



TESTED
TACKLING DROP OUTS THROUGH SYSTEMATIC
STUDENT SCREENING

WORK PACKAGE 3 (A3.3)

VET STAFF/TRAINERS UPSKILLING PACKAGE FOR THE
EARLY DETECTION OF PROBABLE DROPOUTS

PROJECT NUMBER: 2022-1-RO01-KA220-VET-000086834

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Introduction

Vocational Education and Training (VET) serves as an important pathway for individuals to gain the skills and qualifications necessary for a successful career. However, the issue of dropout from VET has important and many important implications for social, economic, and employment levels. Learners who drop out of VET programs face great risks of unemployment, social exclusion, and limited career opportunities, which makes it crucial to understand and address the root causes of this phenomenon.

This training program is designed to equip VET trainers, teachers, and staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to prevent dropouts and support learners at risk. By identifying and analyzing the factors that contribute to dropout, from socio-economic challenges to institutional issues, the learners will gain a comprehensive understanding of how these issues affect both students and civil society. The program will also demonstrate the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes dropout prevention and educational success.

Through a blended learning approach, which includes interactive online modules, hands-on exercises, and collaborative methods, learners will explore evidence-based strategies for identifying early warning signs, providing advice and guidance, and offering alternative pathways to keep learners engaged in their studies. This project will also focus on the importance of data-driven monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of prevention initiatives and support needed policy changes.

At the end of this training, learners will be empowered not only to address dropouts from the VET system but also to foster a culture of inclusivity and support that ensures all learners have the opportunity to thrive and succeed in their educational and professional paths.

Description of WP3

The main objective of this Work Package is to develop an upskilling package for the VET trainers/trainers and staff to utilize the findings of the TeSTED psychometric assessment tool and support VET learners with vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds (i.e., orphans, foreign-borns, disabled learners, Roma, and young people from poorly performing regions). This WP will create a VET teachers/staff force interested in addressing issues like dropouts due to socio-economic difficulties.

The specific objectives of this WP (W.S.o.) are:

- W.S.o1. To increase the capacity of VET trainers and staff on psychological issues and intervention methodologies for students with socio-economic issues.

- W.S.o2. Provide the VET institutions with a groundbreaking upskilling package for their teacher/trainers and staff, thus contributing to the eradication of skill shortages and lack of experience in the VET sector regarding dropout.
- W.S.o3. To create a user-friendly and widely accessible learning management system (LMS).
- W.S.o4. To facilitate the usage and the TeSTED project tools and mechanisms for tackling dropouts in the VET environment.

The Curriculum outline is one of the most important steps for the creation of an upskilling package since it will set the course goals and student learning outcomes, and expectations of the curriculum. The Validation Workshop will be an activity that will validate the Curriculum outline.

Module 1: Introduction to VET dropout and its implications

Unit 1.1 Understanding VET dropout and its impact on individuals and society

Section 1.1. The phenomenon of dropping out of school

Talking about dropping out of school seems to be an easily understandable topic where everyone shares the same notion, driving forces, and consequences. By definition, the term is widely used when we consider educational matters, especially challenges and problems.

However, is this really true?

Let's imagine the following situation:

You are at a conference where, during a coffee break, some invitees around you are discussing dropping out of school. What could be the central topic of discussion in that conversation? Those people could be teachers or principals of adjacent schools in a city, talking about students who left their school, while not knowing what happened to these students afterward.

Or, those people could be educational officials from different cities, also not knowing whether these students who have left their school continue to study somewhere abroad, e.g., due to family relocation. Alternatively, those people could be teachers or principals of schools from different educational branches without administrative data on whether those left students have been enrolled in another educational or training institution.

You can guess that different senses of a given notion are not just a matter of terminology but perspective. Such differences will mean different approaches to the prevention, dealing with, and treating the consequences.

In this regard, we need to stick to a certain definition of dropping out of school to clarify the causal factors, intervention methods, and outcomes. This is not an easy task as there are a variety of definitions, which determine different aspects and the internal nature of the term.

Without intending to summarize the majority of definitions, we can bring to your attention some of them to demonstrate differences in views and thus differences in applicable approaches.

In general, the school dropout phenomenon could be determined as an interruption and non-completion of further education by a student. For example, Zengin (2021) describes the phenomenon as an undesirable outcome for any student in the education system. Some students decide not to continue their education or they leave the process by failing to fulfill the requirements of continuing their education.

Suh (2001) defines school dropout as a case where a student leaves the school before graduating from the attended program and cannot obtain a diploma. Fortin et al. (2006) see school dropout as a situation where a person leaves school without being awarded a degree corresponding to the educational cycle and is not registered the following year.

From an even broader perspective, Alexander et al. (2001) state that school dropout represents a premature disengagement and termination of education. Other researchers, such as Tinto (1975) define “dropout” as any person leaving their institution, while Kaplan et al. (1997) state that dropouts are those who leave their departments voluntarily after the payment of the tuition fee is completed and/or the add/drop period is over.

Conversely, Levy (2007) presents a differing perspective, positing that students who choose to withdraw from a course within the “add/drop period” should not be classified as dropout students. This is due to the fact that they either receive a full refund for their tuition or are not impacted financially by their decision to discontinue the course during this specific time. School dropout, or leaving school, is broadly defined as people who discontinue their studies (European Commission, 2003). It is used as an indicator to measure the relationship between academic progress, age, and education level.

School dropout and its sister term, early school leaving, mean withdrawal from the formal educational system before the acquisition of the final degree, expressing the completion of their studies.



For the project, further on, we will explore school dropout as a phenomenon, in which the student stops attending classes and stays out of the educational system without receiving any respective document. In this light, we will use the term “dropouts” for learners who have dropped out for reasons other than promotion, transfer, completion of school, changing study preferences, etc., and which exclude continuation of formal training.

Termination of studies, staying out of education and training, not developing appropriate skills, and not obtaining necessary educational documents vital for finding a decent job are among the most characteristic traits of the dropout phenomenon. In their entirety, they cause profound negative consequences, and this is the reason for any attempt to address the dropout phenomenon.

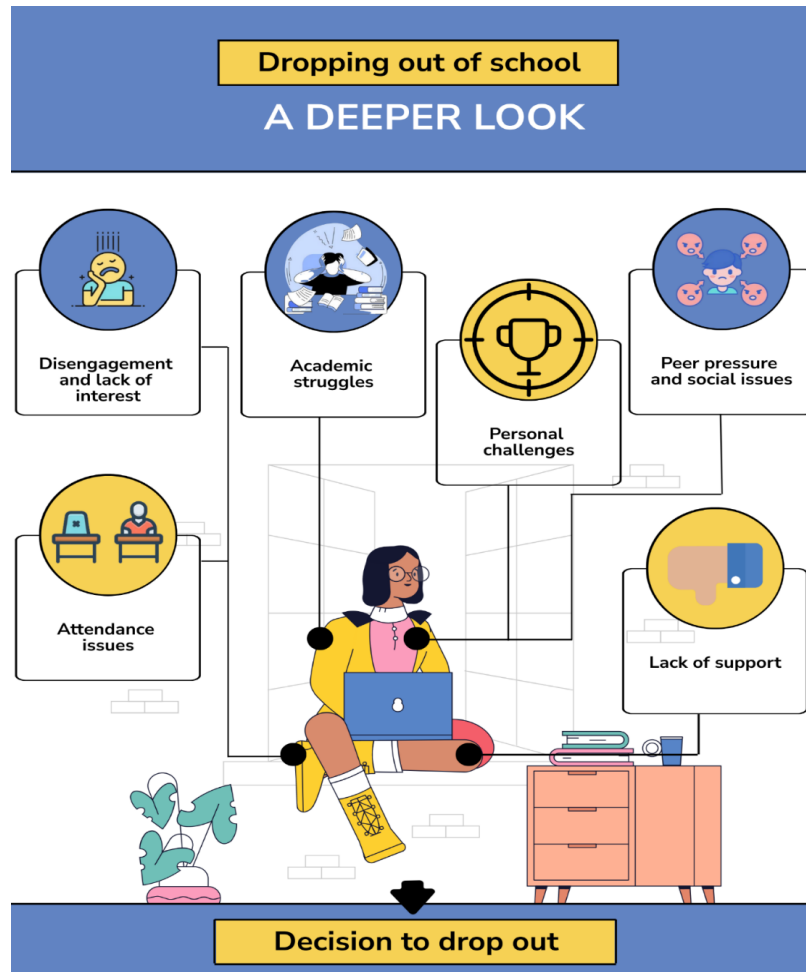
Section 1.2. A deeper look at the phenomenon of dropping out of school

The phenomenon of dropping out of school could be understood better by considering it as a process, revealing its typology, origins, and manifestations.

The process of school dropout is complex and can involve a combination of personal, social, and academic factors. While every dropout's experience is unique, some common stages or factors may contribute to the decision to leave school prematurely. We can suggest the following overview of the elements of that process:

- ❖ Disengagement and lack of interest:
 - A student may start to disengage from school due to a lack of interest in the curriculum, teaching methods, or school environment.
 - Academic challenges, such as struggling with coursework or feeling overwhelmed, can contribute to disengagement.
- ❖ Attendance issues:
 - Disengagement often leads to irregular attendance. A student may start skipping classes, arriving late, or frequently being absent from school.
 - Attendance problems can be a sign of deeper issues, such as boredom, bullying, or personal struggles.
- ❖ Academic struggles:
 - If a student faces persistent academic challenges without receiving appropriate support, they may become frustrated and demotivated.

- Lack of academic success can erode a student's confidence



- ❖ Personal challenges:
 - Personal issues, such as family problems, health concerns, or financial difficulties, can create additional stressors that interfere with a student's ability to focus on school.
 - Personal choices, like involvement in negative peer groups, substance abuse, or early parenthood, can also contribute to the decision to drop out.
- ❖ Peer pressure and social issues:
 - Negative peer influences, bullying, or a lack of a supportive social environment can contribute to feelings of isolation and alienation.



- Social challenges can exacerbate emotional and mental health issues, further pushing a student away from school.
- ❖ Lack of support:
 - If a student does not receive adequate support from teachers, counselors, or family members, their challenges may go unaddressed, making it more likely that they will discontinue their education.
- ❖ Decision to drop out:
 - At some point, the student may make a conscious decision to drop out of school. This decision is often influenced by a combination of the factors mentioned above.
 - External pressures, such as the need to contribute to family income or take on adult responsibilities, may play a role in the decision-making process.
 - It's important to note that the process of school dropout is not linear, and individuals may move back and forth between these stages. Additionally, effective interventions and support systems at various stages can help prevent dropout and encourage students to stay engaged in their education.

The typology of school dropout refers to the classification or categorization of school dropouts based on different criteria or characteristics. Various factors can contribute to dropout behavior, and researchers often categorize these factors to better understand and address the diverse reasons behind students leaving school prematurely. Some common typologies of school dropout are as follows:

- Academic typology:
 - Academic strugglers: Students who drop out due to persistent academic difficulties, such as low grades, learning disabilities, or challenges in keeping up with coursework.
 - Underchallenged/disengaged: Students who leave because they feel unchallenged, bored, or disengaged from the learning process.
- Social and behavioral typology:
 - Socially isolated: Students who experience social difficulties, bullying, or isolation, leading them to withdraw from school.
 - Behavioral issues: Students with behavioral problems, disciplinary issues, or a history of rule violations that contribute to their decision to drop out.

- Economic and work-related typology:
 - Economic necessity: Students who leave school to contribute to family income or due to financial constraints.
 - Early employment: Students who choose to work or pursue employment opportunities instead of continuing their education.
- Family-related typology:
 - Family responsibilities: Students who drop out to take on caregiving responsibilities, such as looking after siblings or family members.
 - Family disruption: Students affected by family issues, such as divorce, relocation, or unstable home environments.
- Health-related typology:
 - Physical health issues: Students facing chronic health problems that interfere with regular school attendance and performance.
 - Mental health challenges: Students dealing with mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or other disorders, which impact their ability to cope with school.
- Cultural and ethnicity-based typology:
 - Cultural dissonance: Students who may experience a disconnect between their cultural background and the school environment.
 - Language barriers: Students face challenges related to language proficiency, particularly in settings where they are not proficient in the language of instruction.
- Early parenthood typology:
 - Teen parents: Students who become parents at a young age and decide to leave school to focus on parenting responsibilities.
- Push-out typology:
 - Systemic issues: Students who feel marginalized, discriminated against, or pushed out of the educational system due to systemic issues, such as institutional racism, inadequate support services, or discriminatory policies.

Understanding these typologies is in favor of developing targeted interventions and support systems to address the specific needs of different groups of students at risk of dropping out. The first step is to recognize the diversity of reasons behind school dropout and tailor interventions accordingly to create more inclusive and effective educational systems.

Talking about the origins of the dropout phenomenon, we can use various notions – driving forces, causes, factors, etc.

For the subsequent training modules, the following categorization will be important:

- Static vs. dynamic
- External vs. internal
- Collective vs. personal
- Volitive vs. random

Concretely, the factors will be the subject of the next module.

Regarding the manifestations of the dropout phenomenon, we can use many terms for this, such as early warning signs, symptoms, indicators, etc.; however, all of them express the same meaning.

According to the book *High School Dropout, Graduation, and Completion Rates: Better Data, Better Measures, Better Decisions* (2011) by The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (USA), dropping out is a process that begins well before a student leaves school. Research has identified early warning signs of dropping out, such as poor grades, frequent absences, being overage for the grade, low achievement, and frequent transfers from school to school.

School dropout can be seen in various ways, and its signs can be observed at different levels, including behavioral, academic, and social indicators. Among the common indicators of school dropout are the following:

- Decline in academic performance - sudden and significant drop in grades and academic achievement; frequent absenteeism, leading to missed assignments and exams.
- Behavioral changes - increased disruptive behavior in the classroom; lack of interest or participation in class activities; engagement in risky behaviors or substance abuse.
- Lack of motivation - loss of interest in learning and extracurricular activities; lack of motivation to complete assignments or participate in class discussions.
- Social isolation - withdrawal from social interactions and friendships; difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships with peers.
- Repeated grade levels- being held back or repeating a grade multiple times due to academic struggles.
- Family issues - family circumstances, such as financial problems or conflicts, may contribute to dropout risk.
- Truancy - habitual absenteeism or skipping classes without proper reasons.
- Low self-esteem - negative self-perception and feelings of inadequacy; lack of confidence in academic abilities.



- Emotional distress - symptoms of anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues.
- Involvement in delinquent activities - engaging in illegal or antisocial behaviors outside of school.
- Limited plans - lack of clear goals or aspirations for the future.
- Limited parental involvement - lack of parental support and involvement in a child's education.

Of course, these manifestations can vary from individual to individual, and some students may show a combination of these signs. Addressing the root causes, such as family issues, socioeconomic factors, or learning difficulties, is crucial in preventing and mitigating school dropout.

Section 1.3. Something more on the terminology

The impact of the causes and factors for school dropout and the ratio of their interference within concrete developments and flows of the process described above could have different strengths and scales in every individual case. Thus, we could expect that the resulting situation will differ in terms of its finality, possibilities for change, means for intervention, and feasibility of the efforts.

In this regard, the following distinction is worth mentioning:

◆ School Leavers

The Britannica Dictionary defines a school-leaver as someone who has left school, usually after completing a course of study instead of continuing to a college or university.

Out of the positive final of the study, usually, a leaver is a student who was enrolled even for a short period during the prior year and does not return before the close of the school start window the following fall. Such students cannot be determined by respective educational inspectorates in terms of their status unless there are pieces of evidence from other authorities.

Here, the subcategory with severe negative social impact is that referring to Early School Leavers. According to the Eurostat Glossary, Early leaver from education and training, previously named early school leaver, refers to a person aged 18 to 24 who has completed lower secondary education and is not involved in further education or training.

For Eurostat statistical purposes, an early leaver from education and training is operationally defined as a person aged 18 to 24 recorded in the Labor Force Survey (LFS):

- Whose highest level of education or training attained is at lower secondary education. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 level 0-3C short for data up to 2013;

- Who received no education or training (neither formal nor non-formal).

◆ School Movers

Those are students who change their school in a city or move to another region, remaining within the educational system. We mention this category because very often the causes are similar to those resulting in the finite termination of study without graduation.

◆ School Dropouts

In addition to the definitions above, we can say that those are students who reach the ultimate stage of the rise of problems, causing the rupture of the study.

Section 1.4. Dropping out in VET

Formal educational degrees are necessary in many countries to pursue a stable career. Dropping out of education means leaving the educational system with no formal degree. This may be associated with negative labor market consequences, such as a discontinuous labor market career, unemployment, holding unskilled jobs, and low wages. However, students who revise their initial dropout decision may continue their education in another occupational field and obtain a formal vocational degree. They then preserve their chances of successfully integrating into the labor market (Wydra-Somaggio, 2021).

According to Böhn&Deutscher (2022), dropout is associated with multiple consequences from various perspectives. It can be problematic at the company level if affected companies were to withdraw from offering training programs in the future as a reaction to high dropout numbers. From a societal point of view, dropouts in the VET system often result in a shortage of qualified personnel, in unemployment, and people taking up jobs in the low-wage sector. In the worst cases, it also causes high costs on both the aggregated and the individual level. At the individual level, from an apprentice's point of view, dropping out can be a successful strategy to adjust for a wrong career choice by choosing a more fitting educational program. In other cases, though, it causes a feeling of failure, increases both the risk of demotivation and the need to reorient one's initial vocational goals, and is associated with a feeling of having lost time. Regardless of the path an apprentice follows, dropping out represents a disruption of the vocational biography.

Generally, dropouts reduce the number of students who complete courses. To the extent that the goal of economic growth and poverty reduction requires individuals to complete (and not just attend) vocational training courses, dropout undermines the goals of policymakers. Indeed, retention is considered a key metric in evaluating vocational training courses. However, the students are likely out of cost-benefit calculations (as the whole mission of vocational training is to train a student for a specific skill and increase future earnings). Thus, if students become hesitant

about whether to stay in or leave vocational training based on the costs and benefits of attending, dropout rates could reflect the perceived lack of benefits from these programs (Ragulan, 2022).

Section 1.5. Impact of VET dropouts on the individual

Dropping out of vocational education can have specific consequences on an individual that may differ from dropping out of general education programs. Vocational education is designed to provide practical skills and training for specific trades or professions, and its impact on individuals can vary based on various factors. We can list the following potential impacts of dropping out of vocational education on a person:

- **Limited job opportunities in the chosen field**
Vocational education programs are often tailored to specific industries or trades. Dropping out means missing out on the specialized training and certifications that employers in those fields may require. This can limit job opportunities and career advancement within the chosen vocational area.
- **Reduced skill set**
Vocational education is focused on developing practical skills relevant to a particular job or industry. Dropping out means not fully acquiring these skills, which can hinder an individual's ability to perform competently in their chosen field.
- **Lower earning potential**
Many vocational careers offer competitive salaries, but dropping out may result in lower earning potential within those fields. Completing a vocational program often leads to higher wages compared to entry-level positions that may not require specific vocational training.
- **Missed certifications and licenses**
Certain vocational careers require individuals to obtain specific certifications or licenses. Dropping out may prevent individuals from meeting these requirements, limiting their eligibility for certain jobs or hindering their ability to start a business in a regulated industry.
- **Difficulty transitioning to other fields**
Vocational education is often specialized, and dropping out may make it challenging for individuals to transition into different career paths. The skills acquired may not be easily transferable to unrelated industries.



- Potential for unemployment or underemployment

Without completing vocational education, individuals may face challenges in securing stable employment in their chosen field. They may be more susceptible to unemployment or may settle for lower-paying positions that do not align with their career goals.

- Impact on confidence and self-esteem

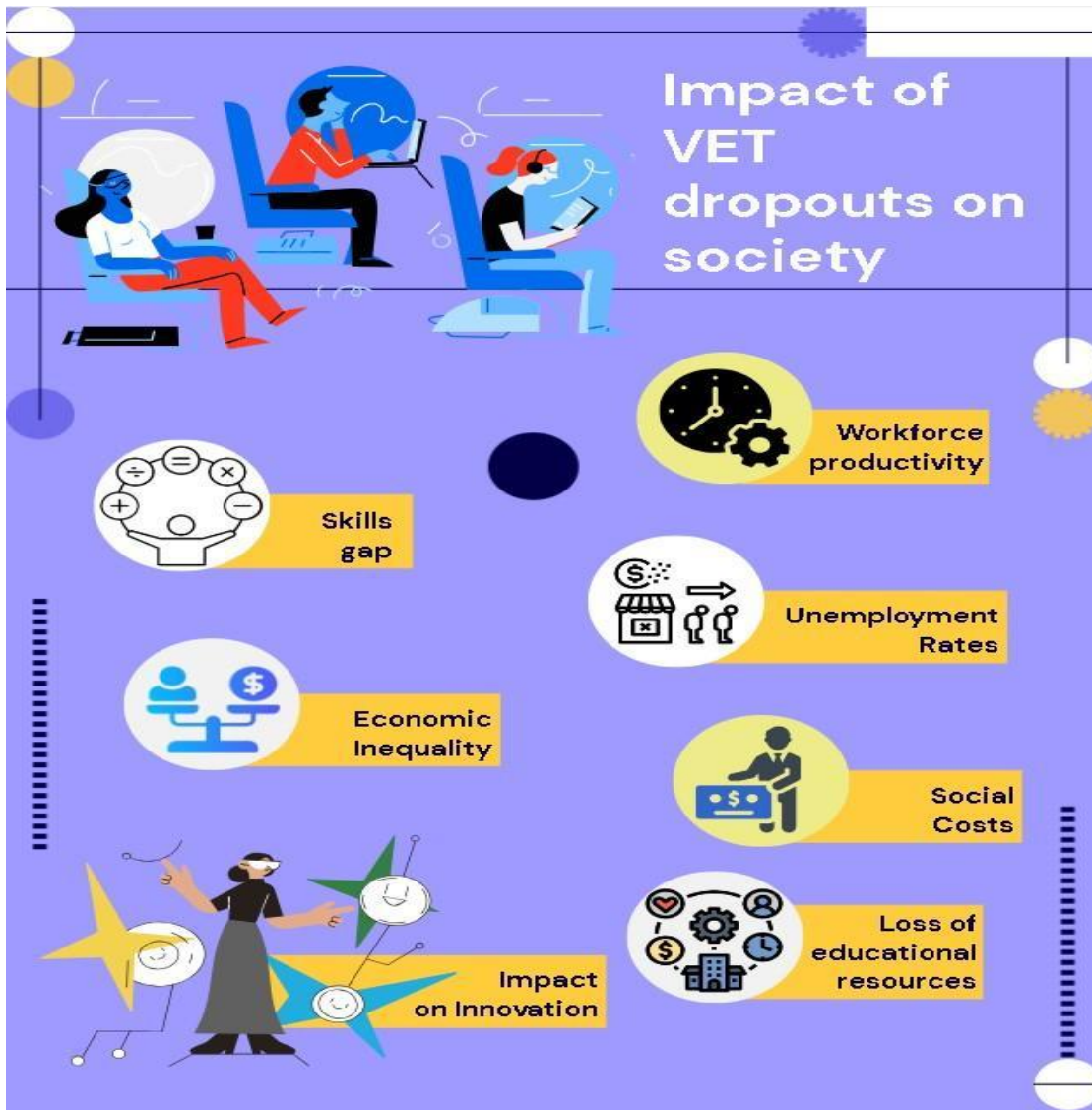
Dropping out of any educational program can impact an individual's confidence and self-esteem. This may be particularly true for vocational education, where the emphasis is often on practical skills and hands-on experience.

- Limited networking opportunities

Vocational education often involves building connections within specific industries through internships, apprenticeships, or industry partnerships. Dropping out may result in missed opportunities to network with professionals in the field.

At a personal level, leaving vocational education completely, becoming unemployed, or working without any qualification, constitutes a substantial cut in the individual's biography, whereas continuing training in another company only results in a small, if any, loss of time. A change in training occupation is associated with starting from scratch (Krötz& Deutscher, 2022).

Section 1.6. Impact of VET dropouts on society



From a societal point of view, dropouts in the VET system often result in a shortage of qualified personnel, in unemployment, and in people taking up jobs in the low-wage sector (e.g., Deuer, 2003; Kriesi et al., 2016). In the worst cases, it also causes high costs on both the aggregated and the individual level (e.g. Bessey & Backes-Gellner, 2015; Hensen, 2014).

The impact of individuals dropping out of vocational education can extend beyond the personal consequences and have implications for society as a whole. Some potential effects on society are as follows:

- **Skills gap**

Dropping out of vocational education contributes to a skills gap in the workforce. Industries that rely on specific technical or vocational skills may face shortages, hindering economic growth and innovation. This gap can lead to increased competition for skilled workers and impact the overall productivity of affected sectors.

- **Workforce productivity**

A workforce with a higher level of vocational education tends to be more productive. When individuals drop out of vocational programs, they may lack the specialized skills and knowledge required for certain jobs, affecting the overall productivity of industries and potentially slowing economic development.

- **Increased unemployment rates**

If a significant number of individuals drop out of vocational education programs, it can contribute to higher unemployment rates within specific industries. This can lead to social and economic challenges, including increased reliance on government assistance programs and a strain on public resources.

- **Economic inequality**

Vocational education is often seen as a pathway to well-paying jobs, and dropping out can contribute to economic inequality. Individuals who lack access to or cannot complete vocational programs may face barriers to entering high-demand, well-compensated fields, exacerbating socioeconomic disparities.

- **Impact on innovation**

Certain industries rely on a skilled workforce to drive innovation. Dropping out of vocational education can limit the pool of talent available to contribute to technological advancements and other innovative solutions, potentially hindering a country's competitiveness on the global stage.

- Social costs

Individuals who drop out of vocational education may face challenges in securing stable employment, leading to potential social costs such as increased crime rates, dependence on social services, and strains on healthcare and other public systems.

- Loss of educational resources

If a significant number of students drop out of vocational education programs, it may lead to a misallocation of educational resources. This can impact the efficiency and effectiveness of educational systems and the ability to meet the needs of both students and industries.

Unit 1.2 Exploring the Social and labor market implications of VET dropout.

Section 2.1. Going in and going out of VET

According to the theory of Becker (1962), individuals decide to invest in training when the monetary returns exceed the costs. Revising an educational decision is not possible because individuals are aware of all information at all times. Manski (1989) and Montmarquette (2001) overcome this strict assumption of Becker (1962) by describing training as an experiment in which a continuous re-evaluation of the educational decision occurs. To do this, students have to begin training and gather information to judge whether they can manage the vocational training in a given training environment. The analysis of Aarkrog et al. (2018) is based on such a re-evaluation process, and the authors argue that a student continuously revises his or her initial educational decision, taking changes in personal circumstances into account. Thus, students can detect discrepancies between their initial expectations and actual training circumstances, such as educational and occupational requirements and context (Karmel and Mlotkowski 2010; Snell and Hart 2008). Based on the information gained, students can decide whether the vocational training program is what they envisage and thus can repeatedly reassess their initial decision (e.g., Mangan and Trendle 2008; Biewen and Tapalaga 2017). Moreover, this reassessment becomes more substantial the longer the student's tenure in the training program continues, as it is based on a greater amount of valid information on the training conditions. This reassessment might result in early termination.

According to Wydra-Somaggio (2021), revising the initial educational decision depends on the investments made so far. Investments increase with time in training and the opportunity. The costs of termination are higher at a later stage of training, as the human capital investment is higher, which could result in higher productivity and thus higher wages. Individuals who terminate their training at a later stage forgo the potentially higher wages that they may have earned if they had completed their vocational training. Furthermore, earnings might also be higher in establishments that intensively invest in training and thus provide good training conditions to retain apprentices

after training. The overall costs and the loss of the related returns of an early termination decision are therefore higher at a later stage of training, although the costs of subsequent training remain the same. Hence, early termination at a later stage should result in dropping out rather than stopping out. The costs of undertaking new training, however, decrease if the new training is in the same occupational field because the human capital acquired so far can be applied to that new program. Furthermore, an occupational change is less likely to occur the later the timing of the termination is. Finally, individuals who terminate earlier should be more likely to successfully graduate from their subsequent training program if this training is in the same initial occupational field instead of a different occupational field. However, dropping out of education can still ultimately lead to dropping out of education if the subsequent vocational training is not completed.

Section 2.2. Wider social implications of VET dropout

Dropping out of vocational education causes wider social implications, affecting both individuals and society as a whole. We can suggest the following, an exhaustive list of such implications:

◆ Reduced workforce skills

Individuals who drop out of vocational education may lack the specialized skills and training needed for specific trades or industries. This can lead to a less skilled and less competitive workforce.

◆ Increased unemployment

Without vocational qualifications, individuals may find it more challenging to secure stable employment in a competitive job market. This could contribute to higher rates of unemployment, especially in industries that require specialized skills.

◆ Downsizing productivity

A less skilled workforce can impact the overall economic productivity of a region or country. Industries that rely on vocational skills may suffer from a shortage of qualified workers, potentially leading to a slowdown in economic growth.

◆ Income inequality

Vocational education often provides individuals with the skills needed for well-paying jobs. Without this education, there is a risk of perpetuating income inequality, as those without specialized skills may have limited access to high-paying employment opportunities.

◆ Barriers to social mobility

Vocational education can serve as a pathway for social mobility, allowing individuals to move up the socio-economic ladder. Without this option, there may be reduced opportunities for individuals to improve their economic and social standing.

◆ Increased reliance on general education

With fewer individuals pursuing vocational education, there may be an increased demand for general education and university degrees. This could lead to a saturation of certain job markets, making it more difficult for individuals with only a general education to find suitable employment.

◆ The burden on social services

Individuals without vocational skills may face difficulties in finding stable employment, potentially leading to increased reliance on social services and welfare programs. This places a strain on government resources and social support systems.

◆ Deteriorated perception of vocational education

If a significant number of individuals drop out of vocational education, it may contribute to the perception that vocational paths are inferior to traditional academic routes. This can further stigmatize these career choices and discourage others from pursuing them.

◆ Slow down the impact on innovation

Certain industries, particularly those requiring technical skills, may suffer from a lack of innovation if there is a shortage of trained and skilled workers. This can hinder technological progress and competitiveness on a global scale.

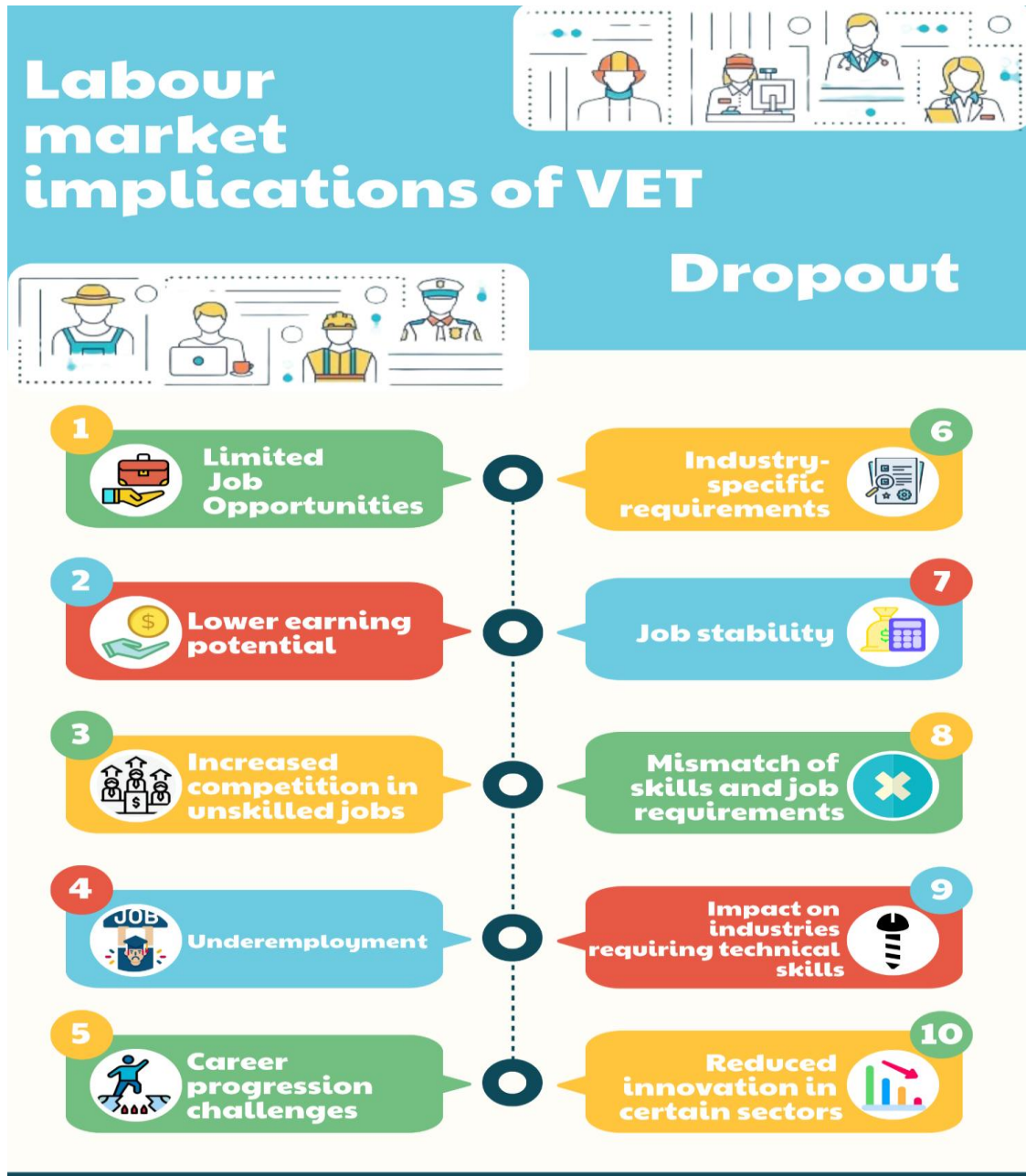
◆ Gaps in cultural attitudes towards work

The devaluation of vocational education may influence societal attitudes towards different forms of work. It could contribute to a cultural bias favoring academic paths over vocational ones, potentially limiting the recognition and appreciation of essential trades and skills.

We can conclude that addressing the issue of dropouts from vocational education requires a holistic approach involving educational institutions, policymakers, and the community to emphasize the importance of diverse career paths and provide support for vocational training programs.

Section 2.3. Labor market implications of VET dropout

Dropping out of vocational education can have various implications for individuals in the labor market, affecting both their employment prospects and potential career paths. Some of those implications are as follows:



❖ Limited job opportunities

Individuals without vocational qualifications may have fewer job opportunities, particularly in industries that require specialized skills. Many vocational programs are designed to prepare students for specific roles, and dropping out can limit access to these positions.

❖ Lower earning potential

Vocational education often leads to the acquisition of specialized skills that are in demand in the labor market. Without these skills, individuals may find themselves limited to lower-paying and less specialized jobs, impacting their overall earning potential.

❖ Increased competition in unskilled jobs

Dropping out of vocational education may lead to increased competition for unskilled or low-skilled jobs. This could result in higher unemployment rates for individuals without specialized training.

❖ Underemployment

Even if individuals find employment, dropping out of vocational education might result in underemployment, where individuals work in jobs that do not fully utilize their potential or acquired skills.

❖ Career progression challenges

Vocational education often provides a structured path for career progression within specific industries. Without completing such programs, individuals may face challenges in advancing their careers and accessing higher-level positions.

❖ Industry-specific requirements

Some industries have specific licensing or certification requirements that are often met through vocational education. Individuals who drop out may find it difficult to meet these industry standards, limiting their eligibility for certain jobs.

❖ Job stability

Vocational education equips individuals with practical skills that can enhance job stability. Without these skills, individuals may be more vulnerable to economic downturns, as they lack the specialized knowledge that some industries demand.

❖ Mismatch of skills and job requirements

Dropping out of vocational education may result in a mismatch between the skills individuals possess and the requirements of available jobs. This can lead to frustration for both employers seeking qualified workers and individuals seeking suitable employment.

❖ **Impact on industries requiring technical skills**

Industries such as manufacturing, construction, and technology often require specific technical skills provided by vocational education. The dropout of individuals from these programs may contribute to a shortage of skilled workers in these sectors.

❖ **Reduced innovation in certain sectors**

Industries that rely on technical and vocational skills for innovation may be adversely affected if there is a shortage of skilled workers. This can impact the overall competitiveness of these industries on a global scale.

Dealing with the labor market implications of dropping out of vocational education requires efforts to provide alternative pathways for skill development, promote the value of vocational training, and create supportive environments for individuals to complete their education and training programs. Collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and policymakers is crucial to ensuring a skilled and competitive workforce.

Section 2.4. Importance of addressing VET dropout

Addressing the issue of dropping out of vocational education is crucial for several reasons, as it has significant implications for individuals, the labour market, and society as a whole. Here are some key reasons highlighting the importance of addressing dropout rates in vocational education:

❖ **Skilled workforce development**

Vocational education plays a vital role in developing a skilled workforce with specialized knowledge and hands-on training. Addressing dropout rates ensures that individuals acquire the skills needed for specific trades and industries, contributing to a more competent and versatile workforce.

❖ **Economic competitiveness**

A well-trained and skilled workforce enhances a nation's economic competitiveness. Completing vocational education programs equips individuals with the expertise necessary for various industries, promoting innovation, productivity, and overall economic growth.

❖ **Reduced unemployment**

Completing vocational education increases the employability of individuals, reducing the risk of unemployment. Addressing dropout rates helps ensure that people are adequately trained and qualified for available job opportunities, contributing to lower unemployment rates.

❖ Higher earning potential

Vocational education is often linked to higher earning potential. Individuals with specialized skills are more likely to secure well-paying jobs in industries that demand technical expertise. Addressing dropout rates can help improve individuals' income and financial stability.

❖ Meeting industry demands

Many industries have specific skill requirements, and vocational education programs are designed to meet these demands. By addressing dropout rates, there is a better chance of aligning the skills of the workforce with the needs of different sectors, fostering a more harmonious relationship between education and industry.

❖ Diversity of career paths

Vocational education provides diverse career paths beyond traditional academic routes. Addressing dropout rates ensures that individuals have access to these alternative paths, promoting inclusivity and recognizing the value of various skills and professions.

❖ Facilitated social mobility

By addressing dropout rates, there is a better chance of providing equal opportunities for individuals to access and complete vocational training, regardless of their background.

❖ Innovation and technological advancement

Industries requiring technical skills and innovation benefit from a workforce with a strong vocational background. Addressing dropout rates helps ensure a continuous influx of skilled workers into these sectors, contributing to technological advancement and competitiveness on a global scale.

❖ Reduction in dependency on social services

Individuals with vocational skills are more likely to secure stable employment, reducing their dependence on social services and welfare programs. Addressing dropout rates contributes to self-sufficiency and a decreased burden on government resources.

❖ Promotion of lifelong learning

Addressing dropout rates fosters a culture of lifelong learning. Encouraging individuals to complete vocational education programs emphasizes the importance of continuous skill development, adaptability, and staying relevant in an ever-changing job market.



In summary, addressing dropout rates in vocational education is vital for building a skilled, adaptable, and competitive workforce, promoting economic growth, and fostering social and individual development. It requires collaborative efforts from educational institutions, policymakers, employers, and communities to create supportive environments and effective strategies for retention and completion in vocational programs.

To measure the implications of dropping out of vocational education, various quantitative and qualitative indicators can be used. Some measurement units and metrics that can be employed are as follows:

- **Dropout rates**

Measure the percentage of students who start vocational education programs but do not complete them. This is a fundamental quantitative metric that directly reflects the prevalence of dropping out.

- **Employment rates**

Track the percentage of individuals who dropped out of vocational education and are currently employed. This can provide insights into the immediate employment outcomes of those who did not complete their training.

- **Earnings disparities**

Compare the average earnings of individuals who completed vocational education with those who dropped out. This measurement helps assess the impact on income disparities and economic well-being.

- **Unemployment rates**

Analyze the unemployment rates among individuals who dropped out of vocational education compared to those who completed their programs. A higher unemployment rate among dropouts may indicate a negative impact.

- **Job Placement rates**

Determine the percentage of individuals who secure employment in their field of study after completing vocational education versus those who drop out. This provides insights into the relevance of vocational training in securing job placements.



- **Industry-specific skill demand**

Assess the demand for specific skills in different industries and compare it with the skills possessed by individuals who dropped out. This helps identify potential skills gaps and the impact on industry-specific labor markets.

- **Career progression metrics**

Measure career advancement, promotion rates, and the attainment of higher-level positions among individuals who completed vocational education versus dropouts. This helps gauge the long-term impact on career paths.

- **Social mobility indicators**

Use socio-economic indicators such as income mobility, educational attainment of future generations, and upward mobility to assess the social impact of dropping out of vocational education.

- **Utilization of social services**

Quantify the utilization of social services and welfare programs by individuals who dropped out of vocational education. This can indicate the level of support needed by this group.

- **Skills mismatch index**

Develop an index that measures the degree of mismatch between the skills possessed by dropouts and the skills demanded by employers. This helps identify areas where interventions are needed to bridge the gap.

- **Innovation and technology adoption metrics**

Assess the contribution of individuals with vocational education to innovation and technology adoption within specific industries. This can provide insights into the impact on the competitiveness of these sectors.

- **Surveys and qualitative data**

Use surveys and qualitative data to gather insights into the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of individuals who dropped out of vocational education. Qualitative data complements quantitative metrics and provides a more nuanced understanding of the implications.

- **Comparison with academic paths**

Compare quantitative metrics such as employment rates, earnings, and career progression between individuals who dropped out of vocational education and those who dropped out of academic programs. This allows for a comparative analysis of outcomes.



- Return on investment

Calculate the return on investment for individuals who completed vocational education compared to dropouts. This involves assessing the financial benefits, such as increased earnings, against the costs of education.

Using a combination of these measurement units allows for a comprehensive assessment of the implications of dropping out of vocational education. It's essential to consider both quantitative and qualitative data to capture the multifaceted nature of the impact on individuals and society.

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Module 2. Factors contributing to VET dropout

Unit 2.1 Socio-economic difficulties faced by at-risk learners

Section 1.1. Determining learners at risk

Most of the educational policies have a fundamental orientation to help students with any kind of learning difficulties regarding adaptation or learning to succeed in terms of instruction, socialization and qualification. The vision of educational success is thus broadened, going beyond just acquisitions linked to the curriculum. Such orientation places the nature of risk at the centre of educational concerns. The category of students with adjustment or learning difficulties could be divided into two subcategories, students at risk and students with serious behavioural problems. According to these subcategories, students who present difficulties that could lead to failure, learning delays, emotional problems, behavioural problems, developmental delay or mild intellectual disability are at risk.

This working definition generates a heterogeneous grouping of students, meeting the sole criterion of progress or lack of progress of the young person depending on the goals that the school sets with regard to their learning, their socialization and their qualifications. This position, consistent with prevention and a global approach to student difficulties, rejects the practice of labelling which has been criticized many times. It allows efforts to be focused on preventive interventions.

Hixson and Tinzmann (1990) group the currently prevailing definitions of the student at risk into four categories: the predictive approach; the descriptive approach; the unilateral approach and the institutional approach. The predictive approach identifies a student as being at risk when facing specific conditions such as attention deficit, single-parent family, etc. These conditions or factors are associated with an increase in the probability of failure or dropping out of school. The descriptive approach identifies students at risk from the moment the problems begin to manifest themselves (low academic performance, repeating a year, absenteeism, aggressiveness, etc.). The unilateral approach states, due to the complexity of the problems facing young people today, that all students are at risk in one way or another. The egalitarian vision of rights and values, conveyed by this approach, has been transposed into a belief according to which intervention must be the same for all students, even those with special needs.

Finally, the institutional approach focuses on school factors that could constitute potential causes of risk:

- 1) inflexible schedules;
- 2) the narrowness of the curriculum;
- 3) priority emphasis on basic skills;

- 4) disproportionate reliance on standardized tests for the development of intervention plans;
- 5) grade repetition and the separate secondary school strategy;
- 6) special classes and resource classes
- 7) attitudes and beliefs of teachers and administrators towards students and their parents.

After analysing the advantages and disadvantages of each of these approaches, Hixson and Tinzmann (1990) propose an ecological approach which recognizes education as a process taking place, both inside and outside of the school and which is affected by: 1) the social and academic organization of the school; 2) the personal characteristics of students and their families; 3) community, family and school environments and 4) the relationship between each of these factors.

Risk status does not reside solely in the link with a single individual or with the school. The entire society is concerned, because it builds schools in the image of a dominant ideology, and creates environments in which certain children will be at risk. This categorization has points in common with the evolution of epistemological paradigms described by Terrisse et al. (2000) and seems interesting for identifying the foundations of the different definitions.

School stakeholders and their conception of the notion of risk

For his part, Rosa and Stallings (1996) mention that the most widespread notion of risk in school environments is linked to a personal deficiency of the student that must be addressed and that it directs interventions specifically towards this deficiency. It would therefore be the descriptive approach, with a deficit model in the background, which would predominate in the educational environment.

According to Ronzone (2000), few studies have sought to identify the status of students at risk maintained and developed by teachers, as an educational, contextual and cultural construct. According to her, risk status is socially as well as culturally constructed and the context in which the discourse on risk is constructed would exert a significant influence on the words and actions of teachers. Conceptions would be filtered socially and culturally through perceptual lenses that would influence educational decision-making.

As part of an ethnographic study (participant observation, formal and informal interviews), she studied the development of the representation of students at risk among teachers engaged in an intervention program. It emerges from the analyses that the time factor is an important element in the construction of the notion of risk:

- 1) the time of the school year;
- 2) time to go through the curriculum;
- 3) time for instruction;
- 4) time for individual remediation;

- 5) the time corresponding to the child's development and
- 6) the child's chronological age.

Teachers also report the increased workload, the difficulty in meeting the needs of all students and the expectations of parents of successful or gifted students. Results also indicate that teachers paint a demographic profile of at-risk or gifted students, based on economic status, ethnicity and gender. These results suggest that teachers have a conception of risk governed by institutional and predictive approaches.

Section 1.2. Typology of youth at risk

Although this is risky because it could lead to a “normalization” of the phenomenon, many authors have drawn up typologies of young dropouts. These are often students from modest social backgrounds who experience learning difficulties. This idea, however, needs to be qualified since more and more students with significant resources – economic, social and intellectual – are also facing situations of dropping out of school.

The typology created by Catherine Blaya is interesting because it highlights that young people at risk of dropping out of school are not always those we might think (Bonnéry, 2011). This typology identifies four groups of young people at risk of dropping out of school. 1. The first group concerns students who tend to “express their difficulties conspicuously” through protesting behaviour. These young people are in confrontation with their families and adults in general with whom communication is broken. 2. The second group listed brings together students who lack interest in school and adopt a passive attitude towards academic demands. Although they are not at odds with their family environment, they regret the little help their teachers give them and are bored in class. This can lead to absenteeism or “addictive behaviours” which can be precursors to dropping out of school. 3. Third, one group corresponds to young people who have “hidden deviant behaviours” and who “have to deal with dysfunctional problems in their family”. These students are difficult to identify because they appear to “conform to the norm”. 4. The last group concerns depressed students with difficulty concentrating. These are difficult to list because they are so far behind. School dropout situations are influenced by various factors such as student behaviour and performance, pedagogy and school climate but also relationships with teachers and parents. Young people at risk of dropping out of school in no way represent a “homogeneous group”.

Section 1.3. How socioeconomic inequalities disrupt learning

Social and economic inequalities have significant and lasting effects on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, as well as their academic performance (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; Shonkoff and Garner, 2012). Cumulatively, multiple inequalities negatively impact the ability of marginalized children to learn (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015). As a result,

the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children widens over time (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015).

In contexts of high inequality, quality and equitable education is crucial for the inclusive, peaceful and sustainable development of society and the country. Engaging marginalized groups and individuals in larger development plans helps reduce social inequalities. Conversely, if we do not pay attention to equality of access, learning opportunities and the quality of academic achievements, education can perpetuate inequalities or create new ones.

Socioeconomic inequalities and education in the 2030 Agenda

Don't leave anyone behind. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development considers equity as an essential condition for sustainable development and calls for leaving no one behind. This means including all vulnerable countries and ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, has the right to realize their potential and lead a decent, dignified and rewarding life in a healthy environment. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4 specifically aims to reduce inequality, but not only from an economic point of view: “By 2030, empower all people and promote their social, economic and regardless of their age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status” (SDG 10.2, United Nations, 2015).

The fight against inequalities in education is at the heart of SDG 4. SDG 4 underlines the need to combat all forms of exclusion and inequalities linked to access to education and the processes of learning. To do this, we must refocus efforts on improving educational outcomes throughout the life cycle, particularly for women, girls and marginalized people in vulnerable situations. Equity applies to all aspects of SDG 4 (“all girls and boys”, with each indicator disaggregated by sex), but it is also the subject of a specific target (SDG no. 4.5): “By 2030, eliminate gender inequalities in education and ensure equal access for vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, Indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations, at all levels of education and professional training” (United Nations, 2015).

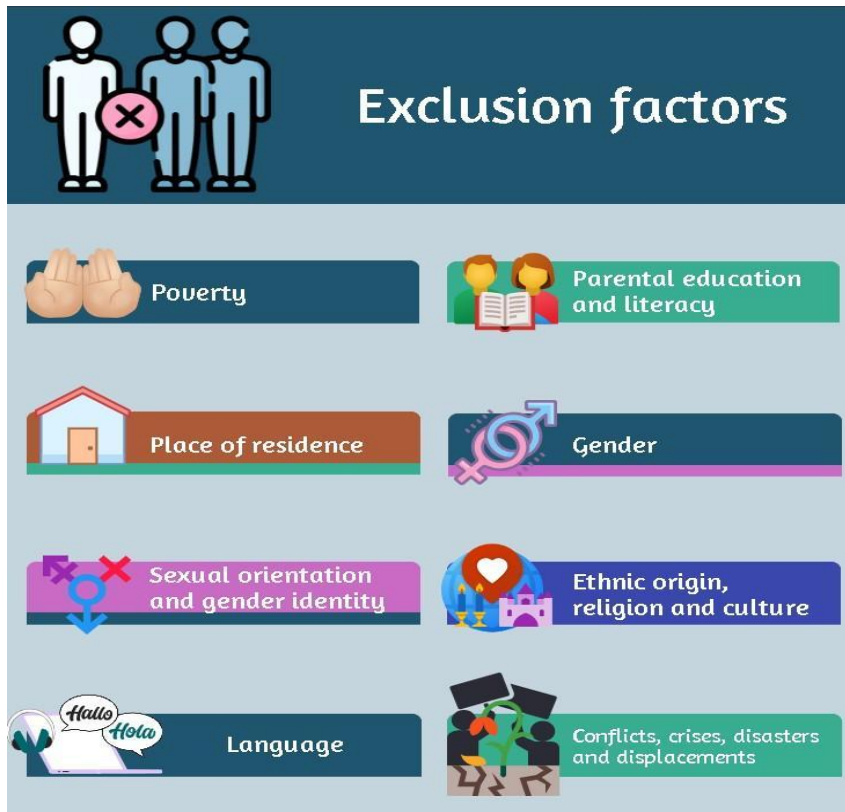
Large disparities exist between countries, but this overview focuses on socioeconomic inequalities between groups or individuals within countries. It is important to understand who is at risk of marginalization and exclusion and how different types of exclusion affect learning.

Exclusion is contextual and influenced by supply- and demand-side barriers that prevent children and young people from enrolling and/or succeeding in school. Exclusion can manifest itself:

- At the individual level, based on socio-economic status (poverty or poorly educated parents), place of residence (rural or urban, regional disparities) or other precarious factors;
- At the group level (marginalized ethnic or linguistic groups, nomadic or Indigenous peoples, gender or socio-cultural and religious factors, or migration status); Or

- Due to environmental and contextual factors, such as fragile state, conflict or natural disaster, often leading to displacement.

Exclusion factors



Poverty. Children from poor families are less likely to meet the basic prerequisites for learning and are often poorly prepared for school. Statistically, those who live in communities with few resources suffer more from malnutrition, and they are at risk of having absent parents and being exposed to violence and stress. Their school may receive less funding. These factors often lead to poor outcomes (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; Shonkoff and Garner, 2012). The need to contribute to family finances and difficulties paying tuition and other costs can impact school attendance.

Parental education and literacy. The home environment plays a vital role in children's development and early learning (Save the Children, 2018). Results from the Program for

International Student Assessment (PISA) show that children whose parents have a high socioeconomic status have better reading skills than those who live in a precarious socioeconomic situation (Xin Ma, 2008). According to the findings of the Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE), students perform better when their parents believe that they will access a higher level of education (UNESCO Santiago, 2015). Inequalities in parental education can have a significant impact on children's ability to benefit from formal education. Parents who have not attended school or are illiterate may avoid participating in their children's homework or interacting with teachers and other service providers (Eccles, 2005; Tusiime et al., 2014). They may not be able to provide access to books and other literacy materials.

Place of residence. Most countries do not offer the same conditions of economic development, financing and social services from one region to another, and the gap between rural and urban areas is significant. Schools in low-resource areas – including rural areas and informal urban settlements – often receive less funding than schools in well-resourced areas. Access to childcare centres, excellent schools and well-trained teachers is therefore limited. As a result, there are lower literacy rates, poor academic performance and higher dropout rates, which ultimately contribute to the cycle of poverty (Hindle, 2007). According to a 2018 UNICEF report, in one in six countries, the poorest children in urban areas are less likely to complete primary school than their peers in rural areas (UNICEF, 2018).

Gender. In many countries, girls access school less easily than boys and risk dropping out of school prematurely. The factors may be practical, such as distance, security or the availability of suitable facilities, but these difficulties may also be due to, among other things, expectations regarding participation in household chores, practices of child marriage, or the limited employment prospects of girls after school (GEM Report, 2016; Rihani, 2006; UNESCO, 2012). In some countries, boys are at risk of dropping out or underperforming because of pressure to earn money or because school is seen as unattractive (GEM Report, 2016). At school, teaching practices or teaching materials may contain gender stereotypes (Rihani, 2006) and students may be confronted with gender-related violence, which seriously hinders their learning.

Sexual orientation and gender identity. Harassment, violence and other mistreatment are often exacerbated for LGBTI and gender non-conforming children and young people (UNESCO Bangkok, 2015), with a strong impact on education. They risk missing classes, avoiding school activities, or dropping out of school altogether. International learning assessments show that bullying lowers student performance in key subjects such as mathematics (UNESCO, 2017).

Ethnic origin, religion and culture. Children who experience direct and indirect discrimination based on their ethnicity, religion or culture can suffer psychological and physical impacts from an

early age (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). They may then perform less well or encounter learning difficulties.

Language. Surveys regularly show that speaking a language at home other than the language taught at school constitutes a handicap (Duru-Bellat, 2004) which increases the risk of repeating a grade or dropping out of school (Pinnock, 2009).

Conflicts, crises, disasters and displacements. Experiencing conflicts, crises and disasters can physically and emotionally traumatize children. Migrant, refugee or displaced children may not have an official residence permit that allows them to go to school, or they risk facing hostility or prejudice at school. Due to the damage caused and/or insecurity, children do not always have access to school buildings, educational materials or qualified teachers (GEM Report, 2018b; IIEP-UNESCO, 2011).

Section 1.4. Socioeconomic theories of dropping out of school

Here, we will draw on some social theories.

Social theory (Baudelot & Establet, 1971; Owono, 1986)

Inspired by the work carried out in France by Bourdieu and Passeron (1964) and then by Baudelot and Establet (1971), Mballa Owono (1986) contextualized the problem of social reproduction in education or its role in the social elevator. According to the latter, schooling contributes more to the maintenance of capitalism. The better the socio-economic situation of the parents, the better the chances of their children being in school. As a result, there are two different education networks corresponding to two major social classes. In disadvantaged categories, only a minority of children can overcome the obstacle of primary school and will be able, by entering secondary school, to hope for social advancement. In conclusion, this sociological theory establishes a static correlation between the socio-professional category of parents and academic performance.

Becker's economic theory of human capital (1964)

For more than thirty years, the concept of human capital has been a matter for economists (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1962). This capital strongly emphasizes the importance of the human factor in economies based on knowledge and skills. Human capital according to Zuinen and Varlez (2004) is a broad concept, which has multiple facets and covers different forms of investments in human resources. Food and health are certainly an important aspect of this investment, particularly in developing countries. The key aspect of human capital relates to the knowledge and skills possessed by individuals and accumulated during education, training and experience which are useful for the production of goods, services and new knowledge. Human capital therefore constitutes an intangible asset that can advance or support productivity, innovation and employability.

Education is an important investment that builds human capital. Indeed, according to Bezbakh and Gherardi, 2011 cited by Rezine (2015), education has always constituted a key investment for the future, of individuals, the economy and society as a whole. Thus, education becomes the basis of an intangible or intellectual investment whose purpose is the production of human capital. It is in this sense that Woodhall (1997) posits that the notion of human capital refers to the fact that human beings invest in themselves, through education, training or other activities, which allows them to increase their future income for their entire life. With the work of authors such as Becker (1964), Denison (1962), Drucker (1969), and Schultz (1963), the theory of human capital took a decisive step in the United States. Denison and Schultz, in trying to explain the observed economic growth by different factors such as financial capital and the quantity of labour, discover a residual which they attribute to the improvement in the quality of labour of work as a result of increasing levels of education among workers.

Section 1.5. Socio-economic difficulties as factors for dropping out

Concern about the issue of dropping out of school has given rise to numerous research studies on the factors leading to it. Several distinctions are commonly used to classify these factors: individual factors or institutional factors, psychological factors or sociological factors, social environment or school environment. On the one hand, everything that relates to the socio-economic context experienced by dropouts, including the family educational environment in which they were raised: the social environment, the residential area, the economic situation of the employment area, the training offer available and accessible, etc. On the other hand, everything related to the context of schooling: school experiences, characteristics of establishments, teaching practices, etc. This distinction can be interpreted from a scientific point of view but also in political terms. In terms of scientific approaches, these two orders of phenomena refer to two successive paradigms for the analysis of educational inequalities. While theories of reproduction highlighted the determinations of the social environment in the school world, the interactionist and constructivist turn led research to look more at what was happening in the “black box” of the classroom and the relationships between teachers and students.

Unit 2.2 Identifying risk factors and early warning signs of VET dropout

Section 2.1. Insights on the categories of risk factors

Individual Factors

The literature on school dropouts far favours the study of individual characteristics. Studies generally focus on demonstrating the links between academic maladjustment, psychosocial maladjustment and dropping out of school, but rarely specify how these relationships are positioned concerning each other.

Academic and psychosocial maladjustment

Psychosocial development does not occur independently of the social contexts in which it takes place (family, school, peer group). The school, through its mandate, its operation and its history, establishes itself as an essential agent of socialization in the accomplishment of developmental tasks (Grusec & Lytton, 1988; Hill, 1980; Palmer & Humphrey, 1990; Walgrave, 1992). School is of course a place of learning focused on cognitive development and the growth of knowledge (Keating, 1990), but its influence on the individual transcends these utilitarian aspects. Not only does the school offer adolescents knowledge that will facilitate their access to the job market (or to further schooling) but, perhaps even more fundamentally, it offers a place where they can through various activities and experiences, discover, develop, affirm and test their skills, their values, as well as a range of social roles. It is a privileged place for interactions between peers which leads to the deepening of friendship and intimacy. It is often the place of first romantic encounters and also the place where relationships are established with adults other than parents. Through all of the experiences they face at school, adolescents will learn to behave in a “socially acceptable” way and to know and follow the values and norms of society. School therefore presents itself as a living environment conducive to the development and accomplishment of the various psychosocial tasks specific to adolescence (Pinker & Bloom, 1990; Claes, 1983; Hill, 1980). If the experience of schooling contributes to the psychosocial development of adolescents in the same way as their family experience, we should observe links between poor functioning at school and psychosocial difficulties. Research on adolescence indeed observes such links and frequently highlights the quality of school adaptation as a concomitant or prior phenomenon to psychosocial maladjustment.

Psychosocial adaptation of dropouts

Some people will be reluctant to talk about the “consequences” of dropping out of school. Although this term is commonly used to describe “post-dropout” behaviours or states, there is to date no study that makes it possible to clearly and unambiguously distinguish the effects of personal characteristics or prior experiences at dropout. Dropping out of school from dropping out itself. Failing to be able to speak of consequences, strictly speaking, the terms “links” and “aftermaths” will be preferred to describe the post-dropout experience.

Economic ties

Numerous studies have confirmed the negative links between under-education and socioeconomic status. Thus, as one might have imagined, dropouts have bleaker employment prospects than their graduate counterparts: more of them benefit from social assistance, and dropouts have less stable, less prestigious and less well-paid jobs.

Behavioural links

Dropping out of school is not unrelated to the evolution of criminal activity and certain lifestyle habits. Most studies on the subject show that dropping out of school is positively related to adult criminality (Bachman et al., 1971). On the other hand, the short-term effects of dropping out of school on criminal activity are more nuanced. Indeed, some researchers have noted a short-term decrease in criminal activity after dropping out, both in terms of self-disclosed delinquency, and official. These results tend to confirm the thesis of Elliot and Voss (1974) that dropping out of school helps reduce the stress and frustration experienced at school, factors which favour the appearance of delinquent behaviour. The studies of Pronovost and LeBlanc (1979, 1980) also make it possible to understand that dropping out of school reduces delinquent behaviour to the extent that the adolescent can integrate into the job market. They note that the reduction in delinquent behaviour is twice as significant among dropouts who have found employment as among non-dropouts or unemployed dropouts. Criminal activity is far from being a lot of all dropouts (Jarjoura, 1993). Sex, race, age, previous delinquent activities, educational path pursued (general or professional), the presence of aversive living conditions after abandonment and reasons for abandonment are all factors that mediate the impact of dropping out on criminal activity. It shows, among other things, that adolescents who say they dropped out because they didn't like school are more likely to be violent, steal and sell drugs, while those who were expelled are more likely to steal and sell drugs.

Organizational Factors

The quality of the school experience does not depend solely on individual abilities. The school environment affects the quality of educational interactions related to learning and behaviour. Although a dimension much less studied in the empirical literature on school dropout, it seems essential to us to describe the influence of the educational environment from its organizational perspective. Thus, we will first note the studies which have demonstrated variability between schools in the prevalence of dropping out of school and concomitant problems. We will then say a few words about the methodological aspects which characterize studies on the effectiveness of schools. Finally, we will summarize the structural and functional aspects of school organization which have been identified in the scientific literature for their influence on educational success.

Socio-Political Factors

Dropping out of school is a social construction. The perception of dropping out of school as a social problem is not unrelated to the economic and cultural changes that have shaken Western societies in recent decades. As Rivard (1991) and Schreiber (1969) point out, dropping out of the school system has not always constituted a deviant act in relation to society's expectations. Indeed, if we approach the question from a socio-economic angle, the perspective most often used to describe the harms of dropping out, we notice that 30 or 40 years ago, an adolescent could very well leave school. Without a diploma, find a job and fully occupy their place in society. However,

many factors such as the post-war population explosion, migration to urban centres, labour specialization, the economic slowdown and crises of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the entry of women into the labour market have contributed to significantly reducing employment opportunities. Where it was enough only to know how to read and write, a secondary V diploma is now required; where only a high school diploma was required, we now require a college diploma, and so on. In short, if dropouts are practically three times less numerous than at the beginning of the century, for 25 years they have found themselves in socio-economic conditions more disadvantageous than ever.

Many authors have attempted to identify a grouped set of socio-economic factors of school dropout. Ouellet (1994) is very close to reality when he lists several factors to give a global explanatory vision of the phenomenon: sociodemographic factors: ethnic and social origin, linguistic affiliation, region, socioeconomic status, and gender. Family factors: family structure, parental education and income, presence of models of success or failure, parental monitoring, and place of residence. Economic factors: attraction of the labour market, need to bring additional income to the family, need to consume. Factors related to the school system as a whole: policies regarding admission requirements, passing grades, assessment, etc. School-related factors: school organization, climate, teaching staff, teaching methods, etc. Factors linked to youth culture: their interests, tastes, their modes of communication, and individual factors: personal characteristics and attitudes of students (self-esteem, sense of responsibility, motivation, etc.) as well as school characteristics (learning difficulties, educational aspirations, participation in extracurricular activities etc.)

Section 2.2. Specifics of risk factors for VET dropout

Factors and obstacles favour the abandonment of apprenticeships. We can present these obstacles grouped into nine categories:

- Negative attitude towards apprenticeship and trades; these are seen as second-class professions with no future or progress. The decisions of girls or boys to pursue these professions are often influenced by social and sexual stereotypes.
- Lack of information and ignorance of learning; employers often ask themselves this question: "What can an apprentice do for me? ". Indeed, they think that learning is only a very big burden (Fayek, 2002), and yet, it is a source of qualified labour
- Difficulties created by work or training environments little welcoming: discrimination, sexism, hostile behaviour, insecurity, adaptation to the work environment, etc.
- Cost of apprenticeship: remuneration and cost of monitoring the apprentice which is worrying for the employer, financial pressure on apprentices at times, given their age and their need for independence are increasingly growing. To these constraints are added, for women who have children, childcare costs



- Possible repercussions of economic factors on work and the pursuit of learning: during periods of economic slowdown, a reduction in working time work can reduce learning opportunities, and even lead to the apprentice leaving the training centre or workshop
- Shortage of learning support resources: lack of work tools or necessary “raw materials” for apprenticeship
- Concerns about the basic skills and essential skills of apprentices: too many technical or intellectual gaps at the start of the apprenticeship (not knowing how to read, write or count, for example)
- Gaps in workplace training and technical training: Lack of centres and qualified personnel in rural areas
- Difficulties created by regulations aimed at apprenticeship: absence of common programs between training centres and workshops, training programs randomly given to apprentices.

Section 2.3. Identifying early warning signs in class

Below are some key steps on how to spot the first signs of dropping out of your class(es):

Step 1: Look for the clues (engagement and academic performance)

It is obvious that neither Student A's nonchalance, Student B's memory lapse, nor even Student C's insolence is enough on their own to determine whether some of your students are showing warning signs of dropping out.

Research has shown that students most at risk of dropping out are those whose engagement and academic performance are the lowest (Archambault & Janosz, 2009; Bowers, Taff & Spratt, 2013):

Academic performance here refers to the student's number of grade repetitions as well as their current academic results - clues that you can easily collect from the student's file.

School engagement characterizes the student's participation in school as well as how he interacts with learning activities, teachers and peers (Skinner & Pitzer, 2011). Thus, it has a behavioural dimension (e.g. respecting the rules of classroom life), cognitive (e.g. persevering in the face of difficulty), emotional (e.g. being happy at school) and social (e.g. taking pleasure in collaborating with his classmates) (Wang et al., 2019). Observation grids exist to help you diagnose the academic engagement of your students.

Don't try to interpret everything. Collecting these two indices - engagement and academic performance - will allow you to correctly identify dropout situations in almost 80% of cases (Archambault & Janosz, 2009).

Step 2: Know the different profiles of dropouts

You think you're the only one who can't sleep soundly. Think again! Dropping out of school haunted the nights of an entire community of researchers after discovering that it did not have just one face. Indeed, if we all have in mind a unique prototype of the dropout (= disruptive student experiencing great difficulty in learning); the reality is much more diverse. Currently, four dropout profiles are relatively stabilized in the scientific literature (e.g. Janosz et al., 2000).

First of all, some students drop out early, that is to say, they drop out of school during middle school or at the start of high school, particularly after the age of compulsory education (16 years old). For these students, dropping out appears as the last episode of an unfavourable life course initiated upon entry into primary school due to a failed connection with the school. This failed connection would be due to a gap between the academic expectations relating to the student's profession (implicit expectations, such as the attitudes and behaviours to have in class) and the more disadvantaged socialization context among these students (on the family, social level, cultural, economic).

Consequently, these students find themselves during their schooling in a situation of academic failure with sometimes a disengagement at the behavioural level (behavioural problems, casual attitudes, etc.) and/or emotional (acquired resignation in the face of academic failure, low self-esteem, etc.)

How to re-engage your disengaged students?

Among so-called “early dropouts”, two profiles stand out:

Unsuitable dropouts (30 to 50% of dropouts) constitute the profile that we know best because it is the one for which dropping out is the most visible and therefore easier to spot. In addition to academic failure, it manifests itself in externalized behaviours of rejection of school resulting in disciplinary problems.

Conversely, underperforming dropouts (10 to 20% of dropouts) tend to internalize their distress and show few behavioural problems. These dropouts may also show superficial signs of commitment (positive relationship with the teacher, “keeping up appearances” by hiding their academic shortcomings), which do not make it possible to compensate for their learning difficulties.

For the other two profiles, dropping out is generally later, that is to say, the break from school occurs during high school or at the end of high school (for example after a first failure at the baccalaureate). The educational path is similar to non-dropout students, which makes them two extremely difficult profiles to identify.



For these students, these are generally life events (directed or forced orientation, harassment, failure in an important exam, death of a loved one, etc.) or developmental episodes (social deviance in adolescence, peer influence). Which undermines their academic commitment and exhausts the resources they can mobilize at school, thus leading to school dropout.

Discreet dropouts (30 to 60% of dropouts) are students who have slightly poor but close to average academic performance and who do not present behavioural problems, although they may be absent. They are characterized by the fact that they remain in the school system for a long time despite personal difficulties, at school or outside of school, which push them to absenteeism and deteriorate their feeling of having their place. At school, although they report liking school otherwise. This student profile reveals situations of “academic overwork”, characterized by high commitment but difficulties in meeting academic demands (precarious academic success).

Conversely, disengaged dropouts (10 to 20% of dropouts) have good academic results but do not have a positive view of school, that is to say, they are emotionally disengaged or unmotivated - concerning it (loss of meaning, perceived futility of school), which manifests itself in problems of indiscipline and schoolwork reduced to the minimum necessary from an academic point of view. These students can thus receive disciplinary sanctions, without presenting learning difficulties.

Step 3: Establish a class-wide diagnosis

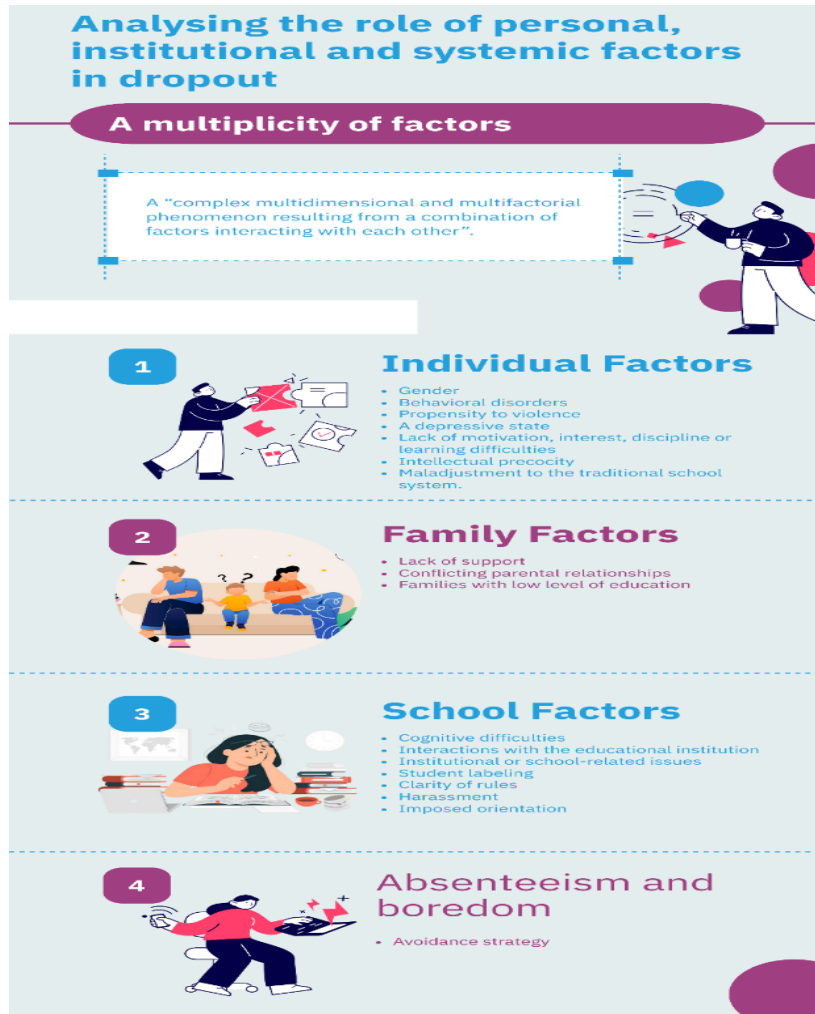
At this stage, you can already have some intuitions about the state of the risk of dropping out of your class, observe your heart rate drop and your pulse slow down. More good news? There are open complete tools to 1) systematically identify the most salient engagement and learning issues in your class and 2) guide you towards the most relevant and appropriate educational remobilization actions.

Section 2.4. More inside the factors for VET dropout

Abandoning professional training can be motivated by various factors such as personal difficulties, a change of professional project or external constraints.

There are several reasons why a person may decide to drop out of vocational training, including:

- Mismatch between expectations and reality: if the training does not meet the specific needs of the participant or does not correspond to their career objectives, it may be preferable to abandon it to seek other, more aligned opportunities;
- Personal or financial difficulties: health problems, family problems or financial constraints



- Change of professional project: this may be due to a new awareness, the emergence of new opportunities or a reassessment of their aspirations and interests;
- Training dissatisfaction or problems: If the training does not meet expected quality standards, is under-resourced or the trainers are not competent, this can lead to dissatisfaction and abandonment. Organizational problems, pedagogical disagreements or unsuitable teaching methods can also be factors that lead to dropping out;
- Immediate professional opportunities: an interesting job offer or the possibility of participating in concrete projects can encourage the person to abandon current training to start their career earlier.



Unit 2.3 Analysing the role of personal, institutional and systemic factors in dropout

Section 3.1. A multiplicity of factors

Dropping out of school is a “complex multidimensional and multifactorial phenomenon resulting from a combination of factors interacting with each other” and the outcome of a long process where each of the parties (teachers, parents, students) seems to have a share of responsibility. The definition of dropout is therefore complex and multiple factors can cause it. Indeed, no single factor can justify a dropout situation.

1. INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Dropping out of school can be influenced by individual factors such as gender (boys are more prone to it), behavioural disorders, a propensity to violence, a depressive state, a lack of motivation, interest, discipline or even learning difficulties, intellectual precocity, maladjustment to the traditional school system, etc.

2. FAMILY FACTORS

The family environment must also be taken into account both at the structural and functional level because the family is “an essential element of academic success”. The organization, relationships and structure can influence the phenomenon of school dropout. Thus, lack of support and conflicting relationships with parents impact the child's academic success. Furthermore, children from families where parents have a low level of education are more likely to drop out. Family socio-economic origin can therefore have an impact on school dropout situations, particularly in terms of “difficulties adapting to school standards”.

3. SCHOOL FACTORS

Even if academic difficulties cannot be isolated from their social and subjective causes and effects, dropping out of school appears to be the fruit of a slow process which finds its origin in an early cognitive dropout and plays out in the interaction between students and the educational institution, from its policies to the classroom situation, from interactions with the teacher to the proposed working framework, both from the point of view of school forms as well as content and forms of evaluation. Institutional or school factors are preponderant in situations of school dropout, the general functioning of the school system is sometimes even problematic. School engagement at the level of the student but also the teacher, the school climate, the support of teachers in learning, the clarity of school or class rules, labelling, orientation, school programs etc. are all variables to take into consideration. Among these, for Catherine Blaya et al., the school climate in general and the labelling phenomenon are central. By labelling, you are either a good or a bad student. It is a classification that the young person will internalize. When a student experiences difficulties at

school, the institution will tend to “naturalize”, “pathologize” and “externalize” them. The young person will thus think that his place is not in the school system since it does not want him. Repeating a grade, relegation and segregation are all phenomena that young people must face.

Young people in difficult situations at school will tend to group in “a subculture of opposition to the system and the image it sends back to them, in a reaction process to the stigmatization or exclusion that they undergo.” This “differentiation”, and this “victimization” can also lead to difficult socialization, to a lack of self-esteem and therefore increase the feeling of exclusion from school. Concerning the school climate, situations of harassment, relationships between student and teacher, and the class are all factors which can have strong repercussions on the student. The organization of the class, the support provided by the teacher, how the rules are dictated and perceived, etc. can lead to a feeling of “insecurity” and a “negative view of the establishment” in the student. If he does not feel at home in his class or school, he will tend to no longer attend classes.

The orientation chosen or undergone is also an important factor affecting school dropout. In all European countries, it is the professional sectors that are most prone to dropout situations. Furthermore, a 2009 PISA study shows that establishments, where young people from immigrant backgrounds are concentrated, do not particularly increase the risk of dropping out of school, while the grouping of young people from a disadvantaged social category increases this possibility. “Cultural” and “methodological” elements can also intervene in situations of school dropout. Some students who do not understand what is being asked of them on a methodological level, for example, can quickly feel excluded and incomprehensible.

4. ABSENTEEISM AND BOREDOM

All of the above factors can lead to absenteeism and/or boredom. Absenteeism can be an “avoidance strategy” that can lead to dropping out of school. Both cause and consequence of dropping out of school, absenteeism promotes student maladjustment: unsuitable for the school environment, they risk also being unsuitable for the job market. Concerning boredom, it cannot be considered as a factor increasing the risk of dropping out of school. However, it is symptomatic of a problematic situation, or perhaps poorly experienced schooling, of a dysfunction.

Section 3.2. Interdependence among the factors

It is difficult to identify, among the multitude of factors, the significant risks of dropping out because they are so interdependent. These factors only have value in their accumulations. It is the interaction between these and the environment that will predispose to one or the other behaviour. Concretely, it is impossible to standardize the reasons which could lead to abandoning training.



The factors frequently mentioned are personal learning difficulties, lack of social skills, behavioural disorders and depression. We might think that students who are more at risk have conflicting family relationships and/or few educational resources, however, boredom is also often cited by young people. In most cases, there is no single cause and difficulties do not arise overnight. The young person's situation gradually deteriorates and difficulties accumulate.

What is certain is that interactions between students and teachers have an impact on learner engagement. To complete the picture, lack of organization and a negative perception of the teacher are likely to increase the risks.

The more mature the student becomes, the more likely he or she is to drop out. The most common factors are:

- The presence of depressive feelings
- Lack of organization
- Negative attitudes of the teacher towards the students
- The student's lack of engagement in his or her school and extracurricular activities.

The solutions

To encourage perseverance in studies, motivation, self-confidence and confidence in their abilities must be highlighted. We could also mention: parental support and involvement, the promotion of training by the family as well as listening and communication. It is important to feel that those around us have confidence in our choices and our success.

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Module 3. Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

In a nutshell...

The chapter is composed of Unit 1, which centres around creating a supportive learning environment in VET settings by emphasizing the importance of promoting inclusivity and diversity to ensure all learners feel supported. Unit 2 presents potential barriers to implementing inclusivity and diversity in VET settings and strategies on how to overcome those barriers.

The importance of students' engagement and motivation for their general well-being and success in the learning process will be explained and the units will give practical insight into how to make vocational training settings a supporting learning environment that prevents dropouts. It offers strategies, tips and tricks, checklists, and methods for fostering student engagement and motivation which then leads to the reduction of dropout rates.

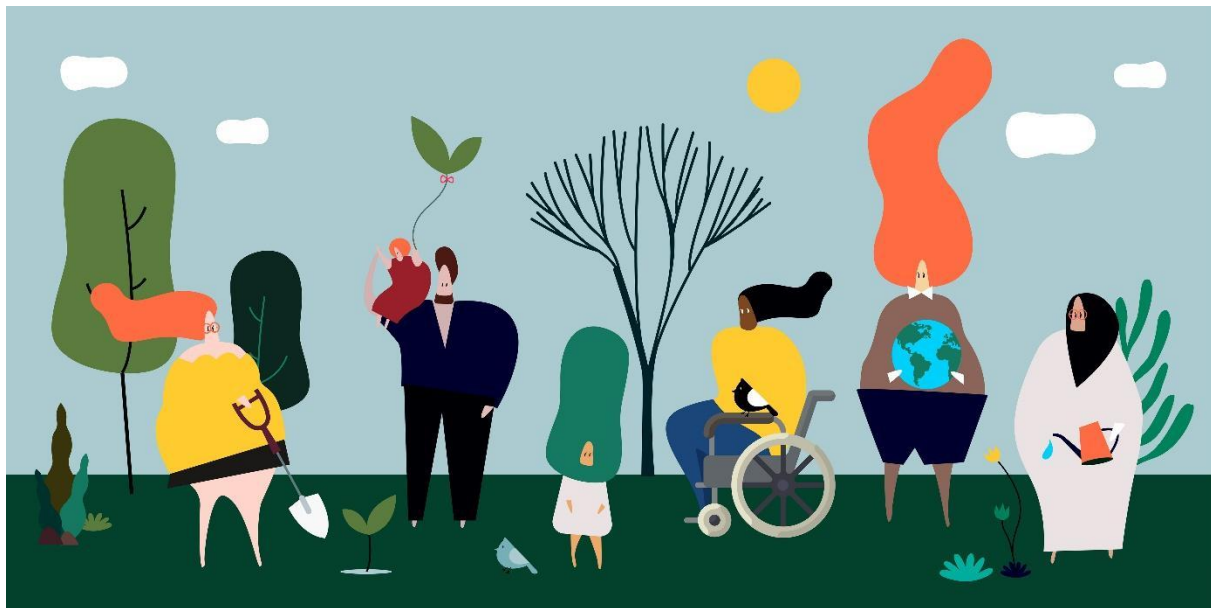


Unit 3.1 Promoting inclusivity and diversity in VET settings

The most important mechanisms of successful and effective vocational education and training are inclusivity and diversity because they create a setting that is unprejudiced, supportive, and open to all learners.

- **Inclusivity** implies a learning environment that is welcoming and supportive of all learners, regardless of their background, culture, or identity.
- **Diversity**, on the other hand, denotes the inclusion of a wide range of individuals with different social and cultural backgrounds as well as the inclusion of different identities in education and training.

Both factors help break down participation barriers, improve the quality of education, and prepare learners to meet the needs and expectations of an increasingly diverse workforce. Additionally, promoting inclusivity and diversity in VET education helps address issues of social justice and equity, which are necessary for building a more just and unbiased society.



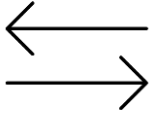
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What are the potential barriers to implementing diversity and inclusion in VET settings?

Potential barriers to implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives in VET settings are complex and multiple and may include different motives starting from the lack of resources to the lack of awareness and understanding.¹

¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/what-benefits-promoting-diversity-inclusion-lkyjf>

As a teacher, it is important to consider the following common trends:



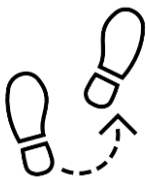
Resistance to Change:

Traditional educational practices which are usually not inclusive and generally block the integration of diversity and inclusion initiatives in VET curricula seem to be hard to overcome. Formal education tends to show resistance towards non-formal practices and methods.



Lack of Resources:

Lack of resources and inadequate funding, resulting in a shortage of qualified personnel, materials, and infrastructure suitable for learners with diverse needs can delay or completely block the implementation of inclusive practices in VET institutions.²



Limited Staff Training:

As teachers and trainers are directly involved in working with people with different cultural backgrounds and needs in VET education, they are the main carriers or implementors of inclusion and diversity practices. Consequently, inadequate training of teachers and trainers and lack of professional development and support can be a serious impediment to implementing inclusive VET practices and effectively supporting diverse learners and their needs.

² <https://tvjetjournal.com/tvet-systems/towards-integrating-inclusive-vocational-and-technical-education-practices-in-zimbabwe-tvet-institutions/>



Lack of awareness and understanding:

Lack of awareness of the specific needs of diverse learners as well as limited or no awareness and understanding of the benefits of promoting diversity and inclusion in VET settings, can be another barrier to implementing inclusive practices.



Infrastructure and Accessibility:

Inadequate infrastructure and lack of accessibility for learners with diverse needs, such as those with disabilities, can represent significant barriers to the implementation of inclusive VET surroundings and practices.³

An extensive approach is required, so VET institutions can accommodate the diverse needs of all the learners involved.

“How to” Checklist

- ✓ A shift in institutional culture to embrace diversity and inclusion in VET curricula.
- ✓ Continuous professional development and support for teachers and trainers.
- ✓ Adequate resourcing and funding.

³ <https://aer.eu/eu-policy-and-funding-framework-for-social-inclusion-in-tvet-and-skills-development/>



How to promote inclusivity and diversity in VET settings

Resulting of the existing barriers to implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives in VET settings identified in the previous chapter, some of the effective strategies for promoting inclusivity and diversity in VET (vocational education and training) settings can be⁴:



STEP 1: Professional Development⁵

Teachers and trainers working in VET surroundings are challenged continuously to improve their teaching strategies and methods to keep their students focused, as many of them have learning problems or show a very low level of motivation. Early leaving from vocational education and training (VET) programs can sometimes be a result of the student's dissatisfaction with teaching/training materials and methods as well as problematic relationships with trainers. Therefore, providing professional development for inclusive teaching and training to overcome participation barriers for all teachers and trainers is crucial.

Professional development of teachers and trainers in VET to promote inclusivity and diversity can be implemented by taking mini steps such as...

⁴ <https://www.togetherplatform.com/blog/diversity-programs-in-the-workplace>

⁵ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/promoting-workplace-diversity-inclusion-inspiring-success-ociti>



MINI-STEP 1 - Inclusive Training Programs:

Developing inclusive training programs that address the needs of diverse learners and promote cultural competence among teachers and trainers.



MINI-STEP 2 - Collaboration and Partnerships:

Collaborating with community organizations, advocacy groups, and educational institutions to better understand unique needs, establish trust, and bridge gaps in accessing education and training.



MINI-STEP 3 - Continuous Professional Development:

Providing continuous professional development opportunities for teachers and trainers to enhance their knowledge and skills in promoting inclusivity and diversity.



MINI-STEP 4 - Inclusive Teaching Practices:

Encouraging and supporting teachers and trainers to adopt inclusive teaching practices that value and respect differences and provide opportunities for diverse learning.



MINI-STEP 5 - Diversity and Inclusion Training:

Providing diversity and inclusion training for teachers and trainers to enhance their cultural competence and understanding of diverse learners.

By implementing these strategies, vocational education and training institutions can ensure that their teachers and trainers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to promote inclusivity and diversity in their programs. This will lead to a more diverse and inclusive VET workforce that reflects the varied backgrounds of the communities it serves.



STEP 2: Flexibility in Programs

Flexibility is very much needed in VET programs to adapt the programs to the needs of learners from different backgrounds and with diverse preferences. This can be achieved through mini steps such as...



MINI-STEP 1 - Evaluation of needs:

Carrying out continuous evaluations in a practical way to see what the performance level and satisfaction of students is, while evaluating in a qualitative way which are the needs and potential solutions to improve that performance.



MINI-STEP 2 - Modularization:

Making VET more accessible and attractive, and providing additional support to help learners select suitable modules and design personalized learning paths.



MINI-STEP 3 - Tailored programs at different levels of skills and qualifications:

Shorter and less demanding programs with a strong component of work-based learning leading to partial qualifications would still have a labour market value at the same time have an advantage over the existing mainstream VET programs when it comes to disadvantaged social groups who have difficulties.



STEP 3: Addressing Negative Perceptions

Negative perception towards upper-secondary VET results in its failure to attract lower-performing and disadvantaged students in comparison to general education. This can be seen in the overall decline in the perception of upper-secondary VET among young people, who are increasingly interested in pursuing higher education and show the ambition of working in high-skilled jobs (Musset and Mytna Kurekova: 2018). Increasing the attractiveness of the VET teaching profession could be done via mini steps such as:



MINI-STEP 1 - Continuous professional development:

Improving the current programs and adding tailored programs at different levels of skills and qualifications performance, so the contents are appealing while being practical for the integration in the labour market.



MINI-STEP 2 - Conducting information sessions about the benefits of VET education:

This could be directly done in schools, and it should be highlighted that there is a need for upper-secondary VET enrolments as there is an increasing labour market demand for medium and upper-secondary VET graduates.





STEP 4: Raising Awareness and Alleviating Stigma

VET organizations should raise awareness alleviate the stigma associated with focused training and provide broad continuing education at the national/regional level to improve diversity and inclusion within the sector. This can include webinars, podcasts, and other resources that support diversity, inclusion, and racial justice.



STEP 5: Attracting Diverse Candidates

Providing educational opportunities aimed to meet broad cultural needs and the needed support by specialized training and mentorship can attract more diverse candidates, thus directly encouraging diversity and inclusion in the VET surroundings. VET institutions should seek to admit and educate a diverse student body to enrich the educational experience and prepare students to meet the current and future needs of the profession. This commitment involves building a platform of inclusion and success for all students and having no tolerance for discriminatory language or actions. Higher quality teaching together with combined language and vocational training are of crucial importance.



STEP 6: Creating Inclusive Work Environments



Various strategies can be implemented, so VET settings can become more inclusive and diverse for both learners and professionals:



MINI-STEP 1 - Create socially conscious educational and work environments:



MINI-STEP 2 - Remove barriers to equity:

This means providing support for underrepresented groups, including people with disabilities, foreign-born and those from less favourable socioeconomic backgrounds.



MINI-STEP 3 - Developing mentorship programs:

Monitoring the progress and status of diverse students, and implementing pipeline programs to encourage their inclusion, such as providing them with a mentor from previous years, who can help them with theoretical and practical questions.⁶

Importance of implementing these strategies

Not implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives in vocational education and training (VET) curricula leads to potential consequences such as⁷:

- **Reduced Learning Outcomes**
- **Limited Employability and Career Prospects**
- **Worsening Inequality**
- **Underusage of Talent Pool**
- **Inadequate Preparation for the Workforce**

⁶ <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/1/how-do-you-overcome-diversity-inclusion-training-barriers>

⁷ <https://strengthscape.com/effects-of-a-lack-of-diversity-inclusion-at-the-workplace/>



VET institutions which fail to understand the importance of inclusive practices and address their potential consequences, risk failing to provide learners with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to prosper in a current inclusive and diverse workforce, ultimately negatively influencing the quality, relevance, and impact of VET programs and services.

Unit 3.2 Strategies for fostering student engagement and motivation.

In comparison to traditional academic settings, vocational training is intended to prepare individuals with the practical skills and knowledge necessary to work in specific industries. Therefore, maintaining high levels of engagement and motivation is important for ensuring that students not only acquire the necessary knowledge and skills but also stay interested and committed to their educational pursuits.

Motivated students, who are consequently highly engaged, are more likely to actively participate in learning activities and therefore retain information and apply their knowledge effectively later. This, in turn, improves their readiness for the workforce and increases the likelihood of finding employment after completing the training. It is the responsibility of training institutions to neutralize the factors that often lead to disengagement and indifference.

For this purpose, it is essential to focus on student engagement and motivation in vocational training environments, because it is not only beneficial for individual learners but also essential for the continual growth and strength of the workforce in various industries.

How to make vocational training a supportive learning environment to tackle dropouts.

Vocational training aims to equip learners with practical skills and knowledge in various occupations. This approach seeks to address the unique challenges faced by these individuals while promoting their engagement, motivation, and overall well-being during their education journey.

A supportive learning environment for dropouts can be achieved through several strategies that cater to the specific needs of this population. These may include:

“How to” Checklist

- ✓ **Create a positive and inclusive culture:** Emphasize respectful communication, teamwork, and empathy towards all students, regardless of background or skill level.
- ✓ **Offer individualized support:** Implement one-to-one coaching or mentoring programs to help students overcome challenges and build confidence.
- ✓ **Provide meaningful connections:** Foster strong ties between students, instructors, and industry professionals to enhance job prospects and boost morale.
- ✓ **Encourage peer support:** Facilitate interactions among students to share experiences, offer encouragement, and form friendships.
- ✓ **Promote autonomy and agency:** Help students develop self-management skills and encourage them to take ownership of their learning journey.
- ✓ **Teach essential life skills:** Incorporate lessons on time management, goal setting, conflict resolution, and stress management to prepare students for success inside and outside the classroom.
- ✓ **Ensure physical safety and comfort:** Ensure that facilities are clean, well-maintained, and free from hazards to minimize distractions and promote a sense of security.
- ✓ **Implement flexible scheduling options:** Allow students to adjust their schedules according to their needs and commitments to accommodate diverse learning preferences and situations.
- ✓ **Use technology judiciously:** Integrate technology to facilitate learning but avoid relying solely on screens to engage students. Instead, leverage technology to supplement traditional methods.
- ✓ **Monitor progress and intervene promptly:** Regularly evaluate student performance and proactively address concerns before they escalate into larger problems.
- ✓

These strategies will nurture an environment that supports academic and personal growth, encouraging students to persist in their vocational training journeys.

What are strategies for fostering student engagement and motivation?

Strategies which can be used for fostering student engagement and motivation in vocational training environments are as follows:

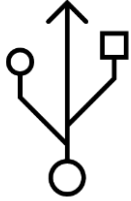


Providing hands-on learning experiences:

Vocational training environments are best suited for hands-on learning experiences. Students are more likely to be engaged and motivated when they are actively involved in the learning process. Providing opportunities for students to practice skills and apply knowledge in real-world scenarios can help them stay engaged and motivated. Some of the examples include:

“How to” Checklist

- ✓ Practical labs where students perform experiments or use equipment related to their field of study.
- ✓ Field trips that expose students to real-life applications of their coursework.
- ✓ Projects that require students to solve problems and demonstrate their understanding through tangible outcomes.



Technology use:

Technology can be a powerful tool for engaging and motivating students. Interactive simulations, virtual reality, and gamification can make learning more fun and engaging. Additionally, using technology to track progress and provide feedback can help students stay motivated and on track. Some examples of how technology can be used to foster student engagement include:

“How to” Checklist

- ✓ Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), which allow students to explore simulated environments and interact with digital objects.
- ✓ Gamification, which uses game mechanics such as points, badges, and leaderboards to encourage competition and reward achievement.
- ✓ Online platforms and tools that facilitate communication, collaboration, and assessment between instructors and students.





Create a supportive learning environment.⁸:

Students are more likely to be engaged and motivated when they feel supported and valued. Creating a positive and supportive learning environment can help students feel more connected to the training program and their peers. Encouraging collaboration, providing opportunities for feedback, and recognizing student achievements can all contribute to a supportive learning environment. By cultivating an atmosphere of respect and inclusivity, educators can help students build strong relationships with one another and form a sense of community within the class. Strategies for building a supportive learning environment are included.

“How to” Checklist

- ✓ Establishing ground rules and norms for behaviour and communication.
- ✓ Encouraging active listening and empathy among students.
- ✓ Promoting teamwork and cooperation.
- ✓ Recognizing and celebrating student accomplishments.



⁸ <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/1/how-do-you-overcome-diversity-inclusion-training-barriers>

Set clear goals and expectations:

Setting clear goals and expectations can help students stay motivated and focused. Communicating what is expected of students and what they can expect from the training program can help them stay on track and motivated to succeed. When students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, they are better equipped to manage their time effectively and prioritize their efforts accordingly. To ensure that students have a clear grasp of the goals and expectations associated with their courses, consider:

“How to” Checklist

- ✓ Develop a syllabus that outlines the objectives, assignments, and evaluation criteria for each unit.
- ✓ Breaking down larger projects into smaller tasks and milestones.
- ✓ Communicating regularly with students about their performance and progress.

**Provide opportunities for self-reflection and self-assessment:**

Providing opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and assess their progress can help them stay motivated and engaged. Encouraging students to set their own learning goals and track their progress can help them take ownership of their learning and stay motivated to achieve their goals. Se

If-reflection and self-assessment empower students to take control of their learning journey and identify areas for improvement. By encouraging students to reflect on their progress and evaluate their performance, educators can help students become more invested in their education and



committed to achieving their goals. Techniques for promoting self-reflection and self-assessment include:

“How to” Checklist

- ✓ Ask students to keep journals or logs documenting their thoughts and feelings throughout the semester.
- ✓ Requiring students to complete periodic self-evaluations based on established rubrics or checklists.
- ✓ Facilitating group discussions centred around reflection and critical thinking.



Offer personalized learning experiences:

Every student is unique, with their strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. Offering personalized learning experiences can help students stay engaged and motivated. Providing opportunities for students to work at their own pace, offering individualized feedback, and tailoring instruction to meet individual needs can all contribute to a more personalized learning experience. Personalization allows students to learn at their own pace and according to their specific needs and preferences. By catering to individual differences, educators can improve student engagement and increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. Methods for delivering personalized learning experiences include:

“How to” Checklist

- ✓ Adapting teaching methods and materials to accommodate different learning styles.
- ✓ Allowing students to choose topics or projects that align with their interests and career aspirations.
- ✓ Providing additional resources and support for struggling students.
- ✓ Offering flexible scheduling options to accommodate diverse life circumstances.



How to measure student engagement and motivation in the vocational training environment

Vocational training environments must measure student engagement and motivation to ensure that students are receiving the best possible education and support. Measuring engagement and motivation can help identify areas where students may be struggling and allow for targeted interventions to improve their learning outcomes. Here are some ways that vocational training environments can measure student engagement and motivation:

Surveys and questionnaires:

Surveys and questionnaires can be used to gather information about students' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences.

These tools can help identify areas where students may be disengaged or unmotivated and provide insights into how to improve the learning environment

Observations:

Observing students in the classroom or during hands-on training can provide insights into their engagement and motivation levels.

Virtual reality:

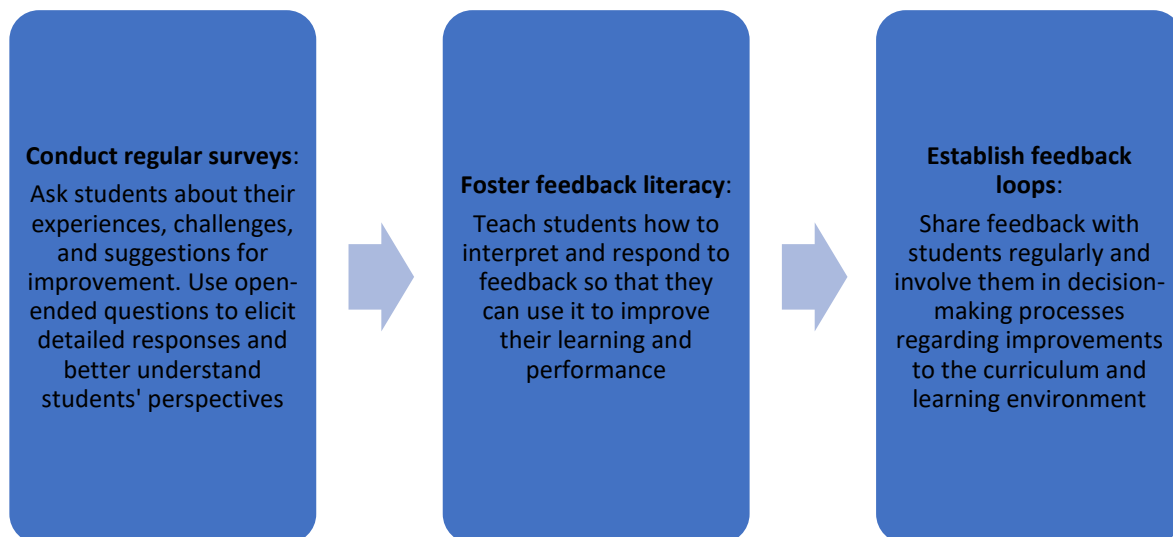
Virtual reality can be used to simulate real-world scenarios in a safe and controlled environment. Preliminary research has shown that virtual reality environments can enhance engagement and motivation.



Measuring student engagement and motivation enables vocational training environments to identify areas for improvement and implement targeted strategies to support student's learning and success.

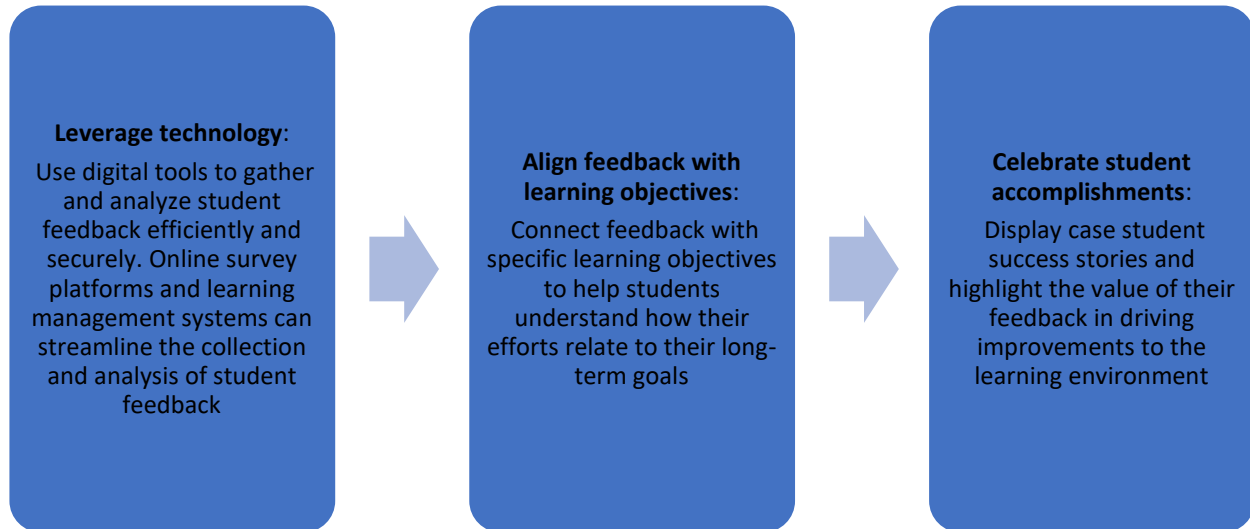
How to use student feedback to improve engagement and motivation in VET environments

To improve student engagement and motivation in vocational training environments, it is essential to collect and utilize student feedback. Some strategies for gathering and applying student feedback to enhance the learning experience are:



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⁹ <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/how-can-you-encourage-student-engagement-vocational> + <https://typeset.io/questions/how-can-feedback-be-used-to-improve-the-learning-experience-5breix9fbo>



Collecting and utilizing student feedback in vocational training environments can create a more supportive and engaging learning environment that meets the needs and interests of their students. This, in turn, leads to increased motivation, improved learning outcomes, and greater student satisfaction.

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Module 4. Early Detection and Intervention Strategies

In a nutshell...

This Module focuses on early detection and intervention strategies for preventing VET dropout. Unit 4.1 explores the recognition and appropriate response to signs of at-risk learners. It also explains risk factors and early warning signs of dropouts in vocational training as well as the responding strategies to deal with early warning signs of dropout in vocational training.

Unit 4.2 delves into the implementation of effective early intervention practices, which play a crucial role in lowering dropout risks. It presents detailed strategies for addressing each of the dropout factors presented in the first subchapter. Finally, Unit 4.3 offers and clarifies the list of early intervention strategies created specifically for trainers.





Unit 4.1 Recognizing and Responding to Signs of At-risk Learners

To recognize and detect potential dropouts in vocational training early, it is crucial to focus on early warning signs, causes of dropouts, and risk factors.

Early warning systems can be developed to identify at-risk learners and intervene to prevent the final and undesired drop-out. These systems can be enhanced with predictive models that consider learner profile information (socio-economic background), engagement (motivation level), behavioural patterns (regularity on attendance) and performance within the course (exam and activity results).

Intervention mechanisms are necessary to avoid a learner's drop-out. These vary a lot depending on the concrete case and one of the most important requirements is that they are developed by a professional team that can cover the different student's needs.¹⁰

What are the main risk factors for dropouts in vocational training?

Dropout rates in vocational training are influenced by various risk factors and it is important to understand the origin of these factors and to provide potential solutions within the VET Setting and in cooperation with the students' family or support network.¹¹

Risk factors for dropouts in vocational training include low educational qualification, low school achievement, discontinuity in the previous educational course, low socioeconomic background,

¹⁰ https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/6211_en.pdf

¹¹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11618-023-01151-1>



migration background, and failure to achieve desired occupations. Personality features and the personal context in which the student lives, such as disidentification with educational goals or lack of family support, can lead to a voluntary withdrawal and final drop-out.¹²

In general, it is important to highlight that vocational training programs can create a supportive environment that fosters student retention, engagement, and success in vocational education. Guidance and counselling at the individual and family level are pretty much welcomed in this kind of setting, as holistic interventions ensure better success.

Identifying and addressing these factors enables dropout prevention and improves the overall success of vocational training programs.

How can we detect early warning signs of dropout in vocational training?

On many occasions, teachers only focus on the content part of the course. However, it is also a responsibility to care about the well-being and performance of all students. In this sense, it is very useful to know which aspects correlate with a risk of dropping out in advance.¹³

Some key aspects to pay attention to are:



Excessive Absenteeism: Students who miss a significant amount of training, such as more than one week per semester.

¹² <https://ijcer.net/index.php/pub/article/view/218>

¹³ <https://publisherspanel.com/api/files/view/1411094.pdf>



Failure of Core Academic Courses: Students who fail core academic courses, such as math or English.



Lack of Engagement: Disengagement from training, indicated by low attendance, lack of classroom engagement or behaviour issues.



Low Socioeconomic Background: Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to drop out.



Low educational qualification and School Achievement: Students with low school achievement are at a higher risk of dropping out. As well as those who have discontinued a previous educational course.





Migration Background: Students encounter more language barriers, cultural differences, and integration challenges that affect their engagement and performance in vocational training.

Recognizing these early warning signs and risk factors in vocational training settings, enables educators and institutions to implement targeted interventions to support at-risk learners effectively and improve retention rates in vocational education programs.

How to respond to early warning signs of dropout in vocational training

Vocational training programs can use early warning signs to initially target students who might be suffering a down phase during the course. Additional interventions and detection systems can assist in understanding student behaviour and performance, allowing a timely intervention that is designed by a multidisciplinary team for a specific student with unique needs.¹⁴

It is recommended to set up a group of the training staff that establish concrete indicators, identify and prioritize main risk factors according to the concrete context of the country, city and school and finally agree on thresholds upon which students will be identified as 'at risk' or 'at high risk' of dropping out.

¹⁴ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/monitoring-early-leavers>

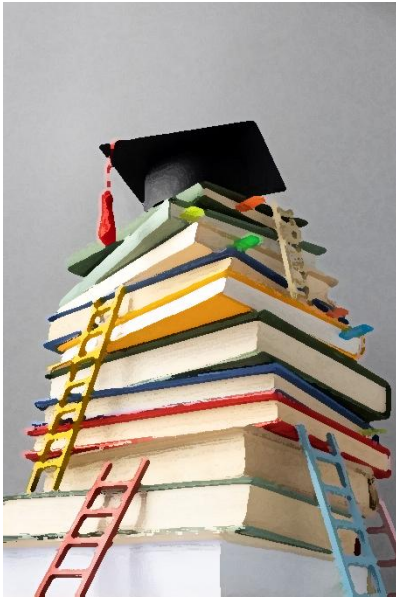


“How to” respond to early warning signs

- ✓ **Tailored Interventions since the beginning:** The most important aspect is that the specific needs and challenges of the student are addressed.
- ✓ **Better Coordination from above:** It is essential to ensure a more cohesive approach to supporting students.
- ✓ **Information Sharing among professionals:** Systematic information sharing and increased cooperation between practitioners, enhancing the overall support network for at-risk students.
- ✓ **Understanding Disengagement at the root:** Gain a better understanding of the process of disengagement and the factors that lead to early leaving among students.
- ✓ **Offer work-based learning opportunities:** Provide students with practical, hands-on work experiences in their chosen field to help them build confidence, develop skills, and see the relevance of their training to their future careers.

The effectiveness of holistic and deep interventions relies on good initial planning from the management, which allows flexibility and offers solutions, but also on a constant monitoring approach from the teachers, who are alert to detect early drop-out signs. Then it is important to communicate it soon, so all the resources and knowledge can be gathered on time.

Unit 4.2 Implementing Effective Early Intervention Practices



Effective early intervention practices for preventing dropouts in vocational training include a range of strategies and initiatives. These practices focus on advising and counselling trainees, enhancing trainee engagement through meaningful curriculum, and increasing trainees' sense of belonging in VET settings.¹⁵

Additionally, key components of dropout prevention programs involve strong reading and writing programs, academic tutoring, personalization, and improving classroom behaviour and social skills.

Implementing programs like career and technical education, work-based learning, mentoring, tutoring, and professional development for educators are also crucial in reducing dropout rates. These strategies aim to create safe learning environments, promote active learning, engage students in meaningful ways, and provide individualized instruction to meet the diverse needs of at-risk students.

Low Educational Qualification

Low educational qualification is a significant risk factor for dropout in vocational training programs, impacting students' ability to succeed in their training. Special attention needs to be thrown into this aspect, as it is where a teacher and a VET centre can usually impact the most.

To address this challenge effectively and support students with low educational qualifications, vocational training programs can implement various interventions to meet the specific needs of these learners.

¹⁵ https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/eiservices/keyprinciplesmatrix_01_30_15.pdf



“How to” address Low Educational Qualification

- ✓ Remedial Education Programs
- ✓ Individualized Learning Plans
- ✓ Mentorship
- ✓ Skill Development Workshops
- ✓ Career Counseling and Guidance
- ✓ Collaboration with Community Partners

Diving into details...





Remedial Education Programs

Description	Offering remedial education programs that focus on foundational skills in subjects like math, language, and literacy can help bridge the knowledge gap for students with low and high educational qualifications.
Impact	These programs provide targeted support to improve students' academic competencies and build essential skills necessary for success in vocational training.



Individualized Learning Plans



Description	Developing individualized learning plans for students with low educational qualifications allows for personalized instruction and support tailored to their specific learning needs.
Impact	By customizing learning experiences, vocational training programs can address the unique challenges faced by students with low educational qualifications and enhance their chances of success.
 <h3>Mentorship</h3>	
Description	Providing mentorship programs and academic support services can offer guidance, encouragement, and academic assistance to students with low educational qualifications.
Impact	Mentorship relationships and academic support can boost students' confidence, motivation, and academic performance, creating a supportive environment for their educational journey.
 <h3>Skill Development Workshops</h3>	
Description	Organizing skill development workshops focused on essential vocational skills can help students with low educational qualifications acquire practical knowledge and hands-on experience.
Impact	These workshops enhance students' vocational competencies, increase their confidence in their abilities, and prepare them for the demands of the workforce.



Career Counseling and Guidance

Description	Offering career counselling services that help students explore career pathways, set goals, and make informed decisions about their vocational training can empower individuals with low educational qualifications.
Impact	Career counselling equips students with the information and resources needed to align their aspirations with suitable vocational opportunities, increasing their engagement and commitment to training.



Collaboration with Community Partners

Description	Collaborating with community organizations, employers, and industry partners to create work-based learning opportunities can provide hands-on experiences for students with low educational qualifications.
Impact	These partnerships expose students to real-world contexts, enhance their practical skills, and strengthen their connection to the vocational field.

By implementing these interventions tailored to address the specific needs of students with low educational qualifications, vocational training programs can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes student retention, engagement, and success in VET education.



Low School Achievement

Effective interventions for addressing low school achievement as a risk factor for dropout in vocational training include¹⁷:

Comprehensive Training Improvement¹⁸: Implementing comprehensive strategies that focus on improving the overall training system, increasing students' sense of belonging, and enhancing student engagement through meaningful curriculum to address low achievement and prevent dropouts. This is a strategy that needs to be developed and constantly re-evaluated at the end of each academic year. Strategic management and implementation teams should be involved in the process of improvement.

A very recommended variant is to pre-create a modified variant of the course for individuals and groups of students at risk of dropping out. This variant could include academic tutoring, mentoring, and personalized support to improve retention rates.¹⁹

¹⁶ Designed by Freepik.com

¹⁷ <https://ervet-journal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40461-017-0061-4>

¹⁸ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED498352.pdf>

¹⁹



Longitudinal Tracking Systems: In order to evaluate which students are at risk, there should be longitudinal tracking systems that are been used at an organizational level. This will facilitate timely interventions that improve academic performance and prevent the final drop-out.²⁰



Discontinuity in Previous Educational Courses

Interventions to address discontinuity in previous educational courses as a risk factor for dropout in vocational training are crucial for supporting students' successful transition and completion of their training programs. Research suggests several effective strategies based on early-risk factors and personality constructs.

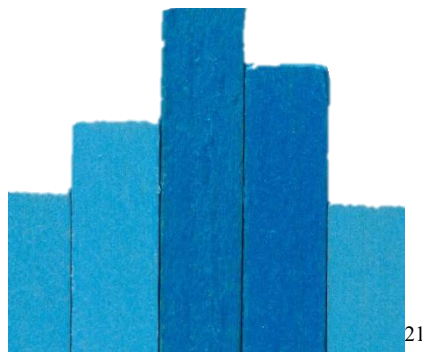
- **Immediate Reintegration:** Interventions focusing on reintegration into education and training immediately after experiencing a premature training termination (PTT) are essential. Approximately two-thirds of adolescents who faced a PTT succeeded in returning to education, highlighting the importance of timely support. However, it is also important to detect the reasons for a student's drop-out.

²⁰ Designed by Freepik.com



- **Prevention Measures:** Prevention measures should include providing information on occupational and educational alternatives to reduce interruptions in educational trajectories. This can help minimize the risk of PTT and withdrawal from education and training programs.
- **Continuous Career Counselling:** Personalized coaching and mentoring can also motivate individuals with low family resources to stay engaged in their training. Lack of family support is one of the problems because young people drop-out as they cannot well-cooperate with the family pressure.
- **Differentiated Support:** No student is the same as another. Every person has own needs, expectations, and storyline. Therefore, tailored interventions based on individual characteristics can be effective. For instance, adolescents with strong openness may benefit from constructive career development support, while those with strong self-efficacy may require specific guidance to avoid unskilled employment.

Vocational training programs can better support students at risk of discontinuity and dropout by implementing these interventions and strategies, ultimately improving their chances of successful completion and career adaptation.



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²¹ Designed by Freepik.com



Low Socio-Economic Background

Addressing the impact of low socio-economic background on dropout rates in vocational training programs requires targeted interventions and support mechanisms. Some of the effective strategies to moderate this risk factor are:

- **Assigning Adult Advocates:** Providing students from low socio-economic backgrounds with adult advocates who give them personalized support, guidance, and mentorship. These advocates can help students navigate challenges, and encourage, and assist in addressing any barriers to their education.
- **Offering Academic Support:** Providing academic support tailored to the needs of students at risk of dropout is crucial. Enrichment programs, tutoring, and additional resources can help improve academic performance and increase retention rates among students facing socioeconomic challenges.
- **Multicomponent Training-Based Interventions:** Implementing comprehensive interventions within training institutions that address various aspects of student well-being, such as training connectedness, teacher/trainer support, and valuing the profession, can effectively prevent dropout among students in vocational education programs. These multi-component approaches have shown promising results in reducing dropout rates.
- **Addressing Structural Inequalities:** Recognizing and addressing structural inequalities within the educational system that contribute to dropout rates among students from low socio-economic backgrounds is essential. Strategies aimed at improving teaching quality, providing equal access to resources, and creating a supportive learning environment can help mitigate the impact of socioeconomic disparities on educational outcomes.

Focusing on all-inclusive support for students from low socio-economic backgrounds and implementing these interventions, vocational training programs can effectively reduce dropout rates and enhance the educational success of all learners.



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Migration Background

Supporting Young Migrants: Providing targeted support for young migrants and refugees during vocational education and training (VET) to address weaker academic proficiency or relevant skills is crucial. Ensuring a positive learning experience in VET schools can help enhance the educational outcomes of students with a migration background.

- **Career Guidance and Counselling:** Implementing career guidance and counselling programs as auxiliary levers to minimize early leaving from vocational education and training can be effective. These programs aim to motivate learners to stay in education, inform them about career options, and provide personalized support through coaching, mentoring, and one-to-one assistance.
- **Addressing Structural Barriers:** Recognizing and addressing structural barriers that may hinder the educational success of students with a migration background is essential. Providing inclusive education programs, one-on-one support, and initiatives for the prevention of training dropouts can help mitigate the challenges faced by these students.

²² Designed by Freepik.com

- **Promoting School Connectedness:** Organize extra-curricular activities to build supportive relationships with teachers, peers, and other educational institutions to create a sense of belonging and to promote a culture and setting that strives for inclusivity. This will help those with a migration background to create an initial community and meet new people who can become social support in the long run.

In implementing these interventions tailored to the needs of students with a migration background, vocational training programs can effectively reduce dropout rates and support the successful integration of these individuals into the labour market.



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Failure to achieve Desired Occupations

Reassessing Initial Choices: Trainees who fail to realize their desired occupations can benefit from reassessing their initial choices and starting another vocational education and training (VET) program. This allows them to preserve their labour market opportunities and integrate successfully into the workforce.

²³ Designed by Freepik.com

- **Early Recognition of Dissatisfaction:** It is crucial to recognize dissatisfaction with VET at an early stage to enable students to make informed decisions about their educational path. If a non-motivated student keeps attending lessons, that he or she finds useless, the risk of drop-out is very high. This can be tackled by showing the student that the same degree can lead to many different job opportunities, and it is easier to re-adapt and foster a career change when you have finalized the ongoing course because the set of skills you gained can be useful for more sectors and job positions than expected.
- **Addressing Training Conditions:** **Training is a first glance into the labour market as it is, in many cases, the first job-related position** that young people experience. Training quality must be ensured. Additionally, higher training wages can help foster youngster's motivation. Addressing these training conditions is essential in retaining students and supporting them in achieving their desired occupations.
- **Policy Measures:** Implementing policy measures that focus on prevention, intervention, and compensation practices can help minimize the incidence of premature training termination. These measures should provide information on occupational and educational alternatives and support trainees with low family resources through personalized coaching, mentoring and financial support, if possible.

Early intervention programs in vocational training should inevitably also address cultural diversity and inclusion by implementing strategic policy interventions to foster an inclusive environment. These programs focus on creating culturally responsive teaching practices, curriculum development, and family engagement strategies to ensure that all individuals feel valued and supported in their learning journeys.



By fostering innovation, encouraging collaboration among stakeholders, and implementing best practices that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion, these programs aim to generate more effective intervention initiatives.

In this sense, training programs, workshops, and ongoing professional development opportunities are essential for educators and service providers to acquire the necessary skills for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusivity in early intervention programs.

Collaborative partnerships with community organizations, cultural groups, and families play a crucial role in enhancing cultural competence in educational settings by providing valuable insights and resources to create culturally responsive practices that better serve all individuals.

Unit 4.3 Early intervention strategies for trainers

To sum up the content of this module, you can take a look at the main steps that should be taken to create an early intervention strategy that trainers can employ to prevent dropout in vocational training:



✓ Early Assessment and Identification

Regularly assess students' progress and identify potential challenges early on. Use diagnostic tools to identify learning gaps and address them promptly.

✓ Attendance Monitoring and Intervention

Track attendance patterns and intervene early if a student shows signs of irregular attendance. Identify and address potential barriers to attendance, such as transportation or scheduling issues:

**✓ Financial and Resource Support**

Identify financial challenges early and get support from the decision-making body to spot available support resources. All students should have access to necessary materials, tools, and counselling within the VET-Context.

✓ Flexible Scheduling and Delivery

Consider flexible scheduling options and get support from the decision-making body, so you can accommodate students' work or family responsibilities to the program. Use online or blended learning approaches to offer diverse learning preferences.

✓ Collaboration with other employees and external employers

Foster strong partnerships with other colleagues, so they can help you with your students. Get in touch with employers to provide real-world insights and opportunities to students. Facilitate internships, apprenticeships, or job shadowing experiences to enhance students' understanding of their chosen field.



3rd STEP CHANGE OF APPROACH

✓ Individualized Learning Plans

Develop personalized learning plans based on each student's strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles.

✓ Engagement Strategies

Create interactive and hands-on learning experiences to keep students engaged. Foster a positive learning environment that encourages active participation and makes the student at risk feel relevant in the class.

✓ Career Exploration and Goal Setting

Help students explore potential career paths within their vocational training program. Set realistic short-term and long-term goals, emphasizing the connection between training and future opportunities.

✓ Skill Development Workshops

Think out of the box and make a long-term calendar with different workshops that enhance soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. This will help the student in his/her real life and can act as a coping mechanism against vulnerabilities.



3rd STEP ACCOMPANY AND EVALUATE

✓ **Mentoring and Counseling**

Assign mentors to provide guidance and support to students. They could be teachers, external coaches, or previous students who faced a similar situation but got back on track and have a success story and perspective to share. In any of these cases, you must make sure to monitor the process and to be a support for the mentor as well.

✓ **Peer Support Programs**

Establish peer mentoring programs to encourage students to support each other. Foster a sense of community within the vocational training group.

✓ **Regular Feedback and Communication**

Provide timely and constructive feedback on students' performance. Maintain open communication channels with students, addressing concerns promptly.

Trainers should implement these early intervention strategies to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that consequently significantly reduces the risk of dropouts in vocational training programs.



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Module 5. Alternative Pathways and Retention Strategies



General consideration:

Most young people complete the stages of the education system, continue their education studies or training opportunities, and enter the workforce with a specialization and a diploma. But, at the same time, one in seven young Europeans drop out of school without possessing the skills or qualifications currently considered necessary for a transition success in the labour market. Although the school dropout rate has recently decreased in the European Union, there is still a large number of young people classified as early school leavers.

In 2003, the European Union identified early school leavers as people aged 18 to 24 who have finished only lower secondary education or less and are no longer pursuing education or training. So, early school leavers refer to those who have completed only pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, or a short upper secondary education that is less than 2 years long (ISCED, 2011). Dropping out of school is a problem that affects more than just the student who makes this decision; the phenomenon affects his family, community, and society in the long term.

Early school leaving is usually explained by reasons personal, social, economic, geographical, educational, or family. These reasons can be external or internal about school experiences and are always, very specific to the individual. For many, abandonment results from a variety of reasons, such as poor school results, unsatisfactory relationships with teachers or peers, bullying, lack of motivation or belonging to "wrong groups", and personal or family problems, such as substance use or homelessness.



For this reason, at the governmental and institutional level, numerous studies analyze the impact that school dropout has. For example, studies illustrate that students who drop out report higher unemployment levels, lower wages, and greater health problems than the rest. Early school leaving is thus associated with a higher degree of delinquency, and destructive behaviours - drug and alcohol consumption and addiction. Their low level of employment or the fact that they occupy lower-paid positions it affects not only their standard of living but also the national income, taxes being at a low level or this category being supported by social measures. Considering these factors, school dropout is a concern at the national level, being the development of long-term strategies to combat it. Addressing the issue of dropout requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses early identification of at-risk students, providing personalized support, and offering alternative pathways to graduation.

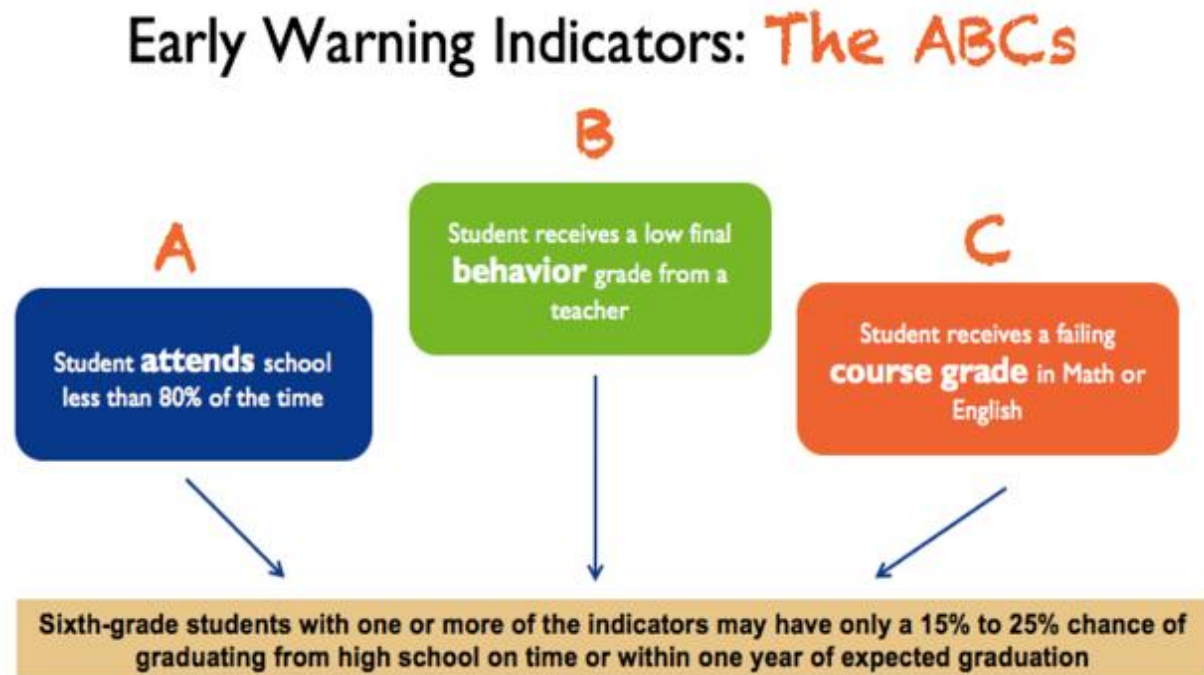
A significant part of the problem can be attributed to the lack of support and counselling from the school and the lack of interest in education and secondary school curricula, which often do not provide enough varied options, alternative pedagogies, or experiential learning opportunities.

Therefore, effective measures are needed to reduce the percentage of young people out of school, because this phenomenon is a contributing factor that favours social exclusion later on.

Here's a comprehensive overview of alternative pathways and retention strategies for dropout prevention.



Unit 5.1 Early warning systems. How to identify at-risk students



a. Indicators

Numerous studies in the field have demonstrated the effectiveness of using dropout predictors to identify those at risk and for the early adoption of intervention measures. They take into account a wide range of indicators: *school behaviour* (e.g. school absences, tardiness, classroom behaviour, task completion), *cognitive ability* (IQ scores), *personal resources* (locus of control, academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with school), and *early school experiences* (grade retention, special education status), *race*, *gender*, *ethnicity*, and *socioeconomic status* are significant predictors of early school withdrawal.

These alternative conceptualizations of dropout risk may be more useful to parents, practitioners, and other parties concerned with dropout prevention when formulating interventions. Identifying students at risk is a difficult process, both because the signs are not always visible, and because there are several categories of students who can end up in this situation, both those with poor academic results and those with intellectual potential high. Experts in the field draw attention to some behavioural patterns that indicate that a student is facing academic or personal challenges (or both):

- **Low notes or large variations (high notes initially and then extremely low notes)**
- **poor interaction with class members or teachers**
- **Grades or failure to submit assignments.**

Poor grades are perhaps the most obvious means of identifying at-risk students. Depending on the school results, we can classify the students into three risk categories: safe, supervised, and in danger. Parents and teachers will be notified about the inclusion in a risk category.

- **Absenteeism / Tardiness**

If a student does not attend class or is frequently late, it is another good indicator of risky behaviour. Absenteeism is a major problem that school administrators must address; therefore, many schools have a requirement of 20 absences. Some schools also impose mandatory reporting on parents or counsellors to minimize and manage the problem. Dropouts reported missing too many days of school and having difficulty keeping up. This is the second reason often given to justify their dropping out of school. Therefore, it is important to determine why these students are absent and find a way for them to retrieve materials and return to class.

- **Low or no participation**

Students who do not participate in the activities may be part of the categories exposed to risk. This aspect is not always valid as some students are simply shy and some are less interested in the respective discipline. However, the consistent refusal to participate in class discussions, complete class activities, take notes, or attend class may be an indicator of risky behaviour. Disengagement is described as the gradual process by which students become disengaged from the school environment (Finn, 1989).

Behavioural (e.g. voluntary class participation, attendance, effort) and academic (e.g. homework completion, time spent on tasks) engagement are easy to observe while measuring cognitive engagement (learning, relevance of schoolwork) and engagement effective (for example, feelings of belonging, relationships with teachers and colleagues) are more difficult to measure and require a specialized analysis.

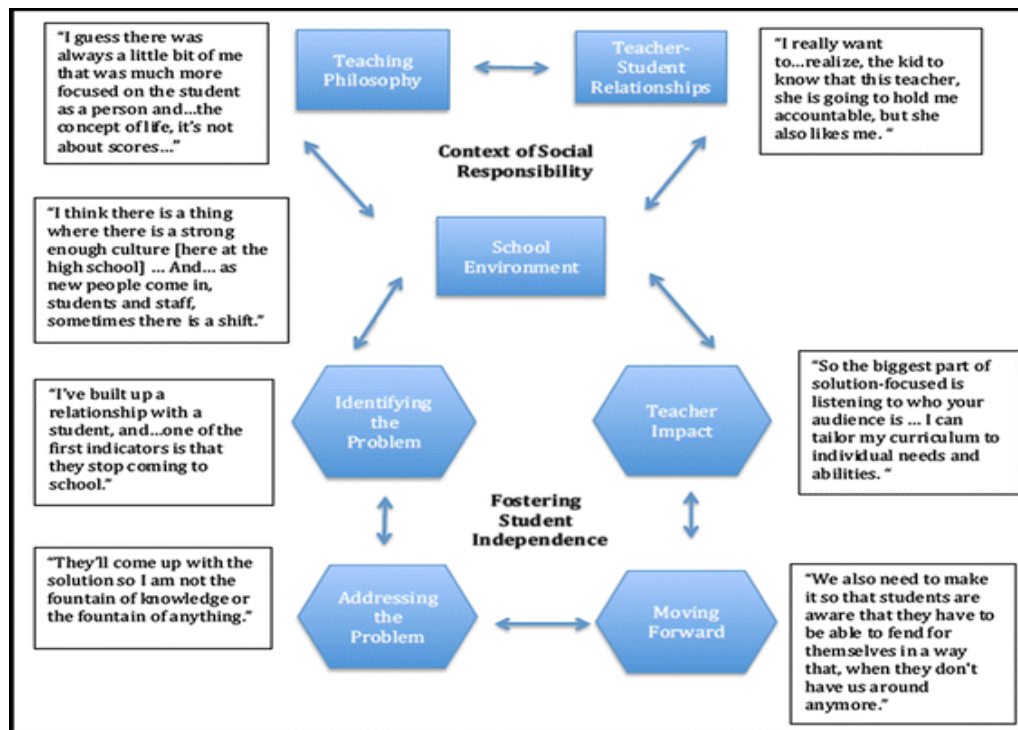
- **Mood swings and behavioural changes are indicators of risk situations**

For both situations, a series of standard tests have been proposed which, when applied, can provide early indications regarding students at risk of early school dropout.



In this case, I took over two tests, proposed by experts in the field. In general, the questionnaires developed within the studies carried out on this issue consider some fundamental expectations:

- **basic features:** sex, age.
- **information about school life:** school course, current studies, attitudes towards teachers and their future educational aspirations;
- **information about the family life and home conditions of young people:** composition and role within the family, their attitudes towards parents, siblings and the areas where they live, the economic situation
- **information about the group/groups they belong to:** their interaction with schoolmates, the composition of the friendship group and their aspirations beyond education;
- **plans** in terms of continuing education and training and occupational aspirations.²⁴



²⁴ [Szlyk, H.S. \(2017\). Fostering independence through an academic culture of social responsibility: A grounded theory for engaging at-risk students. Learning Environments Research](#)



Table 1

Alterable Variables Associated with School Dropout

	Protective	Risk
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete homework • Come to class prepared • High locus of control • Good self-concept • Expectations for school completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High rate of absences • Behavior problems • Poor academic performance • Grade retention • Working
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic support (e.g., help with homework) and motivational support (e.g., high expectations, talk to children about school) for learning • Parental monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low educational expectations • Mobility • Permissive parenting styles
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orderly school environments • Committed, caring teachers • Fair discipline policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak adult authority • Large school size (>1,000 students) • High pupil-teacher ratios • Few caring relationships between staff and students • Poor or uninteresting curricula • Low expectations and high rates of truancy

Source: Reschly & Christenson, 2006a

The second table proposes an analysis model of the degree of risk of early school leaving considering 2 categories of factors: individual and social factors and school and systemic factors.²⁵

²⁵ chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/V2_Executive_Summary.pdf



Individual and Social Factors	Educational Performance	Academic Achievement	
		Persistence	
		Attainment	
	Behaviour	Engagement	Academic
			Social
		Anti-Social Tendency	
	Attitudes		
	Social Background	Past Experiences	
		Health	
		Family	Demographics
Status and Structure			
Practices			
Resources			
School and Systemic Factors	School Structure		
	School Practices		

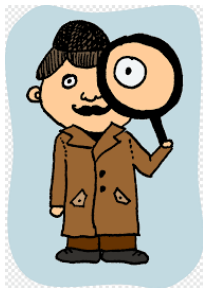
b. Identifying students at risk measures



- **Create a Risk assessment team** Establishing a risk assessment team made up of teachers, counsellors mentors, and school principals. This team should meet periodically to discuss emerging situations and concerns about at-risk students in the school.

Because team members work in different roles, they can provide diverse perspectives and insights into each student's challenges and how best to address them. Develop a unified strategy for individualized intervention plans to communicate to other teachers and staff to ensure a coherent approach. Designing effective early warning systems. These systems can use data from attendance records, grades, disciplinary actions, and standardized tests to flag potential dropout risks.

- **Observing and communicating with other teachers:**



Collaborate with the head teacher and the council of class teachers for its implementation. Meet regularly with them and discuss the situation of each student. Encourage teachers to be alert to changes in student behaviour and performance and to communicate regularly with their families to identify potential problems.

- **Social-emotional screening:**



Perform social-emotional screening to identify students with mental, family, or personal health problems that may influence their academic performance and increase the risk of dropping out of school.

Early warning systems are based on the selection of baseline indicators associated with risk factors. They provide us with information about the family environment; performances, behaviour, and attitudes at school; and information about the student's health and financial situation. The table below includes the main indicators found in the specialized literature regarding early leaving.



FAMILY ENVIRONMENT	ATTAINMENT, BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES	HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic status of family • Migrant or ethnic minority background* • Family responsibilities (e.g. taking care of siblings) • Lack of family engagement and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic underachievement (poor grades; grade repetition) • Absenteeism • Disruptive behaviour or lack of positive involvement in activities within or outside the curriculum • Negative self-perception linked to education failure • Absence of positive future vision of oneself • Lack of work readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health circumstances (illness, substance abuse, pregnancy) • Issues related to child poverty (e.g. hunger, lack of sleep) • Issues related to personal, social and emotional well-being (e.g. sense of belonging to the training community; satisfaction with student-teacher relations; relations with peers; bullying).

Source: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/identification-learners-risk-early-leaving>

Unit 5.2 Intervention methods for success



One of the biggest challenges for teachers is finding ways to support at-risk students in the classroom. Most analyses in the field focus on strategies such as building solid relationships in the classroom, using a democratic classroom model, developing a check-in/check-out system, permanent communication with parents, and developing a customized education system can go a long way in preparing these students for success and substantially reduce the risk of early school leaving.

As we saw in the analysis regarding the causes of school dropout, there are a variety of reasons for it; therefore, the solutions are multidimensional. Analyzing the studies in the field, we note that most identify common strategies with a positive impact on reducing school dropout. These strategies are grouped into four general categories:

- **Foundational Strategies**
- **Early Interventions**
- **Basic Core Strategies**
- **Managing and Improving Instruction**

A. Foundational Strategies

- School-Community Collaboration
- Safe Learning Environments

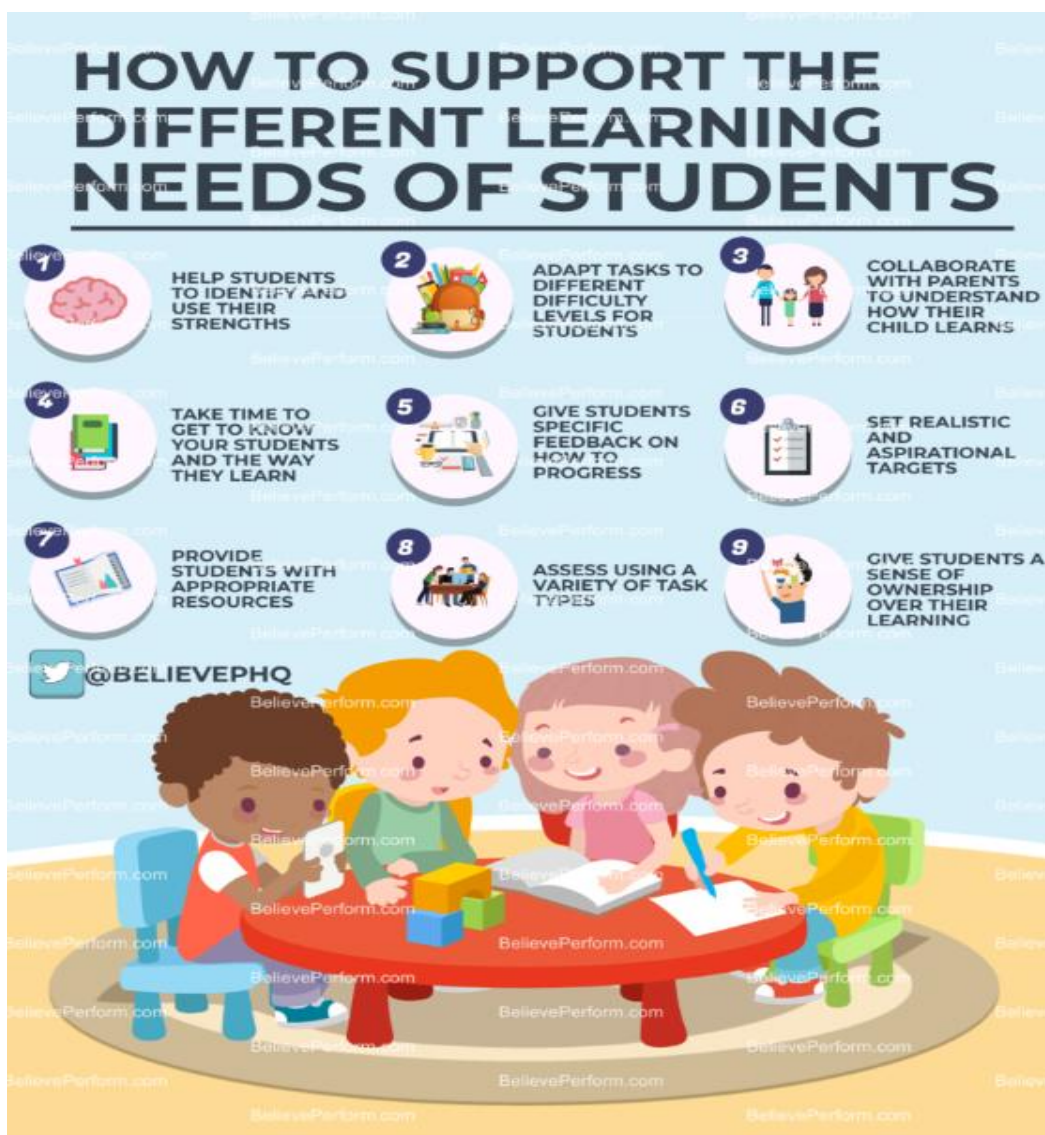
This methodology centres on the control of a locked-in and responsive community where everybody within the community is responsible for the quality of instruction, coming about in a caring and collaborative environment where youth can flourish and accomplish. The basic components of this sort of collaboration depend on viable, continuous, and multidimensional communication so that dropout anticipation could be a community-wide and continuous exertion.

Experts in the field consider general prevention essential, by creating learning environments based on cooperation, on a good knowledge of students' problems and needs, not only academic ones but also those they face in the family or in the communities they come from (abandonment, separated families, youth gangs) on adapting strategies and activities to these needs.

Fost president of the National Association of School Psychologists Kathleen M. Minke, PhD. explains that schools should not "think of children's social and emotional needs as something you do after you address their academic performance." These should be thought of "as part of their whole school experience" to improve both the lives of students and the overall success of the school.

The main measures that can be integrated into this system are:

- Carrying out activities to get to know the students.
- Activities to ensure cohesion and cooperation within the classes.
- Creating real, permanent connections between schools through trips, conferences with parents/teachers, and class projects
- Cooperation with specialized staff (counsellors, support persons)
- Providing additional support to students experiencing major changes (moving to a new school, moving up a school level, parents divorcing, etc.)
- Involvement of parents in school activities
- Connecting students with community resources (e.g., faith-based organizations, businesses, cultural institutions, universities, public and private organizations)





B) Early Interventions

- Family Engagement

Family Engagement



Inquire reliably finds that family engagement encompasses a coordinated, positive effect on youth's accomplishment and is one of the foremost precise indicators of a student's victory in school. Basic components of this sort of collaboration depend on successful, continuous, and multi-dimensional, two-way communication as well as continuous needs evaluations and responsive family underpins and mediations.

C) Basic Core Strategies

- Mentoring/Tutoring
- Building the teacher-student collaborative relationship and Motivate Goal Setting in At-Risk

Mentorship programs

The check-in/check-out system requires the creation of a relationship with a member of the school team to improve his school activity, by creating a personalized course, which can be adjusted according to the student's interests and needs. This person can be assigned by the school, following a preliminary study to illustrate the affinities, or can be chosen by the student.

It was found that this method reduces disruptive behaviours by building a relationship with another adult in the school building (other than the current classroom teacher). The standard model proposed by experts in the field assumes that the mentor and mentee should meet at least twice a day, once in the morning (check-in) and once at the end of the day (check-out). The adult helps them prepare for their daily activities by going through a pre-established goal sheet with them, but also how the student will work to achieve their academic and personal goals or about how their challenges can be addressed that day. At the check-out session, they can review the day's successes and areas for improvement and make plans for tomorrow.



The check-in/check-out system should be personally designed to best meet the needs of each student. Mentoring programs help to stimulate positive interactions with school staff and generate a safe, inclusive, and motivating climate.

Building the teacher-student collaborative relationship and Motivate Goal Setting in At-Risk Students

Positive teacher-student connections are strong and reasonable and flourish in learning situations where students feel safe, involved, and valued. Instructors build connections with students when they illustrate respect and are sympathetic to their needs. This approach to building and maintaining high aspirations allows for role definition and creates positive connections and training, facilitating successful learning. Knowing and understanding students, families and the community can give them the tools to motivate students and create a better connection with them. Reflexivity enables instructors to understand how context and circumstances influence their decision-making and responses.

Students who have good connections with their teachers are more likely to have positive moods toward school, feel part of the school community, achieve higher academic results, and place a high value on school. An integrative school environment allows students to feel safe and will be strengthened in the context of any challenge (Center for Measurement and Evaluation of Instruction, 2020).



Source: <https://www.powerschool.com/blog/how-to-approach-teacher-collaboration-in-todays-classrooms/>

What are the effective intervention strategies for learners at risk?

- Communicate high student expectations.
- Establish routines.
- Positive feedback.
- Encourage individual mastery goal setting.
- Having compassion and empathy. Express empathy for their struggles and validate their feelings to foster trust and openness.
- Creating a secure and dependable structure.
- Teaching active listening. Practice active listening to understand students' perspectives, challenges, and aspirations.
- Embedding strategy instruction

D. Managing and Improving Instruction

- Active Learning
- Facilitate Regular Communication
- Promote Success and Engagement
- Address Mental Health and Personal Challenges

Active Learning



Active learning and student engagement strategies meaningfully involve students as partners in their learning. These strategies include student voice and choice. Effective feedback, peer review, and goal setting. Collaborative learning; critical, creative, and reflective thinking. And microteaching, discussion, and two-way communication. For maximum effectiveness, teachers should provide tools and strategies to help students organize themselves and new material. Techniques and systematic steps to follow when working on assignments and reflecting on your learning.

Facilitate Regular Communication:

- **Regular Check-ins:** Schedule regular check-ins with students to monitor their progress, address any concerns, and provide encouragement.

- **Communication with Parents:** Maintain open communication with parents or guardians to keep them informed about their child's progress and the interventions being implemented.

- **Collaboration with Teachers:** Collaborate with teachers to coordinate support and ensure consistency across all aspects of the student's learning experience.



Promote Success and Engagement:



- **Celebrate Achievements:** Recognize and celebrate students' academic, social, and personal achievements to boost confidence and motivation.
- **Connect Learning to Goals:** Help students connect their learning to their future aspirations and career goals to increase engagement and motivation.
- **Provide Opportunities:** Offer opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities, school clubs, and community service projects to foster engagement and personal growth.

Address Mental Health and Personal Challenges:



underlying personal challenges.

- **Signs of Mental Health Concerns:** Be attentive to signs of mental health concerns, such as changes in behaviour, mood, or academic performance.
- **Referral to Professionals:** When necessary, refer students to qualified mental health professionals for further assessment and support.
- **Connect with Community Resources:** Connect students with community resources, such as food banks, homeless shelters, or social service agencies, to address any

By implementing this comprehensive approach, educators and counsellors can effectively provide consultation and guidance to at-risk learners, helping them overcome challenges, succeed academically, and develop the skills and resilience they need to achieve their full potential.

Unit 5.3 Exploring alternative pathways for education and training

Alternative education aims to build options for students who are not successful in their current educational path, to help them reach high school graduation, and to prepare them either for post-secondary studies or for a career. In the current educational systems, there are a variety of models that can be considered for the development of alternative education programs. Their conception

starts from the assessment of the needs of their students at risk of dropping out of school to be able to develop an effective model of alternative education.



Personalized Instruction - Learning experiences can be individualized, differentiated, or individualized to suit each learner's interests, pace, study time, and previous experiences. In a personalized environment, the goals, content, methods, and pace of learning will be tailored to the needs of the learner at a given time (thus, personalization includes differentiation and personalization).

An important benefit of this is the fact that they can change and adapt as the students' needs change. Equity should be the focal point of the design process of alternative education pathways, as it provides a chance to receive an adequate education for students who do not succeed in traditional schooling. Precisely for this reason, alternative education models should be innovative, creative, and above all adaptable.

Some of the **common elements of alternative education** include:

- small study groups
- a face-to-face interaction with mentors, tutors, etc.
- flexible scheduling
- multiple learning opportunities through teacher-led, online, and hybrid courses
- accessible curriculum
- varied range of instructional strategies
- an inclusive learning environment
- An alternative design may include flexible hours and schedules, different skills and content, and different learning methods.

<p>Options for Setting – Can take place within the traditional school during the regular school day OR within the traditional school after the regular school day. Another setting option is in a separate, off-site location as a program connected to the school, or as a separate, standalone school.</p>	<p>Behavioral Supports – Intentional supports and processes to ensure the safety of all students and to mitigate behaviors that may interrupt the learning environment including supports for the student population adhering to the requirements of Chapter 222: An Act Relative to Student Access to Educational Services and Exclusion from School.</p>
<p>Duration/Time Frame for Students – Can be a temporary or permanent placement or both depending on student needs. The district decides on the goal of the pathway which may be to retain students until graduation, or it may be to transition students back to the traditional middle or high school. Districts/schools have autonomy in the entrance and exit processes of alternative education.</p>	<p>Academic Credit Accumulation – May focus on credit accumulation to target students who are under credited making them unable to graduate. Credit accumulation should be equitable with the traditional school setting, accelerate learning, and use various modalities that work for the students being served. Supports for credit acceleration is key to long-term academic success for some students.</p>

Source: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/alted/altedguide.docx>

The most common alternative education models include:

a) Flexible learning

Offer flexible scheduling options to accommodate students' work commitments, personal circumstances, and interests in a particular field of study now, the offer in this field is quite wide, including online courses, evening courses, or distance learning programs. The latter offers flexible scheduling options, allowing individuals to learn at their own pace and manage their education around their schedules.

b) Short-term certificate programs:

These programs focus on specific skills or competencies that typically require less time and effort than traditional degree programs, allowing students to complete credits more quickly, and reducing the time it takes to graduate. They are ideal for people who want to acquire new skills, deepen certain fields, or whose material or family resources do not allow them to go through the typical schooling system.

c) Alternative Diploma Programs:

Provide alternative diploma programs that are tailored to the needs and interests of at-risk students, such as career and technical education (CTE) programs or adult education programs.

d) Credit for Prior Learning (RPL):

RPL programs allow individuals to earn college credit for knowledge and skills acquired through prior experiences, such as work, military service, or non-formal education. This can significantly reduce the time and cost of pursuing a higher education degree.

e) Personalized Instruction

Learning experiences can be individualized, differentiated, or individualized (combining self-paced, personalized learning with content or topic flexibility to suit each learner's preferences, interests, and previous experiences). In a fully personalized environment, learning goals and content as well as methods and pace can all vary (thus, personalization includes differentiation and individualization).

f) Vocational Education Training (VET) in schools

Some students in the high school system will choose not to pursue a university degree. Although there may be an ambition to go to university, some students' learning styles are better supported in the VET system and using VET vocational training programs offered through schools can assist in gaining access to the desired field of study. For example, a student may choose a VET course in Health Services, in Nursing Preparation, then a Diploma in Nursing. This can then create a path to university and there can be the possibility of recognition of the course at the university level and of equalization of the credits thus obtained.

Retention Strategies:

1. **Positive Reinforcement:** Utilize positive reinforcement techniques to acknowledge and celebrate student achievements, both big and small. This can help boost motivation and engagement.
2. **Meaningful Connections:** Foster meaningful connections between students, teachers, and staff. Create a supportive and inclusive school environment where students feel valued and respected.
3. **Career Exploration:** Provide opportunities for career exploration and guidance, helping students connect their education with their future aspirations. This can increase engagement and motivation.
4. **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with community organizations, businesses, and employers to provide students with exposure to real-world experiences and job opportunities.
5. **Post-Secondary Transitions:** Assist students in securing post-secondary education, vocational training, or employment opportunities upon graduation.

By implementing a comprehensive approach that combines early identification, personalized support, alternative pathways, and effective retention strategies, schools can significantly reduce dropout rates and improve student outcomes. Alternative pathways for education and training offer individuals diverse and flexible options to acquire knowledge, skills, and credentials that can lead to career advancement and personal fulfilment. These pathways cater to different learning styles, preferences, and circumstances, providing access to education and training beyond traditional classroom settings.

Benefits of Alternative Pathways:



Alternative pathways offer a wealth of opportunities for individuals seeking to advance their education, skills, and careers. By providing flexible, accessible, and industry-aligned learning options, these pathways empower individuals to achieve their educational and professional goals.

Flexibility and Accessibility: Alternative pathways offer flexible scheduling, online options, and credit for prior learning, making education more accessible to individuals with diverse circumstances and commitments.

Focus on Practical Skills: Many alternative pathways emphasize practical skills and hands-on learning, preparing individuals for immediate employment or specific career goals.

Cost-Effectiveness: Short-term certificate programs, apprenticeships, and online courses can often be more affordable than traditional degree programs, making them a viable option for individuals seeking cost-effective education and training.

Career Advancement: Alternative pathways can provide individuals with the skills and credentials they need to advance their careers, secure promotions, or transition into new fields.

Personal Growth and Development: Alternative pathways provide opportunities for individuals to develop new skills, expand their knowledge base, and enhance their personal growth and employability.

Alignment with Industry Needs: Many alternative pathways are designed in collaboration with industry experts and employers, ensuring that the skills and knowledge acquired are relevant to current market demands.



Engagement: Alternative pathways often involve partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and employers, creating opportunities for networking, internships, and job placements.

Alternative pathways offer a wealth of opportunities for individuals seeking to advance their education, skills, and careers. By providing flexible, accessible, and industry-aligned learning options, these pathways empower individuals to achieve their educational and professional goals.

Conclusion: Understanding different risk factors and how they can influence a student's success in school or their decision to drop out is very important. Identifying these factors and understanding students is at risk can help schools take early action and reduce dropout rates. An efficient way of this process is the creation of a universal screening tool at the school level, its application and the permanent adjustment of the indicated results policy.

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Module 6. Monitoring and Evaluation of Dropout Prevention Initiatives



Unit 6.1 Early school leaving.

Authentic and functional education is first established in the family, then continues in kindergarten and school through the teaching staff, who, by their very existence, represent the power of example.

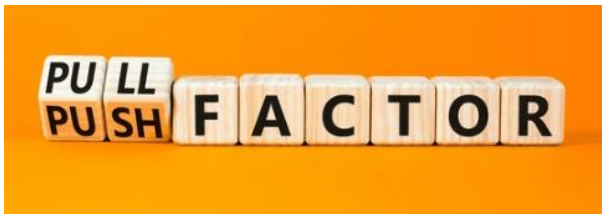
School dropout is the act of leaving the education system and any relationship with school before obtaining a professional qualification. Those who drop out are those who have missed a lot of school or have behavioural problems for which they have been previously punished, according to the Internal Rules of each school.

Leaving school is even more problematic when it occurs in the final grades, because both the provider, the education system, and the beneficiary, the student, have spent enough resources to reach a point where the financial and spiritual efforts of both parties have not been realized.

Unfortunately, the school is no longer perceived as the pillar of society in certain hierarchies, being considered a waste of time that does not ensure a future, preferring immediate material gain. And all this starts at home, in the family, thus forming a vicious circle.

While the issue of early school leaving has received increasing attention, there is no single, universally agreed-upon definition. The European Union's definition diverges from other international and many national ones. The EU defines early school leavers as 18–24-year-olds who haven't progressed beyond lower secondary education and are not currently enrolled in further education or training. Dropping out is defined as leaving school without completing a high school education or equivalent credential such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

Feeling unwelcome or challenged can lead many young individuals to disengage from education or training. This disengagement can manifest as dropping out. However, the reasons behind it are diverse. Youth come from a variety of backgrounds, and their decisions to leave or underachieve are not always based on the same factors, nor are those factors inherently negative. This highlights the fact that early school leavers are not a homogeneous group. Often, a combination of **push factors** (negative experiences) and **pull factors** (external opportunities) influences their decisions.²⁶ While some young people are undoubtedly more vulnerable to dropping out, the reasons for disengagement are complex and multifaceted.



According to Jordan²⁷, students can be pressured to drop out due to two main forces: push factors and pull factors. Push factors come from the school environment itself, including challenging tests, strict attendance and discipline policies, or consequences for bad behaviour. These negative experiences can push students away from school. Pull factors, however, originate from a student's circumstances. Financial worries, needing to work, family changes, or even health issues can all become more important than school, ultimately pulling students away from completing their education.

²⁶ Doll, J. J., Eslami, Z., & Walters, L. (2013). Understanding Why Students Drop Out of High School, According to Their Own Reports: Are They Pushed or Pulled, or Do They Fall Out? A Comparative Analysis of Seven Nationally Representative Studies. Sage Open, 3(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013503834>

²⁷ Jordan W. J., Lara J., McPartland J. M. (1994). Exploring the complexity of early dropout causal structures. Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, The John Hopkins University.

One common trend is that more young men drop out than women. Research also shows that minority ethnic groups and immigrants are more likely to leave school early in many countries. This is especially true for Roma and traveller communities, who are often seen as high-risk. Segregated schools, with low expectations and teachers not trained to handle diverse classrooms, can make this problem worse. Early school leaving is also more common in inner-city areas across Europe.

Beyond these group-level factors, individual characteristics, socioeconomic background, and external circumstances all play a role in disengagement from school. These factors often interact in complex ways, influencing a student's decision to leave education early.

While push and pull factors explain why students actively leave school, Watt and Roessingh.²⁸ identified a third factor: "falling out." This occurs when a student, lacks sufficient support and experiences low academic progress, apathy, or disillusionment. Unlike push factors (school pressure) or pull factors (external needs), falling out is a gradual process. Students become disengaged without being forced out or lured away. This disengagement ultimately leads them to disappear from the educational system altogether.



The key difference between these factors lies in who or what drives the dropout. Push factors involve the school acting as the agent, enforcing consequences that push students out. Pull factors involve the student as the agent, lured away by external attractions or distractions. Falling-out factors, however, have no clear agent. These are circumstances beyond the control of either the student or the school, leading to a gradual weakening of the student's connection to the school. While pull and falling out factors might appear similar due to student action, pull factors involve a clear, desired attraction that draws the student away, unlike the passive disengagement seen in falling out.

Activity

Choose a real-world scenario of early school leaving and apply your analysis of push, pull, and falling out factors to each. Explain how these factors might have interacted to lead to the decision to leave school.

²⁸ Watt D., Roessingh H. (1994). Some you win, most you lose: Tracking ESL dropout in high school (1988-1993). *English Quarterly*, 26, 5-7.

The importance of monitoring and evaluation

Dropout prevention initiatives are programs and strategies implemented by schools, communities, and organizations to reduce the number of students who leave school before completing their education. These initiatives target students who are considered at risk of dropping out and aim to address the underlying factors that contribute to their disengagement. The effectiveness of a dropout prevention initiative depends on various factors, including the specific needs of the student population, the resources available, and the commitment of the school community. By implementing a comprehensive approach that addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of students, dropout prevention initiatives can play a crucial role in ensuring all students have the opportunity to succeed in school.

Monitoring and evaluation are essential for these programs. By providing data-driven insights, they contribute to program improvement, resource allocation, and ultimately, increased student success. We have identified five directions in which the monitoring and evaluation component acts: measuring effectiveness, resource allocation, program improvement, program sustainability, and accountability and transparency. We'll shortly detail each one of those directions.

Measuring effectiveness focuses on tracking progress and identifying what works. Without monitoring and evaluation, it's difficult to determine if a program is reducing dropout rates. Data allows tracking changes in dropout rates over time and assessing the program's impact. Evaluation helps identify which program elements are most effective in keeping students engaged. This allows for adjustments and improvements to maximize the program's impact.

Resource allocation refers to a strategy in which resources are prioritized and strategically allocated. Dropout prevention programs often require significant resources. Monitoring and evaluation data help justify program funding by demonstrating their effectiveness and return on investment. Data can reveal which programs are working better for specific student groups, allowing resources to be allocated strategically where they can have the most significant impact.

The **program improvement** component identifies weaknesses and adapts the program to evolving needs. Evaluation helps uncover weaknesses in program design or implementation. This allows for adjustments to address student needs more effectively and improve overall program quality.



Student needs and challenges can evolve. Monitoring data helps identify these shifts and allows for program modifications to remain relevant and impactful.

Regarding the **program's sustainability**, evaluation data can be used to advocate for the program's continuation and secure ongoing funding. By documenting successful practices, evaluation data can help replicate effective programs in other schools and communities.

The transparency of the accountability component is very important because it shows stakeholders, such as parents, policymakers, and community members, information regarding the program's effectiveness and how resources are being used. Evaluation can highlight areas where research is needed to better understand what works in dropout prevention.

Unit 6.2 The Conceptual Framework

Risk factors for school dropout

The causes of school dropout are diverse and numerous, their origin can be individual, economic or social. We are talking specifically about the student's maladjustment to the learning activity carried out in the school environment, but also about the school's maladjustment to internal factors: biological, psychological and external: economic, cultural. Early school leaving is the result of a cocktail of internal causes such as school immaturity, emotional instability, behavioural disorders etc. and external causes (of an economic nature: precarious family situation, lack of clothes and shoes, living conditions, family breakdown, lack of help with learning).

The individual risk factors are academic difficulties (low grades, learning disabilities, lack of interest in schoolwork), behavioural issues (frequent absences, disruptive behaviour, disciplinary problems), mental health concerns (anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, difficulty concentrating), physical health challenges (chronic illnesses, disabilities, frequent absences due to health problems) or motivation and engagement (lack of interest in school, poor study habits, difficulty setting goals).

Regarding the economic and social factors, we can mention the material difficulties of the family, especially in the case of large, disorganized families, lacking resources, having problems providing adequate clothing for all children, and sometimes feeling the need for labour (either in the field or in the household). Family disorganization leads to material difficulties. Factors such as alcoholism, divorce, or violence in the family are signs that represent a decision to drop out.

Also, other factors can be an excessively permissive family climate, the lack of parental authority, or the despotic or, on the contrary, indifferent attitude of those who should offer a perfect behavioural model for smooth integration into society and life.

The educational model offered by parents and siblings must be taken into consideration. Most often, students who do not want to study come from families where the parents have a maximum of eight grades. There are, of course, exceptions. The educational model offered by siblings has a much greater influence. Families with older siblings who dropped out of school early tend to reproduce the model for their younger siblings.

Another risk factor is entering the labour market. Even if we are talking about temporary jobs, such as day or weekend work, or if we go to extremes and mention begging or prostitution, activities that are on the edge of the law, these are risk factors that usually lead to dropping out of school in favour of these activities that generate immediate income.

Instead of focusing on early leavers as a "group problem", we should address the issue of early school leaving itself, because students leave school early for various reasons, and not all of them automatically face marginalization in their transition to work or further education. Schools can equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate potential risks, enabling them to leave well-prepared. Therefore, addressing the needs of these students should be a particular focus.

Types of Dropout Prevention Initiatives

Dropout prevention programs offer a lifeline to students at risk of leaving school early. These programs can take various forms and can be implemented in schools, and community centres, and target individual at-risk students or entire schools with low graduation rates. There are several types of dropout prevention programs: academic support programs, social-emotional learning programs, career guidance programs, family engagement programs, or school climate improvement initiatives.

Academic support programs, like tutoring and mentoring, after-school programs, or summer learning programs, encompass a range of services designed to help students succeed. These include one-on-one or small group tutoring, which provides targeted support in specific subjects or study skills. Mentors can additionally offer guidance and encouragement. After-school programs extend learning beyond the school day, reinforcing core subjects, offering academic help, and creating a safe and supportive environment. Summer learning programs bridge the summer learning gap by

offering academic enrichment and preventing regression in knowledge and skills. The early warning systems identify students at risk of academic failure early on, allowing for targeted interventions to address their specific needs.

In the **social-emotional learning programs** category, we could mention counselling services, provided individually or in a group, to address mental health concerns that can affect school engagement and performance. Social-emotional learning programs help students develop essential skills like self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness and relationship skills. These skills can improve academic performance, reduce behavioural issues, and promote a positive school climate.



The **career guidance programs** could help students identify their interests, aptitudes, and potential career paths, provide real-world experiences (like internships or job shadowing)

that connect classroom learning to future careers and motivate students to stay in school or equip students with the information and skills they need to successfully apply for college or vocational training.



Family engagement programs aim to strengthen the partnership between schools and families in supporting student success. These programs offer a variety of initiatives, such as parent involvement workshops that equip families with strategies to support learning at home and cultivate a positive learning environment. This way strong school-family communication channels are fostered to allow for collaborative problem-solving of student needs.



The **school climate improvement initiatives** are highly recommended because they focus on creating a positive and supportive learning environment for all students. This includes implementing anti-bullying programs to ensure a safe and inclusive atmosphere where bullying and harassment are actively discouraged and, also, to provide a school-wide framework for promoting good behaviour and addressing disciplinary issues consistently. A variety of extracurricular activities, such as clubs and sports, could be offered to foster student engagement, develop talents, and cultivate a sense of belonging in the school community.



Activity

Consider the role of technology in dropout prevention. How can technology be used to support academic success, social connection, and student well-being?

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

When evaluating the effectiveness of dropout prevention programs, it's essential to track relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)²⁹. These indicators provide valuable insights into the program's impact and success. The most suitable KPIs will depend on the specific goals and objectives of the prevention program. It's important to choose a combination of KPIs that provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness at both the student and program levels.

Student-Level KPIs assess the program's impact on individual student success. These metrics include academic performance, measured by changes in grades for core subjects and standardized test scores. Additionally, program effectiveness is evaluated by monitoring changes in student attendance rates, disciplinary referrals, and retention rates, which track the number of students who stay enrolled and graduate on time.

Program-level KPIs assess the program's overall effectiveness and impact. This evaluation considers several factors, like program completion, teacher and student satisfaction and cost-effectiveness. The program completion rates track the percentage of students who fully participate in the prevention program and student and teacher satisfaction surveys gauge participant experiences with program content, delivery, support provided, resources, training, and overall support. A cost-effectiveness analysis evaluates the program's financial efficiency by examining the cost per student who successfully exits the program or demonstrates significant improvement.

It is highly recommended to analyse data by student demographics, including grade level, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background, to determine the program's effectiveness across all student groups and track the long-term outcomes of program graduates in terms of further education or employment to assess the program's lasting impact. Qualitative measures, such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews, can provide valuable insights into student and teacher experiences within the program.

²⁹ KPI is a quantifiable measure of performance over time for a specific objective. KPIs provide targets for teams to shoot for, milestones to gauge progress, and insights that help people across the organization make better decisions. From finance and HR to marketing and sales, key performance indicators help every area of the business move forward at the strategic level.

Unit 6.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology

The monitoring and evaluation methodology of a dropout prevention program is a systematic process for gathering data, analysing information, and assessing the program's effectiveness in reducing student dropout rates.

Some key steps must be taken:

1. Program goals and objectives: without clear goals, it's impossible to accurately assess the program's effectiveness. Established objectives provide benchmarks against which to measure progress and determine if the program is indeed making a difference in reducing dropout rates. That is why it is important to clearly define the program's overall goal (e.g., reduce dropout rates by X% within Y years), to establish specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives for key areas like academic performance, attendance, or social-emotional well-being. Well-defined goals and objectives set a clear direction for the program by outlining what it aims to achieve. This guides all stakeholders – teachers, program staff, and students – towards a common purpose.



Monitoring and evaluation data, concerning established goals, can reveal areas where the program needs improvement. This allows for adjustments to program strategies and ensures continuous improvement towards achieving its objectives.

In essence, defining program goals and objectives acts as the foundation for the entire M&E methodology. It ensures all program activities, data collection efforts, and analysis are aligned towards achieving the program's ultimate goal – reducing dropout rates and keeping students on the path to graduation.

2. Monitoring and evaluation tools

It refers to the process of choosing the most appropriate methods for gathering data on the program's effectiveness. These tools will help assess whether the program is achieving its goals and objectives in reducing dropout rates. There are two main categories of data collection tools: quantitative data and qualitative data.



Quantitative data refers to numerical data that can be statistically analysed, such as standardized test scores, grades in core subjects, attendance records, graduation rates, and disciplinary reports.

Qualitative data refers to descriptive data that provides insights into experiences, perceptions, and opinions. In this category can be included: surveys (students, teachers, program staff), focus groups, interviews (students, teachers, program staff), and program observations.

The choice of tools depends on the specific goals and objectives of the dropout prevention program. Some questions must be put into consideration: What information is needed to assess program effectiveness? Does it involve measuring changes in academic performance, attendance, or social-emotional well-being? What resources are available? Factors like budget, staff expertise, and student time constraints should be considered. What is the best way to collect the data? Surveys may be efficient for large groups, while interviews provide in-depth information.

For example, to measure the program's impact on academic performance, we can utilize pre- and post-program standardized test scores and monitor changes in grades for core subjects. If understanding student experiences is needed, we might conduct focus groups to gather qualitative data on their perceptions of the program's impact on their engagement and motivation. If we want to measure program satisfaction, we might use surveys to collect feedback from students, teachers, and program staff.

It's often beneficial to use a **combination** of quantitative and qualitative data collection tools to gain a more comprehensive picture of program effectiveness.

Data collection strategies

Effective monitoring and evaluation depend on data collection, the process of gathering information from various sources to assess a program's success. This information comes in two main forms: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data provides insights into experiences, perceptions, and opinions. *Techniques like surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations* can reveal valuable details about the dropout prevention program's implementation, participant engagement, and potential areas for improvement.



Quantitative data focuses on numerical information that can be statistically analysed. This data, often gathered through surveys, questionnaires, or secondary data analysis (existing records), helps measure program impact on specific goals, like attendance, academic performance, or graduation rates. By combining these approaches, monitoring and evaluation gathers a well-rounded picture. It allows us to measure the success: data tells us whether the program is achieving its goals, like reducing dropout rates or improving student engagement. We can also track the progress by collecting data over time, we can identify trends and see if the program is having a sustained impact. Comparing data to program objectives helps assess effectiveness and identify areas where adjustments might be needed.³⁰

A **quantitative approach** helps paint a clear picture of the program's performance, including trends and patterns in outcomes. To understand the impact, we gather numerical data through surveys, questionnaires, and other structured methods. Quantitative methods rely on numerical data that can be analysed with statistics. These methods are strong at uncovering the who, what, where, when, and how much of a situation. They provide objective facts, but they don't delve into the reasons behind those facts.

Qualitative methods focus on gathering descriptive data, rich in detail and observations, rather than numbers. Unlike quantitative approaches, qualitative research uses words to explore

³⁰ Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods ensures a comprehensive, reliable picture of the program's impact, allowing for continuous improvement and maximizing its effectiveness in achieving its desired outcomes.

experiences. By analysing these descriptions, researchers can identify patterns and uncover the underlying reasons or explanations for why and how things happen.

The following table provides an overview of when a quantitative and/or qualitative approach should be used and the appropriate tools for collecting monitoring and evaluation data:

	Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach ³¹
What	Structured Emphasizes reliability Harder to develop Easier to analyse	Less structured Emphasizes validity Easier to develop Can provide “rich data” but is more labour-intensive to collect and analyse
Why	Want to count things to explain what is observed Want to generalize to the entire target population Want to make predictions/provide causal explanations Know what you want to measure	Want a complete, detailed description of what is observed Want to understand what is observed Want narrative or in-depth information Not sure what you can measure Want to attain a more in-depth understanding or insight
Tools	Surveys Interviews Observations	Surveys Interviews Focus group discussions Case studies Observations
Output	Numerical data	Words and pictures
Analysis	Statistical	Interpretive

Surveys are a popular tool for gathering specific information from a representative sample of a target population. They excel at capturing perceptions, opinions, and ideas, making them ideal for understanding how people feel about a project, program, or policy. While surveys can also gauge intended behaviours, it's important to acknowledge the potential for bias. People's reported intentions may not always align with their actual actions.

³¹ Source: Adapted from Morra-Imas and Rist, 2009.

Surveys typically involve a sizeable, randomly chosen group to ensure results represent the larger target population (more on sampling methods later). The format can be structured (fixed answer choices) or semi-structured (open-ended questions) depending on the data needed.

Surveys can be conducted once (cross-sectional) or repeatedly over time (longitudinal). Cross-sectional surveys capture information from the target population at a specific point, like the end of a project. They help identify relationships between factors, such as how a livelihood project affects knowledge about income generation. Longitudinal surveys collect data over time, allowing researchers to analyse how the target population and relationships between factors change. These can involve different approaches like panel studies (same group over time) or cohort studies (groups defined by a shared experience).

Surveys aren't limited to just one format, and the choice depends on factors like the target population and budget. It can be in-person interviews, when a researcher directly asks questions to participants and records their answers, phone interviews: similar to in-person interviews, but conducted over the phone, paper questionnaires, when participants receive a physical form with questions and write their answers on it or online questionnaires: participants access the survey online and answer questions through a website or app.

Interviews are a qualitative method, that helps researchers understand how people have experienced a particular issue or program. Regarding the benefits of this tool, interviews allow for a deeper exploration of the topic through mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation. Basically, both the researcher and participant learn from each other during the interview.

There are three types of Interviews: structured, which uses pre-defined questions in a specific order, similar to a survey, semi-structured: which uses a guide with key questions, but allows for follow-up questions based on the participant's responses and unstructured: an open conversation with no set questions, allowing the participant to lead the discussion.



Focus groups serve as a valuable qualitative research method. These sessions involve a small, guided discussion led by a moderator, with note-takers and sometimes observers present. Participants engage in a relaxed setting, sharing diverse viewpoints on a specific topic. The primary objective is to delve deeper into the reasons behind people's feelings—a dimension that surveys often overlook. For instance, consider a survey indicating that 63% of respondents prefer

activity Y. A focus group can uncover the underlying motivations for this preference. Additionally, focus groups help identify social desirability bias, where individuals respond based on perceived expectations rather than their genuine opinions. Imagine a focus group discussion revealing that participants prefer activity Z, contrary to what their survey responses suggested.



However, focus groups may not yield detailed individual accounts. For a more in-depth exploration, interviews are better suited. Moderators play a crucial role in ensuring everyone feels comfortable participating and in identifying any individuals who might dominate the discussion.

A **case study** serves as a qualitative data collection method aimed at examining real-life situations. Its purpose is to illustrate aspects of a program under monitoring or evaluation. Through comprehensive examination, case studies delve into the operational dynamics, activities, outputs, outcomes, and interactions associated with the program.



Case studies delve deeply into a limited number of events or conditions, providing a rich contextual analysis that unveils the intricate relationships at play. This in-depth exploration serves multiple purposes. It allows researchers to apply existing ideas and research methods to the specific case, ultimately contributing to a broader understanding of the field. Case studies help unravel complex issues or objects, offering nuanced insights that strengthen existing knowledge and they excel at exploring the various factors that influence outcomes and outputs. However, it's essential to note that this method of data collection may demand substantial time and resources. Additionally, information obtained from case studies can be intricate to analyse and extrapolate.



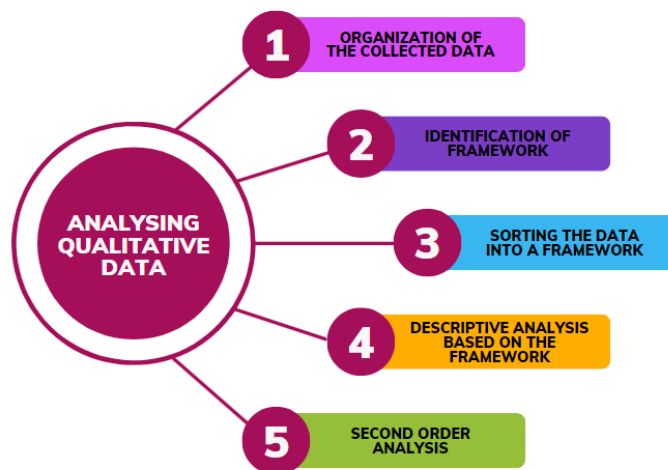
Activity

Research innovative data collection methods, such as social media sentiment analysis or wearable technology data, that could provide insights into student engagement.

Data analysis

After collecting and cleaning the data, it becomes ready for analysis. Data analysis serves a crucial purpose: it allows us to assess whether, how, and why the program being monitored and evaluated aligns with the established objectives. In this section, we will explore how to analyse both qualitative and quantitative data, along with the concept of triangulating data from multiple sources.

Qualitative data analysis is a deliberate process that involves sifting through substantial amounts of qualitative information—often sourced from various channels, including focus group discussion notes, individual interview records, and observations. The goal is to extract relevant themes and patterns that address the monitoring and evaluation questions at hand.



Analysing qualitative data involves a multifaceted approach. Researchers focus on the spoken words of participants, examining their expressions, nuances, and the context in which they were spoken. Understanding this context is crucial, as it unlocks the deeper meaning behind the words. Additionally, exploring both consistency and contradictions in respondents' views reveals underlying dynamics and potential areas of inquiry and the frequency and intensity of comments provide clues about the relative significance of certain themes.

The analysis is guided by specific details and emerging patterns, ultimately leading to meaningful conclusions.

For instance, imagine an ongoing project where ten focus groups engage with select beneficiaries. Once all the discussion notes are collected, the next step involves analysing the data. Here, researchers face a choice: ad hoc or systematic analysis. In the ad hoc approach, relevant information is highlighted informally. Researchers extract insights based on their judgment and intuition. Alternatively, researchers can systematically code the data. Coding involves labelling segments as belonging to specific phenomena—such as concepts, beliefs, actions, themes, cultural practices, or relationships. This can be done manually using paper and markers or digitally using tools like Word, or Excel.

Qualitative data analysis is a nuanced journey that uncovers hidden meanings within spoken and written words, leading to valuable insights.

After inputting **quantitative data** into a spreadsheet, it becomes ready to generate information to address monitoring or evaluation questions. Statistics play a crucial role in transforming this data into actionable insights for decision-making. Descriptive and inferential statistics serve distinct purposes. Descriptive statistics provide information that describes data and aids in summarizing it. Graphical representations, such as histograms, pie charts, and bar charts, facilitate quick comparisons across different data sets, revealing trends, variations, and significant values over time. On the other hand, inferential statistics draw upon data from a sample of the population to make broader generalizations about entire populations.

Categorical data groups things into distinct categories, like "male" and "female." We can summarize this data by counting how many things fall into each category. For example, counting the number of females in a community tells us their frequency. This information is often presented in a frequency table, showing how many people belong to each category (male/female) in the community. We can also express these counts as a percentage or proportion of the total population.

Frequency tables are great for reports, but for a more visual picture, we can convert them into charts or graphs. A proportion tells you the relative frequency of each category. It's calculated by dividing the number in each category by the total number. Percentages are just proportions multiplied by 100, making them easier to understand than raw counts. That's why they're often included in frequency tables.

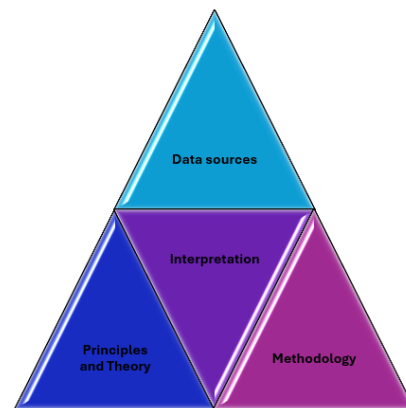
Triangulation is a research strategy that involves comparing multiple data sources, methods, theories, or investigators to address a specific research question. Its purpose is to enhance the validity and credibility of findings while compensating for any weaknesses in the data.

Triangulation is a powerful strategy that involves examining data from multiple perspectives. Researchers achieve this by using various sources (interviews, surveys, observations) and methods (qualitative, quantitative) to explore the same phenomenon. This multi-angled approach offers several advantages.

First, it helps compensate for the weaknesses inherent in any single approach. Like using multiple lenses, triangulation provides a more complete picture by offsetting potential biases or limitations. Second, triangulation enhances the validity and reliability of research findings. By validating observations across different sources and methods, researchers can be more confident in the accuracy of their results. We can affirm that triangulation reduces bias by cross-referencing data, strengthening the overall trustworthiness of the conclusions.

Furthermore, triangulation helps identify inconsistencies and new insights. Comparing and contrasting findings from different angles can reveal areas for further investigation, while convergence of data across sources reinforces the credibility of the conclusions. Ultimately, triangulation broadens perspectives, encouraging researchers to explore alternative viewpoints and potentially leading to new ways of understanding the research problem.

While there's no one-size-fits-all approach to analysing data for triangulation, some key steps guide the process. Analysing triangulated data requires a rigorous approach. Researchers must critically examine all findings, prioritizing those most relevant to the research goals. This involves looking for connections and inconsistencies between data sources and identifying any missing information that might limit interpretation. The next step involves identifying patterns within the data, whether these trends appear in a single source or emerge consistently across multiple sources. Based on the triangulation goals, researchers can then formulate theories or hypotheses. For instance, if the goal is to assess the impact of an intervention on beneficiary behaviour, hypotheses might be developed based on the



available data. Once formulated, these hypotheses are tested against the data to confirm or refute them. This process often reveals new insights and exposes data gaps. In cases where additional data is unavailable, researchers might need to modify or even drop a hypothesis. Any modifications should be re-confirmed through further analysis.

Finally, concluding involves leveraging the convergence (or divergence) of data from different sources to build a reasoned and well-supported case for the research goals. The aim is to create the strongest possible argument for the hypothesis based on the available evidence.



Here are some helpful questions to consider:

- ✓ Which hypotheses are backed by the most reliable data?
- ✓ Which are supported by independent sources?
- ✓ Are both quantitative and qualitative data in agreement?
- ✓ Are there potential biases or limitations in the data?
- ✓ Are there other explanations not considered in the hypotheses?
- ✓ How confident are you in your conclusions?
- ✓ Can your conclusions be acted upon (will they lead to improvements)?

Reporting and program improvement

Reporting and Program Improvement are the engine that drives a successful dropout initiative program's monitoring and evaluation process. The first reason is transparency and evidence-based decisions. Reports act as a communication bridge between the program and its stakeholders, including funders, policymakers, and the public. By sharing data and findings, the program fosters trust and allows everyone to see its impact on dropout rates. This transparency is crucial for securing continued support and resources.

Secondly, reporting identifies the areas for growth, because monitoring and evaluation involve continuous data collection and analysis. Reports highlight both the program's strengths and weaknesses. This information is invaluable for program developers who can use it to refine their approach and maximize the program's effectiveness.

It can also guide the program's direction, as data from reports becomes the foundation for making informed decisions about the program's future. Should it be expanded, modified, or even discontinued? Reporting helps make strategic choices based on evidence, not simply guesswork.

Least, but not last, there is learning from experience. Monitoring and evaluation data offers a valuable window into the program's past successes and failures. Reporting on this information allows program developers to learn from experience and incorporate those lessons into future iterations of the dropout initiative. By continuously improving the program's design, it can become even more effective in reducing dropout rates.

In essence, reporting and program improvement work hand-in-hand with monitoring and evaluation. Data from ongoing monitoring is analysed and reported on, providing insights for program improvement. These improvements are then implemented, and the cycle continues. This ongoing process ensures the dropout initiative program remains effective and has the greatest possible impact.

Conclusion

Dropout initiative programs rely on student data to track progress and measure success. However, this data is sensitive, and protecting student privacy is paramount, that is why data **security** is a crucial part of monitoring and evaluation processes.

The following aspects should be taken into account:

- ✓ Follow data privacy regulations. This means to comply with all relevant laws and regulations regarding students and implement robust security measures to safeguard student data from unauthorized access or breaches.
- ✓ Minimize data collection - Collect only the data essential for program evaluation and anonymize it whenever possible.
- ✓ Transparency is key - Communicate to students and parents how their data will be used and protected.

Building trust with students, parents, and the community is essential for the program's success. By prioritizing data security and privacy, you demonstrate your commitment to ethical data practices.

Collaboration is a cornerstone of successful dropout initiative programs. Involving key stakeholders throughout the monitoring and evaluation process offers a multitude of benefits. Stakeholders, such as teachers and program staff, can provide valuable insights into practical data collection methods that minimize disruption to daily routines. Their firsthand experience ensures the data collection process is efficient and practical. Including diverse perspectives from stakeholders fosters comprehensive data interpretation. This collaborative approach ensures that all relevant factors influencing dropout rates are considered, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the program's impact.

Involving stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation cultivates a sense of shared ownership. This fosters greater buy-in and increases the likelihood of program success. By fostering collaboration with stakeholders, dropout initiative programs can gather richer data, gain a more holistic understanding of the issues, and create a more effective program overall.

Effective resource allocation is vital for dropout initiative programs. To achieve this, a cost-effectiveness analysis is essential. This analysis involves a two-pronged approach: calculating program costs and measuring their impact on dropout rates. Calculating costs entails identifying and quantifying all program expenses, such as staff salaries, materials, and technology. On the impact side, the program's effectiveness is evaluated by metrics like the number of students retained or the percentage of dropout reduction achieved.

A cost-effectiveness ratio is calculated by dividing the program's total cost by its measured impact. This ratio provides valuable insights into whether the program is achieving its goals in a cost-efficient manner.

By conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis, program developers can make informed decisions about resource allocation and identify areas for potential cost savings. This ensures that dropout initiative programs maximize their impact while remaining financially responsible.

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Module 7. Promotion and Organisational Policy Change

Unit 7.1 Engaging in promotion for dropout Prevention.



Introduction

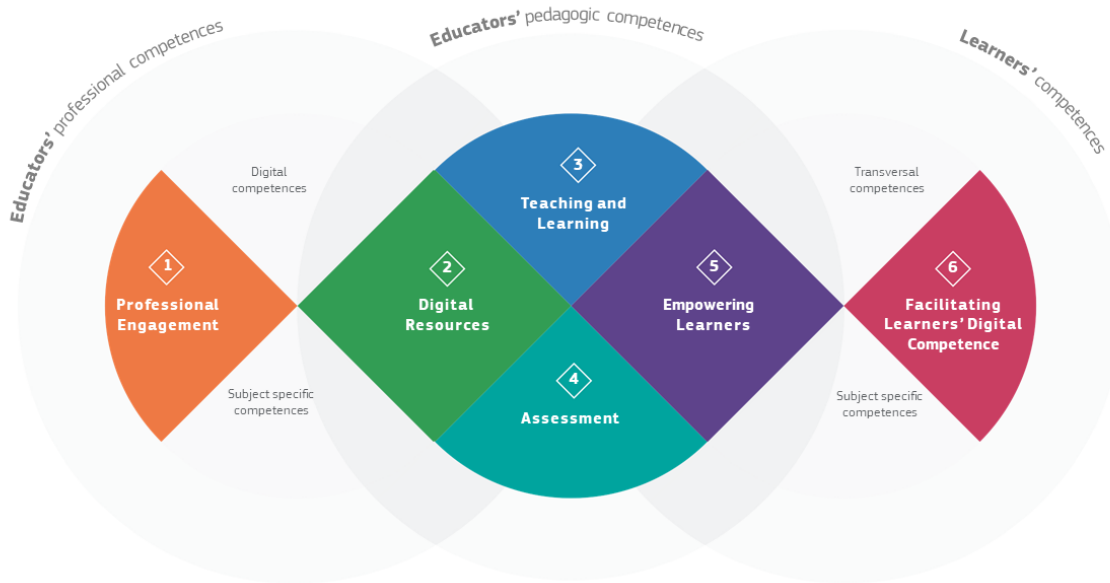
So far, we have discussed student engagement for the sake of dropout reduction. For engagement, communication is key as the primary way of working with behavioural feedback. However, as it turns out, the principal importance of communication also applies to any attempt for public promotion to achieve dropout reduction. In order to achieve the maximum percentage of prevention, engagement should exceed the internal barriers and proceed to the design of a strategy for effective community outreach, raising awareness and winning support for change.

Why do I need to focus on communication?

At first, it may seem counterintuitive to focus on communicating externally, because it is not broadly recognized that teachers and trainers engage in such roles. However, in reality, communication is a crucial ingredient for success.



One of the best ways in which the importance of communication is displayed is through the DigCompEdu Competence Framework. One of the competence areas concerns Professional Engagement which includes competencies related to successful communication.



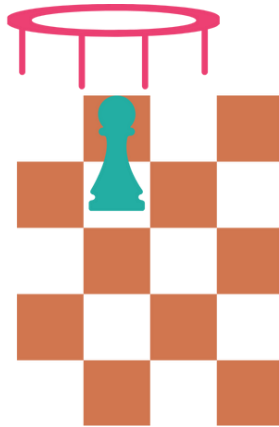
Check the DigCompEdu competence framework [here](#) to learn more about Professional Engagement competencies that are most relevant to your goal.

How to raise awareness and mobilize support

Raising awareness and mobilizing support for a cause requires a strategic approach that leverages communication, collaboration, and community engagement.



Initially, it's vital to craft a compelling message that clearly outlines the phenomenon of dropping out, its importance, and what it takes to change it. Utilizing various digital channels, such as social media, newsletters, blogs, and traditional media—can help disseminate this message widely and effectively targeting the correct audiences.



Do I need a strategy?

It is important to approach the matter with strategic thought, as strategy poses far more emphasis on the best possible utilization of resources for the achievement of goals. The reason is quite simple: doing any actions within your VET institution is confined to this internal environment itself. However, any actions beyond, and outside of VET may prove to have a limitless, confusing number of goals. For maximum efficiency, a strategy should be defined addressing only the necessary targets for your outreach campaign, all while keeping an eye on whether the necessary means are there to achieve the outcome.



Community Outreach 101

Start with storytelling. By creating stories, you can connect events and actions of persons with emotion (Fryer, 2003). This is crucial as people beyond work settings tend to operate according to emotional criteria. At the same time, it's a simple way to remember the connection between cause and effect in VET dropout rates. This combination is ideal for initiating dissemination by word of mouth, as people will carry the story you have constructed to portray the situation in VET.

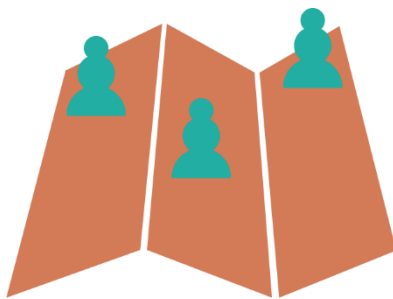
That same storytelling requires engaging content to maintain a constant presence through resharing among users in your audience. Do not create content that will simply express your willingness to generate change. The target is not your willingness, which is a given, but the audience's willingness to effectively tackle social issues.

Moreover, you can create communities specific to VET dropouts, initiating dialogue with parents, dropouts and students at risk of dropping out as well. This creates the potential for two-way channel communication (Garbrecht, 2019), meaning that you will have all the necessary inputs to tweak the accuracy of your message over time for effectiveness.

Parents may often blame the VET institution for the dropout phenomenon, ignoring the complexity of the matter. Through communities, when the VET teacher is proactive and considerate, addressing the worries of parents, your institution will be able to find support, allies and connections through their networks. Parents are a generation older than their offspring and have consolidated their networks, which allows them to leverage it for maximum efficiency.



An even more important step is the organization of events on the topic of school dropouts.



Map the stakeholders – Although we will discuss more about the practical importance of stakeholder engagement and collaboration, this is the phase where we shall start with the mapping of stakeholders. The mapping serves targeted and efficient cooperation with stakeholders that hold a genuine interest in the relevant matters. This ensures the quality of the input, efficient management and timely responses to communications and challenges. The stakeholders must also be

willing to engage in different policy-making levels.

Some questions to ask when mapping stakeholders are the following ones and they will be effective in guiding you.



- Who could be potential supporters of your initiatives?
- What are some similar initiatives in the ecosystem?
- Who will be able to influence in favour of the desired outcomes?
- Which stakeholders can voluntarily or involuntarily block the outcomes of your efforts?
- Who might be against your initiative?
- How involved is the stakeholder in the relevant field of policy-making?
- Who holds the most appropriate knowledge
- Who will be affected by the policies besides dropouts themselves?
- What are the relationships between and among stakeholders?

Activity



Answer indicatively to the questions posed to stakeholders. Which ones do you find most difficult? What was the source of the difficulty?

Moreover, it can be beneficial to map what sorts of collaborations have worked in the past. You can either extract this information by interacting with stakeholders directly or by watching any of their reports and content that involve their story, essentially providing a map of your activity. Many



representatives will be more than happy to share their insights because, for the previous projects, their motivations were similar to yours.

Always be clear about the objectives of your engagement. Stakeholders do not know exactly why you are reaching out. That means that they are not precisely aware of how they can help and therefore may be less motivated to help. Precision means a more focused scope, meaning that it is easier to take smaller steps. Being expected to make little specific contributions towards a cause is more motivating than not defining how big their contribution will be.

Small tasks will also act as small experiments for you to adjust your communication towards other stakeholders in the communities you are communicating with. This can be achieved through active listening and asking for feedback. In this sense, your efforts don't have to cover communications with the whole spectrum of all the diverse stakeholders at once, but may rather happen incrementally.

Activity



E-Mail or LinkedIn?

Two professional digital channels to communicate with stakeholders are through E-Mail and LinkedIn. Which of the two do you believe is the strongest tool in your case? Are your stakeholders active on LinkedIn with content creation and showing activity within existing communities? Would you prefer E-Mail if they have a weaker LinkedIn presence and activity?

Getting the Ambassadors ready



An ambassador's main role is to promote your initiative for reducing the VET dropout rate (D). Therefore, it should be agreed on how exactly they will promote it. The least effective ambassador roles are the ones that depend on simply endorsing the cause, something that is usually reflected on your VET website or the initiative's website. However, effective ambassadors actively take the initiative to inform and educate, and even proceed to small, usually symbolic actions that highlight the importance of the matter.

Did you know that you could assign ambassadors even during events? This is best implemented when the event lasts more than two days and offers opportunities to do all the necessary networking during lunches and dinners.



Hence the main duties of the ambassadors are:

1. To inform and educate on the importance of the matter of VET dropouts
2. To drive participation in events promoting the policy
3. To provide accurate feedback from the audience they reach mostly share and sometimes create content, even in the form of annotation
4. To represent in events by actively informing the participants
5. To provide support and mentor

An ambassador will act either because they will feel great about doing good or because promoting education is following their true values. (Punie and Redecker, 2017)

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Unit 7.2 Collaborating with stakeholders for policy change.



Introduction

Having reflected extensively on some characteristics of stakeholders, we will now proceed with the basis of collaboration with stakeholders for policy change. Recommending policy change is one of the highest levels of collaborative engagement and so it offers certain milestones to follow to successfully start generating change before even the policy recommendation reaches its final stage.

In order to understand who are the relevant stakeholders in the Vocational Education and Training environment, we simply need to look at its close link to broader education and complementarity, youth and the relevant industries.

The involvement of industrial stakeholders not only improves the retention itself but also signals to the authorities that the matter at stake is not purely educational but also economic. With these parameters in mind let's take a closer look at the matter of how to proceed with policy recommendations themselves with the help of stakeholders.



Getting a picture of relevant considerations

Map the gaps in policies.

Be sure to map at what level the policies are being implemented (local, national, international?) and which authority is the main factor (e.g. the Ministry of Education). This will provide you with a clear blueprint, which you can use to see exactly where you want to aim.

What if there are other policies in place?

In many cases, the policy may be in place, but it may not be implemented correctly or to an adequate degree. In this case, it is best to identify the challenges in the enforcement and provide data.

Remember - even policies that are not directly aiming at dropouts can alter the rate of dropouts. This is the reason why data collection should be as inclusive as possible, asking questions about all surrounding factors and only then evaluating their usefulness ad hoc. Of course, collective brainstorming should also take place, provided that during many instances' interviewees may not be fully aware of the true reasons behind their choice. To address the sum of these biases, an external validation is recommended.

Getting supplementary data from Summative Assessments

One of the more usual data used in policy change is data from summative assessments. Usually, dropouts are low performers in VET, who are not engaged. Had they participated in summative assessments, their grades would have been low (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021). This is why, if not already, the authorities should focus on whether data from summative assessments represents the true picture.



Consider what needs to be changed to improve existing policy frameworks.

For example, many students are intimidated by the nature of summative assessments (Harrison et al., 2017), and may procrastinate, creating room for dropping out. Assessment formats that are closer to the formative ones may not be approved by the authorities, as they may provide unfair advantages. In this scenario, policy forming should address the implementation of a balanced assessment.

What should a Policy Recommendation look like?



Any recommendation should start with an attractive cover, followed by its contents, concisely expressing a clear structure.

Executive Summary - Then an executive summary is a great addition, as it will provide a prompt description of the recommendation, including the settings, the needs and the objectives. Such a section is necessary given the amount of information volume that floods the attention of decision-makers

Introduction - Following the executive summary, the introduction sets the pace for the rest of the recommendation. In the introduction you will introduce the purpose of the recommendation, addressing problems and opportunities.

Context and Rationale - Right after the introduction follow context and rationale, in which you will be explaining the context in a layered manner. Here you will analyze the whole picture,



essentially presenting reasons for conducting policy intervention. Of course, you will improve the credibility of this analysis by including as much data, statistics, case studies and examples as possible. Be precise and don't cite irrelevant information, which might be found inaccurate and disengaging.

Objectives – The section of objectives lists the specific goals that the policy aims to achieve. Be sure to quantify the goals as much as possible, even if the expected result is not connected to the one metric on the paper. By showing the ability to measure results, you are sending a signal that the stakeholders proposing are accountable.

Stakeholder Identification – Of course, a proper listing of stakeholders is also required. Having the agreement of a large list of relevant stakeholders also serves as a demonstration of proper dissemination actions taken, with an active approach of outreach and dissemination. This displays the agreement of all, the importance of such a policy and the future ability of your institution to engage in finding solutions.

Policy Recommendations – This is the essence of the policy paper, as you will be creating the form of your recommendations. The Recommendation should have a segmented format, creating a clear picture of the recommendations, the explanations and the anticipated impact just below each one.

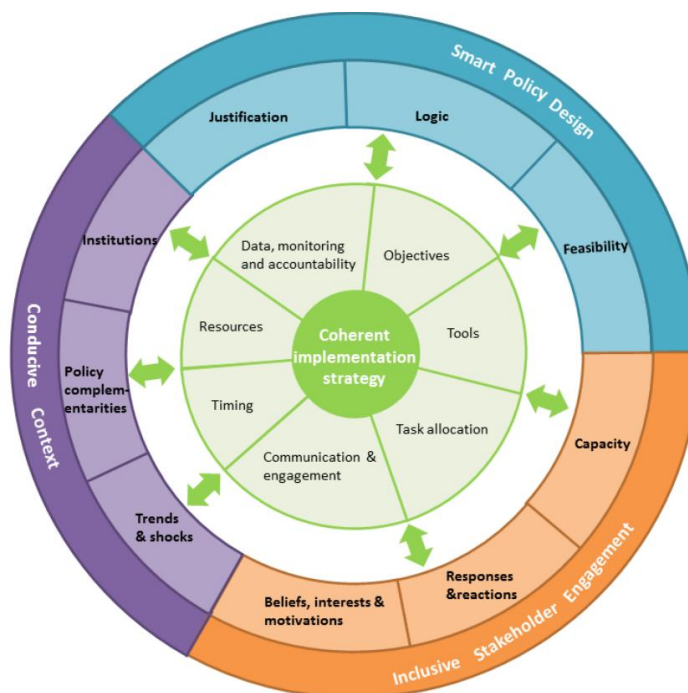
This section will look like the following graph.

● Recommendation 1:	_____
● Explanation	_____
● Anticipated Impact	_____
● Recommendation 2:	_____
● Explanation	_____
● Anticipated Impact	_____
● Recommendation 3:	_____
● Explanation	_____
● Anticipated Impact	_____

HINT: Keep in mind that policy processes are also transforming, something which should be reflected in your recommendations. There is not much benefit in targeting the wrong authority. Certain processes that were top-down are becoming based more on horizontal interactions; essentially structures that become created by those same stakeholders that your engagement strategy targets (OECD, 2018). Consequently, coordination is becoming more and more important for proper recommendations and subsequent actions.

Activity

Analyze the following policy implementation graph. Which aspects of it do you find the most important for the overall success of a policy recommendation?



Source: Viennet, R. and B. Pont (2017), "Education policy implementation: A literature review and proposed framework", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 162, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/fc467a64-en>



Afterwards, create a list of keywords for the Conductive Context section. This specific section will help you match the more standard elements of the design with the essential reality you are trying to represent.

Complementary Routes to Policy?

You may want to support your initiative even after communicating your policy recommendation. Because policy takes time to shape itself through the legal routes it must pass through, until it is approved and implemented. Complementary actions will only encourage the final approval of policies, as side actions raise the voice of your organization.

Collaborate not just for change of policy but also to improve the quality of the student experience. For example,

In the event, you feel discouraged.

Oftentimes educators are disappointed by a general feeling that education is not getting that much attention from profit-oriented stakeholders. However, in reality, even investors are advocating in their bibliography for the improvement of education for the smoother functioning of society and its projected, qualitative growth (Dalio, 2021).

Useful Resources

Balanced Assessment Systems

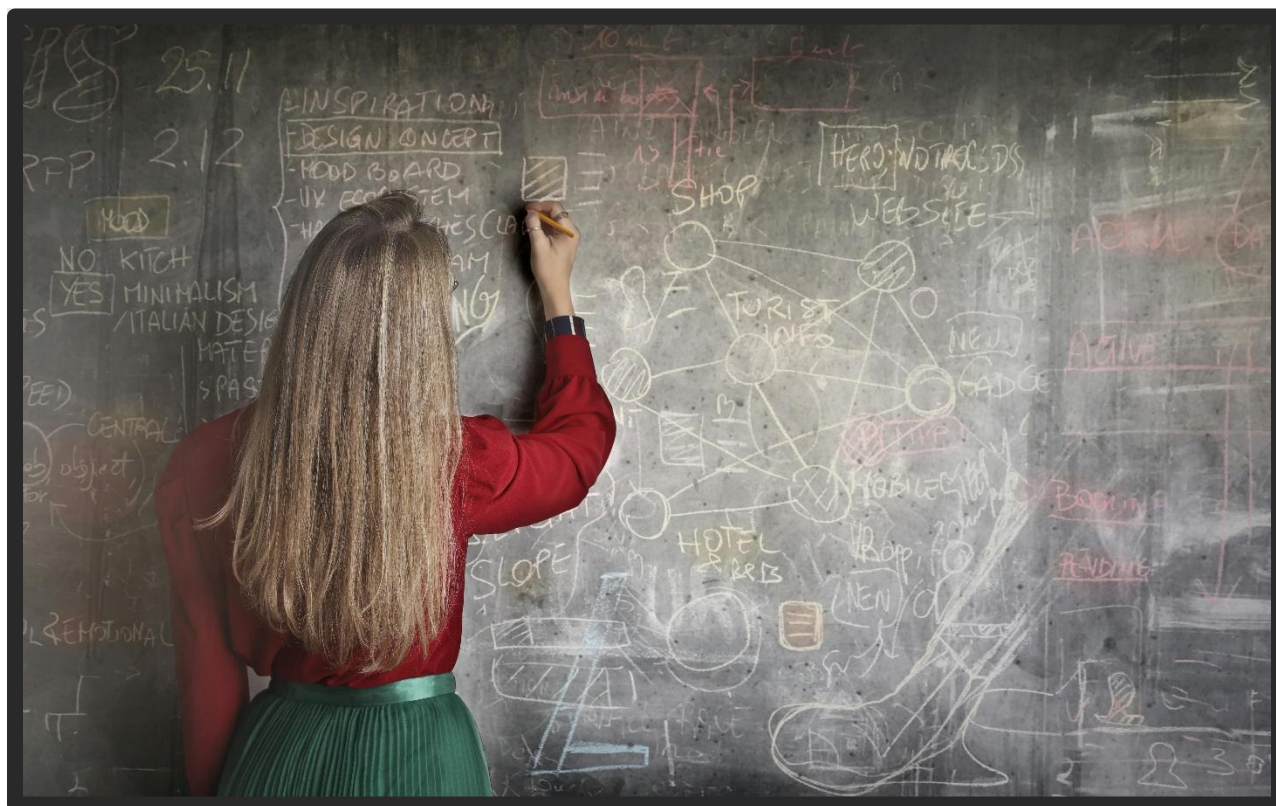
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Module 8. Applying Upskilling Knowledge and Skills in the VET Environment

Unit 8.1 Engaging in promotion for dropout prevention.



Introduction

Through our discussions on dropout rates, we have delved into many aspects of the matter. In this unit, we will analyze the pivotal role of the teachers in the problem. Teachers play an important role in the educational system, particularly in inspiring and helping students develop. So, what steps can teachers take to prevent dropouts? What are their common mistakes? How can teachers contribute to the educational system? Teachers must receive training to handle this situation and strive for continuous improvement. Training will empower the teachers to play a proactive role in decreasing dropout rates.



Why is it essential to train teachers?

The educational system is being questioned in various aspects, mainly regarding its adjustment to the evolving job market. Furthermore, sometimes the dysfunction of the education system and students' dropouts are due to the lack of teachers' training. VET should prioritize upskilling their professors, to enhance the overall learning experience. There is ongoing debate about whether traditional methods of teaching have an impact on students. Modern teaching creates a more personalized environment for the students that meets their needs and ambitions. Training teachers aims at understanding the various forms of teaching and adapting them to different situations. Moreover, upskilling teachers address the knowledge gap that expands every year due to constant technological and social involvement. Last but not least, training teachers aim to improve them individually, decreasing their reliance on authority and boosting their confidence.

Personal Benefits

Training for teachers not only affects students but also impacts the teachers themselves. Learning and achieving new objectives help them grow. Personal growth is usually combined with a boost in their confidence, motivation and happiness, thus increasing job satisfaction. When teachers are in a better psychological state, it often results in improved work performance and wellness to inspire their students to stay engaged and eager to learn.



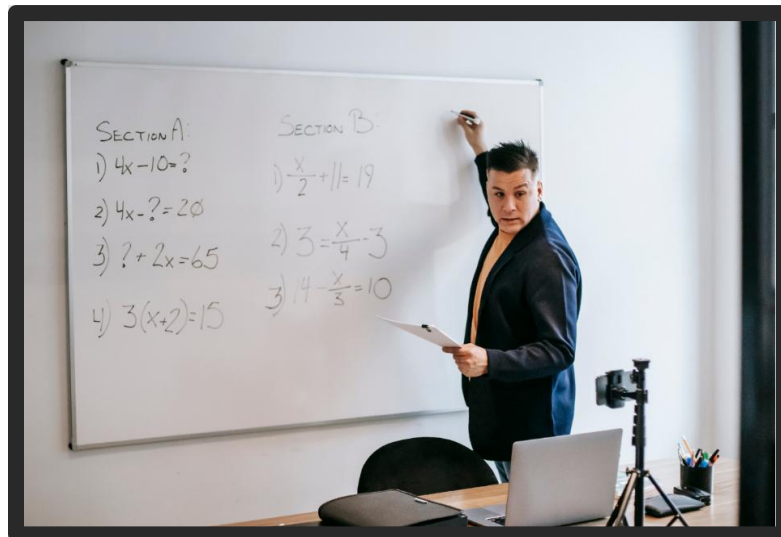
Training method



1. Skill development programs

In an effort to reduce dropouts, a key step for teachers is the renewal of their skills, knowledge, and experiences so that students can engage with more modern and relevant topics. The renewal of their skills can be achieved through training programs. The effectiveness of these programs was confirmed by a study conducted by Gibbs, Graham; Coffey, Martin (2004). The study analyzed a group of teachers and their students after the teachers participated in training programs. The study took place across 22 universities in 8 countries, with the educational programs lasting 4 to 18 months. The project aimed to enhance the teacher's skills, foster critical thinking about teaching, and introduce methods to increase student interest and eventually change the teaching progress for the better. The results of the study showed that students had deeper knowledge of the lessons, were more interested in their academic pursuits, and were more focused during lessons.

2. Pedagogical and class management



One of the most important lessons that teachers must undertake to prevent dropouts is about pedagogical skills and class management. Programs with pedagogical learning outcomes aim to update traditional educational methods with modern ones. The theory behind this training does not claim that traditional methods are useless but supports evolution. When it comes to class management, it focuses more on the student as an individual and on the lessons themselves. These programs teach teachers methods and strategies to understand the needs, ambitions and feelings of their students. Finally, these trainings promote adaptability to adjust to new technologies, modern methods and learning based on the students' needs. Changing the format of lessons so that students can relate and understand better is a crucial aspect that will encourage them to stay.

How can a teacher design and practice pedagogical methods?

Teachers, to base their teaching techniques on pedagogical methods, need to follow some steps. They begin by defining the goals and purposes of the lessons according to the conditions of the class. After determining the desirable learning outcomes, they can help build the education program in a more specific way. When the definition phase is completed, the next step is more practical. Teachers prepare projects, assignments, and tests so that they can understand if the students fully comprehend the lesson. The final step refers to teachers' evaluation. Did they reach their goals? What learning outcomes have been mastered and which ones need improvement? The education process is divided into sub-projects. The first part focuses on explanation, presentation, and concept formation, while the second involves conducting tests for each unit studied to provide feedback for corrections and additional training activities (Allayarova Solikha Narzullovna, Khusainova Firuza Tokhirovna, Akhrorova Zebo Bakhramovna, Sadikova Shoiri Odeldjanovna4, Sodikov Ulugbek Jurayevich, 2020).



What pedagogical methods exist?

There are various pedagogical methods, but some key methods are the most well-known, easy to execute and ideal for beginners.

1. **Innovative pedagogical methods** aim to improve the educational system, by using innovative, technological tools in lessons. The use of technology engages both teachers and students, helping them gain experience and knowledge about the technology used by companies today. These methods also encourage students to participate actively in class, in contrast to the traditional methods.
2. **Problem-Based Teaching Methods** are interactive methods. In particular, teachers challenge the students through problems and tasks to encourage independent learning. Of course, teachers are there to guide, but not to provide the solutions. Usually, this technique is executed from a combination of traditional and modern approaches.
3. **Interactive Methods** focus on the importance of creating an environment for the students that attracts their interest and helps them stay concentrated. Some examples of interactive methods are games, simulations, and collaborative-based learning.
4. **Audiovisual Aids method** refers to the limitations of using books and lectures in teaching. While steps have been taken in the educational field with audiovisual media, which have motivated students, their use is still limited. In conclusion, teachers should not be limited to simple, conventional equipment, but should explore and discover new resources.
5. **The Differentiated Approach** analyzes the challenge of having numerous technological educational options, which can be overwhelming for educators when deciding what to choose and effectively utilize. The determination of the type of technology can be made specifically based on the field (economic, political, mathematical). This way, educators specialize in their equipment usage, facilitating lesson implementation and enhancing the lesson itself.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation** is a simple way for both teachers and the education system to continuously evolve by monitoring and assessing evaluation. By identifying errors and resolving them, the VET adapts to the needs of its students better. The method aims to promote effective and modernized learning.

(Allayarova Solikha Narzulloevna, Khusainova Firuza Tokhirovna, Akhrorova Zebo Bakhramovna, Sadikova Shoiria Odeldjanovna⁴, Sodikov Ulugbek Jurayevich, 2020).



Bullying Programs

A key factor in a student's dropout is bullying. Even if the student is interested in their studies, if they perceive themselves to be in a dangerous environment, they may abandon it. While these situations are more common at younger ages, it would be beneficial for teachers to be informed. Often, these programs focus more on prevention, but they also teach the signs of victimization from abusive behaviour. The main problem in this specific situation is that teachers, due to their workload and large number of students, do not consider it their responsibility to supervise (Elise T. Pas, TracyE. Waasdorp, Catherine P. Bradshaw (2019).



VET and Job Market

Communication and creating opportunities in the job market are crucial focal points for students. Communication can take place in various ways. The initial stage involves preparing the student for interviews. Classes about the preparation of CVs and job interview simulation would help the student feel more prepared. Subsequently, providing simple updates to students about career days and internships offered by reputable companies will highlight the interest of the VET in the future of its students. VET can also establish relationships with important companies, for example, the big four for internships, which are a major advantage for resumes. Furthermore, the student's orientation is a key part. Even if they have already chosen their studies, the range of job positions available with every degree is usually broad, so guidance from professors based on needs is



essential. Another scenario is when a student ultimately loses interest in their chosen degree, leading them to consider dropping out of VET. Communicating with professors about changing majors, instead of dropping out, is a better approach.

One of the most important aspects of studies is the trust between the teacher and the student. While a student may consider abandoning their studies, they will think twice when teachers are well-informed, use modern tools, and can ensure a future in their career. Nowadays, there are plenty of resources and techniques to support teachers in meeting students' demands. So, VET should encourage them to take advantage of them.

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Unit 8.2 Implementing Strategies and Interventions in real-world VET Contexts



Introduction

The transition from theoretical lessons to practical lessons can help prevent dropouts and improve the educational system. Once students have fully understood the theory, teachers should first begin by implementing practical exercises and after in real life. A modern educational system that aims in practical execution is simulation-based. In this unit, we will analyze how simulation works and its various categories.

What is a simulation exercise?

A simulation exercise creates an environment using technological equipment or ancillary props to simulate an experience similar to reality. Students train in hypothetical situations where the outcome does not involve risk, anxiety, or fear of failure. This allows employees to gain proper knowledge and skills to handle and adapt to complicated tasks. Some categories of simulation exercises are management games, case studies, role-playing and in-basket training (Kanu Raheja (2015)).

1. Management games

Management games combine the serious parts of learning with the fun of playing. This education reinforces skills like teamwork, communication, time management and leadership. All these attributes contribute to better communication between teacher and student. Moreover, management games help cope with stress. Game-based training focuses on practical education, with direct execution.

2. Case study

Case studies are a process or record of research into the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time. The content of these case studies can include mistakes made by teachers that increased dropouts or cases where teachers figure out how to decrease dropouts. Case studies are food for thought on how a similar situation can inform and improve our practices.

3. Role Playing

Role-playing games aim to familiarize the trainee with situations first in simulated environments and then to manage real situations with more experience. In role-playing, hypothetical situations are re-enacted, and learners act out what the people involved would do in the respective circumstances. The steps involved in role-playing include defining objectives, choosing context & roles, introducing the exercise, trainee preparation/research, role-play, concluding discussion, and assessment. Types of role-play may be multiple role-play, single role-play, role rotation, and spontaneous role-play.

A possible scenario in this particular training is the teacher playing the role of the student who wants to leave and a colleague playing the role of the teacher who is discussing and trying to deal with the problem. The training will help the teachers to deal with situations more objectively, having experienced the student's point of view as well.

4. In-basket training

In-basket training or in-tray training involves providing students with a set of business papers (reports, proposals, etc.), then regarding the content the student must react and suggest solutions or proposals depending on the situation. This type of education can be beneficial for addressing dropouts' issues. For example, a teacher will receive feedback that the mature student has failed a test, his/her goal is to find what was the problem about the teaching progress, to prevent student disappointment.



5. Collaborative learning (CL)

Collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches, mainly characterized by teamwork and collaboration. The trainees learn through working with their team to exchange opinions, share an experience, solve problems or complete tasks. Collaborative learning can be applied for teachers to learn from each other's experiences or to guide the reflective practice of one another. Furthermore, the foundation of collaborative learning is for educators to not think of themselves as experts but as a part of the team, that every member can teach and learn something from the rest of the group. Teachers will have the chance to adapt this way of thinking when they communicate with their class to be more open to understanding their students' needs and minds (Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean T. MacGregor (2012)).





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