ERASMUS +   ISSA

Improving Solutions for Student   Absenteeism

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Survey for Student Absenteeism

Systematic Review Protocol

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Background

Early School Leaving (ESL) is a multi-faceted and complex problem caused by a cumulative process of disengagement. *It is a result of, emotional and psychological, social, economic, education or family-related reasons.* It is triggered by problems that can be related to the course of study, the school, or to certain health, personal, or emotional difficulties young people face. Limited access to quality education or to an individual's preferred choice of study may be especially problematic in rural or disadvantaged areas[1].In 2012, 12.7% of all 18 to 24 years olds had not completed upper secondary education and were no longer in education and training[2]. This represents some 5.5 million young people. Data show that some groups of young people are more at risk of ESL than others. In most countries, boys are more likely to leave school prematurely than girls. Young people from a migrant background often display a higher than average rate of ESL, and the risk of ESL is especially high for disadvantaged minorities, including Roma[3].

For a long time, ESL has been one of the matters on which several investigations have been made in international background and especially in European Union. To prevent ESL in EU countries, some radical precautions have been taken, and dropping the ESL rate has become one of the 2020 targets of European Union as mentioned in Education and Training in Europe 2020. According to ET 2020, one of the education targets of EU by 2020 is to reduce the rates of young people leaving education and training with no more than secondary education to below 10 % and according to Country- Specific Recommendations (CSRs) in the area of education, prevention, intervention and compensation requirements will be implemented [4].

The general ESL rate of European Union Countries is 12.7 %. The ESL rate in Turkey is 39.6 % and that is comparatively high when compared to EU target (European Commission; Reducing Early School Leaving: Key Messages and Policy Support, Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, November 2013). With

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[1] European Commission Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving November 2013.
[2] Labour Force Survey 2012: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/
[3]Education and Training Monitor 2013,
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learningpolicy/progress_en.htm.
[4] Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM (2010) 2020, http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

the rate of 24.9 %, Spain has the most ESL rate among the candidate countries of EU. In Greece this rate is around 11.4 % which is close to EU target but above the national target while Germany is one of the most successful countries that can deal with ESL in EU since the rate is 10.5 % which is around the desired level of EU and national target[5].

One of the main reasons of ESL, according to "EU Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on ESL"[6] is school absenteeism. Schools play an important role in addressing ESL but they cannot and should not work in isolation. Comprehensive approaches that focus on the root causes of ESL are required to reduce ESL. Reducing ESL can help towards the integration of young people into the labour market, and contribute to breaking the cycle of deprivation that leads to the social exclusion of too many young people[7].

2. Operational definitions

In the current research protocol the following definitions will be adopted:

Absenteeism

Is the fact or habit of frequently being away from work or school, usually without a reason[8] or, similarly, absenteeism can be defined as persistent, habitual, and unexplained absence from school[9], while chronic absenteeism occurs when a student is absent without reason 20% or more of school time; ―this nominal figure is consistently identified regardless of the specific circumstances of the absenteeism[10]. Traditional definitions that are being questioned by our 21st century student-centered approach used to connect absenteeism with the lack of an explanation for that absence. Through the systematic review the reasons of the absenteeism should be investigated.

Dimensions of absenteeism

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[5] Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM (2010)2020, http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

[6] European Commission Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving November 2013.

[7] European Commission Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving November 2013.

[8] Collins Cobuilb English Language Dictionary, 1989 London and Glasgow: Collins Publications.

[9] Brooks, 1997 in Bond, G. (2004). *Tackling student absenteeism: Research findings and recommendations for school and local communities*. http://www.hwllen.com.au

[10] Bond, G. (2004). *Tackling student absenteeism: Research findings and recommendations for school and local communities*. http://www.hwllen.com.au

In the literature, several dimensions of absenteeism are identified: truancy, condoned/overlooked absenteeism, school refusal[11], school withdrawal, and early leaving[12]. It is important to identify the different dimensions of absenteeism in tackling the problem because they may require different interventions.

Truancy: the persistent, habitual and unexplained absence from school, although sometimes it can occur with parental knowledge and sometimes consent. The truant leaves home under the pretense of going to school but turns away and become involved in out-of-school activities. It can take the form of fractional truancy, where students arrive late, leave early or skip individual classes[13]

School refusal: students refuse to attend school even in the face of persuasion and punitive measures from parents and school. These students stay at home with the knowledge of their parents and school administrators[14]. This form of absenteeism is widely associated with social and medical disorder involving persistent non-attendance at school, excessive anxiety, and physical complaints[15],[16]. This type of absenteeism can be separated from the other types, given its psychological and/or medical composition.

School withdrawal: Students are absent from school because their parents keep them away from school on a frequent basis because of the parents' needs and priorities. For the most part, these student's parents do not enroll them at school[17]. It is a parentally agreed absence.

Early leaving: This refers to students under 15 who drop out of school before completing their schooling.

Early school leaving

The definition of early school leaving used at EU level refers to those young people 18-24, who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are

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[11] Bond, G. (2004). *Tackling student absenteeism: Research findings and recommendations for school and local communities*. http://www.hwllen.com.au

[12] Australia. Auditor General Victoria. (2004). *Tackling student attendance*. http://www.audit.vic.gov.au

[13] Cunningham, M. M. (2005). *A study of school enrolment, attendance and dropout rate in four rural primary schools in St. Mary, Jamaica* (Unpublished master's thesis). The University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.

[14] McShane, G., Walter, G., & Rey, J. M. (2001). Characteristics of adolescents with school refusal. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *35*(6), 822–826.

[15] Australia. Auditor General Victoria. (2004). *Tackling student attendance*. http://www.audit.vic.gov.au

[16] Bond, G. (2004). *Tackling student absenteeism: Research findings and recommendations for school and local communities*. http://www.hwllen.com.au

[17] Australia. Auditor General Victoria. (2004). *Tackling student attendance*. http://www.audit.vic.gov.au

no longer in education and training. In many Member States however, ESL can mean leaving education and training systems before the end of compulsory schooling; before reaching a minimum qualification or before completing upper secondary education. So, the term ESL may include all forms of leaving education and training prematurely. **In this protocol, early school leaving** describes all forms of leaving education and training before completing upper secondary. It includes those who have never enrolled and those who have dropped-out of education and training. It also includes those who do not continue education and training after finishing lower secondary education[18] as well as those who have followed pre-vocational or vocational courses which did not lead to a qualification equivalent to upper secondary level.

School drop-out

Often refers to discontinuing an on-going course, e.g. dropping out in the middle of the school term. Drop-out from education can occur at any time and can be experienced by different age groups[19].

3. Literature Review Protocol

A systematic review methodology, is a key element for an objective literature approach, for the synthesis and the critical analysis of the gathered material, and serves the purpose of a good meta-synthesis of the evidence, that follows.

The quality assessment criteria enable us to gain an understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the body of evidence to be taken into account during the process of synthesis.

3.1 The problem:

Supporting schools to improve solutions for school absenteeism

3.2 Review Objectives

1. Describe the prevalence of early school leaving in partner countries

2. Identify the risk factors and consequences of early school leaving

3.3 Type of documents

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[18] European Commission Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving November 2013.
[19] European Commission Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving November 2013.

Key papers, in scientific journals in the area of Social Sciences, Education, and Health. Editorials, research reports, opinion and editor letters, doctoral and master's degrees thesis, should be included in official documents.

3.4 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Type of studies	Both qualitative and quantitative studies (including systematic reviews)
Type of sample	High students between 14-18 years old who have performed a number of absences or left school. The age group of our sample is open up to 22 years old. Special populations are also included as Roma, immigrant and disabled.
Location of studies	Articles should be selected only from European countries. Developed countries such as USA, Australia, Canada, *Asian countries*, should be excluded
Time period	Published during 2006-2016
Language of publications	English and Local language
Thematic area	Student Absenteeism resulting to Early School Leaving. More specifically absenteeism is from 10 days to 30 days continually absence from school and/or not completing upper secondary education or anything equivalent according to each country legislation.
Filters for electronic search	The studies should have an abstract
Note that other than scientific documents are grey literature and should be relevant to the subject and to the above criteria	

3.5 Sources

A. International Electronic data bases

In order to meet the objectives of the literature review we have to search international databases on the area under investigation. Reports from major stakeholders or institutions should be included in the aforementioned scientific research. A series of electronic databases from the fields of Social Sciences, Education, and Health have been selected and are illustrated at *the Template 1*. See **Appendix 1.**

Table 1	Key terms algorithm of the basic search
1	Absenteeism(MESH) OR Early school leaving OR School dropout
2	Secondary education (MESH) OR high school AND completion
3	Early school leaving (MESH) OR Absenteeism OR School dropout

3.7 Study selection

Data will be extracted by two reviewers, with arbitration by a third in cases of uncertainty, using a specially designed data extraction form as it is presented in *template 2*, **see Appendix 2.** Study selection will be conducted in two stages: a) an initial screening of titles and abstracts against the inclusion criteria to identify relevant papers, b) screening of the full papers of the papers judged as relevant in the initial screening.

3.8 Piloting

The selection process will be piloted by applying the inclusion criteria to a small number of papers (n=2) in order to ensure that the studies are classified appropriately. The pilot outcomes will be sent to the coordinator *of the output 1* to control for inconsistencies. The pilot phase will be used to refine the inclusion criteria and ensure that the criteria can be applied consistently by more than one person and in more than one country.

3.9 Data extraction

Data extraction is of crucial importance since the meta-synthesis of evidence is based in this specific work. Certain information will be extracted from the studies that will be selected using the extraction form illustrated in template 2, **(see Appendix 2)**. In brief, the articles' title, an abstract, the background of the study, the theories used, the field research methodology, the data collection and analysis, as well as the results, should be included in this form.

3.10 Outcome presentation

A flow chart showing the number of studies/papers remaining at each stage will be used to document the study selection process, see **Appendix 3**. A list of studies excluded from the review will be reported giving the reasons for exclusion.

Appendix 1

Template 1: Databases

Data bases /Assess	Description	Partner for basic search
SCOPUS http://www.scopus.com/home.url	Abstracts and full texts Social sciences	**DPU**
WEB of Science http://www.ekt.gr/wos/index.html	Articles and citations Social Sciences Citation Index & Art & Humanities Citation Index	**DPU**
Scholar Google http://scholar.google.gr/	Articles, abstracts, reports, studies	**TEI**
PsycINFO® www.psycinfo.com	An expansive abstracting and indexing database in the behavioural sciences and mental health	**TEI**
EBSCO www.ebscohost.com	Serves thousands of libraries and other institutions with premium content in every subject area. For institutions colleges and Universities hosts various subject areas such as: Education Studies, Social Work, Law, Rehabilitation, Physiology, there you can find abstracts, journals and other sources.	**DPU**
Med line www.pubmed.com		**TEI**
Google www.google.com		**TEI**
International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) http://www.csa.com/factsheets/ibss-set-c.php	**The IBSS** is a bibliography for social science and interdisciplinary research (Paid)	**DPU**
Bibliography of Periodical Literature (IBZ) http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/databases/4799461.html	Universal index of **periodical literature** covering basic research from all fields of knowledge, and is particularly strong in the humanities and the social sciences (Membership)	**TEI**
International Bibliography of Book Reviews (IBR), http://www.eui.eu/Research/Library/ElectronicResources/E-Resources/2012/04-10-IBR.aspx	Membership database on book reviews of literature in the humanities and social sciences	**TEI**

Appendix 2

Template 2: Extraction form

Section and Topics	Item		On page
Title	1		
Keywords	2		
Abstract	3	Identify the article as a study relevant to our project	
Content			
Introduction	4	State the research questions or study aims	
The background of the study	5		
The theories used	6		
Methods			
Sampling	7	Describe participant sampling	
Data collection/tool	8	Describe data collection method	
Data analysis in quantitative studies (Statistical methods)	9	Describe statistical methods used	
Data analysis in qualitative studies	10	Describe the method of analysis (Thematic analysis, Content analysis, Grounded theory etc)	
Results	11	The results and the final discussion to be described with explicitly	
Ethical considerations	12	The study to take into account ethical issues	
The value of the study	13		

Appendix 3

PRISMA flow diagram

| Records identified through database searching (n =) | Additional records identified through hand searching (n =) |

| Records after duplicates removed (n =) |

| Records screened (n =) | Records excluded (n =) |

| Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n =) | Full-text articles excluded, with reasons (n =) |

| Studies finally included in (n =) |