School Dropout In Italy

When Mind Fullness Feels Like A Necessity

Main reasons and causes for leaving education

Early school leaving most affects:

students from low income families, boys more than girls, students from an immigrant background, students older than fourteen

students attending technical/vocational schools, students from underdeveloped areas (such as southern Italy), rural and deprived suburban areas.

Community/social reasons

variety of values leading to disorientation; low chance of getting an attractive job; increasing problem of the individual to integrate him / herself;

living in a "fun-society" and letting oneself go instead of straining oneself; relevance of education not being apparent enough in public;

unreal image of life caused by the media; Other points in common are poverty, ripple effect on emotional wellbeing, (bullying and stigmatization from their peers) low socio-economic status/background of the area where young person is living poor social behavior outside school, sometimes leading to criminal prosecutions high number of working hours outside school, leaving little time for school work and attendance.

Family factors

low educational level of parents and siblings and subsequent low educational expectations family problems - disruption, bereavement, illnesses, unemployment, not living with both natural parents, large number of siblings family history of early school leaving, lack of parental support - limited interest in school activities and few school contacts the family environment, especially poor families, where the value of training is heavily underestimated; the perception of the crisis of the school system, amplified by the media and by the behavior of politicians who have represented as a service run-down.

location factors - distance of travel / time needed to attend school, rural living.

Personal factors

Life circumstances- which make it difficult to be organized
 low levels of achievement/success - often falling behind peers
 difficulty meeting the requirements of the course - too demanding
low self-esteem stress, anxiety and discomfort
 lack of interest or boredom - leading to a lack of effort
 poor attendance ongoing poor behaviour, lack of ethical / moral values - aggression, uncontrollable impulses, being part of high risk
 group/gang, use and sale of illegal substances
 Poor attendance and poor behaviour are probably the most important signs of a potential for dropping out of school, yet they are
almost always preceded and caused
 by the other underlying factors.

Education factors

•Poor quality / un-stimulating teaching e.g. lack of differentiation to cater for different learning styles
(The better the quality of education, the better the student's attendance)
 poor quality careers guidance - leading to poor course/school selection
 lack of necessary basic skills level - unsuccessful progression from lower levels
 falling behind on the course - and unable or unwilling to catch up (sometimes exacerbated by a lack of school support)
 feeling lonely or isolated, lack of integration with class group and/or ignored by teachers
 The school system needs early high quality careers guidance in order to help students with the right choice of courses, and
 emphasis is on the need for the right selection of school.
 Organizational and financial problems often hinder teachers from being properly trained and poor quality teaching is felt to
be the major cause of the problem

Current strategies to prevent school dropouts:

Thanks to the law 296, both the school leaving age and the minimum age to access labour market were raised to 16 in 2006.

Compulsory schooling is free and it must last for at least 10 years: going to school is mandatory for children between the ages of 6 and 16. Parents or legal guardians are considered responsible before the law and they can be prosecuted if they don't fulfill this obligation.

Italy has a National Agency "Agenzia nazionale per lo sviluppo dell'autonomia scolastica", which has been established to support "school autonomy" and is also involved in proposals for inclusion projects.

Local Authorities (regions, provinces, counties, town councils) have relevant roles everywhere. Their education offices work in cooperation with schools or local organizations involved with young people's problems, even though they do not always share direct responsibilities.

Coordination between national and local authorities together with local community organizations working to tackle the problem has everywhere proved the most successful strategy. A multi-agency approach linking professional, private and community bodies with parents and students appears to be the best approach to help students at risk of dropping out of school.

In Italy, "the obligation imposed to parents to maintain, instruct and educate their children" is established by specific laws.

The control of school dispersion and the consequent notification to the judicial authorities must be made mainly by the municipalities and the schools.

The municipalities take action when they verify the children were not enrolled in school or when the headmasters ask the Provincial Education Office to inform the municipalities so that they admonish parents to fulfill their duty. The warning can be either a simple or formal communication, rather, in the request for intervention because of social services, identify the reasons, including psychological, that led to the problem, work towards the solution.

If the aim is not reached, the Municipality has to report the child's parents to the authority. Even the school is obliged to indicate the school dropout when the young people do not attend the lessons. The Headmaster may also decide to inform the Judicial Authority of the non-fulfillment of compulsory schooling for parents already informed of unjustified absences of their children. In fact, the "offence" is "in having already, without justification, failed to fulfill their duty of monitoring and supervising the minor, in order to make sure he goes to school to receive education. Finally, it must be said that even the police may go first to the local registry to see who and how many school children and then to local schools to check school dropouts undertaking to notify the offense.

The recommendations of the Ministry have "inclusion" as a main target and propose "educational, teaching strategies taking into account the singleness of each person, his/her complex identity, skills and weaknesses in the different phases of development and putting the student at the centre of educational activities in all cognitive, emotional, relational, physical, ethic, spiritual aspects" "in order to offer real opportunities of guidance and prevention of early school leaving" .

Since 2001 the Region has been implementing a Regional Students' Register (SISR) on the basis of the work done by the so called Provincial School Observatory (OSP). The students' register, which should control compulsory attendance, is considered as the main strategy to prevent early school leaving in the opinion of both the regional offices of The Ministry and of the Regional Education Councilor. Dropout maps could allow local institutions to develop their own strategies for dealing with the problem within specific areas and needs.

There are many integrated projects, introduced with the 2003 agreement between Regions and the Ministry of Education; others have been financed by European Social Found on the specific measure C2, devoted to prevent early school leaving. Some schools have worked on an autonomous project, others in a network of schools and educational organizations.

The Provincial Offices of the Ministry of Education, which generally support the fight against early school leaving, coordinate networks of schools and project specific teachers' training on intercultural and guidance issues. Teachers' training is also organized in cooperation with University structures with blended methodologies. Certain experiences have planned initiatives to make families fully involved in their kids' recovery process.
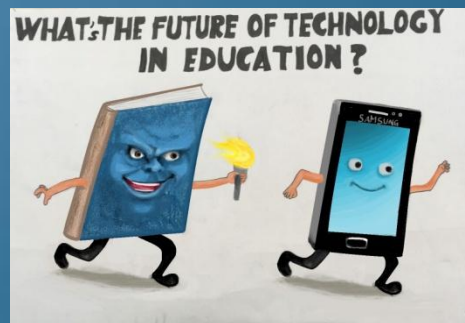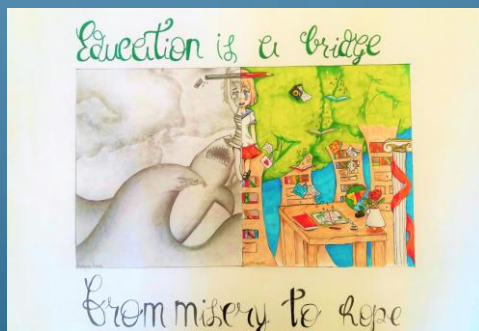
"La scuola che integra" The Italian title is a pun, meaning the inclusive school and the school which cooperates with other institutions. This is a successful Italian project in a deprived urban area with a steady increase of immigrant students. The school faced problems of truancy, disaffection, and disruptive behaviours, which required a systemic approach. An agreement was made with the local Vocational Training Centre to develop bespoke pathways integrating school curriculum with activities in the training agencies with coordinated, frequent assessments of the student's progress. Other relevant factors were that the classes were divided into small groups, followed by tutoring and mentoring, a listening centre for parents was established and sports activities were enhanced. From school year 2005/6 to year 2006/7 the results were 4% reduction in early school leaving, 3% reduction in the truancy rate and a 10% increase in parents attending meetings with teachers.

Important are systemic measures that revolve around the lens of inclusion, such as the raising of compulsory education and training, the establishment of a national register system for students, the reorganization of the education system and vocational training with the definition of organic connections between the paths of vocational schools and regional routes, including the reorganization of education for adults, not forgetting the special attention that our country has always addressed to education and early childhood care.
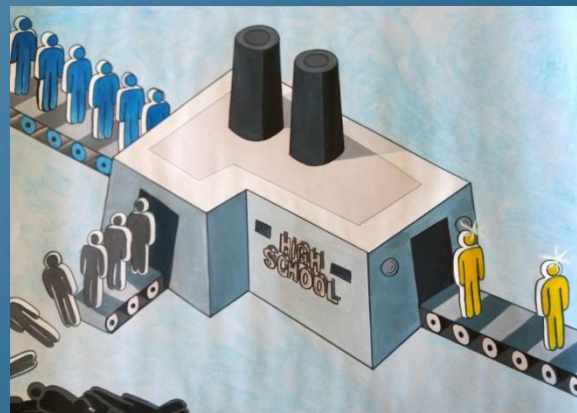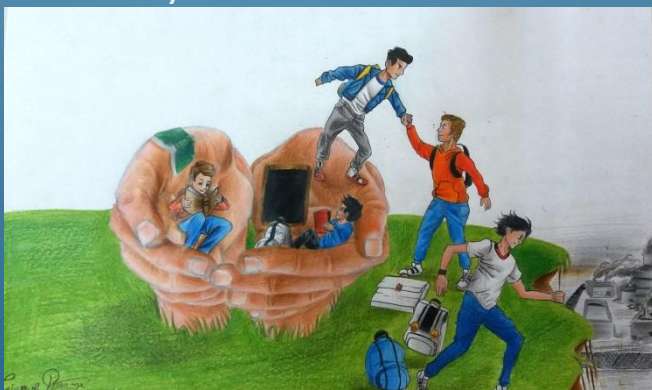
Instruments of intervention for students with Special Educational Needs and territorial organization for school inclusion

SEN (Special Educational Needs)

Some students have needs or disabilities that affect their ability to learn. For example:
reading and writing (eg. dyslexia) understanding
concentrating (eg. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) physical needs or impairments
behavioural/social (even momentary)

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL DO TO HELP STUDENTS TO PREVENT TRANSITORY PROBLEMS BECOMING

PERMANENT THUS LEADING THEM TO EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING?
žIn Italy we have a good law to help students with certified physical or mental problems
We guarantee each student with certified problems an extra teacher who works in the class near the student

what about students with no medical certifications?

with the new guidelines of December 27th 2013 the Minister of Education gave us new "intervention tools for students with special educational needs and territorial organization for school inclusion"

It means that teachers can bring in a class council the problem of a student who is undergoing a particular momentary situation (divorce of parents, death of relatives, family problems, etc..) which prevents the student to study. The teachers together can decide to activate a personalized learning path (PDP- percorso didattico personalizzato) with or without the help of external "forces", for example young teachers doing their masters at University who can support the student for a period of time, until he/she overcomes the problems

Consequences of dropouts

Each year, more than a million kids will leave school without earning a high school diploma -- that's approximately 7,000 students every day of the academic year. Without that diploma, they'll be more likely to head down a path that leads to lower-paying jobs, poorer health, and the possible continuation of a cycle of poverty that creates immense challenges for families, neighborhoods, and communities.

For some students, dropping out is the culmination of years of academic hurdles, missteps, and wrong turns. For others, the decision to drop out is a response to conflicting life pressures -- the need to help support their family financially or the demands of caring for siblings or their own child. Dropping out is sometimes about students being bored and seeing no connection between academic life and "real" life. It's about young people feeling disconnected from their peers and from teachers and other adults at school. And it's about schools and communities having too few resources to meet the complex emotional and academic needs of their most vulnerable youth.

Although the reasons for dropping out vary, the consequences of the decision are remarkably similar. Over a lifetime, dropouts typically earn less, suffer from poorer health as adults, and are more likely to wind up in jail than their diploma-earning peers. The link between dropout rates and crime is also well documented, and the report's data indicates that high school graduation reduces violent crime by 20 percent.

Solutions

In Italy the 2003 agreement between Regions and the Ministry of Education allowed the development of many projects generally run by schools, which have taken advantage of support from vocational training agencies and from such local institutions as provincial and town councils. Successful strategies include more flexible pathways, integration of systems and cultures, and the use of teaching methods which take into greater consideration individual needs and aspirations. Good solutions should include:

mapping of the phenomenon,

mapping of local and regional educational and training opportunities

cooperation and networking between different institutions,

financial support for teacher training, support for innovative projects and support to motivate students.

All national reports agree that cooperation between institutions is proven to be the most effective tool to reduce dropout rates. Students at risk should be provided either by schools or by external institutions with

listening and counseling centers

high quality career guidance

mentoring

Parents

It is widely accepted that family has a huge influence on a student's career prospects, and this is therefore one of the main areas on which to concentrate.

here are some families who play a passive role and leave all responsibilities to schools, other families as quick to hold the school responsible for their children's failures - these are in the majority. Yet, we find a considerable number of UK parents who happily cooperate with schools and are open to support from external organizations.

Local network

The opportunity for community collaboration is not the same in all the countries, but its value is recognized, as schools alone cannot solve problems which often stem from the young person's social and economic background. Cousselling centres and welfare services can be very useful members of a multi agency team.

Teachers

Teachers follow a traditional, academic approach, unsuited to the current situations, where a more flexible and innovative approach is required.

There is general agreement that practical activities, usually carried out in small groups can be more motivating for some students than the traditional "whole class" lessons. Although teachers are not always trained to cope with the problems connected with different learning styles, individualized pathways are generally considered as the best solution for students who are not successful with more academic approaches.

The main need is specific training for teachers to give them practical strategies to resolve the problem at an early stage e.g. the development of interactive teaching methods. Employment of Curriculum Support Assistants and of Teaching Assistants is another valuable suggestion. Obviously to achieve this it is essential that adequate time and funding is available.

Students

Students believe that teachers have no understanding of their problems and in fact are completely indifferent to them and this can lead to poor teacher / student relationships. Some students think they were not well guided in choosing their courses/school whilst others feel the learning pathways are too long. Their needs are to receive more sympathetic listening to their problems and better course and career guidance.

Conclusions

Educational systems need to be more flexible and offer young people more varied opportunities if they want to meet Lisbon targets.

Accurate statistical information is generally not available. Data processing is not adequate and this does not allow reliable comparisons between the performances of different organizations in each country.

The causes for dropping out of school all agree that usually there are multiple reasons, all of which may need to be investigated to give the best chance of finding a successful solution.

The school itself can be a cause for exclusion. This could be because their systems and procedures do not approach difficult cases with systematic strategies, adequate professionalism and sufficient resources thus practically validating social, financial disparities.

Any structured strategy should begin with an early identification of the signs of discomfort and disinterest (particularly absenteeism). Students' concerns should be given serious consideration and their personal strengths enhanced, to overcome their frequently expressed indifference barriers.

Practical / vocational experiences should be included and personal, career prospects taken into consideration.

Because early interventions are more likely to be successful there needs to be a system which records information about children at risk and this information should be readily shared and accessible to authorized individuals/ institutions.

School alone cannot resolve the problem. External, supporting organizations are needed. A multi-agency cooperation of schools together with families, employers, local institutions and community associations is the one which gives the best results
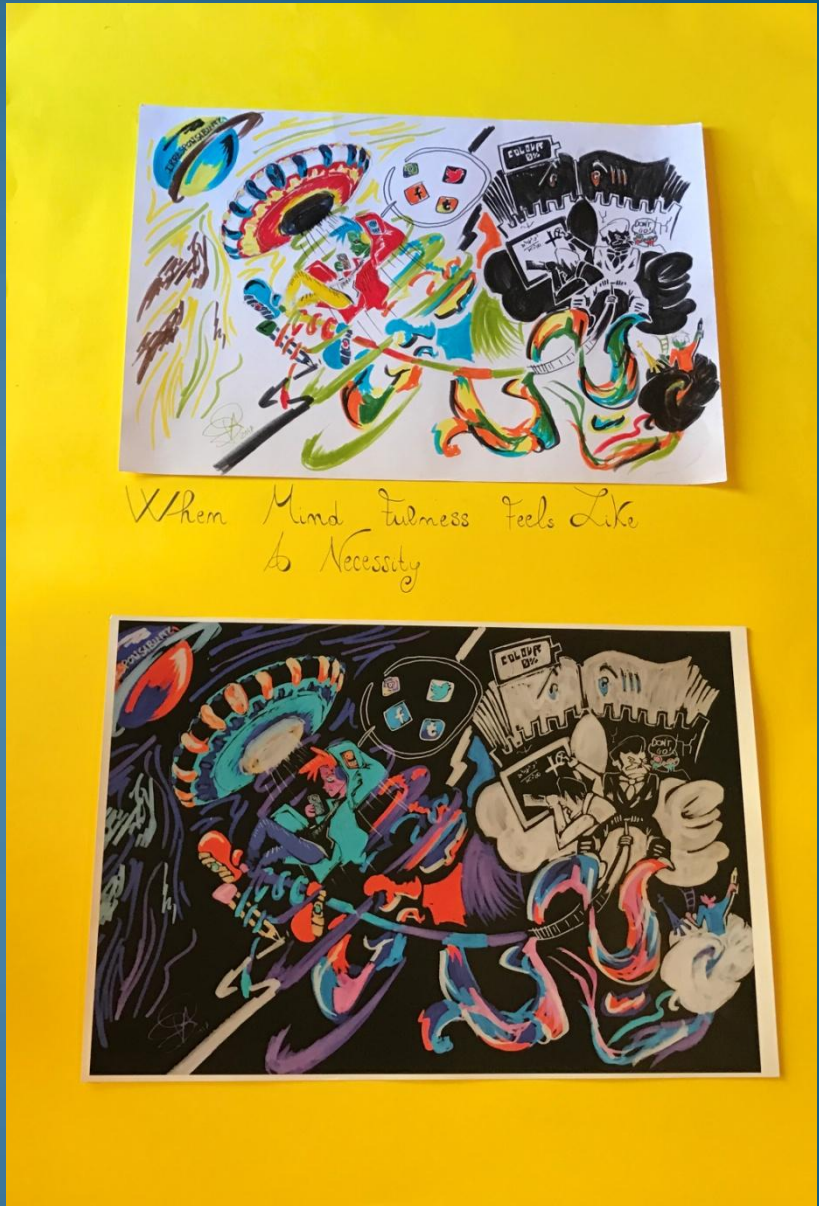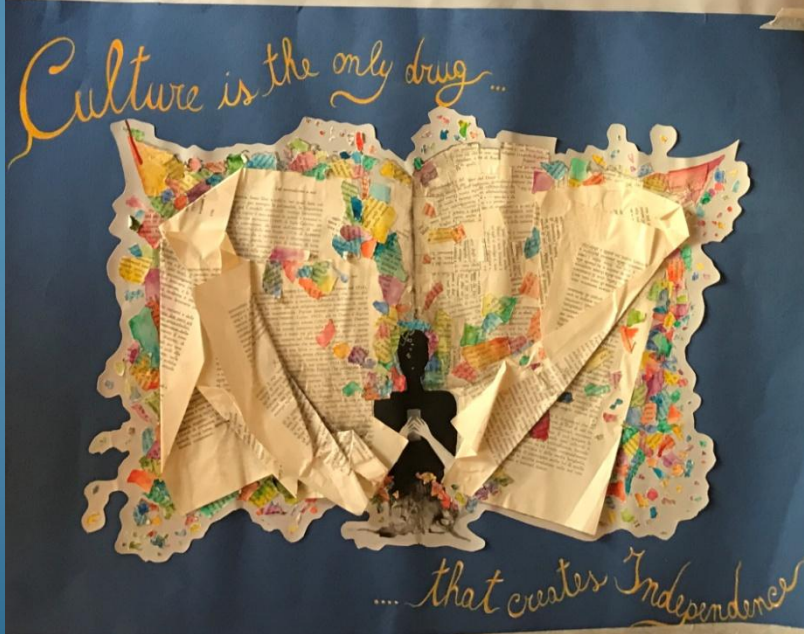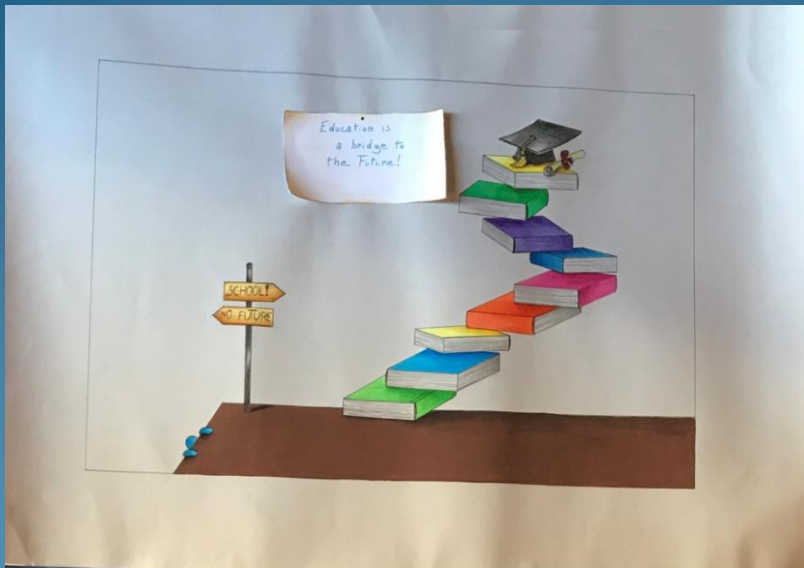
Parents should be offered as much help, education, support and guidance, as possible.

Initiatives should not only be focused solely on students and families, forgetting teachers and their need of in-service training. Improving teachers' personal and professional awareness of the problem would multiply the effectiveness of the new initiatives and would be a strategic tool in encouraging continuing student engagement with education.

Teachers' specific training requires an investment of time and money, and the restrictions of funding which all schools experience, is a major problem.

Solutions should not depend on the dedication of individual teachers, professional expertise is needed, particularly in the field of careers guidance and planning to provide courses suited to individual needs.

Learning from the mistakes and from the positive experiences of the other European countries can mark the beginning of a new approach.

Thank you for your attention