

***The long road
from a strategy on ESL
to sustainable changes in schools***

EUNEC Conference on Early School Leaving
Vilnius, November 2013



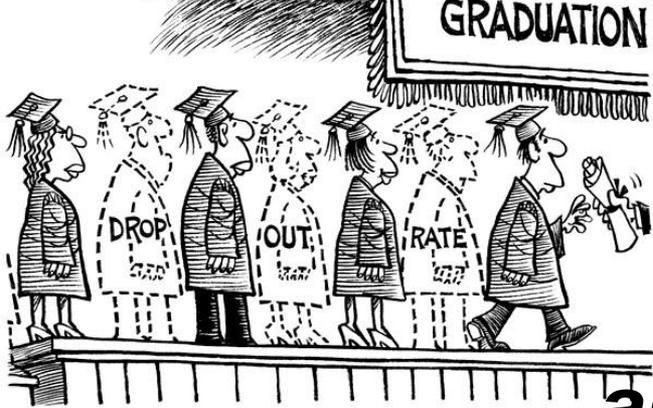
Overview

Part I: Current situation in Austria

- Terminology revisited: ESL – School Failure? Dropouts – Pushouts? NEET?
- Data on ESL
- Austrian strategy on ESL and “Youth Coaching“ as a targeted measure and “Fit for Training“ as a subsequent measure

Part II: The long road to making schools a better place for students at risk

- Structural / systemic / pedagogical challenges in the context of ESL
- Gap between (research) findings and school practice
- Whole-school approaches and quality initiatives in schools
- Outlook



Terminology (revisited) and different perspectives

- ***Early School Leaving*** refers to the completion of upper secondary school or vocational training with a certificate – *the person and his/her certificates are monitored*
- ***School Failure*** corresponds to a broader and systemic perspective (OECD: “*Equity and Quality in Education. Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*”, 2012)
- ***NEET***: young people, **n**ot in **e**ducation, **e**mployment and **t**raining – *this perspective combines labour market & educational monitoring*
- ***Dropouts – Pushouts?***

Reflecting & overcoming the individual deficit perspective...

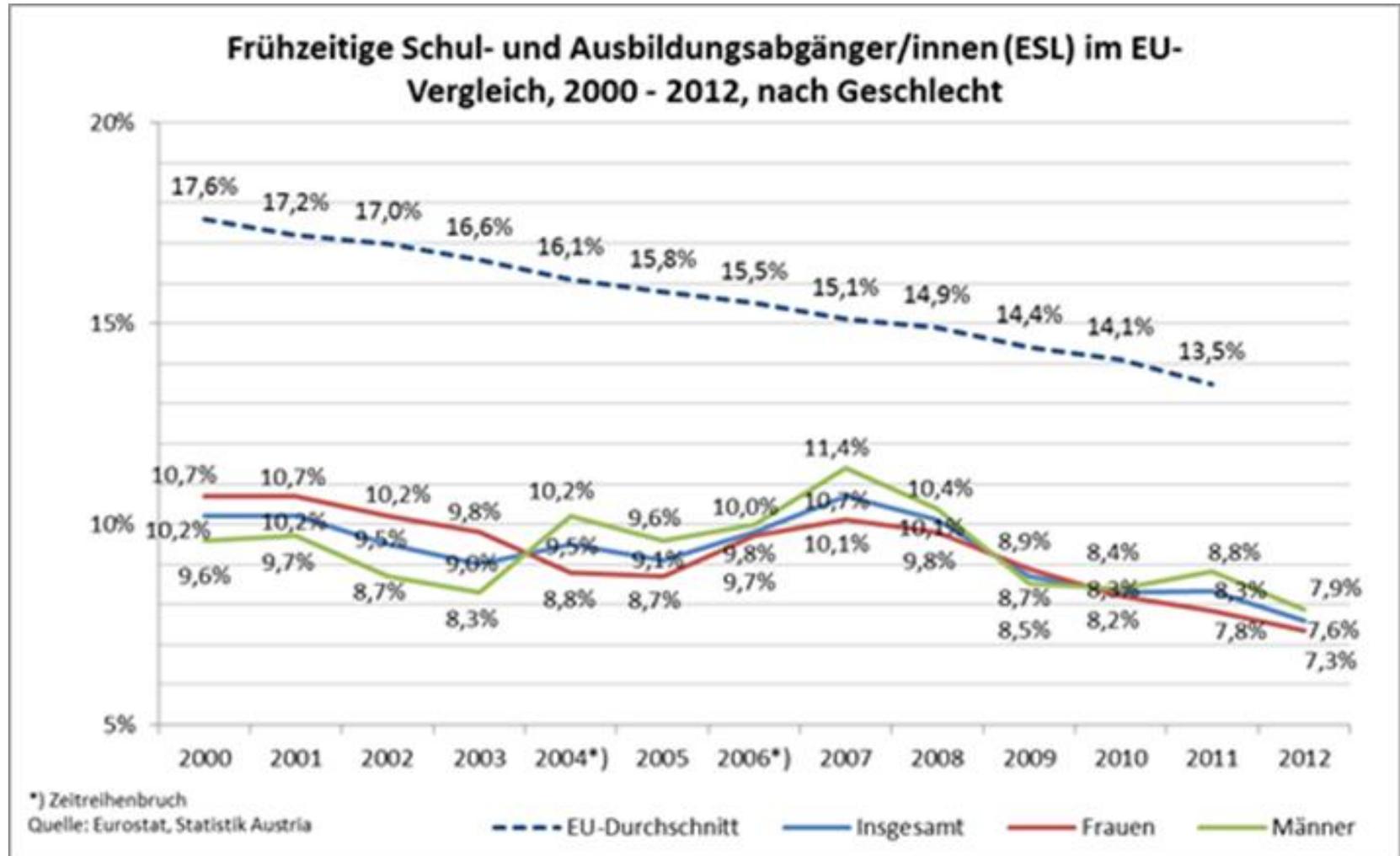
...for the benefit of a broader perspective

Definition of School Failure (OECD 2007/2012)

“From a **systematic perspective**, school failure occurs when an education system fails to provide fair and inclusive education services that lead to enriching student learning. At the **school level**, school failure can be defined as the incapacity of a school to provide fair and inclusive education and an adequate environment for students to achieve outcomes worthy of their effort and ability. From an **individual perspective**, school failure can be defined as the failure of a student to obtain a minimum level of knowledge and skills, which can at the extreme level lead to dropping out of school.”

(OECD: Equity and Quality in Education, 2012, p. 18)

Data on ESL in Austria



However... *Certificates = Competences?*

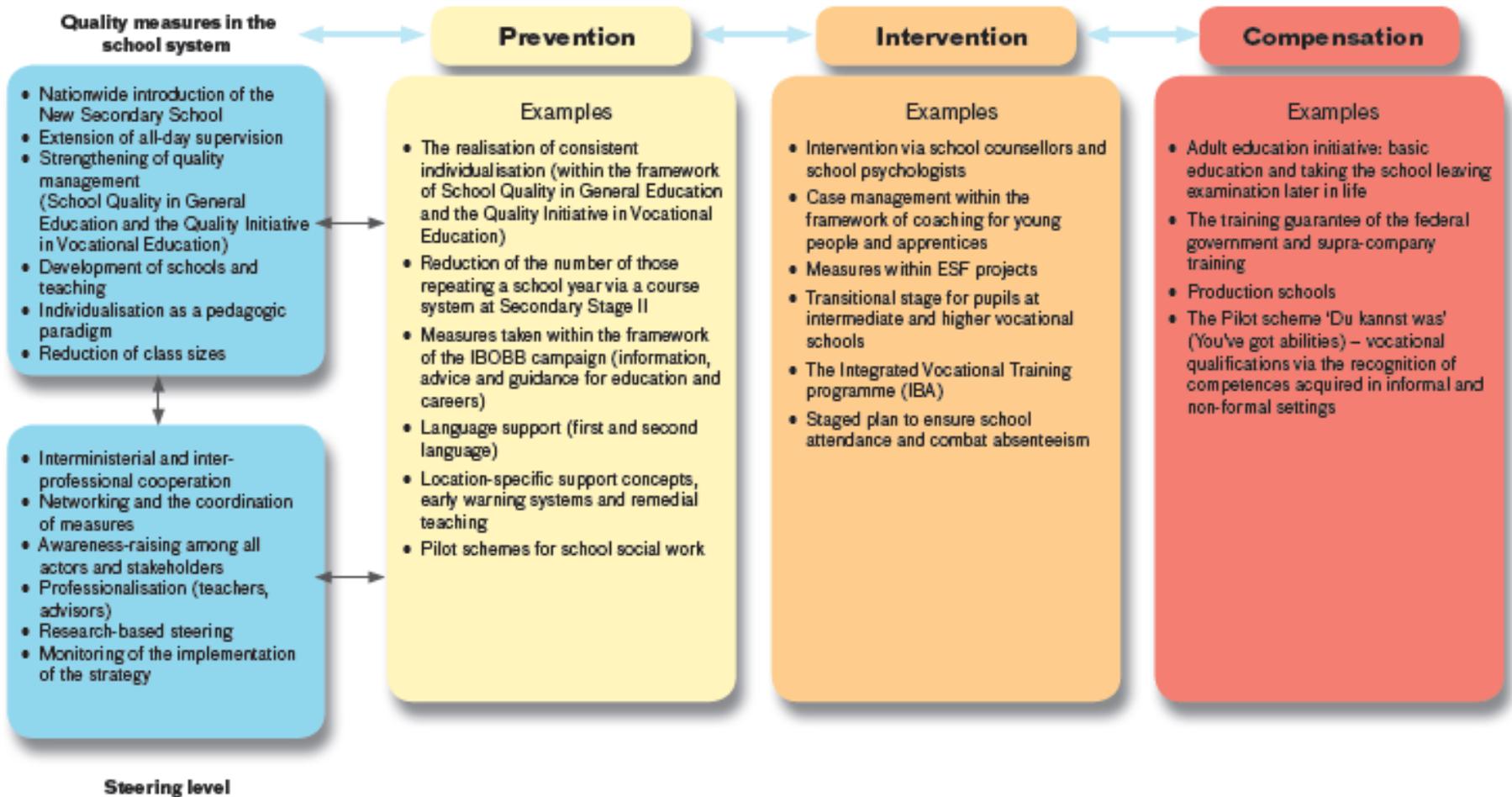
Discourse on “Poverty in certificates and competences“ (dt.:
Zertifikats- und Kompetenzarmut = “Bildungsarmut”, Jutta Allmendinger /
Stephan Leibfried)

	ESL 2012	Students at risk – PISA / literacy
Share p.a.	7,6 %	27,5 %
Number of students	7.000	25.000

Source: Mario Steiner, IHS, 2013

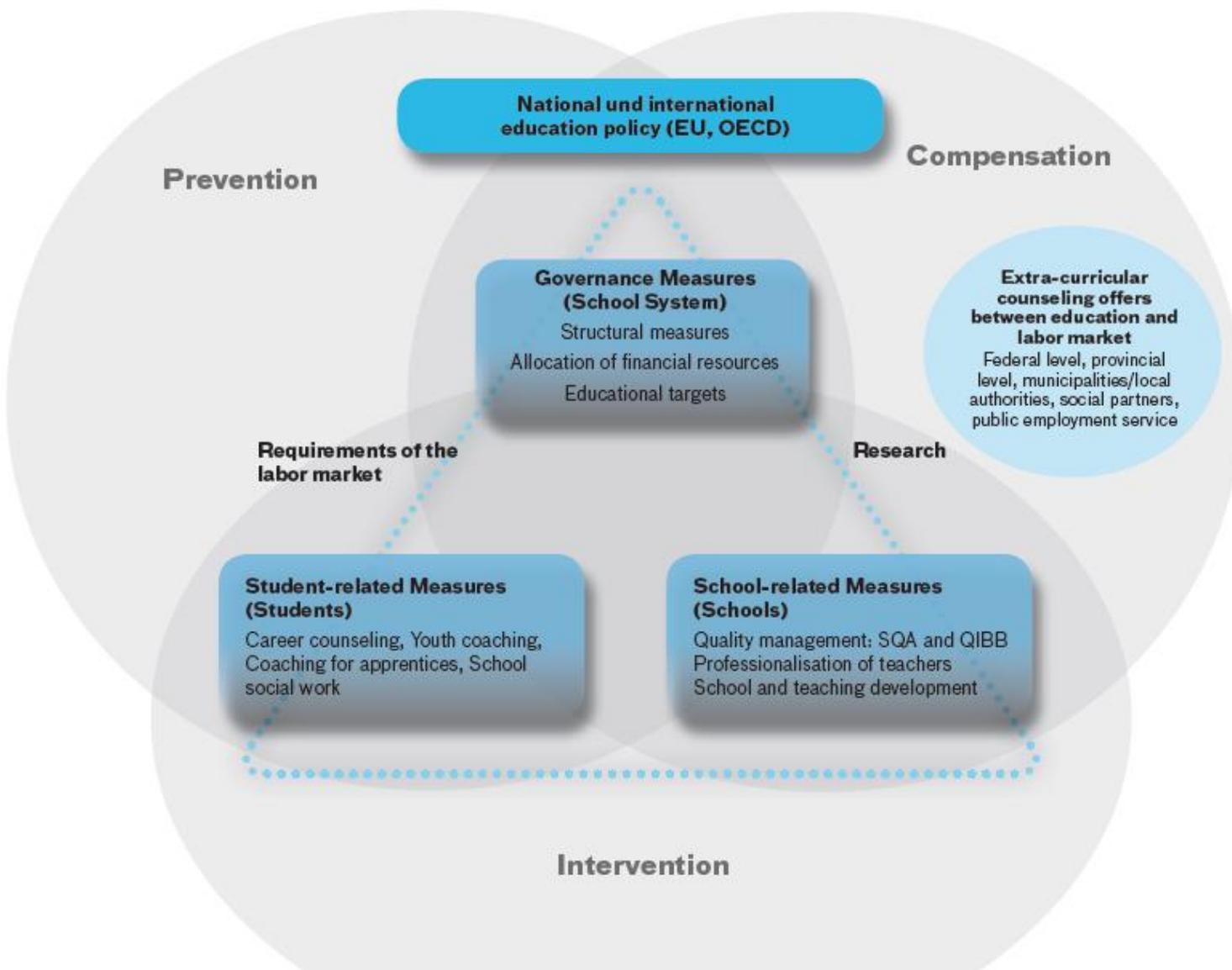
How do we tackle this gap? What are the underlying causes?

Strategic framework to prevent early school leaving and reduce dropout rates in education and training



Strategy to prevent early school leaving

Preventing educational deprivation – Optimising educational pathways – Raising the number of educational certificates





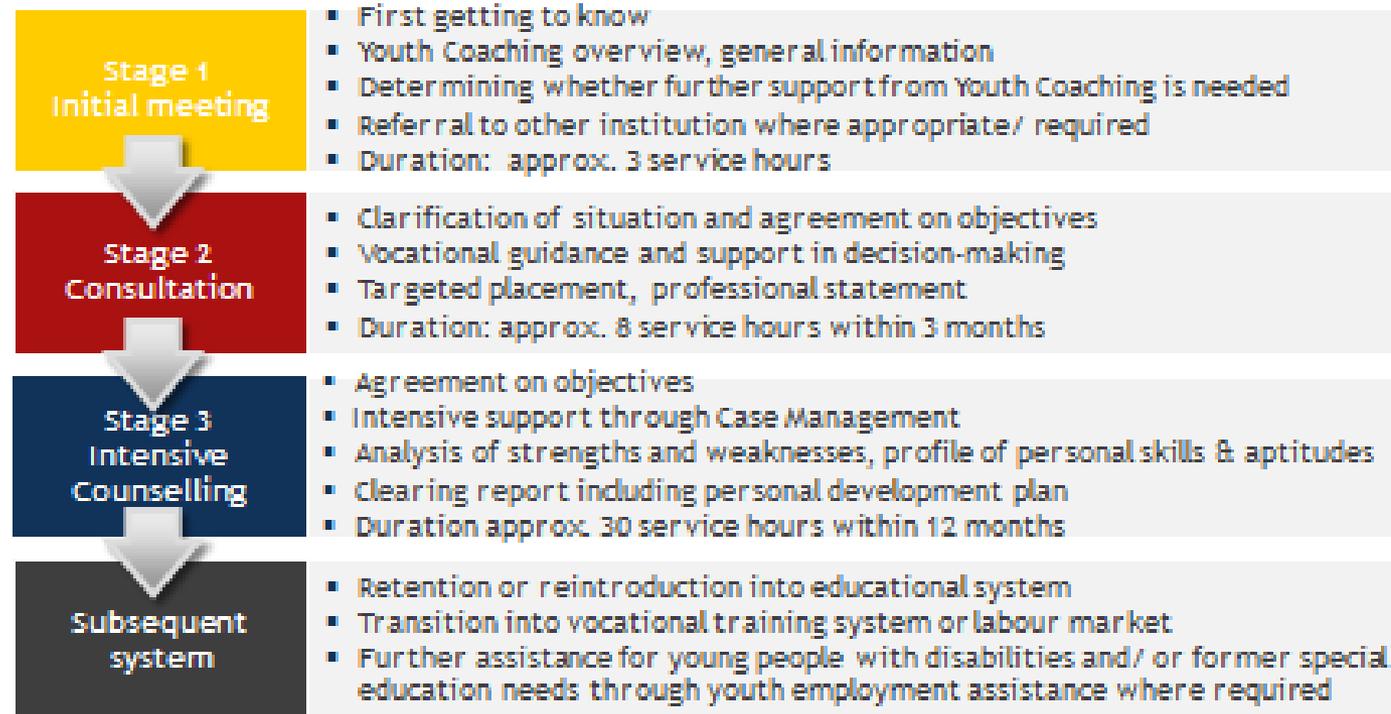
Youth Coaching – a targeted measure to deal with students at risk

- **Jointly-run project** between the **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** (BMASK) and the **Ministry of Education**, funded by BMASK; concept developed by the **Federal Social Service** (“Bundessozialamt”); different organizations provide Youth Coaching in schools and counselling centres
- **Pilot projects** in Vienna and Styria (C’mon 14, move on); former measure “Clearing” for students with special needs
- Youth Coaching offers **counselling on educational and vocational pathways for students at risk** and helps them make self-determined career decisions; NEET as target group
- **Individual support and assistance** is provided until integration into (initial vocational) training or the labour market is under way.



How does Youth Coaching work?

Overview of the stage modell



Follow-up measure

New measure for 2014: “Fit for training“

- supports the most disadvantaged youth identified by youth coaches
- targeted follow-up measure for youngsters who fail in apprenticeships and training, etc.
- provided by Federal Social Service, funded by Ministry of Social Affairs
- one-year intensive customized training & empowerment
- compensation for missing skills & poor competences
- tailor-made “after-maturing“ (dt. „Nachreifung“)
- focus on migrant youth with low SES and NEET

Challenges at system level

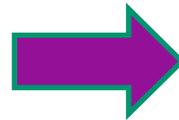
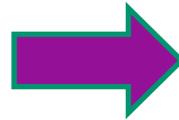
Drawing a **bigger picture** in education?

Selectivity of the system - **not reinforcing existing inequalities** (SES – outcomes)?

Bringing different **sectors into alignment**?

Changing schools without extra resources?

Making **schools accountable** without control over budget & staff? Paradigm shift?



Education / formation ↔
competences/qualification/
employability?

Missing knowledge about interrelation SES & ESL in schools and concrete ways of breaking the cycle

Fragmented governance / responsibilities & funding, short-term periods of funding

Expansion of school autonomy? Clear aims?
More responsibility for head teachers?

Challenges at school level

Implementing & monitoring
quality initiatives

Identifying **competence gaps**
and **improving instruction**

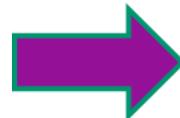
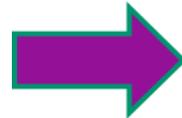
Implementing **whole school**
approaches to ESL

Changing **professional**
attitudes and patterns

Accountability of teachers
and schools

Additional **resources** & staff
(index-based funding?)

Conducive / supportive
learning environments



Tension between focus on
outcomes and customized /
personalized learning

Enough knowledge about the
different pathways for
effective learning &
teaching?

Dealing with **linguistic**
diversity and **late migrant**
arrivers?

Co-operation between
different professionals

Topics: leadership, school
/culture, aims and outcomes,
support, teacher training



The gap between (research) findings and practice ...

- **Appropriate and early support** is crucial.
- **Diagnostic competences** of teachers are important.
- **Classroom atmosphere / school culture *and* school leadership** matter.
- **Teachers' attitudes / learning approaches** are critical.
- **Support for teachers *and* students is crucial:** social work, counselling teachers, support structures, ... burn-out prevention for teachers
- **Positive discrimination** for disadvantaged students + index-based funding for disadvantaged schools
- **Improvements in teaching & learning environments** + a broad scope of different teaching and learning methods



What can be done to put these findings into classroom practice? How to train teachers in an effective way?

Whole-school approach & quality initiatives

(Good practice in VET)

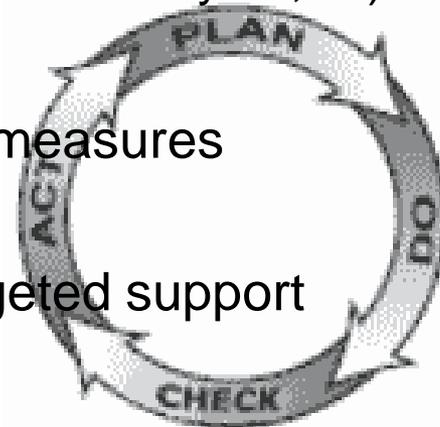
School quality circle: **PLAN – DO – CHECK – ACT**

- **Analysis** of the current situation (number of ESL & causes)
- Definition of **objectives** to tackle ESL + definition of indicators of success
- Short-term and long-term **measures** (differentiated instruction, additional language support, remedial programmes, case management & counselling, parental involvement, tutoring and mentoring, transitional year, ...)
- **Evaluation** of success / failure
- **Rephrasing & redefining objectives** and measures



combined with early detection + targeted support

(www.stop-dropout.at)





Outlook

We can't turn schools around within a short period of time.

➔ *But we can **initiate and support change** in school culture & professional attitudes to combat ESL and to break the cycle of disadvantage.*

There are no recipes for bringing about change.

➔ *But we can **make schools and teachers sensitive to the mechanism of disadvantage and the interrelation between SES and ESL** through quality initiatives and professional development.*

ESL will continue at a certain level.

➔ *But we can reduce it to a minimum and keep the future (and educational systems) open for young people by means of **joint and coordinated efforts, tailor-made programmes and a strong commitment on the part of the people in charge.***

What we need for sustainable change is ...

- to **overcome the individual deficit perspective** in favour of a **wider social inequalities perspective** which avoids 'blaming the victim' and takes into account the individual living circumstances of young people
- **a social justice approach & a new paradigm in education** that confronts and counteracts disadvantage and the marginalization of young people and reflects discriminatory school practices at all levels
- to **improve awareness & responsibility at all levels.**

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