

INNOVATIVE TOOL TO DETECT YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT

Liliana GRECU

Researcher, National Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection
gliliana@incsmpls.ro

Magdalena VELCIU

Researcher, National Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection
magda.velciu@incsmpls.ro

ABSTRACT

*In this paper, we present the "Risk Detector", one of the principal tools for screening and intervention to prevent school and training dropout. It aims to identify young people at risk of abandoning school by collecting and interpreting information on the incidence of situations and problems these phenomena of dropout, with threatening impact on the development and professional life. The methodology for developing the tool "Risk Detector" was developed through a research partnership during the Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation project namely "Support against Vocational Training and Education Dropout" - *SAVED*.*

Keywords: school dropout, vocational training dropout, risk of dropping out

JEL Classification: I21, J24

Better acting on education and training dropout

Achieving better results on education, especially " Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%" and the adjacent " at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education" are important points for the major targets for the European Union in 2020, toward a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Educational improvements are able to help employability and professional life.

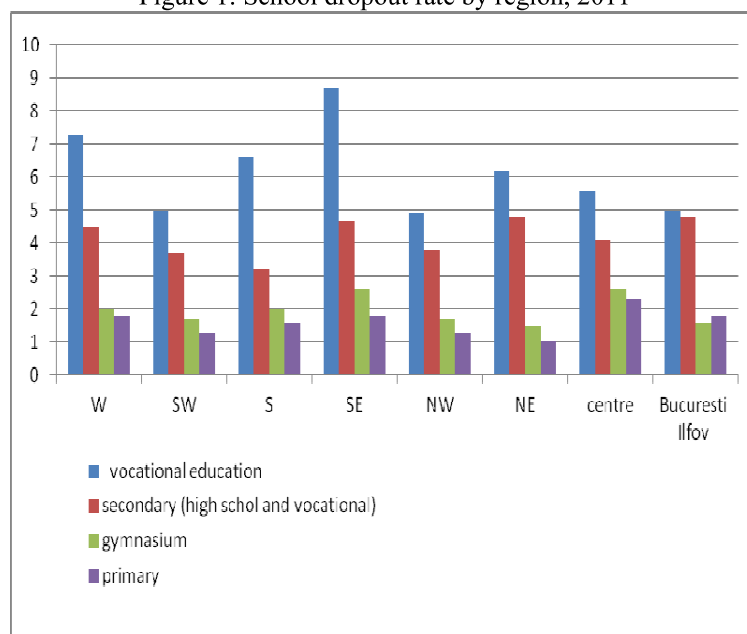
In general, EU countries have difficulties, more or less, due to the fact that some young people leaving the education or training system without a qualification or, their qualifications do not meet the labour market requirements.

In Romania, after 1990, the educational system has undergone a series of transformations due to regulations and demographic developments of Romania, which

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led to the reorganization of the whole education system. Recently, the dropout phenomenon was increasing in general, mainly among children and young people belonging certain categories such as: the Roma children who grow up in poor families or living in rural areas and those with disabilities. For example, in 2011, the school dropout rate was higher in region SE where there is an increased incidence of poverty comparative with others an area.

Figure 1: School dropout rate by region, 2011



Source: Education in Romania, 2014, National Institute for Statistics

When these vulnerabilities are aggregated, the risk situation is more likely to happen. In these circumstances, the Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation project namely "Support against Vocational Training and Education Dropout" aims to really contribute in reducing early school leaving and absenteeism and improving the quality of learning process and conditions by extending the Risk Detector aim and produce a new tool for supporting the educational institutions, at the final of their activities and achieved results.

The consortium was carefully selected, based on the principles of competence and professional expertise, participation, cooperation, transparency and responsibility. It includes seven organizations from six different countries, each of them having experience in transnational projects (LdV, Grundtvig, Youth, Equal) and also an

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adequate technical, human and organizational expertise required for effective and high quality performance of all project tasks. More information can be found on the project website <http://www.project-saved.eu> .

In essence, the project seeks to strengthen cooperation between relevant institutions responsible for education and training by implementing a flexible support and prevention among all stakeholders in the fight against school dropout. All these main objectives are directly related to the overall objective of reducing the dropout rate.

School dropout is the negative final effect of a combination of some pedagogical, psychological and social factors that are in a critical configuration with immediate and lasting consequences. Each case of dropout has a personal and social history related to how to apply or not, the benefits of development.

Presentation of tools for detection and intervention

The project transfer the results of "Stop Dropout" project that was successfully implemented in several European countries. More, we propose not only adapting tools developed in the previous project but adapting and improving the principal tools namely Risk detector, Personal profile and Flexible Prevention and Support System. In addition, we expect further research to identify additional factors that may influence the phenomenon of abandonment or absenteeism, school failure, or violence. Also, we aim to develop a new tool called Profile institution for improving the quality of education and training services and avoid the drop out as well as to develop an online platform dedicated to supporting assistance systems. At the final, the platform will support the functioning of the Flexible Prevention and Support System, with the ultimate goal to help us preventing the situations of abandonment or school absenteeism. Next, we present more information about these instruments respecting the stage of project implementation.

Risk Detector is a tool to be used by teachers and counsellors and includes one electronic questionnaire for learners in order to collect information on the incidence of risk factors, known or newly detected, along with a computer program that processes the information collected to identify those pupils or students who are at risk of dropping out of the educational program.

Personal Profile can be used by counsellors, including tools for applying the story telling technique during career and school counselling of potential dropouts and enhancing their decision making capacity.

Institutional Profile is a tool that can be used by teachers and persons in schools to help them identify weak points and directions of action for better managing school dropout and other related phenomena.

Flexible Prevention and Support System is a flexible network of institutions gathering together persons as counsellors and professionals involved in activities of school dropout prevention. Potential beneficiaries could be institutions from

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educational field (schools, ministries, school inspectors, educational centres, etc.), teachers, counsellors, students, parents, NGOs, local authorities, employment services, research bodies.

The **Online Platform** is a multifunction application created in order to support and Prevention Support System Flexible, allowing people with responsibilities in the field of education to participate in an exchange of experience and good practice to know events and innovative initiatives and to meet potential partners involved in similar actions.

Risk Detector – a tool for detecting young people at risk of dropping out

The instrument was transferred from the previous project „Stop Dropout” but to be used, in optimal conditions, it has been adapted and improved to meet the specific national conditions of partner countries in our project. The improvements were directed to include more risk factors that may cause dropout. More than this, were assessed some related situations, not only dropout but school failure, absenteeism, violent behaviour in schools etc. These cases should be analyzed together and not separately, because between them there is causality and interconnection, directly or indirectly, as an act of violence at school can turn into a situation of abandonment for aggressor, victim or both protagonists. The situation would be even worse if the effects of these phenomena would accumulate.

Theme is extremely varied because of the multitude of causal factors that can interfere in the school situation so it is important for us to identify them, isolate and acting for diminish and remove the negative effects.

Our work was directed to analyze the national framework in Romania, Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Northern Ireland, and Turkey and extract principal characteristics of the risk of dropping out. This made it possible to adapt the original questionnaire, aiming to include new risk factors identified in partner countries. In addition to known factors, there were selected risk factors for other phenomena such as school failure, absenteeism and violent behaviour in school.

The new questionnaire contains 157 questions divided into various fields like: personal data (gender, age, residence), educational level, family background (educational level of parents), attitudes and beliefs of parents about education and its importance for young people, pupil's situation to education, school environment, school activities and compliance with school rules or desirable behaviour of the student's, social relationships with peers and teachers, the existence of support or assistance needed in case of difficulty, about the experience of practical training and desired occupation, personal attitude to study and a few filter questions.

The activities, findings and results have led to more quality because the questionnaire obtained permit the identification of pupils or students who are at risk of dropping out school or training courses, taking into account the more possible risk factors. Finally we obtained a more comprehensive detection of risk situation.

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Also, software for identifying student in a risk situation will be improved based on the extended list of risk factors and the intrinsic relationship between them.

Interpretation of the collected data and final conclusions confirms that the management of situations of abandonment must focus on creating the better conditions for learning for all. The school environment should be a place where students feel comfortable and supported, involved in community life. This is important for the emotional, social and educational status of the student. For improve the institution's ability to manage any relationships at school, teachers must become facilitators of learning.

Conclusions

By carrying out this questionnaire to identify young people at risk of dropping out, we will be able to involve a better targeted support of potential actors, in a documented and professional way, to take measures against vocational training and education dropout, even individually or integrated into a plan of intervention measures.

Also, the use of a multidisciplinary team, from diverse fields of activity, creates points of connection between complete education and labour market insertion, something that can motivate students to continue their studies, and lead to lower dropout.

While the reasons of dropout are so comprehensive, the policies addressing to prevent it should also be dealt with a comprehensive and integrating approach.

Finally, we can say that we need congruence and collaboration in actions at local and national level among all institutions and stakeholders to reduce the dropout. Also, active involvement of teams from different fields, such as educational bodies, local government, child protection and welfare services, public order structures etc can solve any problems, maybe even better than a major strategic measure national.

References

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