

International conference

Early school leaving: what are the issues today? what educational practices? what partnerships? what effects on learning?

ARGUMENT

In most countries of the world, education systems take into account the difficulties experienced by young people in their ability to learn and to attend school in good conditions. Learning difficulties are reflected, for example, in deficiencies in numeracy, general or scientific literacy, and language skills. The results of the PISA survey (2015) show that, on average in OECD countries, around 20% of young people do not reach the threshold of reading literacy. For a significant number of young people, learning difficulties can lead to early school leaving without a diploma after the compulsory schooling period (Beauchesne, 1991). In all cases, they lead to personal and economic difficulties and make social and professional integration difficult. Early school leaving (ESL) also has an important economic cost for society insofar as it leaves on the fringes of society a significant fraction of the population who do not possess or insufficiently possess basic skills and find themselves marginalised and often assisted. Dealing with the problem at its source with all the educational actors involved in daily life appears to be an effective solution.

On the other hand, young people who do not come from families whose capital, resources, forms of socialisation, interests, expectations, language and type of pedagogy are similar to those of school children (indigenous middle class), in addition to experiencing objective difficulties due to not having a « cultural and symbolic heritage » close to the school culture, experience themselves and are considered by the school as « outsiders », and often as a « problem » (Feito, 2003; Collet et al., 2014). Therefore, school failure is not only an individual phenomenon of some pupils who do not succeed in a « neutral » school, but the inability of an institution that operates within the parameters of the indigenous middle class to actively and equitably integrate all pupils into the learning dynamic. Moreover, the initial expectations of families and teachers are low (Fernández Enguita et al, 2010) and in the daily life of the school, these low expectations find realities that reaffirm them and the prophecy is fulfilled in a daily and often invisible way, to the point of constructing in the young person a feeling of disaffection or « school disaffiliation » according to Broccolichi (1998), of alienation, incomprehension and incapacity in relation to the whole school, which can become irreversible (Ballestín, 2015; Garcia et al., 2013; Martínez et al., 2013).

Among the 12 key measures to reduce ESL, the European Report of the Ministers of Education (2013) calls for « supporting cooperation between schools, local authorities, parents and pupils in school development and in initiatives to reduce early school leaving. Promote a strong commitment of all stakeholders in efforts to reduce early school leaving at the local level ». The fight against ESL, school failure or juvenile delinquency requires the collaboration of the state and local authorities and the relevant scientific disciplines to be effective. In addition, the institutions, professionals involved (teachers, associations, social workers, etc.) and the target populations themselves (parents, pupils, who are also « partners ») are crucial.

Furthermore, in most countries, educational actors are faced with strong demands to continuously update their knowledge and skills as a result of, for example, the introduction of new curricula, changes in the characteristics and learning needs of young people or new research findings on teaching and learning. The aim is to establish systematic approaches and opportunities for the continuous professional development of teachers, educators and youth workers, both in a school and in a professional environment, with particular attention to the design of effective, inclusive and innovative teaching and pedagogies, relying amongst others on digital technology.

This conference will be held in Angers on **6, 7 and 8 July 2022** in the premises of the Western catholic University (Université catholique de l'Ouest), at the end of a project funded by Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership. The Alliance 3 project brings together European organisations from Denmark (Nyborg School), Spain (University of Vic), Hungary (Eotvos Lorand University) and France (Université catholique de l'Ouest, coord.) who have been working for several years on the issues of inequalities at school, inclusion and early school leaving. It aims to create tools, knowledge and know-how for teachers, youth workers and parents to develop their collaboration in order to actively participate in the fight against ESL.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The call for abstracts is addressed to researchers in the humanities and social sciences working on issues related to ESL, using qualitative or quantitative methodologies. Results and evaluations of measures and experiments are also expected. The conference also aims to bring together stakeholders from the school world, professionals and volunteers from the world of associations, trainers, « early school leaving » referents, doctoral students and representatives of educational and social institutions that propose efficient collaborations in terms of teaching, learning and training.

Topic 1 | Issues, territorial inequalities and public action: international perspectives

The causes of ESL are varied and complex. Blaya (2010) mentions in particular individual, family, social and school factors. Faced with this multiplicity of causes, it is also essential to propose multiple interventions in the various areas concerned (Gilles, Potvin and Tièche, 2012). In several countries around the world, educational policies and public actions are proposed to combat this phenomenon. They play an important role in the development, education and effective training of teachers and all educational actors. For example, school is now compulsory in France and in several European countries, at least until the age of 16. The Danish school system encourages a democratic school culture involving pupils and parents in school management. This creates common values and rules shared by pupils, schools and families.

This topic will examine the definition, characteristics and effects of early school leaving at the international level. It will attempt to analyze the public actions put in place in different countries of the world and their challenges. What are the different policy systems in place in different countries? Do these systems not create inequalities that lead to ESL? What are the environmental, economic and social challenges? What is the place of digital technology in these systems and what is its place in the fight against ESL?

Topic 2 | Partnership to prevent ESL: school, families, associations

In issues such as early school leaving, the importance of working together seems even more relevant. Gilles Potvin and Tièche Christinat (2012) state that « it is not only a matter of working together to successfully complete a project to hook a pupil in a dropout situation, but of mobilising communities of actors and networks concerned by the situation » (p.6). The multiplication of « partnership » educational schemes (Barrère, 2013; Voléry, 2008), most often implemented by local authorities, is accompanied by a reconfiguration of the relationships and educational work between the different actors. The aim is to help identify educational actions and practices designed to prevent ESL from a perspective of decompartmentalisation of the school and out-of-school worlds, based on an existing dynamics in a given territory, and by working on the link between educational and social structures that share the same objective of success and social and professional integration for young people.

The mobilisation of local and regional authorities and associations will thus be examined. How does the partnership between schools and extracurricular structures outside of school contribute to preventing ESL? Who are the actors involved and on the basis of what legitimacy do they organise their actions? What forms of support do they promote? What place is there for « educational alliances » (Gilles, Potvin and Tièche Christinat, 2012) between the various actors involved and in what way? What is the nature of the co-education mechanisms with regard to families and how do they work on the forms of cooperation between professionals and parents?

Topic 3 | Pedagogical approaches to combat ESL

This section focuses on the pedagogical, didactic, formative and support aspects of preventing and combating ESL. Certain educational systems and teaching and learning methods have been designed and deployed to help pupils in difficulty. Notable examples include alternative school practices (Viaud, 2005; Cedelle, 2008), pedagogies of care (Ponsard, 2012), transition systems (Hugo and Pain, 2002), specific structures for school dropouts (Longhi and Guibert, 2003) and other professional practices and innovative educational programmes set up by teachers and educators to identify pupils in difficulty.

It is not only the teaching and learning methods offered to these pupils, but also the specific and appropriate accompaniment for each accompanied person that is put in place by being in front of, beside or behind them, in the sense of Maëla Paul (2004) and which takes into account their development, their history, their interests, their projects, their culture, etc. It is through accompaniment that the different actors determine the specific needs of pupils with difficulties, which contributes in one way or another to their inclusion and orientation at school and in the workplace. Speaking of guidance, according to the Council of the European Union (2004, p.2), it determines « a series of activities that enable (future) citizens to make decisions about education, training and employment ». It also allows pupils to determine themselves and develop their autonomy (Guichard, Forner and Danvers, 2000).

In this topic, contributions may explore existing specific pedagogical practices and arrangements that address the needs of disadvantaged groups of pupils with learning difficulties. In other words, the proposals may shed some light on the following questions: What are the learning difficulties of pupils that lead to ESL? What are the educational, didactic and organisational approaches that can prevent ESL? What are the advantages and limitations of the types of support and guidance offered to pupils in difficulty in order to prevent them from leaving school? What are the specific professional practices that meet the needs of pupils in difficulty? What skills should be developed in these young people who have left school in order to increase their motivation to learn and their inclusion in school? Finally, what are the pedagogical measures that would allow the transition from leaving to staying in school?

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Guidelines for contributors

The selection of abstracts by the scientific committee will be based on the quality of the empirical material, the relevance of the theoretical framework used, and the originality of the research results. Contributions from doctoral students and young researchers are encouraged. Abstracts must be submitted by **28 February 2022** at the latest, in a format of 2000 to 3000 characters including spaces, references not included. The selected communications will be published in the online proceedings of the conference.

The proposals should be submitted on: <https://alliance.sciencesconf.org/>

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CHAIR OF THE CONFERENCE

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