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*Strategies for preventing and correcting school
dropout*

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Introduction

In the context of the knowledge society, based on research, innovation, in the context of globalization and the continuously increasing demands for finding a job, in the context of the advancement of the competencies-based training, a phenomenon with alarming effects for the individual and also for the society as a whole is more observable: school dropout. The National Education Law (2011), Article 2(3), defines the educational ideal in the following way: *the free, whole and harmonious development of the human individuality, in the shaping of the autonomous personality and assuming a system of values that are necessary for the personal accomplishment and development, for the cultivation of the entrepreneurial spirit, for the active civic participation in society, for social inclusion and integration on the labor market* and Article 16 (1) specifically states that *the general compulsory education is 10 years and includes the primary and gymnasial education. Secondary education becomes mandatory until 2020 at the latest.* To achieve these goals, a proper legislative context is required, and also highly qualified human and material resources, coherent educational politics, innovative strategies and action plans. All these become useless in the absence of schooled population, in the context of a general lack of learning motivation, a reduced level of self-esteem, frequently caused by poverty, lowered trust in the school institution and the general devaluation of the idea of education.

According to the Lisbon Strategy¹, in 2010, European countries had to guarantee that 90% of the students finish compulsory education and 85% of them are high school graduates. In 2010, Romania declared a highly qualified urban population, with only 25-30% of the young population leaving school, the phenomenon of school dropout impacting over 75% of the rural population. The statistics of 2010 situated Romania on the 3rd place in Europe, among the countries with the highest levels of school dropout prior to high school graduation. More than a half of the rural students (of which, 23,4% pertain to the 15-24 age group) abandon school before they acquire the basic competencies needed to find a job. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the rural students are not attending high-school and those who abandon before they get to the 12th grade. More recent previsions expect an increase in school dropout at elementary level.

The study is composed of three chapters corresponding to the theoretical framework discussing the two main concepts of the investigative endeavor – school dropout and school motivation – and the third part corresponds to the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of a research conducted to investigate the effects of a prevention program aimed at reducing the early school dropout on the motivation for learning in a group of at risk high-school students.

The central topic of the paper is represented by the analysis of the school dropout phenomenon – at the national and international

¹ <http://fonduri-structurale.ro>

level – with an emphasis of the widespread character of the problem, treating the global reality regarding early school leaving within the specific context of our country. The lack of consensus regarding the definition of school dropout creates difficulties in the analysis, measurement and investigation of the phenomenon. The meanings of the concept vary from two-week absenteeism to three year.² If school dropout means the interruption of ongoing courses, in the general and professional education, early school leaving refers to the abandonment of all forms of education and professional training, before the finalization of the superior secondary education or its equivalent in the professional education and training (obtaining a qualification or diploma corresponding to the 2nd ISCED level)³.

The definitions provided by the international (Finn, 1989; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko and Fernandez, 1989; Fine, 1991; Thomas Oakland, 1992; Josephina Figueira-McDonough, 1992; Newmann, Wehlage and Lambord, 1992; Diana S. Kaplan, B. Mitchell Peck, 1995; Kyle Crowder, Scott J. South, 2003; Cynthia Franklin, Calvin L. Streeter, 1995; Jordan, Lara & McPartland, 1996; James R. Barclay, 1966; McNEal, 1997; Mihalic & Elliott, 1997; Shane Jimerson, Byron Egeland, Alan L. Sroufe, Betty Carlson, 2000; Frances Prevatt, F. Donald Kelly 2003; Thomas W. Farmer et al., 2003; Cem Kirazoglu, 2009; Anne Lessard, Martine Poirier, Laurier Fortin, 2010; Laurier Fortin, Anne Lessard, Diane Marcotte, 2010) and national literature on the topic (Popescu, 1991; Neamțu, 2003;

² Ivasiuc, A., „Abandonul școlar în rândul copiilor romi - mit și realitate”, IN *Buletin informativ trimestrial al UNICEF România*, nr. 7, 2010, <http://www.unicef.ro/>

³ Commission staff working paper, *Reducing early school leaving*, Accompanying document to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving.

Rudică, 2008; Zidărescu 2009; Voicu, 2010; Marcu 2010; Surdu 2011; Mihalache, 2011; Andrei, Profiroiu, Iacob, Ileanu 2011; Costache, 2012; Şoitu (coord.) 2013) describe the phenomenon by correlated concepts such as absenteeism, grade retention, early school leaving. Most often, the concept of dropout is associated with the notion of school failure. The student drops out of school to reduce the frustration produced by its inability to cope with educational demands. Studies reveal that a lack of academic engagement is the main indicator of school dropout regardless of the student's school performance and social status.⁴

It is a shortcoming of the educational system that continues the trend of leveling the students without giving any chances to those that perform better on other dimensions of the multiple intelligences, without excelling in terms of cognitive skills. Various negative school experiences – poor academic performance and the penalties applied by school authorities⁵ - contribute to the lowering of the self esteem and, implicitly affect the dropout-related behaviors.

Dropout occurs most often during the high-school but it is often considered that the negative cycle starts with early school experiences. Studies indicate that low cognitive skills, lack of attention, transfers and irregular presence in kindergarten tend to predict later school dropout.⁶ The number of students who leave

⁴ Rumberger, R. W., *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2004

⁵ Kaplan Diane S.; Peck B. Mitchell; Kaplan Howard B., „A structural model of Dropout Behavior: A longitudinal Analysis” IN *Applied Behavioral Science Review*, vol 3, No.2/1995

⁶ Oakland Thomas, „School dropout: Characteristics and prevention” IN *Applied & Preventive Psychology* 1:201-208, 1992

school increases when the transition from one form of education to another⁷.

Our work focuses on complex picture of the causes of dropout that can take the following shape:

a) *At the level of school institution:* administration, standards for conducts, physical facilities, teachers' performance. Directors of schools with low dropout rates tend to provide strong leadership and show an effective use of staff. Schools with low dropout rate provide more facilities: well maintained buildings, adequate libraries, well equipped laboratories. In schools with low dropout rate teachers use active teaching styles, engaging their students in discussions, attend to the needs of the students individually;⁸

b) *Family level.*⁹ Often one or both parents have dropped out of school, which reflects in the unstable and poorly paid jobs. Their children have access to poor health services, receive less attention and are less subject to poor cognitive and linguistic stimulation needed for their preparation for school. Thus, these children enter school less prepared to acquire basic skills. Due to the low educational preparedness, parents are less able to assist their children with homework and, due to low income, they cannot offer books, computers or other type of academic support. Students with low

⁷ Tudorel Andrei, Marius Profiroiu, Cătălina Liliانا Andrei, Andreea Iluzia Iacob, "Quantitative methods for analysis of school dropout in the development regions of Romania" IN *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 31 (2012) 193 – 197

⁸ Kirazoglu Cem, „The investigation of school dropout at the secondary level of formal education: the stated reasons by the school administrators and school counselors: a preliminary study" IN *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 1 (2009) 905-914

⁹ Franklin, Cynthia; Streeter, Calvin L., „Assessment of middle class youth at risk to dropout: school, psychological and family correlates" IN *Children and youth services review*, vol 17, no 3, 1995

socioeconomic status leave school because they cannot participate in school and cannot identify fully with their colleagues.¹⁰ Their older brothers had also abandoned school, serving as an example for the younger ones. Lack of family traditions that value education is also an invitation to drop school. Often, students who leave school early are victims of abuse, incest, live in dysfunctional families or are orphans. The decision to leave school is endorsed by the determination to leave the family and seek alternative ways to release the effects of emotional and social trauma. Also, the impact of belonging to a minority group or to a family with low socioeconomic status is critical. Drug and alcohol abuse, lack of extracurricular activities, adherence to groups that devalue school and promote early acquisition of adult roles are factors that also promote dropout;¹¹

c) *Community level.* Research indicates that adolescents are also influenced by non-parental adults from their neighborhood.¹² Neighbors with high status provide models that support the perception that education is important and that having a job is the viable choice to welfare and that family stability is a sign of normality. For adolescents, relationships with non-parental adults and integration into local institutions serve as a source of social capital that not only allow not only the transmission of norms and attitudes but also provide

¹⁰ Miller-Cribbs, J., Cronen, S., Davis, L., & Johnson, S., "An exploratory analysis of factors that foster school engagement and completion among African American students" IN *Children and Schools*, 24, 2002, 159–174. doi:10.1093/cs/24.3.159

¹¹ Fortin, Laurier; Lessard Anne; Marcotte, Diane, „Comparison by gender of students with behaviour problems who dropped out of school" IN *Procedia social and behavioral sciences* 2, Montreal, 2010

¹² Farmer, Thomas W.; Estell, David B.; Leung, Man-Chi; Trott, Hollister; Bishop, Jennifer, „Individual characteristics, early adolescent peer affiliations and school dropout: an examination of aggressive and popular group types" IN *Journal of School Psychology*, 41, 2003

information about social opportunities, education and employment. Adolescents who live in poor communities are deprived of role models and show a shortage of interpersonal relations that could provide social and economic opportunities. Adolescents from poor communities are more likely to leave school not only because they face weak social institutions, inefficient sources of social capital and they lack successful models, but also because adults are unable to intervene in situations of educational crisis;

d) *Gender* intervenes in differentiation of the factors that dictate the decision to leave school. Lessard et al 2006¹³ put emphasis on the fact that boys and girls leave school for various reasons: boys often mention conflicts with teachers and colleagues and girls indicate family problems. Girls abandon school because of family responsibilities while boys are more likely to drop school due to disciplinary reasons.¹⁴

Strictly reporting the Romanian reality, according to UNICEF¹⁵ statistics, the economic crisis lead to a 10% increase in school dropout and will also lead to the intensification of the phenomenon. In 2009, the Center Education 2000 + and UNICEF implemented the project "Effective Solutions for dropout prevention: costs and mechanisms." The program's report summarizes the following factors of dropout:

1. At the individual and family level:

¹³ Lessard, A., Joly, J., Potvin, P., Fortin, L., Royer, E., Marcotte D., „Les raisons de l'abandon scolaire: Differences de genre" IN *Revue Quebecoise de Psychologie*, 27(1), (2006) 135 152

¹⁴ Jordan, Will J.; Lara Julia and McPartland James M., „Exploring the causes of early dropout among race-ethnic and gender groups" IN *Youth & Society* 28(1):62-94, 1996

¹⁵ <http://www.unicef.ro/centru-media/articole/abandonul-scolar-timpuriu-cauze-si-possibilitati-de-prevenire.html>

- Material problems (numerous, disorganized families, lack of resources);

- The educational model provided by parents (parents who don't have more than eight classes);

- The model offered by the brothers (the example of brothers who left school tends to be reproduced in the family very frequently);

- Family disorganization (divorce, alcoholism, domestic violence);

- Involvement in activities that are borderline illegal (prostitution, begging);

- Premature debut into the labor market,

- Lack of trust in education.

2. **At the community level:**

- Early marriage;

- Having children;

- The lack of security in the area (which is why teachers avoid to interact directly with parents);

- The norm of ceasing education after the 8th grade.

3. **At the school level:**

- Repeated grade retention;

- Insufficient integration in the classroom;

- Poor quality relationships with teachers and peers.

The second topic of central interest in this paper, which also provides the theoretical framework for the quantitative study regards motivation, more specifically learning motivation with an emphasis on

their implications in the school context, as main factors in the decisions of pupils regarding their course in the continuous education system. Based on the definitions, dimensions and related concepts (intrinsic motivation - extrinsic motivation, self-determination, self-efficacy), theories (W. Edwards (1954) and J.W. Atkinson (1964), Wiliam McDougall (1908), H. Murray (1938), A. Maslow (1943), etc.) of general motivation, getting to terminological delineations referring to learning motivation as a premise of school success, we emphasize the cardinal role of the concept in reversing the decision of leaving school, in avoiding failure, disengagement, marginalization, through involvement in educational activities, through the affirmation of membership or identification with the class and community.

The investigative approach, of a quantitative nature is developed through a longitudinal study of high school students learning motivation with the main objective of identifying the extent to which strategies to prevent and reduce school dropout influences the motivation to learn.

The participants were high school students (initially in the 9th grade), beneficiaries of the European project Save the Children from Abandonment and Non-integration (SCAN), included in pilot classes in Iasi, Botosani, Maramures, Mures and Braila counties and a control group formed of pupils from parallel classes that were not subjected to any interventions to reduce early school leaving.

The research Instrument was *The scale for achievement motivation for high-school students* - Vallerand, R.J., Blais, M.R., Brière, N.M., & Pelletier, L.G. (1989) – that was pretested and

validated on Romanian population. Our research is based on previous studies conducted at the national and international level (Robert J. Vallerand, Marc R. Blais, Nathalie M. Briere, Luc G. Pelletier -1989; The Institute for Education Sciences București – 2004; Ricarda Steinmayr, Birgit Spinath – 2005/ 2006) and describes two measures (pre- and post intervention) starting with the presentation of the context of research, operational objectives and hypotheses, the participants, research variables, continuing with the operationalizing of the concepts, presentation of the instruments and procedures, the results of the pretest and finishing with the analysis and interpretation of the preliminary and final results, suggesting future research directions.

The dissertation concludes by summarizing and discussing the presented data, providing a set of reflections addressed to all the stakeholders involved in the development of educational policies focused on reducing the phenomenon of school dropout.

Sources of information and documentation are given in the Reference section and a collection of statistical data, tables, charts, SPSS outputs can be found in Appendices.

Conclusions of the research

The approach of the Save the Children from abandonment and non-integration project - SCAN is a multidimensional one by its design and through the implementation of measures aimed to prevent and reduce school dropout through interventions on all the levels of the causing factors. The results of our quantitative study confirms the

hypothesis of the pedagogical experiment carried through the project, according to which, with coherent and comprehensive strategies covering all categories of factors leading to school dropout, the early school leaving decision can be influenced.

One of the main causes of dropout, namely declining confidence in education as a means of socio-economic growth is the lack of motivation for learning. Financial difficulties are often backed by a mentality transmitted from one generation to another that that school is not a springboard, but rather a waste of resources. Given the fact that more and more students drop out of school either for financial reasons or lack of motivation (affecting students and teachers altogether), or because educational programs are not attractive enough, a program to provide alternatives to the problems stated above would indirectly generate an increase in motivation, in the interest in learning. The analysis of the data obtained in relation to assessment of the levels of learning motivation confirm this and show the importance of awareness – in the student, family and community – over the importance of education and the school as prerequisites of social success and the intervention aimed at mitigating the influence of key factors in the decision to abandon school: poverty, access to schools of upper secondary level, lack of self-confidence and reduced trust in the value of the schools.

The recommendations that end the chapter that analyses the causes of school dropout from the best practices guide developed within the SCAN project addresses all components of the educational

process, suggestively showed in the version adopted by Momanu Mariana based on the pedagogical triangle:

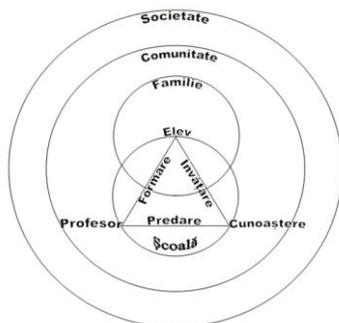


Fig. 1 –The contextualized model of the pedagogical situation (Momanu, 2012, adapted from Houssaye, 1993)¹⁶

Starting from the contextualized model of the pedagogical situation and from the suggestions of the specialists¹⁷ regarding the ways of preventing and eliminating school dropout, we recommend the design and implementation of strategies that simultaneously address the following aspects:

a) the students:

- early detection of the risk factors at the individual level, that include the child's personality (deficiencies - mental, sensory, associated -, delays in development, lack of motivation for learning) and also of those pertaining to the family environment (poverty, domestic violence, the departure of both parents to work

¹⁶ Momanu, M., The Role of Context in Didactic Knowledge Building: An Epistemological Approach, în *Analele Științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Seria Științele Educației*, Tome XVI/2012, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, pp. 45-57

¹⁷ Cristina Neamțu și Angelica Hobjiță, „Cauze ale abandonului școlar” IN Laurențiu Șoitu (coord), *Salvați Copiii de Abandon și Neintegrare. Ghid de bune practici*, Institutul European, Iași, 2013, pp. 68-69

abroad, family conflicts, alcoholism, parental unemployment, drug abuse, devaluing the importance of education) ;

- adapting curricular and extracurricular activities to the needs and interests of students;
- personalized educational plans, capitalization of the learning styles and approaching intelligence from a multidimensional perspective;
- financial support;
- specialized support (counseling and guidance, specific therapies etc.) focused on increasing learning motivation, development of self-esteem, identification of the best educational track;
- design and implementation of formal and non-formal educational activities with accent on developing social skills;

b) parents:

- identification and reporting issues affecting the family (poverty, domestic violence, both parents working abroad, conflicts with their children, alcoholism, unemployment, etc.).
- promoting the priority of education against the involvement of children in housework or paid jobs;
- Active involvement in the life of the school community, increasing the frequency of school - family contacts;
- nurturing a supportive parenting style;
- involvement in formal and non-formal educational activities with their children;
- providing support through individual and group counseling sessions with an emphasis on the importance of education for achieving social success;

- organization of family learning activities;
- participation in activities of training, assessment and certification of skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal interventions;

c) teaching staff:

- approaching teaching strategies in accordance with the principle of education for all by avoiding discriminatory practices of any kind;
- approaching teaching strategies in accordance with the principle of education for all adapting them to specific students;
- openness towards the issues the students are facing;
- design and implementation of educational approaches focusing on motivational components, developing self-esteem and social skills;
- implementation of after-school activities, different from the approaches used in the classroom, through the exploitation of non-formal educational strategies;
- approaching the curriculum from a practical perspective, to demonstrate the usefulness of its contents;
- mediating conflicts between students, between students and other persons in the school or outside the school context;
- capitalization of new educational technologies and social media in the regular school activities and extracurricular ones;
- involving students in decision making regarding curricular and extracurricular activities;
- participation in training and development programs;

- establishing a program of cooperation with social workers and other stakeholders from the community to identify students at risk of dropping out or family abuse;

d) school institution and stakeholders:

- establishing together with students, parents, teachers, members of the community a set of clear regulations regarding the absences, school dropout and joint measures for their elimination;
- organizing curricular and extracurricular activities to bring together teachers, students, families, other community members;
- involvement in organizing promotional campaigns and projects designed to reduce school dropout;
- Improvement of school facilities, including school transportation.
- encouraging and motivating parents to participate in school activities;
- organizing school admission based on aptitude tests and personality assessments;
- adapting teaching strategies to harness the potential of each student, according to their learning styles, focusing not only on academic performance but also on social skills, entrepreneurship;

e) community:

- helping parents with difficulties in supporting schooling costs;
- proposing and implementing projects (including European ones) involving the collaboration between community and school aimed at reducing dropout;
- organization of paid work for high school students and their parents, enabling them to supplement family incomes;

- Establishing school - family – community partnerships aimed at preventing and correcting early school leaving.

Conclusions

A phenomenon as complex as dropout shows warning signs from the first stages of school life. Absenteeism, lowered school motivation, lack of family support, low self-esteem and confidence in one's own potential are the first symptoms that should be considered alarm signals and taken care of:

- By using predictive tools in early stages of observable, behavioral changes;
- Introducing of preventive program to address the negative effects of risk factors that influenced the socialization process¹⁸.

Factors contributing to the maintenance of high levels of school dropout rates in some countries are:

- the number of pupils per teacher;
- percentage of GDP spent on education;
- unemployment rate.¹⁹

Speaking strictly of the adolescence period, namely the educational level covered by this paper, which is the most affected by the phenomenon of dropout, the design of prevention and intervention

¹⁸ Albert Eniko, Maria I. Carcea, *Prevenirea dezadaptării școlare, Contribuții metodologice la profilaxia și terapia adolescenților cu probleme de adaptare*, Editura Cermi, Iași 1998

¹⁹ Tudorel Andrei, Daniel Teodorescu, Bogdan Oancea, *Characteristics and causes of school dropout in the countries of the European Union*, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 28 (2011) 328 – 332

programs should consider the fact that at this stage, young people need, with priority:

- Psychological stability and security;
- acceptance, reinforcement;
- authentic models;
- information regarding healthy lifestyles;
- supporting friends and entourage;
- inspiring views and values for activities and for personal development.²⁰

School-family-community partnerships

The more the society will provide early educational experiences, the likely will be that children will become well-educated adults who will benefit from high living standards and contribute to the socio-economic vitality of the community to which they belong and to the society as a whole²¹.

The efforts to keep students in school, promoting the idea that success in life depends on the education level of the person can take the form of effective action only through the cooperation of motivated teachers and parents, actively involved in their children's school life. Dropout risk is higher for students from poor families, single parent families or with many children and for those who become parents

²⁰ Tudorel Andrei, Daniel Teodorescu, Bogdan Oancea, *Characteristics and causes of school dropout in the countries of the European Union*, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 28 (2011) 328 – 332

²¹ Deborah A. Osgood, *An Entrepreneurial Systems Approach to Dropout Prevention: A Student-Centric Approach to Purposeful Academic Engagement Among At-Risk Youth*, A dissertation submitted to the faculty of Franklin Pierce University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Arts in Leadership in the College of Graduate and Professional Studies. Franklin Pierce University, 2011, p.12

themselves²². Close relationships with parents seem to reduce the risk of dropout. Children whose parents monitor and regulate their activities, offer emotional support, encourage decision making processes, are more involved in school life. (Rumberger, 2000)²³

Developing motivation for learning

According to self-determination theory, students are engaged in school-related work if the educational activities are interesting and relevant to their lives and if they assert their competencies. Developed in the classroom context, motivation can work as a domestic resource for students, contributing significantly to the decision to continue school. Promoting interest for learning, valuing education and affirmation of personal capacities, the educational climate should find ways to support students' needs for competence and self-determination.

Supporting student motivation should include:

- An interesting but individualized curriculum, also focused on understanding;
- Competent and supportive teachers;
- A school culture focused on learning;

²² Beatty Alexandra, Neisser Ulric, Trent William T., Heubert Jay P., (*editors*), *Understanding Dropouts. Statistics, Strategies, and High-Stakes Testing*, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 2001, p.6

²³ Rumberger, R. 2000 Who Drops Out of School and Why. Paper presented at the School Completion in Standards-Based Reform: Facts and Strategies Workshop, National Research Council, Washington, DC (July 17). Available: University of California, Santa Barbara.

- A school community characterized by a sense of support and belonging, which allows opportunities to interact with academically involved peers;
- Strong links between school, family and community;
- Organizational structure and services to address the non-academic needs of students;
- Opportunities to learn the importance of school for educational projects and future careers.²⁴

The teacher's role is to help students develop their motivational resources by creating a supportive classroom environment by offering options in designing teaching tasks, deadlines, recognizing feelings, offering answers to questions, learning activities relevant to their purposes and aspirations. By knowing the personal goals, ambitions and interests of the students, new learning approaches will be designed, in an individualized manner. When teachers support students' interests (more important than the control of their behavior) students will value school to a higher degree and they will not assert the intention to drop school (Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989²⁵; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992²⁶; Vallerand, Fortier & Guay, 1997²⁷).

²⁴ National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, *Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn*. Committee on Increasing High School Students' Engagement and Motivation to Learn. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2004, p.14

²⁵ Steinberg, L., Elmen, J. D., Mounts, N. S., "Authoritative parenting, psychosocial maturity, and academic success among adolescents" In *Child Development*, 60, 1989, pp. 1424–1436

²⁶ Vallerand, R. J., Bissonnette, R., "Intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivational styles as predictors of behavior: A prospective study" In *Journal of Personality*, 60, 1992, pp.599–620

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

The European Commission, in its 2011 Communiqué, provides a summary of the prevention and intervention programs related to school dropout, implemented at European level, by specifying that the strategies to combat early school leaving should have as a starting point an analysis of the national, regional and local characteristics of the phenomenon. The data should allow the analysis of the main causes of early school leaving for different categories of students, regions, municipalities and schools.

Devising strategies must be based on accurate information, enabling a better choice of the interventions, a system to monitor the evolution of early school leaving, which could provide useful data regarding individual motivations for early school leaving and training for continuous adaptation strategies. Global strategies to combat early school leaving should focus on elements of prevention, intervention and compensatory measures.

Concluding thoughts

Early school leaving is an issue that concerns not only the school and its causes must be addressed in a number of social politics and also youth, family, health, proximity, labor employment and education measures. Expanded educational concepts such as cultural education, cooperation with enterprises and other actors outside the school can play an important role in reducing early school leaving, in

²⁷ Vallerand, R. J., Fortier, M. S., Guay, F., "Self-determination and persistence in a real-life setting: Toward a motivational model of high school dropout" In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 1997, pp. 1161–1176

the same time encouraging creativity, new ways of thinking, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

In summary, the strategies for dropout prevention and elimination of group actions are focused on:

- Increasing the role of preschool education;
- Establishing close partnership between school and family;
- Supporting the school: provide laboratories and equipment, qualified and motivated teachers, superior curricula, stimulating school climate;
- The teacher represents the most important actor in the endeavor towards achieving school success;
- Designing appropriate educational and vocational guidance activities, conducted throughout the entire schooling period²⁸.

Some authors²⁹ complete the list of issues focusing on testing and evaluation that will be designed in order to:

- design at every level of education a monitoring and intervention system, remediation and other means for supporting students at risk;
- foster the necessary changes in teaching and curriculum to provide adequate learning opportunities for all students;
- To provide a wide range of opportunities for students to prove their skills.

Reducing the dropout rate can be achieved only by joint action of the local and central institutions and civil society. A high-quality

²⁸ Rudică, T., „Eșecul la învățătură și prevenirea lui” IN Andrei Cosmovici și Luminița Iacob (coord), *Psihologie școlară*, Polirom, Iași, 2008, p.223

²⁹ Beatty Alexandra, Neisser Ulric, Trent William T., Heubert Jay P., (editors), *Understanding Dropouts. Statistics, Strategies, and High-Stakes Testing*, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 2001, p.40

education system with motivated teachers, with an attractive curriculum, with beautiful and well-equipped schools at technical, material level and providing psychological support to disadvantaged students and their families, with involvement of the parents in making decisions about the children's' educational path, raising the awareness of local authorities towards the problems of the educational environment, encouraging real competition between schools concerning their educational offer would create the prerequisites needed to substantially reduce the number of students who leave school early. There is a need for rethinking the idea of school and all its implications to turn the vicious circle of school dropout into a virtuous circle encouraging participation in further education.

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