficient sleep and lowered academic performance (Allen, 1992; Kowalski & Allen, 1995; Schuller, 1994; Wolfson & Carskadon, 1996, 1998).



“At what time do you usually go to sleep on a weekday?” (Downes & Maunsell, 2007)	Before Midnight	Midnight	After midnight	Varies/NA
Primary School A %	42%	16%	---	42%
School B %	54%	16%	15%	15%
School C %	78%	9%	6%	7%
School D %	83%	6%	---	11%
School E %	40%	26%	---	34%
School F %	60%	8%	---	32%
School G %	81%	15%	---	4%

Bridging health and education (Downes & Gilligan 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)



Family support Outreach for emotional and practical supports: *Indicated Prevention Level, Chronic Need, Intergenerational Drug Abuse, High School Non-Attendance*



The **Familiscope Morning Programme** is an intervention used to support children with chronic absenteeism. It involves:

- supporting parents to implement appropriate morning and night time routines
- monitoring and tracking children's attendance
- offering practical support and advice to parents to overcome the issue
- rewarding children for improved school attendance
- promoting an awareness of the link between poor school attendance and early school leaving
- resolving transport issues
- engaging the necessary outside supports to benefit the child.

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.





The ultimate goal is to improve school attendance for children living in families that are often quite chaotic. Long term the goal is to pass these skills to the parents and children so they will no longer require support. Children who are consistently absent in their early school years rarely catch up.

It was observed that **16 out of 19** children on Familiscope's Morning Programme demonstrably improved their school attendance. 3 out of 19 did not improve attendance.

The attendance gains are sizeable in a number of cases for those children who are most marginalized

Challenging Fatalism and Substance Abuse

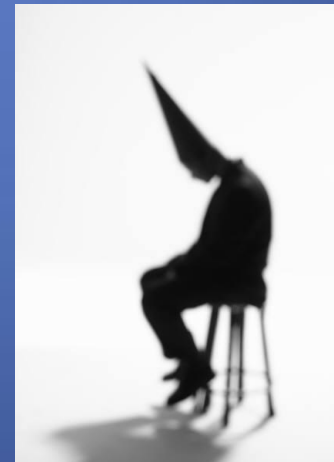
Need for strategies to challenge fatalism which is a risk factor for drug use and other self-harming behaviour, including a fatalism associated with early school leaving (Kalichman et al. 2000, Downes 2003; Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes 2010)

O'Connell & Sheikh (2009) explored non-academic (non-cognitive) factors in early school leaving and found strong correlations with smoking and with lack of daily school preparation for early school leaving in a sample of over 25,000 8th grade US students from over 1,000 schools

Fear of failure – Internalising a failure identity – Need emotional supports and public ceremonies to recognise achievement (Hegarty 2007; Ecorys 2013)

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. Merrett 1986; 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



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'

C1. 'Beyond a patchwork' (EUNEC 2013) approach of System Fragmentation: Clarity on which Prevention Levels the Service is Targeting

The three widely recognized prevention approaches in public health are:

UNIVERSAL, SELECTED and **INDICATED** prevention (Burkhart 2004; Reinke et al., 2009).

- **UNIVERSAL** prevention applies to school, classroom and community-wide systems for all students and their families (e.g. Teacher conflict resolution skills, Whole school bullying prevention approaches engaging all families).



- **SELECTED** prevention targets specialized groups of students at risk of early school leaving and their families (e.g. some family support programmes can work more efficiently at a group level than simply individually for families in need but not at chronic need levels).

- **INDICATED** prevention engages in specialized, individualized systems for students with high risk of early school leaving and their families – Chronic need

INDICATED prevention – chronic need – Requires more than afterschool homework support approach (Downes et al 2006), more than ‘mentors’ to more complex emotional and academic supports

The VaSkooli project in the Turku and Salo regions of South-West Finland acknowledges the ‘difficulties in reaching the youngsters and their families, who do not participate in any of the special services provided by the sub-projects’ (Ahola & Kivela 2007).

ALL 3 levels need to be focused on in a national and regional strategy

C2. 'Beyond a patchwork' (EUNEC 2013) approach of System Fragmentation: From Multiple Agencies to Cohesive Multidisciplinary Teams



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. It is not enough just to designate a desk for these services in schools.

- There is a need to focus on interventions across multiple domains (e.g., family, school, groups, individual, community, see also Reinke et al's 2009 review of US combined school and family interventions) with a focus on system change (institutions and environment), as well as individual change
- There is not one single generalisable ideal model or specific list of disciplinary professionals but a European framework of key structural indicators could be established to guide such models. Such indicators could include addressing issues such as a) a continuum of care, b) stakeholder representation for distinct marginalised groups that are being sought to be reached, c) specific implementation plans for bullying prevention, c) specific alternatives to suspension and expulsion from school, d) an outreach strategy for supporting marginalised families, e) teacher professional development for conflict resolution and diversity skills.

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, risk of substance misuse, suspension/expulsion, conflict with teachers

*Outreach work to reach most marginalised families

- 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).

C3. 'Beyond a patchwork' (EUNEC 2013) approach of System Fragmentation: 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”.



Significantly, an overall reduction in suspensions through Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) has also been observed in the US (Bradshaw, Mitchell & Leaf 2008), thereby indicating a direct benefit for early school leaving prevention.

Language dimension to disruptive behaviour/suspension needs to be addressed

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).

C4. 'Beyond a patchwork' (EUNEC 2013) approach of System 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)



C5. 'Beyond a patchwork' (EUNEC 2013) approach of System Fragmentation: Avoiding Undifferentiated Categorizing

Beyond simple categorizing of students: Not '1 early school leaving problem' – a behaviour with a vast range of underlying motivations and factors

Not '1 size fits all' solutions for generic categories but there can be better models than others for key aspects

Beyond simple categorizing of parents: Parental engagement for ESL prevention involves a range of strategic approaches and models rather than a single intervention approach

A differentiated strategic approach to engaging parents for preventing ESL of their children needs to operate at the *family support* (chronic need, indicated prevention) level and at *parental involvement* (groups-selected prevention and universal) levels



- Different developmental needs and interests of parents with younger (e.g., language development, attachment, nonverbal emotional therapy) compared with older children
 - Different developmental needs and interests of parents based on *their* own age differences
 - Gender differences for parental involvement and lifelong learning classes
 - Parents with chronic needs such as intergenerational drug abuse
 - Single parents
- Recognise sharing of good practice involves analysis of strategic gaps

C6. 'Beyond a patchwork' (EUNEC 2013) approach of System Fragmentation: National and Regional Central Driving Committees for ESL Prevention

Area/Regional Focus Needed

Norway, Markussen et al (2011) *statistically significant variation in the probability of early leaving and non-completion, as compared to completion, due to both county and study program. *Students from Hedmark County had a higher probability both of early leaving and not completing, as compared to completing, than students in Buskerud (reference group), all else being equal. Moreover, students from the counties Oslo, Vestfold, and Akershus had a higher probability of early leaving than students from Buskerud.



Estonian example of need for regional actors to focus on ESL prevention

Kello et al.'s (2011) student-centred research on the effects of language change in instruction from Russian to Estonian which places less academic Russian-speaking students in more difficulty. Kello's (2009) focus groups with Russian-speaking students in Narva, Estonia highlighted that 'students whose language skills are poorer are left aside or leave completely' , so that early school leaving is a foreseeable consequence of language reforms for the less academic Russian-speaking students in Estonia and Latvia (Downes 2003).

Kello's (2009) focus groups with Russian-speaking students in Narva, Estonia highlighted that 'students whose language skills are poorer are left aside or leave completely' (p.47)

- North-Eastern Estonia 'Although the first integration programme did include a chapter of socio-economic integration, its place in the integration policy was very low-key' (Lauristin et al., 2011).

D. A Strategic Systemic Approach to ESL Prevention – Structural Indicators



Structural Indicators (Yes/No answers for system transparency – see UN Right to Health)

*Core structural indicators for ESL prevention - shared by all Member States nationally and regionally (e.g., central driving committee for ESL prevention yes/no, alternatives to suspension across all schools, yes/no, professional development for teachers' conflict resolution skills, yes/no, emotional supports available for students in need, yes/no)

*Specific/thematic country specific structural indicators - local needs, distinctive features of national systems

* Holistic structural indicators – all relevant ones that Member States nationally and regionally recognise are important and will address in the future if successful case for additional funding is made. These allow for recognition of gaps in current services for ESL prevention (e.g., for family support, outreach and mental health)

Outcome indicators from interventions of multidisciplinary team:

a) at an individual level

- improved school attendance (outreach dimension and improved school climate)
- improved student motivation and performance due to improved class climate
- improved student concentration as trauma related issues being supported
- improved behaviour in class
- decreased anxiety and depression and improved mental health, including academic
- improved sleep patterns influencing improved concentration and academic performance

- decrease in substance abuse influencing improved concentration and academic performance
- reduction and elimination of suspension and expulsion
- decrease in school bullying bringing improved school attendance, improved motivation for learning in school, less personal anxiety
- improved self-image, self-esteem, self-efficacy for learning: overcoming fatalism as a risk factor for early school leaving, substance abuse, other risk behaviours
- increased language development in younger children

b) at a family level

- increased engagement of previously marginalized families with support services
- increased engagement of previously marginalized families with the school
- improved communication between child and parents

c) at the school system level

- decreased use of suspensions
- increased use of alternatives to suspension
- improved school and classroom climate
- decrease in bullying in class and school
- professional development of teachers' conflict resolution skills and social class and ethnicity diversity awareness
- increased tolerance of diversity and confidence for minority groups in the school institutional culture

Key Questions for your national/regional strategy – A strategic systemic approach to overcome gaps



1. At which level(s) of prevention is your strategy working – **UNIVERSAL, SELECTED, INDICATED**? (E.G. Stockholm ABC is general parent programme ages 3-12, is *universal* level and not *selected* or *indicated*)

At which levels of prevention is your strategy NOT working?

2. Is there collaboration with key target group members (i.e., involvement in design, strategy, decision-making, leadership roles, employment of them) or merely information to be consumed by them?

3. At which level of system change is your strategy working?

- Individual only

- School system

- Family system

- Community system (e.g., Gijon festivals)

- Links between some of these ? (Antwerp transition primary-postprimary ?)

- Which of these system levels are NOT being targeted in your national/regional/municipal strategy and need to be ?

4. Is the focus in your national/regional strategy holistic for parental engagement and including:

- Practical and emotional outreach family support
- Mental health issues (plus drug, alcohol support focus)
- Education issues for parents
- Language education issues for parents
- Support for parents in educating children
- Parent peer supports

5. Is there clear responsibility at local levels for which agency takes the lead on key issues or is there diffusion of responsibility?

- Are there integrated teams or fragmented multiple agencies ?



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