

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

GUIDELINES FOR POLICY MAKER

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Introduction

The guidelines for policy makers aim in providing specific actions in order policy makers to have a clear view on the situation on schools about early school drop and get feedback in the process. Moreover they will be able to adopt their strategy in the issue. The steps presented in the following paragraphs try to define the main focus of any policy and provide a self evaluation process for its implementation stage.

The process starts from getting to know the problem and its length (Step 1 to 3), lead to specific strategy (step 4), that needs to be tested in real conditions and proper evaluate it (Step 5 and 6). The following steps are rather continuously implemented and evaluated in order to have results of the efficiency of the strategic plan (Step 7, 8 and 9).

At the end, conclusions and several future actions should be presented and a specific strategy should be adopted at a national level (step 10).



Establishment of Information Feed

A starting point in solving a problem is to be informed for that. For this reason any policy maker should be in close cooperation with schools and other local educational coordinates.

1. Establish an information source with schools. Define a process of receiving information from schools. The process should not be dedicated to this problem. A communication channel is needed in order to receive information about things happening in school.
2. Given the fact that teachers are the first ones who have really close contact with students at schools, they are the most relevant persons in identifying students with learning disabilities. What we suggest is the Establishment of an information source that connects directly policy makers and teachers. It could be an electronic platform where teachers will have the opportunity to provide all the information necessary, to pose questions and make proposals. This activity should be combined with other activities (concern teachers) which are already described into the following steps.
3. Establish close cooperation with School Directors in the area of early school dropout. Encourage early notification and feedback from school directors in case of students with learning difficulties
4. Establish an information source based on field input received by School counselors. This is important in order to have quality in the information received from schools and current situation.
5. Visit Schools in the local regions for private discussions within the classroom and having a personal view on the current situation.

Websites

- [Strategies for Improving Public Education](#)
An online publication reporting strategies that have been employed for improving public education in US and concern an initiative of the Ford Foundation.
- [An Important Issues in the Education System: School Dropout](#)
A very useful research that aims to identify the social skills of integration pupils in comparing to their peers.
- [What are Learning Disabilities?](#)
A YouTube platform with descriptive videos dedicated to the topic "Learning Disabilities".



Awareness of the Situation

Research in the area of learning disability is a dynamic evolving sector of applied research. Be informed about the current trends in this development in your own country as well as in Europe.

1. Define the problem at the local area. Receive information about the number of students do exist in your region in each different school.
2. Create a school profile based on the existence of teachers in each school. Every school should have well educated teachers in order to be able to handle students with learning disabilities. Create a small report on their demographic distribution and their existence in each school.
3. Receive daily stories from their teachers and school directors. Try to get into the daily situation of the school practice.
4. Search for directives based on the national practice in handling learning disabilities. Evaluate the situation in your region in respect to the national current situation.
5. Search for information sources at European level. Despite any cultural differences and different approaches in the educational system, common strategies can be applied in most European countries.

Websites

- [Essential Tools. Increasing Rates of School Completion: Moving from Policy and Research to Practice. A Manual for Policymakers, Administrators and Educators](#)
A really informed and useful manual related to Early School Leaving.
- [School Safety Success Stories](#)
The School Safety Net Portal contains several success stories, true story cases that you can read using the filter "Students with learning difficulties".



Analyze the Current Situation Based on the Current Time Framework

Current situation in most European countries is facing different approaches based on the economical and social conditions at a national level. Any approach should take into serious consideration the socio-economic framework in order to define a strategy that can be successfully applied.

1. Analyze the phenomenon from the perspective of the socio-economic background of each school. Different regions might require different strategies based on the social profile of families and teachers.
2. Collect any legislative information about the different alternative students with learning disabilities could have in your country.
3. Monitoring any projects and programs drawn up by the Ministry of education, with this aim in view;
4. Establish collaboration agreements with organizations, international institutions implementing similar activities specific to the target group.
5. Select any strategy decisions regarding the teachers' initial and lifelong training in the area of learning disabilities
6. Collaborate with any national institutions focusing on problems of LD, or operating within the education of students at risk, or internal and external non-governmental institutions.

Websites

- [Equity and Quality in Education – Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools](#)
Web-site reporting very interesting researches and policies dedicated to improving low performing disadvantaged schools and students.
- [Helping children with learning disabilities](#)
A website to support parents dealing with learning disabilities of their children. Despite the fact that the site is more 'parental oriented', all members of the educational procedure (students, teachers, policy makers) can find useful tips to increase their knowledge and sharpen their abilities in dealing with the topic.
- [How Are You Smart? What Students with Learning Disabilities are Teaching Us](#)
A YouTube platform with descriptive videos dedicated to the topic "Learning Disabilities".



Drawing up the Strategy

After processing all information sources, a strategy needs to be drawn up. The strategy should have clear objectives, follow strategic directions and aim at specific actions.

1. Provide a source of different tools in order to help teachers understand the current situation within the classroom. Different tools are available from selected sources so that teachers and school counselors will be able to have information about their students
2. Based on budgetary options, provide to schools communication means and educational resources. ICT means can improve teachers and students communication.
3. Combining the first four steps of the guideline package, our intention is not only to inform teachers about the current situation and exchange opinions with them, but also to train them in order to be ready and self-confident to respond to the topic in question. A training course for teachers is going to be implemented so that to enhance their knowledge over the problem as well as to sharpen their ability to respond to it effectively and creatively.
4. Develop support structures to help students in their school environment assuring the quality of personalized and educational services support for students, school guidance and professional counseling.
5. Create a framework for supporting parents in helping their own children at homework. The family environment is a crucial parameter in achieving specific results.
6. Establish a three months periodical workshop with selected school representatives in order to receive feedback, comments, criticism and new ideas.
7. Provide information sources about the problem to every participant in the strategy.
8. Disseminate similar success stories from other situations at a national or European level.

Websites

- [LDA Learning Disabilities Association of America](#)
On this web-site, teachers can find a useful guideline to identify students at risk of early school leaving due to learning disabilities.
- [CalDys2](#)
A Bulgarian project presented to supporting teachers and specialists who work in the schools with students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties.
- [Special Educational Needs](#)
This book deals with particular areas of special educational need, arguing that effective educational provision can be enhanced with reference to the particular problems experienced by children.
- [School Safety Success Stories](#)
The School Safety Net Portal contains several success stories, true story cases that you can read using the filter "Students with learning difficulties".



Pilot Implementation

Any action needs to be tested under normal conditions. Despite the given experience in the field, there is no magical solution to every situation. It is important to pre-evaluate your strategy in a limited number of beneficiaries in order to calibrate its performance.

1. Select a representative number of schools. The number should be limited so that the whole process will give quantitative results after a limited time.
2. Follow your pilot implementation of the plan into the selected schools for a period of 40 days. Although the time is not adequate, some results will be available.
3. Organize a closed workshop with selected school directors in order to get information on the daily implementation of the plan
4. Define milestones and success thresholds that will be used in order to evaluate the strategy at a later stage.

Websites

- [Students' Evaluation of Mainstreaming Social Skills](#)
The purpose of this study is to evaluate the social skills of the mainstreamed elementary students by comparing them with their classmates.
- [Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities](#)
Guide for teachers that support students with learning disabilities. For the implementation of the pilot program, the guide might be very useful for policy makers since it develops alternative teaching methods as well as tools for testing them.



Process Monitoring

The whole process should be continuously monitored in order to evaluate the strategies implemented and to ensure their efficiency.

1. Define a monitoring and evaluation methodology. Establish a questionnaire with closed question for receiving feedback
2. Make selective visits to the selected schools
3. Organise a closed evaluation workshop with the selected school directors
4. Receive evaluation remarks from selected participants
5. Write yearly evaluation reports and identify potential best practices that may inspire others.
6. Disseminate the results of the overall evaluation process.

Websites

- [The power of dyslexia](#)
A YouTube platform dedicated to Learning Disabilities. Videos are focusing on the problem of Dyslexia and gives illustrative paradigms that people can be successful in any spectrum of the social life in spite the fact that there are or they were dyslectic.
- [Spelling Technique for Dyslexic](#)
A YouTube platform dedicated to Learning Disabilities and more specifically to parents' efforts to help their children to tackle their problem in pronunciation of words.
- [Getting around my dyslexia: a personal evaluation of coping strategies](#)
Web-site to discover methods for best practice in relation with learning and teaching methods as well as tools to testing them and practical support to academic staff in the design and delivery of inclusive academic assessments.
- [School Safety Success Stories](#)
The School Safety Net Portal contains several success stories, true story cases that you can read using the filter "Students with learning difficulties".



Process Adjustment

Following the information received, the feedback from the key factors of the process and the current trends, recommendations will be made to improve the action plan according to the strategy implementation results

1. Each school can periodically assess the level activities achievement within the strategy and suggest improvement actions for the unsatisfying goals.
2. Adjust the strategy according to the feedback received
3. Increase information sources for the school directors and teachers
4. Produce dissemination material
5. Distribute success stories
6. Provide an implementation timetable for the whole region.

Websites

- [Getting around my dyslexia: a personal evaluation of coping strategies](#)
Web-site to discover methods for best practice in relation with learning and teaching methods as well as tools to testing them and practical support to academic staff in the design and delivery of inclusive academic assessments.
- [The Maths' Guy in Belgium](#)
On each page you will find an overview of each of the main conditions, links to further information, checklists and strategies to help in the acquisition of Maths' skills.
- [English Language Learners with Special Education Needs. Identification, Assessment, and Instruction](#)
This site will lead you to a publication designed to provide practitioners with current information on topics, trends, and techniques in language teaching.



Establish Continuously Bilateral Communication Channel

Aim of this step is to receive accurate information and feedback in order to be able to evaluate the whole process. A monitoring system for the progress is necessary. This has to do with a continuous functioning communication channel that will work on:

1. Inspection of School implementation process and performance
2. Periodical reports concerning students performance and dropout rates
3. Statistical analysis at the end of semesters and academic years
4. Increasing the visibility of the problem for everybody
5. Improving the whole process

Websites

- [Strategies for Improving Public Education](#)
A website describing the strategies applied to improve public education in US and an initiative of the Ford Foundation.
- [Special Educational Needs](#)
This book deals with particular areas of special educational need, arguing that effective educational provision can be enhanced with reference to the particular problems experienced by children.



Assessment of Work Done

At the end of each periodical monitoring of the plan's implementation level, an assessment of the performance of the whole process is needed. This assessment will be based on the information offered by schools, as well as from selected interviews from teachers, students, parents and local community representatives. During the assessment the following steps need to be performed:

1. A report on a yearly basis is required. The report should contain statistical figures on the last years drop out, number of students involved, number of teacher involved and schools participated in the plan.
2. Success factors needs to be derived. Success factors depend on the demographic profile provided at an earlier stage and socio-economic background.
3. Performance based on these factors should be measured. There is not an absolute figure demonstrating the success of the process, due to the complicated situation of the whole process.
4. Disseminate the results of the overall evaluation process.

Websites

- [An Important Issues in the Education System: School Dropout](#)
A very useful research that aims to identify the social skills of integration pupils in comparing to their peers.
- [Essential Tools. Increasing Rates of School Completion: Moving from Policy and Research to Practice. A Manual for Policymakers, Administrators and Educators](#)
A really informed and useful manual related to Early School Leaving.



Final Outcome of Work and Future Development

Based on the results of the previous step a national level assessment should be presented.

1. Derive some milestones in your foreseen performance with your next steps
2. Present the results of this work to schools and school directors
3. Present ideas of interventions focusing on improving educational results within the classroom
4. Provide information on success stories and a checklist of specific disadvantages of the whole process
5. Establish learning agreements with different educational institutions.

Websites

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