reclaiming those disengaged from education and learning

a European perspective

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CIDREE

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With thanks to Jill Ware at the NFER for organising the meetings.

reclaiming those disengaged from education and learning: a European perspective

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Contents

Executive summary

- Young people's disengagement from education and learning is an issue of concern across Europe. Since the early 1990s, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has been involved in research focusing on the reasons for, and possible solutions to, this problem. The present small-scale project built upon existing studies from NFER by sharing and disseminating findings with colleagues in other European countries. The project focused on conducting two 'expert meetings' with nine CIDREE (Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe) members on European perspectives on 'reclaiming' young people disengaged from education and learning. These meetings explored the issues of disengagement and strategies that were seen as effective in addressing the problem, in a number of different European contexts.

- During the meetings, it was clear that the nine participating countries were facing similar problems, although there may be different levels. There were universal concerns about the numbers of young people who were not in employment, education or training and all countries raised the issue of educational completion and transition.

- Across the European dimension it was recognised that contextual factors could impact on levels of disengagement and these included:
    - variation in the length of compulsory education
    - variation in levels of regional and school autonomy
    - attitudes to, and opportunities for, engagement in vocational education (including its integration with academic opportunities)
    - the selectiveness of some educational systems
    - the existence of varied transition points
    - levels of segregation and integration/inclusion in schools
    - levels and use of exclusion from school and issues of non-attendance.

- Thus, the following common factors were identified by participants as impacting on levels of disengagement (within their various countries):
    - policy and education system factors
    - school factors
    - curriculum factors
    - individual student factors (including relationships with peers)
    - family factors
    - community/regional factors.

- Within the initiatives and practice applied to address disengagement, the following three areas were seen as key:
    - maintaining and monitoring strategies with a focus on pupil attendance and behaviour in school
    - non-curriculum support with a focus on providing direct support for students' emotional, social and/or behavioural needs

- curriculum diversification and differentiation, offering an alternative learning environment and/or experiences.

- Successful strategies/interventions were also divided into preventative and curative approaches. Preventative approaches included bridging the gap between vocational and academic education, and strengthening transition stages within the educational system. Curative approaches focused on routes back into learning (education or work-related learning), both in and out of school, as well as ensuring reliable data at a national level, and enabling appropriate targeting of resources and evaluation of initiatives.

- During the meetings, participants identified a number of common themes in relation to addressing issues of disengagement including: the development of individualised learning opportunities; the need to address issues of sustainability regarding interventions supporting disengaged students; and the need to provide teachers and other school staff with the skills to work with disengaged students.

- The meetings identified a number of learning points for education strategists, policy makers and practitioners, which could be divided into three 'levels': national level, pupil level and local level.

- At a national level, there was a need for: an awareness of how educational structures impact on disaffection; robust evaluative data on the impact of interventions addressing issues of student disengagement; reliable data on the extent of the problem at a national level; and 'future proofing' initiatives to ensure sustainability of successful practice.

- At individual pupil level, this included recognition of: the importance of students being able to determine the pace of their learning; the need for effective forms of guidance to ensure that students are making the right choices; the benefits of mentoring from both inside and outside the formal education system; the importance of active parental involvement; and the need for students not in school to have access to formal accreditation.

- At a local level, the importance of local responses to local needs and the effective communication between agencies, were both highlighted.

1 Introduction

Young people's disengagement from education and learning is an issue of concern across Europe, for both policy makers and practitioners. Since the early 1990s, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has been involved in research focusing on the reasons for, and possible solutions to, young people's disengagement from education and learning (Kinder *et al.*, 1995, 1996, 1999; Kinder and Wilkin, 1998; Kendall *et al.*, 2001, 2003). This small-scale study builds upon existing work from NFER by sharing and disseminating information with colleagues in other European countries. Participants were drawn from the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE). The study focused on conducting two 'expert meetings' with CIDREE members on European perspectives on 'reclaiming' young people disengaged from education and learning. These meetings explored the issues of disengagement in each of the participating countries and explored strategies that were seen as effective in addressing disengagement in a number of different European contexts. Throughout the report these are presented as a compilation of issues unless otherwise stated. The project aimed to undertake a comparison across the participating countries and, by sharing what constituted good practice, as evidenced by research and evaluation, to provide valuable insights into strategies for addressing disengagement.

This paper is a synthesis of the two CIDREE expert meetings held at NFER, Slough in July and November 2004. Representatives from the following nine organisations and countries were involved:

- England: NFER, QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)
- Wales: ACCAC (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales/Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm Ac Asesu Cymru)
- Norway: The Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education
- Flanders: DVO (Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling/ Department for Educational Development)
- Hungary: OKI (Országos Közoktatási Intézet/National Institute for Public Education)
- Switzerland: Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education
- Austria: ZSE (Zentrum für Schulentwicklung)
- Netherlands: SLO (Dutch Institute for Curriculum Development)
- Spain: CIDE (Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa).

The expert meeting in July 2004 provided an initial orientation to define the focus of the meetings and to exchange current understandings of the problem and its causes. Thus, the meeting focused on the issues that the different countries, with their particular cultural and educational contexts, have found to be the key factors underpinning young people's disaffection and disengagement from learning and subsequent underachievement. Participants were asked to identify different dimensions of the problem, to gauge whether there were common or varying understandings of the problem in different countries and whether different groups of young people were

affected within participating countries. The second meeting in November 2004 focused on identifying and comparing the most effective strategies that educators in different countries have adopted to address these factors, as well as highlighting the key challenges. Participants were asked to relay key findings from research and evaluations conducted in their own countries in order to highlight commonalities and differences in the causes of, and solutions to, disengagement. The role and contribution of local and national government initiatives were also included.

Participants at both the meetings were asked to provide presentations on the issues relating to disengagement from education and learning, and to highlight any effective remedial strategies that were present in their country.

This overview of the two meetings has the following structure:

- the aims of the project
- contextual information 'setting the scene' data on educational participation, achievement and disengagement in the participating countries
- key factors in disengagement and key factors in success including exemplars of good practice and challenges associated with incorporating good practice
- overview: key learning points
- cross-national bibliography.

2   Aims of the project

The aims of the project were:

- to explore the manifestations of young people's exclusion or self-exclusion from educational opportunity in the participating countries and also the contextual factors that have contributed to this problem
- to identify the types of young people most vulnerable to disaffection and disengagement
- to highlight effective strategies for re-engaging young people in education and learning opportunities.

Thus, the objectives of the meetings were to explore: How does disengagement manifest itself? Why does it happen? Who does it happen to, and what works to address it?

3   Contextualising disengagement in the participating countries

During the seminars it was clear that the participating countries appear to be facing similar problems, although there are likely to be different degrees of the 'problem'. Varying levels of unemployment, socio-economic factors and deprivation may be contributory factors, suggesting that disengagement is not culturally specific. However, there was also a need to explore the structure and character of countries' educational systems to consider whether these may influence levels of disengagement. For example, it was felt that disengagement was a relatively recent phenomenon in Switzerland and Austria and was viewed as less of a 'problem', but that it might be increasing. Furthermore, it was also suggested that there was not such an awareness of the extent of the problem in these countries because historically data had not been collected on a national basis.

This section sets the context by providing data on educational participation, achievement and levels of disengagement in the participating countries. In addition, it provides an overview of how the educational systems in each country may impact on students' levels of disengagement, looking specifically at issues like school autonomy, vocational education, selection and inclusion or segregation.

The EU has set a number of educational indicators/benchmarks, which it is hoped will be achieved by 2010. Objective 1.2, Indicator 4 of the Lisbon Strategy: *Developing Skills for the Knowledge Society*, focuses on educational participation and states that by 2010, at least 85 per cent of 22 year-olds in the European Union should have successfully completed upper secondary education[1]. In 2002, the EU average was 76.6 per cent. Table 1 shows that some countries like Norway and Austria have already met the target and Hungary is fluctuating around the target level. It is interesting that Hungary, in line with other new EU member states, has a completion rate well above the EU average. Some caution must be exercised when reading these figures as different countries count drop-out in different ways.

Table 1   **Percentage of those aged 20–24 who have successfully completed at least upper secondary education, 2002–04**

Country	2002 %	2003	2004
Norway	94.9	93.3	95.3
Hungary	85.8	85	83.4
Austria	85.1	83.7	85.3
Belgium	81.1	81.3	82.1
UK	77.2	78.2	76.4
Netherlands	73.3	73.3	–
Spain	64.9	63.4	62.5
EU average	*76.6*	*76.7*	*76.4*

Source: Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training: CEC 2005 Report

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[1] It should be noted that 'upper secondary education' in different EU countries may or may not give young people access to higher education. In UK terms it means attainment of at least Level 2 i.e. five GCSEs A*–C or equivalent vocational qualification. However, in other countries it may also include A levels or equivalent i.e. attainment at Level 3.

A further benchmark/indicator of the Lisbon Strategy states that by 2010, an EU average rate of no more than 10 per cent early school leavers should be achieved. Table 2 shows the percentage of the 18–24 population with only lower secondary education and not in education or training, within the participating countries. As can be seen from the table, Austria and Norway again have already achieved this target, whereas other countries, such as Spain, have some way to go. However, it should be noted that in a number of EU countries, including Spain, the percentage of early school leavers has been decreasing steadily since the early 1990s (Commission of the European Communities, 2005). Nevertheless, Spain is one of eight OECD countries where 20 per cent or more of 20–24 year olds have only lower secondary education and are not in education or training, with young men making up a greater proportion of this group than young women (OECD, 2004b).

Table 2   **Share of the population aged 18–24 with only lower secondary education and not in education or training, 2004**

Country	2002 %	2003	2004
Austria	9.5	9.2	9.2
Hungary	12.2	11.8	12.6
Belgium	12.4	12.8	11.9
Norway	14	6.6	4.5
Netherlands	15	15	–
UK	17.7	16.7	16.7
Spain	29	29.8	30.4
EU	*16.4*	*15.9*	*15.9*

Source: Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training: CEC 2005 Report

Concerns were raised across the participating countries about the numbers of young people who were not in employment, education or training (in England the acronym for this is 'NEET'). This was a key problem for 16–19 year olds in the UK. The UK participation rate for 17 year olds is ranked 27th out of 30 OECD countries (DfES, 2004). Table 3 exemplifies this point, setting the UK in the context of other participating countries.

Table 3   **Students aged 15–19 as a percentage of the population of 15–19 year-olds**

Country	%
Belgium	92
Netherlands	87
Norway	85
Switzerland	83
Hungary	81
Spain	80
Austria	77
UK	77

Source: OECD: Education at a Glance (2004a)

At the expert meetings, all the participating countries raised the issue of educational completion and transition. In England, Ofsted (2003) notes that one in 20 pupils leaves school with no GCSEs and that significant numbers of pupils are not on the roll of any school in key stage 4 (14–16 year olds) and are not being educated elsewhere, which must raise significant cause for concern. In Wales, 10–20 per cent of the 16–18 age group fail to go in to employment, education or training after they have left school. In Spain, 25.4 per cent of 16 year olds do not achieve a 'certificate in compulsory secondary education' (ESO). In Norway, the dropout rate from upper secondary is 7 per cent of pupils with a statutory right to upper secondary education (or 8–10 per cent of all pupils). As in other countries, in Norway there are more drop-outs among minority ethnic pupils and pupils with special educational needs. In the Netherlands, everybody under 23 who leaves school without a 'start qualification' is called a 'premature school leaver' and all municipalities have to register every premature school leaver. In 2002, 70,500 premature school leavers were registered. Municipalities are responsible for the return of premature school leavers to education so that young people can obtain a start qualification. Similarly in Norway, county authorities are legally required to provide a 'follow-up service' for young people aged between 16 and 19 who are not in education, training or employment [prior to 1994 there was no such obligation to do this].

Table 4 highlights participation in education and training of 17 year olds in the participating countries (again reflecting the relatively low levels in the UK).

Table 4   **Participation in education and training at 17 in 2002 (OECD data 2004)**

Country	%
UK	76
Spain	82
Switzerland	86
Hungary	86
Netherlands	89
Austria	89
Norway	93
Belgium	102[2]

Source: OECD: Education at a Glance (2004a)

The systems of education present within the participating countries could be divided into those that were: more or less 'comprehensive' (e.g. England, Wales) and those that were more 'selective' or 'separated' (e.g. Austria, Hungary). Another factor, which should be considered is the variation in the length of compulsory education; for example, in England, Wales and Spain compulsory education finishes at 16, in the Netherlands it is 17 and in Flanders it is 18. Although in Flanders part-time education is possible from 16 onwards, the majority of students attend full time. Those countries where compulsory education finishes later may be presented with additional problems in retaining disengaged students. In most of the participating countries compulsory education starts aged six, whereas in England, Wales and Hungary it begins at five years old (see Table 5).

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[2] Totals more than a 100 due to differences in reference dates e.g. between enrolment data and population data leading to an overestimated figure.

Table 5   **Structure of the school systems within the participating countries**

	Primary	Secondary
UK (5–16) [3]	Primary school Reception to Year 6 (age 5–11)	Secondary Years 7–11/13 (age 11–16/18) Lower secondary Years 7–9 and upper secondary Years 10–13
Flanders (6–18)	Primary school Grades 1–6 (age 6–12)	Grades 1–2 (12–14), Grades 3–4 (14–16) and Grades 5–6 (16–18) Grades 1–2: A stream (no learning difficulties in primary) and B stream (learning difficulties in primary and did not receive a Primary Education Certificate) Grades 3–6: 4 types of secondary education: General secondary education; Arts education; Technical secondary education; and Vocational secondary education
Hungary (5–16)	General school: primary level Grades 1–4 (age 6–10)	General school: lower secondary level Grades 5–8 (age 10–14) General secondary school Grades 5–12 (age 10–18) Vocational secondary school Grades 8–13 (age 14–19) Vocational training school (apprenticeship training) Grades 8–12 (age 14–18)
Austria (6–15) Compulsory schooling for 9 years	Primary school Grades 1–4 (age 6–10)	General secondary schools lower secondary (Hauptschulen): Grades 5–8 (age 10–14) Higher general academic schools lower and upper secondary: Grades 5–8 (age 10–14) and Grades 9–13 (age 15–18) Pre-vocational schools Grade 9 (age 14–15) Apprentice training schools, intermediate and higher technical and vocational colleges Grades 10–13 (15–18)
Netherlands (4–17)	Primary (age 4–12) Range of special education (divided into four clusters)	Three types of secondary education: high (vwo), middle (havo) and lower (vmbo-praktijkonderwijs). Range of secondary special education (divided into four clusters)
Switzerland (6–15)	Primary (age 6–12 in 20 of 23 cantons)	Education organised and financed by each of the 23 Swiss cantons resulting in 23 different but similar school systems. Secondary Level 1 (age 13–15) – pupils divided into sections, which prepare pupils for vocational training or higher secondary education. Secondary Level 2 post-compulsory education: depending on the section followed during the last years at the secondary Level 1, students then go on to diploma schools, vocational schools, or Maturitätsschulen. The latter allows entrance into the public university system
Spain (6–16)	Primary (age 6–12)	Secondary (age 12–18) Educación Secundaria Obligatoria – Lower secondary 12–16 Educación Secundaria Obligatoria – Upper secondary 16–18 Vocational Branch, and Academic or General Branch
Norway (6–16) Compulsory schooling for 10 years	Lower primary Grades 1–4 (ages 6–10) Upper primary Grades 5–7 (ages 11–13)	Lower secondary Grades 8–10 (ages 12–14) Upper secondary Grades 11–13 (ages 15–18) Since 1994 everyone between the ages of 14 and 19 have a statutory right to 3 years upper secondary education leading to higher education or vocational education. Applicants are entitled to a place on one of three foundation courses for which they must apply.

[3] Numbers in brackets highlight the age of compulsory education in each country.

In addition, the level of regional autonomy in educational systems should be noted, for example, in Spain and Switzerland, the regions are relatively autonomous, whereas in England and Hungary, this is not the case. However, within the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own education systems. Increasing decentralisation and the increased autonomy of schools within some participating countries may allow schools/curricula to respond to local needs. On the other hand, it may also mean that the needs of disengaged students may not be adequately met. Thus, the level of school autonomy should also be noted. It was reported that high levels of school autonomy in Hungary meant that schools are highly selective, with schools trying to attract the best students (as was the case in Flanders for some general secondary education schools).

The level of vocational education clearly varies between participating countries. Current thinking in England, Wales and Northern Ireland focuses on creating a continuum of learning from 14–19 (trying to address the relatively high rates of drop-out at 16 in the UK) that will encompass both academic and vocational courses and present a choice of pathways for all students. There is a requirement for work-related education in the new Welsh 14–19 curriculum, which includes key skills and a higher profile for vocational courses generally. The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification is currently being piloted. It aims to promote the inclusion of a greater number of students in post-16 education and training and promote breadth, alongside depth of study, with equal value being placed on vocational and academic qualifications[4]. For a number of years, English schools have been allowed to disapply a limited number of subjects (up to two subjects: a modern foreign language, design and technology and/or science) in the key stage 4 curriculum (14–16 year olds) allowing students to access work-related learning and/or vocational opportunities. The introduction of vocational GCSEs has also provided for more vocational opportunities in England. The recent White Paper in England *14–19 Education and Skills* (GB. Parliament. HoC., 2005) also emphasises the importance of vocational training and commits to increasing vocational opportunities within the mainstream curriculum, as well as offering intensive programmes of support for 14–16 year olds with significant work-based learning for those most vulnerable to disengagement.

Nevertheless, vocational education appears more integrated within the educational systems of other European countries. The Tomlinson Report on reforms to the 14–19 curriculum (Working Group on 14–19 Reform, 2004), along with the Government's response to that report in the recent White Paper *14–19 Education and Skills* (GB. Parliament. HoC., 2005), both highlighted the existing fragmentation of vocational provision within England. Vocational qualifications do not carry the same parity of esteem as academic qualifications in the UK, and the White Paper noted that vocational education and training have low credibility and status in the UK. In contrast, in Austria and Switzerland, for example, post-lower secondary level (14 onwards) education has a huge variety of vocational schools e.g. intermediate technical and vocational colleges, pre-vocational schools [providing a one-year course to facilitate transition between school and apprenticeship training] and apprentice training schools. Similarly in Flanders, Switzerland and the Netherlands, there is a range of technical and vocational secondary education that students can access. However, opportunities to

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[4] http://www.wbq.org.uk provides further details of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

access vocational education should not be seen as the 'cure all' for student disaffection and disengagement and the extent that vocational routes can create problems for young people should be acknowledged, e.g. a lack of parity of esteem or the division between vocational and academic routes. In Flanders, it was noted that in many urban areas vocational secondary education was viewed as a kind of 'rubbish bin' for students with low levels of attainment, poor motivation, living in poor conditions, with poor employment prospects and negative school experiences. Thus, the structure and character of the education system is influential in the disengagement of some students and the division between the status of 'academic' and 'vocational' education in many of the participating countries clearly plays a role.

There are four main types of secondary education in Flanders: arts, general, technical and vocational. A young person following one type of secondary education can change to another, but if this happens, in most cases, it is to move 'down' a level, for example from 'general' to 'technical', or 'technical' to 'vocational', which may contribute to disengagement. This 'waterfall system' is seen as one of the weaknesses/failures of the system. Thus, the selectiveness of the educational system may be seen as an exacerbating factor for some students. In addition, parents targeting too high a level of education for their children may also lead to disengagement. For example, again in Flanders, it was noted that many parents chose the higher status 'general education' for their children when this was not appropriate for them, resulting in students moving down to technical or vocational secondary education, resulting in further disengagement. In Norway, it was noted that pupils in upper secondary who do not access their first choice of school were also more vulnerable to dropping out. Thus 'free school choice' is an issue in student disengagement in Norway. There was also a feeling, for example in the Netherlands and Norway, that students had to choose too soon their options in which to specialise and the type of school they were to attend. Whereas in contrast, one of the strengths of the Swiss system was seen to be that students could make choices much later and when they were ready.

Nevertheless, the 'repeating year' systems evident in Hungary, Switzerland, Austria, Spain and Flanders may contribute to students' disengagement. It was seen as having a negative impact on students' levels of self-esteem and could create difficulties with mixed age groups (it was noted that the repeating year system in Austria was currently under review and had come under a great deal of criticism. Those opposed to the repeating year system argue that there is a need to restructure the whole education system, so that it is course-based rather than year-based). In Hungary, which has a 'repeating year system', five per cent of all pupils fail to finish general education at 16. It is normal for those failing each year of study to repeat the year and this leads to drop-out in the later years of schooling. Recent legislation in Hungary means that children cannot repeat a school year in the first three years unless parents and teachers agree. This legislation has been met with hostility by teachers, as they do not feel that they have been given the necessary support to implement such a programme. Similarly in Austria, students have to complete nine years of education; if they fail certain subjects they have to repeat the whole year, which can result in young people leaving the school system without a 'leaving certificate'. Without this certificate, they cannot enter upper secondary school or access vocational or apprenticeship training and so are at increased

risk of unemployment or poor employment opportunities. Thus, the transition point between lower and upper secondary is a key time when vulnerable students may drop out of education. The varied transitional points in the Dutch vocational educational system were also identified as increasing the vulnerability of some students to drop out. In the Netherlands, some experimental initiatives combining vocational and secondary schools are currently being undertaken because this point of transition is a key time for drop-out. Thus, (as will be noted in section 5) support at key transition points e.g. between different stages within the educational system, may aid retention (see also Box 12 in section 5.2).

There were clearly different degrees of segregation and integration/inclusion in the participating countries. For example, pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) mostly attend segregated provision in the Netherlands, and a high proportion of Roma pupils attend special schools in Hungary. Similarly, the segregation of all students with SEN is high in Hungary. There has, however, been a shift in thinking in the past few years towards aiming for more inclusive provision in both these countries. Nevertheless, the segregation of Roma students in Hungary as a result of local segregation and general demographic trends remains an issue (National Institute of Public Education, 2003). England has a policy of 'inclusion'; however, it could be argued that segregation still occurs but is less overt or publicly acknowledged, in terms of socio-economic status determining young people's ability to access popular schools. In Norway, the number of primary/lower secondary pupils who have been subject to separate teaching measures has never been more than 1 per cent and currently this figure is approximately 0.5 per cent.

A further issue is exclusion from school and non-attendance. In 2002/3 there were 9,290 permanent exclusions from English schools, which represented a decrease from 9,535 in the previous year and a decrease of 24 per cent since 1997/98. More than four-fifths (83 per cent) were from secondary schools and 82 per cent of pupils permanently excluded were boys. The rate of exclusion was highest at the age of 14. Pupils with SEN were nine times more likely to be excluded from school. An examination of exclusions by ethnic group revealed that Black pupils and those of mixed ethnic origin were approximately twice as likely to be excluded from school than White pupils. Exclusion rates were highest for Travellers of Irish heritage (51 in every 10,000), Black Caribbean (37 in every 10,000) and Gypsy/Roma (36 in every 10,000). However, there is a need to treat with caution the Irish Traveller and Gypsy/Roma data because of the small numbers recorded. Nevertheless, in Derrington and Kendall's (2004) longitudinal study of 44 Gypsy/Traveller pupils, more than a quarter (12) of the students had been excluded. On the issue of non-attendance, official statistics show that in 2002/03, 50,000 children in England were not in school on any given day. Many non-attenders are those with medical needs or young carers (mainly female), but the Government focus tends to be more on male non-attenders and their perceived links with crime. In contrast, in Switzerland (although data is limited, see Box 1) and Flanders permanent exclusion was rare; in Hungary and Austria exclusion is not allowed (in Hungary students cannot be excluded from lessons). Although in Switzerland, managed transfers and temporary exclusion do occur, there are no data on the extent to which this happens. However, evaluation of the impact of these approaches has begun (see Box 1).

Box 1 **Ongoing research on reconnecting both excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion, Switzerland**

a) The notion of 'temporary exclusion' was introduced for the first time in the Swiss canton of Berne in August 2002. A study evaluating this approach is currently being undertaken by Prof. T. Hascher [hascher@sis.unibe.ch] and K. Hersberger with a particular focus on the impact of the 'care and coaching' of students during their exclusion. Results published 2005, see Box 9.

b) Longitudinal case studies of excluded students and those at risk of exclusion due to behavioural difficulties are also being conducted in the Swiss canton of Zurich (urban programme). The study running from August 2003 to April 2006 focuses on identifying the factors contributing to students' successful re-engagement with mainstream education. Project of the National Research Programme 51: Social Integration and Social Exclusion www.nfp51.ch

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To conclude, this section has provided a brief overview of the variety of contexts and different levels of the 'problem' in the participating countries. However, although there may be different dimensions to 'the problem', all the countries had a proportion of students who were disengaged from education and learning. Their disengagement could be reflected in behavioural problems ('fight') and/or non-attendance ('flight'). The nature of the education systems within these countries clearly exacerbated some forms of disengagement and, in some instances, served to reinforce existing inequalities.

4 Factors in disengagement

The following presentation provides a summation of the key causal factors in disengagement identified by participants in their respective countries. It identifies both common and distinctive factors raised by participants during the meetings.

4.1 Key factors in disengagement

The following factors were identified by participants as impacting on levels of disengagement within the participating countries:

- policy factors and education systems
- school factors
- curriculum factors
- individual student factors (including relationships with peers)
- family factors
- community/regional factors.

A summary of the issues raised follows.

Policy factors/educational systems and disengagement

Many of the policy/educational and structural factors that may impact on/result in disengagement already discussed in section 3, are revisited in this summation of issues highlighted. They include:

- variations in the length of compulsory education, e.g. difficulties maintaining engagement when students are 18 years old
- levels of regional and school autonomy. High levels of school autonomy are likely to lead to increased segregation and selectivity with low levels of social equity
- the increased autonomy of schools, for example, in England the growth of 'specialist schools'
- the selectiveness of the education system means that students may become disengaged
- the division between vocational and academic education creating barriers between the two
- integration of vocational education within the school system and its relatively low status in some countries
- issues of school 'choice' and access to first-choice school
- students have to make 'choices' too early and choose their learning pathways too soon, leading to poor levels of achievement and disengagement because the wrong choices have been made
- transitional points in the education system, for example, between lower and upper secondary, may increase the likelihood of drop-out for some students
- the 'repeating year' systems evident in Hungary, Switzerland, Austria and Flanders
- levels of segregation and integration/inclusion may acerbate disengagement.

School factors and disengagement

School factors covered issues like how ethos, inter-relations and the skill-base of staff within school affected pupil disengagement. These factors included:

- teachers do not have the skills to work with disengaged students
- a lack of training opportunities for teaching staff to work successfully with disengaged students
- lack of educational resources and support staff
- schools have 'hidden' admission policies
- lack of supportive pastoral systems within schools
- insufficient career advice and guidance was raised as an issue in Norway
- relationships within school, e.g. poor relationships with teachers, often lead to a 'systemic breakdown' (Kinder *et al.*, 1995), i.e. students who have poor relationships with teachers are more likely to disengage with school completely.

Curriculum factors and disengagement

Student disengagement was often linked to the curriculum on offer within schools. Issues highlighted included:

- the perceived irrelevance of the curriculum to the lives of many students
- the prescribed academic orientation of the curriculum; this was a particular issue in England in the 1990s and was also raised as an issue in Norway
- divisions between vocational and academic education resulting in students becoming 'locked' into courses inappropriate to meeting their learning needs
- inappropriate examination and assessment procedures
- reduction in time for pastoral provision/teachers' sense of curriculum pressure
- inappropriate pedagogy: schools focusing on curriculum and subject content rather than learners
- pupil learning style incompatible with school norms
- lack of alternative education provision.

Individual factors and disengagement

Individual factors identified focused on the following:

- lack of self-esteem/confidence
- lack of social skills/coping strategies/internal resilience to deal with problems
- relationships with peers may impact on levels of disengagement. Four types were identified by Kinder *et al.* (1995):
  - the outsider/loner: resulting in them not attending school, for example, because of bullying
  - the *émigré* (friends beyond school resulting in non-attendance and disengagement)
  - the alpha female/male (dominant young person) possibly resulting in behaviour problems and actively influencing others' disengagement
  - the colluder/disputant (mid status) again resulting in behaviour problems or non-attendance due to influence from truanting peers.
- lack of academic ability/special educational needs

- lack of self-management skills
- significant health problems (involving absence), including mental health problems
- substance misuse
- previous negative experiences of school
- students who have to repeat a school year or those who have to change from a higher to lower level of education (the waterfall system).

Box 2 **Individual types of student disengagement**

It was suggested by the Welsh representative that it may be useful to make a distinction between:

- **the disappointed**, who find the curriculum irrelevant. They attend but are disengaged and do not achieve, they are not stretched or challenged
- **the disaffected**, who are more visible and disruptive and who are at risk of exclusion (temporary or permanent) and
- **the disappeared**, who either have very poor attendance or do not attend school at all, these are the young people missing education who may be some of the most vulnerable.

Box 3 **Young people who might be vulnerable to disengagement**

In England a new way of defining young people's disengagement is that they are 'vulnerable' students. The following types of young people have been identified specifically:

- pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- young offenders (those involved in, or at risk of being involved in, criminal activity)
- pupils excluded from school (or at risk of being excluded)
- teenage parents
- Gypsy/Traveller/Roma pupils
- children from migrant/immigrant families
- non-attenders/school refusers
- young carers
- children of drug-using parents
- young people with medical needs.

In England, the largest group of young people out of school are young carers/those with medical needs. However, the Government is particularly worried about the numbers of boys out of school and their possible involvement in criminal activity. It was suggested that there was less attention focused on girls out of school because they are not perceived as constituting such a 'threat' or a problem. It was felt that in England there were issues relating to the inter-connectivity of anti-social behaviour and young people who are not in school, i.e. those who are out of school present a threat in terms of criminal activity and other types of anti-social behaviour, and that there is a perceived link between being out of school and involvement in offending behaviour.

Family factors and disengagement

A range of family factors were identified, which may impact on students' disengagement, including:

- parentally condoned absence/non-attendance at schoo.
- parents not valuing school education
- significant domestic problems/family dysfunction
- family events (e.g. bereavement, divorce, new step-siblings)
- inadequate/inconsistent parenting
- differing social behaviour expectations in the family and at school
- low parental educational aspirations and expectations
- parental expectations may also be too high, e.g. sending children to a higher status school where they are unable to cope with the curriculum
- young people not attending school because they are working in the family economy or caring for relatives (adults or siblings).

Community/societal and regional factors and disengagement

Key community/societal or regional factors may include:

- unemployment and economic/social deprivation, for example, students coming from marginal environments or poor urban/rural areas
- sense of resignation/a community lack of self-esteem
- alternative economies: students looking for integration into the labour market both pre- and post-16
- cultural values regarding education, which may conflict with those of the 'dominant' community, (for example, Gypsy/Traveller students leaving school once they have attained basic literacy and numeracy skills)
- gender differences were noted regarding students' retention in school, with females more likely to be retained in education than males
- the size of settlement may impact on student retention and achievement (see Box 4)
- the differentiated secondary school system in some countries (e.g. Austria) may mean that students have difficulties accessing specific types of school in rural areas
- the socio-economic and community aspects of the problem were highlighted by participants (see Box 5)
- issues regarding the disengagement of particular minority ethnic groups were raised by participants (see Box 6).

Box 4 **Size of settlement and disengagement**

In Hungary, research has shown that the size of settlement (linked to rural poverty, socio-economic position of the settlement and parents' educational level) may impact on levels of achievement, the type of educational provision accessed and retention in education. The smaller the settlement, the lower students' achievement, and the greater the likelihood that they will leave education early. National monitoring by OKI found that the performance of urban learners is on average 8–9 per cent higher than that of students in rural schools (Lannert and Halasz, 2003). Furthermore, the smaller the settlement, the greater the likelihood of students continuing their studies in a vocational training school.

Box 5 **Socio-economic factors and disengagement**

In the UK socio-economic status is a stronger predictor of attainment than early ability. In most participating countries, those young people from higher socio-economic groups perform significantly better at each stage of the education system than do those from lower socio-economic groups (DfES, 2004). Those who perform well early perform even better later in life, whilst those who do not perform well fall further behind and the chances of breaking out of the cycle of underachievement reduce with age (DfES, 2004), highlighting the benefits of preventative work beginning early in primary school. In the UK, the gap between the best and worst performers widens as young people proceed through the education system; and it is significantly wider and more closely related to socio-economic status than elsewhere (DfES, 2004). In relation to school participation, the UK scores the highest of all OECD countries in the 'association between low socio-economic status and participation' (Steedman and Stoney, 2004). In contrast, in Switzerland, students from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to truant than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Steedman and Stoney, 2004).

Box 6 **Minority ethnic groups and disengagement**

Minority ethnic groups were noted as being over-represented in the disengaged group in the Netherlands, Austria, Norway, Spain (for example, Gypsies and immigrant ethnic communities, particularly from North Africa) and England.

In Hungary the Roma population constitutes six per cent of the population, but the participation of Roma students in secondary education is still disproportionately low. Roma students' performance also shows a decline during their time at school, with nearly a 10 per cent decrease in attainment over six years in school (National Institute of Public Education, 2003. Reasons given by teachers for the decline in attainment included: 'lack of appropriate school equipment, inadequate home environments suitable for learning, restricted study time at home due to the division of labour in the family, a higher rate of absence and lack of parental support' (National Institute of Public Education, 2003). Unemployment amongst the Roma adult population is particularly high at around 80 per cent and thus addressing issues of disengagement amongst Roma students is a pressing priority. The disengagement of the Gypsy/Roma community was also raised as an issue in Spain and England.

Matrix 1 provides an overview of the key factors in disengagement identified by participants from each country:

Matrix 1 **Key factors of disengagement: participants' perspectives**

			Causes		
	Policy factors	**School factors**	**Community/regional factors**	**Family factors**	**Individual factors**
Austria	Early end of compulsory education (after nine school years). The highly differentiated school system at the higher levels of secondary education meets the needs of those students working towards higher qualifications rather than the needs of early school leavers. Companies do not supply sufficient places for vocational training/ apprenticeship (vocational).	Problems with teachers (e.g. getting less attention, less support; being blamed). Problems with other students (e.g. bullying). Too little correlation between teaching and the daily lives of the students (e.g. ex-cathedra teaching instead of project orientation). Stress and insufficient achievement because of the wrong choice of school type. Insufficient information on job profiles and qualification requirements at the schools.	In rural areas it is more difficult to find a specific school type within a reasonable distance.	Those at risk are young people from: • deprived families • 'patchwork' families • families with a migration background. Factors found in **German** literature on truancy and disengagement: • retention by the parents (e.g. in order to work at home etc.) • parental expectations too high (e.g. choosing a higher school where students fail).	Disabled children. Children who have to repeat a school year. Children who have to change from a higher to a lower level of education (changing the type of school). Children from low education levels (Hauptschulen, Sonderschulen). Factors highlighted in **German** literature on truancy and disengagement: • influence from truanting peers • students lacking coping strategies for tackling problems and conflicts • low appreciation of the value of education • preference for earning money instead of going to school.
England	National curriculum. Fragmentation of vocational provision. League tables.	Low status of vocational education (it is still viewed as an 'add on'). Lack of alternative education with little formalised accreditation. Lack of investment in pastoral support. Inappropriate pedagogy.	Economic/social deprivation and unemployment in some areas. Community lack of self-esteem.	Education not valued. Absence condoned by parents. Dysfunctional families. Family problems. Lack of parenting skills. Differing social behaviour expectations.	Curriculum irrelevant for pupils. Peer pressure/poor peer relationships. Lack of self-esteem/self-confidence. Lack of social skills. Inability to cope with traditional assessment procedures. Boredom/lack of engagement. Learning problems.

Matrix 1   **Key factors of disengagement: participants' perspectives *cont.***

	Causes				
	Policy factors	**School factors**	**Community/regional factors**	**Family factors**	**Individual factors**
Flanders	Differentiated system of secondary education: general secondary, arts, technical and vocational education. Each attract different groups of youngsters, based on their school results, intellectual capacities and social backgrounds. Youngsters who fail in general secondary education may be reoriented to technical education, and youngsters weak in primary education or failing in technical education may be reoriented to vocational education. This is the so called 'waterfall system'.	Schools are very autonomous and build a particular 'reputation' affecting the type of youngsters they attract in terms of academic ability and social class. Students may 'repeat' a grade if they fail in their exams.		Students from one-parent families – and raised by the mother only – are more vulnerable. Pupils living in families where the father is less present – because of working conditions or because of conflicts with the mother – are more vulnerable.	Misbehaviour at school. Truancy. 'Fed up' with school.
Hungary	High level of school autonomy and market mechanism adds up to a selective school system with very low level of assuring social equity. Year-repeating system means that by the age of 16 some (5%) of students do not accomplish basic education (ISCED 2).	Schools teach and focus much more on curriculum and subject matter rather than learners. The 'chalk and talk' method is overwhelming in schools. Lack of methods for dealing with 'trouble-makers'.	Disengagement of socially/economically deprived communities. In such regions representation of the Roma population is also typically higher. The poorer the settlement the fewer resources exist to support schools providing extra learning support. The size of settlements is linked to levels of achievement.	Differing social behaviour expectations. No educational support at home.	Lack of basic skills entering into secondary education. Curriculum irrelevant for pupils. 'Fed up' with school. Negative learning experiences. Learning difficulties.

Matrix 1 **Key factors of disengagement: participants' perspectives cont.**

			Causes		
	Policy factors	**School factors**	**Community/regional factors**	**Family factors**	**Individual factors**
Netherlands	National curriculum.	Inappropriate care structures.	Weak social surroundings.	Problems in the home situation.	Social-emotional problems, behavioural problems, physical or medical problems.
	The varied transitional points in the Dutch (vocational) educational system.	Lack of competence in dealing with 'problem children'.	Ethnic minorities over-represented.	Education not valued.	
		Inappropriate pedagogy.	Lack of cooperation between different disciplines (meso-, macro-, micro-level).	Differing social behaviour expectations.	Drug problems.
		Lack of support (pupil-level)/consultation (school-level) with regards to the varied transitional points in the Dutch (vocational) educational system.			Wrong school choice.
					Fear of failure.
		'Image problem' of vocational education.			
Norway	Integration for all in the same school.	Differentiation problems in school.	Lack of alternative learning arenas.	Low educational level.	Physical and mental disabilities.
	Generally high levels of education.	Poor career counselling.	Working life responsibility.	Rural occupation.	Drug and psychiatric problems.
	High rates of employment.	Difficulties working with pupils with a truancy problem/non-identification.	Poor cooperation across departments and services.	Lack of educational support at home.	Learning difficulties.
	Statutory right for all 16–20 year olds to three years of upper secondary education within five years	Unable to socially include all pupils.	Lack of apprenticeship possibilities.	Minority background.	Minority background.
					Negative learning experiences.
	A more theoretically-based school curriculum.	Lack of possibilities to obtain craft certificates at lower levels of education.			Low achievement, social problems and low self-esteem.
		Lack of alternative learning arenas.			'Shirking'.

Matrix 1   **Key factors of disengagement: participants' perspectives cont.**

			Causes		
	Policy factors	**School factors**	**Community/regional factors**	**Family factors**	**Individual factors**
Spain	Lack of context in the curriculum. Lack of teaching staff training. Lack of educational resources and support teachers. Criteria of repetition and the consequent gap that may exist between the student's reference age and the school year in which he/she is placed.	Dynamics of the school (school coexistence environment, relationship with the school context, etc.).	High percentage of immigrant children. High percentage of seasonal workers travelling to other autonomous communities.	Belonging to marginalised social groups or poor socio-cultural environments. Parents' educational level, (may determine school acceptance on the part of the student). Belonging to certain ethnic minorities (may mean, in some instances, a tendency to attribute a poor relevance to school). Taking on family duties. Being a member of a migrant school population or children of migrants (legal problems of their parents, language problems, integration difficulties due to prejudice, language, etc.).	Adolescent's personality features (e.g. poor self-esteem, lack of social skills, impulsiveness, conduct disorders). Chronic diseases with repeated relapses. Negative learning experiences. Serious learning difficulties.
Switzerland	Decreasing number of jobs for vocational training in the last four years.	High rate of selection in the school system, e.g. repeating year system, streaming structure in the lower secondary. Low competence of schools and teachers in dealing with a heterogeneous population of pupils.		Children of immigrant families with insufficient knowledge of the school language (German, French or Italian).	Physical and mental disabilities. Drug and psychiatric problems. Learning difficulties. Minority background. Negative learning experiences. Low achievement, social problems and low self-esteem. 'Shirking'.

Matrix 1 **Key factors of disengagement: participants' perspectives *cont.***

			Causes		
	Policy factors	**School factors**	**Community/regional factors**	**Family factors**	**Individual factors**
Wales	National curriculum, fragmentation of vocational provision.	Vocational options often still perceived to have lower status than academic.	Rurality of some areas. Economic deprivation and unemployment in some areas.	Education not valued and absence condoned by some parents. Dysfunctional families.	Curriculum perceived to lack relevance. Inability to cope with traditional assessment procedures. Boredom/lack of engagement.

5 Successful factors in addressing disengagement

When looking at successful factors in addressing disengagement, there are a number of ways in which these factors can be conceptualised:

- by looking at the dimensions of the disengagement strategy, for example, whole-school policies, school-based roles, or external support.
- by looking at the focus of the intervention, e.g. whether it has a preventative or curative approach (or perhaps elements of both), and the level at which it occurs, i.e. small scale or large scale.

5.1 Dimensions of the disengagement strategy and solutions

NFER's study (Kinder *et al.*, 1995) focused on the differing dimensions of disengagement. The study provided an audit of school-based initiatives associated with directly addressing the attendance, curriculum or behavioural aspects of disengagement. It showed that such initiatives might include three dimensions or levels (see Appendix A for further details). These were:

- whole-school policies: organisation, structures, e.g. the production of written policies on attendance and behaviour
- innovative school-based roles to focus on attendance and behaviour, e.g. home/school liaison officers, learning mentors, other agency involvement
- external support, e.g. agency support focusing on attendance, and the provision of alternative curriculum by outside providers such as colleges.

In this study the most positive accounts of success were associated with initiatives that included all, or at least more than one, of these dimensions. It was found that interventions that just focused on implementing policies were unsuccessful and that new school roles and external support did not work without policy back-up. Within the initiatives and practice applied to address disengagement, the following three areas were key.

- Maintaining and monitoring strategies with a focus on pupil attendance and behaviour in school.
- Non-curriculum support with a focus on providing direct support for students' emotional, social, and/or behavioural needs.
- Curriculum diversification and differentiation offering an alternative learning environment and/or experiences.

All these measures could be seen as having a preventative, as well as a curative, dimension. Within these three areas the following strategies/interventions were identified as successfully addressing issues of disengagement (drawing on both NFER's study and examples from the participating countries).

Maintaining and monitoring focus

- The production of school attendance and behaviour policies (with dissemination to parents).
- The adoption of ICT registration systems (research, analysis, spot-checks) and first-day absence follow-up (dedicated administrative staff etc.).
- The promotion of school attendance and behaviour policies to pupils.
- Contact with parents/home school liaison (including consideration of the most appropriate forms of communication to, and from, parents).
- Re-timetabling of the school day (continuous day, breakfast clubs).
- Rewards and sanctions (preventative measures) for attendance and behaviour.
- Peer 'minders'/parent pagers and schools' monitoring attendance and behaviour to identify trends and factors in non-attendance/disengagement.

Non-curriculum focus

- Anti-bullying and discipline policies, including clear rules on racial discrimination.
- The development of pastoral roles within school, such as personal advisors, mentors, counsellors. Along with internal pastoral support, there should be pastoral systems with monitoring, prevention, support and referral remits. Opportunities for young people to access both peer and adult mentoring opportunities. The provision of programmes focusing on developing self-esteem, life skills and social competencies. Support for students' mental health needs.
- Parental liaison and support, including raising parental aspirations, expectations and involvement.
- Clear induction strategies and support at key transition points, for example, between primary and secondary school, between lower and upper secondary education (see Box 12 in section 5.2) and between education and work. An example of the latter was the development of 'Bridge Projects' in Switzerland for low achievers and the disengaged.
- Building resilience and protective factors within young people, for example, raising their educational and employment expectations and aspirations (Steedman and Stoney, 2004).
- The school playing a key role in the community, for example, via the development of extended/community schools, with a wide range of services based in, and accessed from, school.
- Multi-agency teams providing 'joined-up' support for students, pupils and parents, e.g. education, health, social services and/or youth service. These may be preventative and/or curative, e.g. multi-agency forums in Norway reintegrating students who have dropped out of education (see Box 12 in section 5.2) and 'Inclusion Panels' in England for those who need reintegrating or are in danger of dropping out.
- Recognising the influence of cultural background/local community, whether ethnicity or class, and working with this to address the best interests of the students.
- Raising teachers' expectations of pupils as this has a positive impact on student achievement (Steedman and Stoney, 2004). Also, the provision of training for

teachers and other educational providers in supporting disengaged students or those at risk of disengagement.

- Improving career guidance for students enabling them to make the right choices.
- The provision of financial incentives, e.g. the Education Maintenance Allowance in England to help students from families with low incomes to remain in education post-16.

Curriculum focus

- Differentiated learning policy: the provision of a flexible, diversified curriculum with a skills-based, rather than a subject-based, approach. The Netherlands and a number of other countries are currently experimenting with developing individualised learning pathways.
- Matching learning styles and pace of delivery to the needs of individual young people shows a positive impact on sustained engagement (Golden *et al.*, 2004).
- Teacher training: pedagogy and learning styles.
- Alternative curriculum (including accreditation), for example, vocational courses based in college/second chance programmes within mainstream provision, such as those in Austria, which allow students who have dropped out of education to return and graduate.
- For those out of school, the provision of alternative educational opportunities may help address issues of disengagement.
- Work-related learning, including the provision of work placements as part of general education. Opportunities to access academic and work-related learning.
- Reduced/flexible timetables.
- Special units based in school, e.g. learning support units (LSUs) in England, which provide short-term targeted support for pupils experiencing difficulties, or opportunities to attend 'time out provision' in Flanders and the Netherlands.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities and achievement classes, lunchtime and homework clubs and revision programmes.
- Curriculum support from peers, business and community mentors etc.
- Allowing students the opportunity to make curriculum choices when they are ready to do so, as in the Swiss system.

5.2 Focus of the intervention: a preventative and/or curative approach

Using the Netherlands conceptualisation/typology, successful strategies/interventions could also be divided into preventative and curative approaches (see Box 7).

Box 7 **Preventative and curative approaches to intervention**

1 Preventative

- Monitoring attendance, behaviour and attainment
- Pastoral support
- Vocational training
- Work-related skills
- Transparent accreditation and qualification structure
- Bridging the gaps between vocational and academic education and strengthening transition stages within the educational system
- Improving and strengthening cooperation between agencies working with disengaged youngsters
- Changes to the curriculum
- Individualised and personalised learning routes

2 Curative

- If young people do become disengaged there is a need to focus on a return to education or work-related learning, both in and out of school, for example via the provision of alternative educational opportunities for those out of school
- There is a need for reliable data at a national level, enabling appropriate targeting of resources and evaluation of initiatives (see Wales input in Matrix 2)

In addition, within each of these dimensions the solutions may be at varying levels and/or scales (i.e. small scale, local, or large scale, national), ranging from school level, to local/regional level, to national level.

Matrix 2 provides an overview of the key preventative and curative factors identified by participants at both the local/small scale and national/large scale level. It should be noted that many interventions have elements of both preventative and curative input.

Participants noted that there are issues surrounding the need to understand young people and what education means to them, as a base for encouraging them to see the value of education. If there is flexibility in provision, and therefore choice, there needs to be effective guidance to support the system so that young people are able to make the 'right' choices, thus the importance of career counselling was emphasised.

Matrix 2   **Key factors in successfully addressing disengagement**

	Preventative: small scale/ local	Preventative: large scale/ national	Curative: small scale/local	Curative: large scale/ national
Austria	Diverse projects at schools, e.g. to improve well-being at school, to open the school towards the community, to tie the teaching up to the daily lives/needs/interests of the students.	The existence of school psychologists who aim to support students and the school system. Although there are insufficient psychologists employed to allow extensive preventative work. Psychologists are mainly called for when problems have already become obvious. Information on job profiles and qualification requirements: obligatory through national legislation at 7th and 8th grade in all school types. However, only provided by teachers and not very extensive. Early warning system through which the teacher informs students (and their parents) as soon as possible if a student's achievement in a specific subject is considered insufficient. A huge variety of educational tracks are available in upper secondary, allowing appropriate pathways to suit individual needs and abilities. Secondary schools have teachers with psychological training who support 'difficult' students. A nationwide study on conditions and factors of absenteeism, disengagement and early school leaving is being conducted. Nationwide study on students' well-being (replication of a study completed in 1994).	Specific schools or school projects, which aim to encourage truanting students (who have not finished compulsory education) back to school. Most of these initiatives offer alternative forms of teaching together with strong psychological and social support/control.	New legislation allowing students up to the age of 18 to achieve the minimum graduation (Hauptschulabschluss) in a 10th or possibly 11th school year, although the minimal graduation should have been achieved with the end of compulsory schooling after the 9th school year (this is currently being evaluated). There are other opportunities to graduate in different private and public institutions. There are financial incentives and other measures at national level to offer places for vocational training/apprenticeship to young people with special needs (e.g. disabled young people or those who have not graduated).

Matrix 2   **Key factors in successfully addressing disengagement cont.**

	Preventative: small scale/ local	Preventative: large scale/ national	Curative: small scale/local	Curative: large scale/ national
England	Multi-agency partnerships.	Providing a more flexible curriculum [14–19] with opportunities for alternative and vocational accreditation.	Access to sustained support, financial and advisory, from LEA and other local agencies.	Providing a more flexible curriculum [14–19] with opportunities for alternative and vocational accreditation.
	Mentoring of young people by trusted adults.	Individualised learning pathways.	Ongoing training for teachers/providers.	Consistent and sustained central funding.
	Active involvement of pupils and parents.	Opportunities for educational continuity and progression for those who may be out of mainstream education for a period of time.		Reliable data.
	Good pastoral care in school and/or college settings.	Extended schools/schools as community-based organisations.		
		2004 Children's Act places a duty on agencies to work together to deliver common outcomes and creates a statutory basis for partnership working (including both the voluntary and community sector).		
Flanders	Time-out projects.	'Laboratory schools' trying out strategies to bridge the gap between general secondary education, technical secondary education and vocational secondary education.	None identified.	None identified.
Hungary	Extra learning support in a more learner friendly environment.	MAG project ('preventing, adapting, caring'): primary school intervention on tri-level at the same time (classroom–school–LEA).	Different programmes to provide 'second chance' for those who dropped out from schooling.	FAK project ('training integrated into employment') for Roma youngsters providing employment opportunities connected with finishing upper secondary education and vocational qualifications.
	School psychologist, speech therapist, school social worker, remedial teachers.	Roma Integration Programme.	Remedial teaching.	
	Collaboration between secondary and their feeder general schools to identify and retain 'at-risk' students.	District-level counselling service.		

Matrix 2　**Key factors in successfully addressing disengagement** *cont.*

	Preventative: small scale/ local	Preventative: large scale/ national	Curative: small scale/local	Curative: large scale/ national
Netherlands	Emphasis on maintaining compulsory education, registration, educational ID, care-structures (school-internal tuned to external networks), vocational training and continuous learning through the several educational levels. 'Vmbo-mbo': each pupil in the right place at the right level': attractive education, reinforcing both intake and career orientation, and a transparent accreditation and qualification structure. Education system and education-care structure with the following features: – qualitative venerable education and a flexible curriculum – positive school climate with clear rules – teachers are competent in pupil coaching and pupil care – qualitative and venerable internal care structure aimed at observation, prevention, support and referral – sufficient accessible provision for special education. The last few years have seen a shift in thinking with greater inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream education. National developments have included: WSNS: 'Together to school again' and WEC/LGF: legislation of special needs education. The KANS project ('Time out' project: Children differently to school') aims to prevent primary pupils with severe behavioural difficulties from dropping out of education or being moved to special schools.		After early school drop-out, bringing students back into education or labour-oriented learning. Provision for those who are not going to school: – temporary time-out provision – more long-term provision aimed at re-engaging students and providing opportunities for accreditation.	
Norway	Providing breakfast clubs. Using different ways of supporting pupils who live in lodgings. Registration of absence as background for contact with parents and for different action programmes. Small classes with job training and school for 16–19 year-old immigrants with no formal education. Mother tongue teacher coaching. Building inclusive school cultures.	Strengthening counselling and career guidance competencies for school counsellors and contact-teachers. Providing a more differentiated curriculum with opportunities for alternative learning arenas, in cooperation between the school and working life. Competency on a lower level than full-scale apprenticeship. Strengthening transition between the school levels and cooperation between the school and different bodies out of school.	Local operating arenas for the different social partners involved. Job rotation programmes. Alternative learning arenas. Career guidance.	A separate follow-up service provided by the county council, working with students who have dropped out and offering them action plans to get back on track. Strengthening the cooperation between different bodies in the community who are supposed to deal with the target group. Placements and combinations of school education and enterprise training. The 'school gate' must be kept open.

Matrix 2   **Key factors in successfully addressing disengagement cont.**

	Preventative: small scale/ local	Preventative: large scale/ national	Curative: small scale/local	Curative: large scale/ national
Spain	Programmes for the prevention, monitoring, and control of school absenteeism. Social Services support.	Curricular diversification programmes. Career counsellors. Community Services Technical Teachers. Reinforcement measures.	Programmes for the prevention, monitoring, and control of school absenteeism. Social guarantee programmes (only implementation of both Training and Employment, and Professional Workshops modalities).	Shared schooling units, education remedial classrooms or curricular adaptation classrooms [14–16], with an adapted curriculum, of a generalised nature and practical application for the re-adaptation of the student to the ordinary school environment and to the achievement of skills which facilitate social and working integration. Adult education programmes. Social guarantee programmes.
Switzerland	More school autonomy, including introduction of headmasters. School social work in an increasing number of schools in cities, suburbs and surroundings areas. QUIMS: Project for more 'Quality In Multicultural Schools'.	TREE: Longitudinal research project on 'Transition from compulsory school to professional life' (N=5000, 15–22 year olds) Manual for intervention and prevention in social and individual life in schools. Radix: Swiss network of health-promoting schools; schools working according to the principles of the Ottawa Charter on Health-Promotion: participation, self-determined action, equity and sustainability. More curricular orientation on individual and vocational needs in the last compulsory class (9th grade).	New supporting resources in case of crisis such as trouble-shooters for schools and classes, mediation, school social work, intervention-group.	'Bridge-Projects' in the 10th school year and other opportunities to facilitate the transition to professional life for low-achievers and the disengaged. 'Time-out' interventions in an increasing number of cantons: disaffected and disengaged students are excluded from school for up to three months to work with professionals and be coached by special educators.

Matrix 2   **Key factors in successfully addressing disengagement *cont*.**

	Preventative: small scale/ local	Preventative: large scale/ national	Curative: small scale/local	Curative: large scale/ national
Wales	Local response to identified local needs. Using resources of local community. Appointment of committed, energetic coordinators with time to fulfil responsibilities. Multi-agency partnerships. Mentoring of young people by trusted adults. Active involvement of pupils and parents. Good pastoral care from learning providers.	Providing more flexible curriculum (14-19) to include academic and vocational accreditation and possibility of individualised learning. Opportunities for educational continuity and progression for those who may be out of mainstream education for a period of time.	Access to sustained support, financial and advisory, from LEA and other local agencies. Local awareness and implementation of current national initiatives. Ongoing training for teachers/providers via LEA or other local agencies.	Continued work on 14–19 Pathways Guidance. Continued development of Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification currently available at Intermediate and Advanced level. Foundation level proposal in preparation. Consistent and sustained central funding. Reliable data.

Participants highlighted that most secondary schools are revising the curriculum for 14–16 year olds to make it more relevant to the needs and interests of disengaged pupils, or those at risk of disengagement. The strategies implemented are designed to improve attendance and attainment and to support progression to the next stage of education and training. School-based initiatives may include those highlighted above, as well as work focusing on raising the achievement of particular groups, such as boys or those from particular minority ethnic groups. Work-based learning and opportunities to follow vocational courses may also provide opportunities to engage or re-engage students. In England, both the Tomlinson Report (Working Group on 14–19 Reform, 2004) and the recently published White Paper (GB. Parliament. HoC, 2005) looking at the reform of the 14–19 curriculum to tackle low post-16 participation, low levels of basic skills and poor vocational opportunities, stress the importance of individualised learning.

Vocational opportunities in the UK have often been seen as the 'solution' to young people's disengagement. However, there does appear to be a vocational/academic divide. If the curriculum is not working, then young people may be offered a 'vocational' alternative when perhaps there should be a greater focus on teaching and learning styles; there are opportunities to teach some 'academic' courses in a more applied way. In addition, in the UK in particular, vocational courses may be viewed as having less value than academic courses and, therefore, there may be a need to focus on developing 'professional skills'. This is not the case where vocational education is fully integrated into the education system. Vocational education helps re-engage students as learning becomes relevant and motivating – courses away from school, smaller group sizes and on a one to one basis. However, where there is a dual system of academic/vocational, there is a danger that vocational education has lower status (certainly in England and Norway there is that link). Norway has more drop-outs from vocational schools because students do not necessarily choose to attend such schools, whereas in Austria, Spain and Switzerland, vocational education has a much higher status and is fully integrated into enterprise and life.

In a number of the participating countries, temporary, 'time-out' provision, both within and out of school, were interventions used with disengaged students, or those at risk of disengagement. These were known as 'time-out' provision in Flanders, Netherlands and Switzerland (temporary exclusion), as 'shared schooling units' in Spain and Learning Support Units (in school) and Pupil Referral Units (out of school) in England. This provision was usually small-scale, with a focus on addressing behaviour, social skills etc., as well as providing a range of relevant learning opportunities. Examples of time-out provision in Flanders, Switzerland and the Netherlands follow.

Box 8 **'Time out' projects, Flanders**

These projects are running from 2001 to 2006 and are supported by the Ministries of Education and Welfare. They aim to prevent students dropping out of school and permanent exclusion. They focus on giving students who are experiencing difficulties in school 'time out' (a maximum of eight weeks) to receive intensive individualised support and guidance, with the aim of reintegrating them back into school. Schools also receive support on how to manage students' behaviour. Projects were set up in four cities in Flanders in

2001. In the first 21 months, 173 people aged 12–18 had been involved, with the majority being 15 years old. In total, 67 per cent had repeated their school year and 85 per cent had changed schools, with 33 per cent attending five or six different schools. The main reason for attending the project was because of behavioural difficulties (56 per cent). Other reasons given included truancy (48 per cent), disengagement and psychological problems (31 per cent), delinquency (17 per cent) and physical violence (6 per cent). The students attended the projects for between 24 and 56 days. The projects focus on providing individualised programmes with individual and group activities in the following phases:

1. 'Getting acquainted' building confidence and self-esteem, working with peers etc.
2. Individualised training with a focus on the specific needs of each youngster, including the 'deconstruction' of negative patterns of behaviour and building positive patterns of behaviour, taking responsibility for their own actions, dealing with peer group pressure etc.
3. Re-orientation to mainstream education.

Evaluation

The objective to assist schools with developing preventative strategies regarding behaviour had not been achieved at the time of this publication. The impact of the overall programme is still being evaluated and should be finalised in 2005.

Reference/contact

Vettenburg, Nicole and Vandewiele, Bea (2004). Time-outprojecten met schoolvervangende programma's. Beschrijving van een experiment 2001–2003 (Time out projects with school substituting programmes. Description of an experiment 2001–2003). Brussels, Koning Boudewijnstichting, 2004. Available at www.kbs-frb.be [free download]. Contact Nicole Vettenburg, Department of Social Welfare Studies, University of Ghent at: Nicole.vettenburg@ugent.be

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Box 9 **'Time out' projects, Switzerland**

Time out projects have been set up in nine Swiss cantons. The first were introduced in 2001 and last a maximum of 12 weeks. The students attend projects which provide educational and pastoral support from craftsmen, social workers and/or special educators. The aim of the projects is to reintegrate young people back into school, either their existing school, or a new school.

Evaluation

The retrospective evaluation of 16 cases (two girls and 14 boys) found an unexpected main effect: the measure of 'time-out' relieves the other students and the teachers far more than helping the disengaged student. For many of the students excluded for some weeks, this was a definite exclusion. One of the causes of this effect is seen in the fact, that 'time out' is defined as the last of a series of curative treatments and usually imposed in the last year of compulsory school.

Reference/contact

Hascher, Tina; Knauss, Christine; Hersberger, Kathrin. Retrospektive Evaluation der Massnahme «Unterrichtsausschluss gemäss Art. 28 VSG». (Retrospective evaluation of the policy 'lesson/school exclusion'). Bern: Universität Bern, Sekundarlehramt, FSF, o. J. (2005), 134 S (online). Available:http://www.kl.unibe.ch/kl/sla/fsf/retrospektive_evaluation.html. email: hascher@sis.unibe.ch

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Box 10 **KANS 'Time out' project, (Children differently to school), Netherlands**

Type of 'time out project' (in the Den Bosch municipality) focused on preventative work at the primary level with pupils aged 8–10 with severe behavioural problems who are in danger of dropping out or being moved to a special school. The aim is to provide an integrated multi-agency approach to providing support with a change in strategy focus from 'bringing the pupils to the care' to 'bringing the care to the pupils'.

Pupils attend a small-scale facility out of school, which takes a maximum of 14 pupils. The project offers a programme of 48 morning sessions over a 12-week period. The rest of the time pupils attend their own school. Support is also provided to pupils' parents/guardians. The project also aims to help schools to develop their skills in working effectively with these pupils, e.g. by providing them with strategies to implement in the classroom. The project has a multi-disciplinary team made up of teachers, play therapists etc. Action plans are developed, home visits are made and there is a focus on regulating behaviour. Follow-up support is provided.

Evaluation

The project began in September 2004; results were not available at time of print.

Reference/contact

Jose Dankers, rederatief Samenwerkingsverband Weer Samen naer School, Postbus 104, 5240 AC Rosinden

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Alternative educational programmes, for example in college, may also provide opportunities for students' [re]-engagement with learning. Examples were provided of the provision of women-only courses at college in traditionally male occupations, twilight classes, and 'roll-on roll-off' programmes, with an emphasis on accrediting what students have learnt rather than what they have not. Participants from Wales and Norway highlighted the importance of locally devised solutions to disengagement. The PRIDE Project was an example of such a project in Wales (see Box 11). The 'Plan of Efforts' in Norway also allows for the provision of locally devised solutions (see Box 12).

Box 11 **The PRIDE project, Pembrokeshire, Wales**

Pembrokeshire is an area in south west Wales with pockets of deprivation, high rates of unemployment and significant social problems.

The PRIDE project provides an alternative and vocational curriculum for 14–16 year olds offering a range of learning and training opportunities. It is an individually tailored programme with a flexible timetable based both in and outside of school. The programme runs for two years starting in Year 10 when students are 14 years old. Training organisations, providers and an FE college provide a range of vocational activities. Students are released from school for one to two days a week. five schools are involved, along with the behaviour support service who provide education for students out of school (these students will attend five days a week). The programme runs for 40 weeks in Years 10 and 11.

The programmes are made up of:
- personal development programmes, e.g. personal and social skills development, outdoor activities and sport
- vocational work-related training (organised by the local authority)
- vocational skills development (organised by the local college and training providers) e.g. hairdressing, engineering, construction, drama, catering, carpentry, motor vehicle, sport, animal care, ICT. In the first year students experience a range of taster courses and in the second year they specialise in one area.

Activities also include basic and key skills development with opportunities for accreditation, e.g. skills for working life and life skills. A wide range of agencies are involved including the army, the police, careers, voluntary and charitable organisations etc. Quality issues have been raised regarding the huge range of providers used.

Evaluation

Schools have reported an improvement in attendance and behaviour amongst students on the project and it has contributed to a reduction in the number of young people leaving school with no qualifications: 90 per cent of students achieved a minimum of 1 GCSE. The project has highlighted the importance of tailoring programmes to suit local contexts and needs and the need for an active, involved coordinator to determine success. It is also important that students achieve some form of accreditation as this is seen as important as a motivating factor. Close monitoring of attendance and support for students is required while they are out of school. The project provides learning support assistant (LSA) support for students whilst they are out of school.

Reference/contact
Adam Gent, PRIDE Vocational Coordinator

Box 12 Plan of efforts against drop-out in upper secondary, Norway

This intervention was funded under the Government's Poverty Action Plan. The intervention took a preventative and curative approach, i.e. trying to prevent drop-out, but for those who do drop out, providing advice and counselling to help reintegration into school or employment. A third aim of the intervention was to improve the collection of data in this area. The programme was piloted in four counties: Vest-Agder, Oslo, Sør-Trøndelag and finnmark in 2003 and extended to all counties in 2004–5. Two examples from the Plan of Efforts follow.

Joint measures forum (curative intervention)

This multi-agency forum aims to reintegrate students who have dropped out of school back to school or employment. It aims to develop networks and cooperative structures to assist the reintegration process. Agencies involved include: education, the police, health, the youth service and social services. The forum:

- provides opportunities for multi-agency cooperation and input
- allows for a swift response from the follow-up service
- allows for the provision of fast and effective solutions
- avoids duplication of work
- ensures agencies are working with the same aims.

The forum has regular participants, as well as those who are invited to contribute when their expertise is required. Young people are identified by the follow-up service and if they agree to be involved they receive counselling from this service, which also helps implement the agreed action plan. Their case then goes to the forum where targets and an action plan will be agreed. After the meeting a report outlining participants' roles and responsibilities, agreed timescales and targets is produced. The young person's action plan starts 'low and narrow' and is slowly built on from there.

The Transition Project (preventative intervention)

This intervention (run in one upper secondary school in Oslo) aims to prevent drop-out by providing at-risk students with a three week career-choice related course:

- concentrating on the pupils' future plans
- showing the pupils workplaces, occupations and possibilities
- trying out practical skills at school, e.g. woodwork
- making their own career plan.

The target group are young people in the 10th grade (14 years old) in different lower secondary schools who have attendance problems, are disengaged and are in danger of dropping out, thus it is focusing on improving transition from lower to upper secondary. Four to six young people are involved at a time. Career planning, collaboration and training for individual students are vital components. The intervention has been successful because it:

- gives them a break from their ordinary school days
- shows them new occupational possibilities and workplaces

- gives them a chance to experience and become familiar with a vocational upper secondary school
- gives them an opportunity to try out practical skills e.g. working with wood and large machinery
- raises their awareness of what they like to do and what they might want to do in the future, i.e. helps them set educational/vocational goals
- raises their awareness of what they have to do to achieve those goals.

Evaluation

NIBR Norsk Insitutt for By-og Regionforskning has evaluated the first year of the Plan of Efforts (Baklien *et al.*, 2004). The findings from the evaluation show that at an organisational level there must be 'local' solutions. Important challenges are how to find alternatives for those students who do not want to attend school and to improve multi-agency working. At an operational level the following interventions were found to be successful:

- strategies and interventions that prevent students making inappropriate choices regarding their education
- strategies and interventions that improve school life for those at risk of dropping out.

The evaluation found that the interventions would have been more effective if structural changes had been made in the education system.

Reference/contact

Bergljot Baklien, Christopher Bratt and Nora Gotass (2004). Anti-drop-out programme for upper secondary education: an evaluation. NIBR Report. Norway: NIBR.

Box 13 **MAG project ('preventing, adapting and caring'), Hungary**

This is a national preventative programme at the primary level, which aims to: 'develop schools as effective places to learn for all children' especially for socially excluded and 'at-risk' students. Thirteen schools in four districts in Hungary are involved in the project and six of these schools have a large percentage of Roma students who are integrated into the school. The programme has been established with the support of the Matra programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Matra is a wide-ranging programme of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs designed to promote social transformation in central and eastern Europe), in cooperation with APS International and OKI. It is a three-year project which began in the academic year 2003/04.

The concepts behind MAG focus on:

- adaptive education according to pupils' needs, focusing on autonomy, interaction, instruction and classroom management
- effective school improvement (the tri-level approach contributing to sustainability). It aims to improve students' learning and resources, and

to develop an improvement culture with effective evaluation
- the need to describe/explain teachers' behaviour
- horizontal learning, networking, participants coming together in schools, at a district, regional and national level.

Adaptive education focuses on the needs of pupils, teachers and schools at three levels: the classroom level focusing on pupils; the school level focusing on teachers; and local authority level focusing on changing schools. It is based on: relationships, i.e. the need to experience security and appreciation; competence, i.e. the need to have confidence and pleasure in your own abilities, to understand and to experience success; and autonomy, i.e. the need to be able to take the initiative, to have responsibility and to have influence. Teachers/headteachers and LEAs have to provide support, challenge and trust (i.e. high expectations) for pupils/school staff and school managers. It is important that class teachers, headteachers and local education officers work together to develop the work.

Evaluation

The project has introduced a new working model for: school-based INSET (moved from individualised training, to school-based training); school development and education development/reform at a national level.

Reference/contact

Further information about the MAG project available at:
http://www.oki.hu/mag.php?lang=en

Box 14 **FAK project (training integrated into employment), Hungary**

This is an OKI initiative with the support of the National Employment Fund and Ministry of Education. The FAK project is a national curative programme at the secondary level for Roma students who have not achieved secondary school certification. It provides them with an opportunity to achieve secondary school certification (A level), along with a vocational qualification, whilst employing them in primary schools. The expectation is that students complete their secondary education and they in turn are employed as educational assistants. Primary schools have a free teaching assistant and in return they provide learning mentors and other resources to help the students with their studying, preparation of learning plans etc. OKI provides training and support materials for all the participants involved. The project began in January 2004 with 50 Roma students and it now has 150. Participants applied to participate in the programme and schools submitted proposals jointly with the Roma students (aged 18–35). Students have to take an examination at the end of each year.

Evaluation

It has provided the students with long-term employment and also helped develop communication and relationships between the Roma and non-Roma population, e.g. addressing issues of non-attendance and other preventative

measures. It is particularly important that the Roma students are working with teachers as colleagues and vice versa, which has led to a reduction in prejudice and discrimination. The intervention has also helped make mainstream institutions more flexible in meeting the needs of these young people, e.g. by providing flexible examination opportunities, and has given school staff opportunities to develop their own mentoring skills and put personalised learning into practice. Currently there are very few Roma teachers in education in Hungary; it is hoped that this intervention will help increase those numbers and that inter-generational benefits of this project will be seen.

Reference/contact

OKI (National Institute of Public Education) (2003). Integration vs. Segregation: Hungarian Roma Education Policy Note. Budapest, Hungary: National Institute of Public Education. Online available at: http://www.oki.hu/publication.php?kod=integration

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Box 15 **Neighbourhood Support Fund, England**

This was a programme with both preventative and curative elements, which focused on young people aged 13 to 19 in the 40 most deprived areas of England. The programme funded over 660 projects (local voluntary and community-based organisations) whose main aim was re-engagement back into the system. The projects worked with 40,000 young people who had the following characteristics: low levels of educational achievement, long-term non-attenders/truants, young offenders, excluded and those with SEN. A high proportion also had bereavement issues that had not been addressed.

Evaluation

NFER collected data on 40,000 young people and also carried out a qualitative analysis of 101 young people and 39 project staff.

Success factors focused on the following.

• Management and funding: flexible funding not through statutory bodies, so projects could respond to local requirements and funding was not tied to positive outcomes. Funding went to local community organisations who had credibility on the ground.

• Engaging young people: establishing credibility with the young people was very important, e.g. youth workers had knowledge of, and were part of, the community. Also the projects were seen as non-judgemental and confidential, providing interesting and relevant activities and crucially were seen as different from school.

• Sustaining engagement: ensuring that young people were given choices and were involved in the decision-making process helped to ensure their involvement. The content of programmes was relevant and flexible and the programmes were delivered appropriately.

• Project staff: were critical to successful intervention, they established relationships of trust and mutual respect with clear boundaries on what

was, and what was not, acceptable. They also had an understanding of the young people's community.

- Progression: interventions worked with other agencies, such as, voluntary agencies, the youth service, social services, health and housing organisations, to ensure positive progression and two-thirds of young people had positive transitions to further learning, training or employment. Interventions also provided post-transition support.

Reference/contact

Sarah Golden, NFER: s.golden@nfer.ac.uk. Golden, S. Speilhofer, T. Sims, D. and O'Donnell, L. (2004). *Supporting the Hardest-to-reach Young People: the Contribution of the Neighbourhood Support Fund.* (DfES Research Report 535). London: DfES. Available online at: www.dfespublications.gov.uk

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Box 16 **Job Colleg, Austria**

Job Colleg aims to retain young people in education post compulsory school age (i.e. 10th year plus). It is based at the 'polytechnische Schule' pre-vocational year. It aims to provide young people who do not want to continue with education with better qualifications for the labour market. The intervention aims to:

- facilitate entry into the labour market
- prevent social exclusion
- find a job for apprentice training (young people can only enter vocational school if they have a job for apprentice training so it is important that they can access this)
- provide basic competences for working life
- increase qualifications for the labour market.

Key features of Job Colleg include:

- an alternative, flexible and modular curriculum based on the needs of the students and the region
- work-related learning (professionals invited to school and students sent to companies)
- cross-curricular teaching (non-timetabled complete projects focusing on cross-curricular themes)
- professionals/experts from local companies
- increased out-of-school (workplace) practices
- job application training/tutoring (an important part of the project)
- certificates for skills acquired during the programme (accreditation)
- flexible exit from the programme (students do not have to stay the whole school year if they find a job and can start apprenticeship training).

Evaluation

Began September 2004, no evaluation data available at time of print.

Reference/contact

ZSE (Zentrum für Schulentwicklung)

Mentoring has also proved a successful strategy for re-engaging young people in learning and has been found to have a positive impact on young people's attendance, behaviour, self-esteem and progress (Haywood, 2001; Shiner *et al.*, 2004). Mentors might be school staff, peers, community mentors or members of the business community. In Flanders, 'experts by experience' (young people who have had experienced similar problems in their own school careers to disengaged students) have been used as mentors and counsellors when conflicts between pupils and teachers occur. They are often from the same ethnic community as the disengaged young person so are able to share experiences of racism, language and culture.

It was suggested that there needs to be an emphasis on the tutor–teacher role [i.e. relationships] in finding solutions. It is important that there is sufficient flexibility and diversification in the curriculum to respond to the varied needs of young people, particularly those who are struggling or lack motivation. This is particularly important at 14–16 and in adult education. In Spain, there are now a range of 'Social Guarantee' programmes, which provide vocational education and training for those pupils over 16 who do not achieve the ESO leaving certificate at the end of compulsory schooling. In addition, England appears to be moving more towards this 'catch-up' model, given the remit of the 14–19 White Paper (GB. Parliament. HoC, 2005) and curriculum review at key stage 3. The aim is to integrate young people into the labour market or for them to continue their studies. Similarly in Austria, there are now opportunities for those who have not completed lower secondary school to access funding to complete this stage of their education. Also in Austria, a new competence-based curriculum has been developed for lower secondary to make learning more attractive with:

- core and add-on content
- pupil orientation (to use pupil-oriented methods, e.g. self-regulated learning) and streaming (although there has been parental opposition within some schools)
- cross-curricular approaches.

It was suggested that a key focus needs to be on initial teacher training and how well prepared teachers are to deal with the range of problems presented by the disengaged. In Spain, it was felt that initial teacher training was out of date on this issue, and that many teachers did not have the skills to cope with the challenges with which they were presented. The challenges for teachers in acquiring the skills to work with disengaged youngsters was highlighted by representatives from Spain, Norway and Hungary. For example, in Spain, teachers are trained in academic subjects but receive little training on working with different cultures, so there is a need to focus on developing competence-based skills in this area.

In Switzerland and Norway the benefits of smaller school communities and multi-age classes were emphasised. Similarly in England, the QCA has recently completed research with young people on apprenticeship schemes who had been excluded from school or were school refusers. All the young people in the research had enjoyed their primary school and their college experiences, but none of them had liked secondary school. They felt that their secondary schools had labelled them (and their families) as a 'problem' and as low achievers, whereas at college they were able to choose a level of accreditation that reflected their ability. These findings reiterated previous work

completed by NFER (Kinder *et al.*, 1999), which looked at the experiences of 50 disengaged young people in Merseyside, who similarly highlighted their primary school experiences as a 'golden age' in their educational careers and felt that secondary schools had labelled them and their families as 'problematic'.

5.3 Some research findings

The following section provides a brief overview of some of the research findings focusing on re-engaging students.

5.3.1 Key factors in re-engaging students

Box 17 **Key factors in re-engaging students: The Netherlands**

The following factors were identified as key in successfully re-engaging students in learning in the Netherlands:

- swift identification of need
- multi-disciplinary teams with 'good synergy'
- continuous learner support
- work-related learning
- competent professionals
- willingness of those involved.

In addition the following policy/structural factors were identified as helping preventing disengagement in Switzerland (Steedman and Stoney, 2004):

- the system maximises success rather than failure
- there are safety nets in the system at different stages
- no choices need to be made by students before they are able to make them
- training and qualification routes are clear, widely understood and available to most students
- children begin school relatively late
- for those students who do not attend the academic secondary schools there is a more sheltered learning environment (the same classroom and a small number of teachers) and a focus on small learning steps.

Pupil noted success factors: the Netherlands

- Positive school ethos: respect, valuing pupils' opinions, control over their learning
- empowerment
- personal attention and involvement
- small-scale provision
- information on study and employment options
- support, e.g. via mentoring (peer and adult)
- a tailor-made (individualised) curriculum
- a supportive pastoral system.

Many of the above factors were also highlighted by pupils in Kinder *et al.*'s (1996) study, particularly in relation to respect, valuing pupils' opinions and control over their learning.

5.3.2 Key elements of repair: England

By way of conclusion, the following section presents a synthesis of the solutions by presenting examples from England.

Box 18 **Key 'elements of repair'**

The following three elements of repair (Kinder and Wilkin, 1998) may be seen as effectively addressing disaffection.

- **The opportunity to establish positive personal relationships with an adult** who can represent and model pro-social values, and offer 'respect' to the young person.
- **The opportunity to achieve academic/vocational success**, which offers a sense of coherence and progression for the youngster's career and learning pathway.
- **The opportunity to appreciate constructive leisure activity**, which provides a sense of enjoyment, personal achievement and self-worth.

Rectifying these deficits in young people's lives appears to turn disengagement around. Kinder and Wilkin (1998) note that in order to construct effective strategies for disengaged students these three elements appear to be the basic tools of repair, with some adjustment or varying emphasis to suit particular cases of disengagement. This calibration of these elements to meet the difficulties of each individual was a key finding of the research.

5.3.3 Key strategies for supporting disengaged students

Box 19 Looking across the literature (Kendall *et al.*, 2004) some common themes and issues have been identified by staff working with disengaged students as key to providing effective support:

- a need to identify the client group
- communication and data sharing between agencies and clarification of roles and responsibilities
- other agency support and multi-agency partnerships, e.g. school social workers
- the role of the key worker/designated teacher, mentor, counsellor or advocate
- flexibility of schools and the curriculum
- active involvement of pupils and parents
- training and development.

A need to identify the client group

For some vulnerable young people, for example young carers, asylum seekers and Gypsy/Traveller students, there may be a need for them to be identified as such, in order for suitable provision/support to be put in place. Identification and thus 'legitimisation' of the client group will increase the awareness of school staff and others working with these young people of the problems/issues

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the client group face. Raising awareness of the needs of vulnerable/disengaged students and the implications of their vulnerability should aid the provision of suitable support strategies and improve the understanding of those professionals who may work with them. The need for raising awareness amongst school and service staff will have training implications.

Communication between agencies and clarification of roles and responsibilities

The literature highlights the need for the clear identification of roles and responsibilities between agencies working with disengaged/vulnerable children, and the need for clear communication, liaison and collaboration. Successful strategies include:

- information sharing and exchange (including the development of information-sharing protocols)
- detailed service-level agreements
- joint/aligned targets
- a common language/shared definition of 'need'
- common forms of assessment
- accurate assessment of need, which may include multi-agency strategies to support vulnerable children. All agencies working with vulnerable/disengaged students need to ensure that they are setting appropriate goals and monitoring their attainment and progress. In England, a system of 'provision mapping'[5] is proving successful in terms of supporting inclusion in school for pupils with SEN and other vulnerable young people.

Other agency support and multi-agency partnerships

Many vulnerable children and disengaged young people require a wide range of support to address their often complex needs. Accessing specialist support from other agencies, e.g. support for teenage parents from health and voluntary organisations, young carers' projects etc., may be both beneficial and necessary. There is a need for holistic (emotional and practical) support, in addition to education, if the engagement of some groups of vulnerable children is going to be successful and sustained. For example, in Switzerland increasing numbers of social workers have been employed as permanent members of school staff, and in England and Norway multi-agency forums have been successfully used to help reintegrate young people who have dropped out of school back into education, work or training.

Key worker/designated teacher

The use of key workers/designated teachers to support vulnerable/disengaged students is seen as a particularly successful strategy at both

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[5] Provision mapping is a way of documenting the range of support available to pupils (particularly those with SEN and other vulnerable pupils) within a school. It can be used to audit how well provision matches need and identify gaps in provision; assess school effectiveness when linked with outcomes for pupils; plan development to meet pupils' identified needs; demonstrate accountability; focus attention on whole-school issues of teaching and learning rather than on individual child issues; and record changes in provision and transfer easily, from class to class or school to school.

school and education authority/service level. These workers generally provide a wide range of individualised support including learning and language support, pastoral/social, behavioural and cultural support, as well as building relationships with other agencies. Reintegration officers have been successfully used to work with teenage parents providing practical and emotional support, as well as liaising with other agencies. In England schools are required to appoint a designated teacher who acts as a resource and advocate for looked-after students (in the care of social services) within the school. Home school liaison officers also provide important links in supporting attendance, raising attainment and the profile of education within Gypsy/Traveller and asylum seeker and refugee communities. Key workers play an important role in supporting looked-after children and young carers, and Connexions (careers) personal advisers take on this work with young offenders.

Flexibility of schools and the curriculum

Special features of flexibility might include individualised programmes, support units, flexible timetables and curriculum. In addition the ambience and ethos of such 'flexible' provision may also aid the participation/reintegration of vulnerable/disengaged students. It is recognised that flexible approaches to the curriculum might benefit all students, not just those who may be vulnerable to disengagement. The importance of maintaining educational continuity for mobile young people (asylum seekers, looked after children, Gypsy/Travellers) or those who may be out of mainstream education for a period of time (young offenders, teenage parents, school refusers, pupils with medical needs) is highlighted. Within the mainstream context, educational continuity may be assisted by clear admission and induction procedures ensuring that, for example, asylum seeker and Gypsy/Traveller students, or those reintegrating back into school after time out, are admitted as swiftly and effectively as possible. Specialist support units (both in and out of school) have been shown to effectively provide vulnerable students (e.g. teenage parents, school refusers, asylum seekers) with additional support to meet their often wide-ranging needs. Opportunities to implement flexible timetabling are also seen as aiding the reintegration of vulnerable pupils, e.g. school refusers and pupils with medical needs. Opportunities for flexibility in the curriculum (e.g. by providing vocational packages such as college or work experience placements), can aid the retention of pupils in school. For those out of school, packages of alternative accreditation, work-related learning and vocational opportunities and e-learning opportunities might be particularly beneficial.

Active involvement of pupils and parents

There is also recognition of the benefits of actively including the students and their parents in the provision of both education and other forms of support for vulnerable children. Research suggests that pupils and parents should be actively involved in setting targets and planning the provision put

in place for them. Similarly, for young offenders, parental involvement is often seen as key to the success of strategies put in place. The involvement of the community via the development of active home school liaison and employment of members of, for example, the asylum seeker or Gypsy/Traveller/Roma communities within school, is also seen as a particularly effective strategy in improving participation, retention and attainment. Informing vulnerable young people and their parents of their entitlements, access to opportunities and responsibilities is also seen as key to successful engagement.

Training and development

There is a need for training for staff to be able to respond to students' often complex needs and to be able to provide appropriate learning and pastoral support. Key workers may clearly require specialised training programmes.

6 Challenges to re-engaging disaffected students

One of the areas for exploration and expansion identified by the CIDREE group was to identify the challenges to effectively re-engaging disaffected students in education and learning. Some of these challenges have already been alluded to. The following provides a brief overview of some of the main challenges identified.

- Issues regarding effective multi-agency working were raised. The different agencies working with young people, for example education, the youth service and social services, are likely to have different aims and remits, with different cultures and professional languages. There is a need for agencies to develop a 'common language' and mutual understanding when working with disengaged young people or those at risk of becoming disengaged.

- A lack of holistic support for disengaged young people is often apparent and a fragmentation of provision with specific expertise was noted in the Netherlands. Frequently young people may have a number of different agencies working with them and their families, with no one agency taking overall responsibility. There is a need for 'one pupil, one plan'. A key challenge is to improve the cooperation of the agencies working with these groups of young people (at a meso-, macro-, and micro-level). In England, the 2004 Children Act (England and Wales Statutes, 2004), placed a duty on all agencies to work together to deliver common outcomes and created a statutory basis for partnership working and the involvement of all partners, including the voluntary and community sector.

- Different cultures of services may act as a barrier to providing holistic support.

- There is often a lack of robust evaluative data on interventions for disengaged young people, particularly in relation to impact, i.e. 'what works?' This was mentioned as an issue in a number of countries, including Hungary, Austria and the Netherlands. There was also felt to be a need to assess the impact of such interventions over a period of time.

- A lack of staff expertise in working with disengaged young people, e.g. in Spain and the Netherlands, was felt to be a key challenge that needs addressing.

- A lack of long-term funding for interventions working with disengaged young people, e.g. in England and Wales and the Netherlands, means that the sustainability and coherence of such interventions is challenged. This means that provision may develop on an ad hoc basis or that important learning regarding effective ways of working is lost. In Hungary there was concern that national initiatives 'belong' to the Government so that when the Government changes, so do the initiatives and there is very little focus on sustainability or embedding practice in schools.

- There is a need to ensure that 'alternative educational programmes' meet the needs of young people, rather than slotting them into programmes, i.e. adapting the provision to suit the needs of young people.

- Issues regarding the quality of alternative educational providers, e.g. in England and Wales, were also highlighted, along with the need to ensure that students were able to gain some form of formal accreditation when attending such interventions.

- Transport issues for students accessing alternative educational provision in rural areas, e.g. in Wales and Norway, were also raised as an issue.

7 Overview: key learning points

During the seminars, participants identified a number of common themes in relation to addressing issues of disengagement. They also highlighted areas of divergence, in terms of countries' experience of disengagement, which usually related to contextual factors. This paper concludes with a number of learning points identified by participants at the seminars.

7.1 Common factors identified by participants

- The development of individualised learning opportunities.
- Issues of sustainability regarding interventions supporting disengaged students.
- The need to provide teachers and other school staff with the skills to work with disengaged students.
- The need to provide holistic support for young people to effectively address their needs.
- The need to acknowledge how the educational structure/system may impact on disengagement, i.e. how issues of school 'choice' and selectivity and repeating year systems may result in disengagement.

7.2 Areas of divergence

- There was a perception that participating countries were experiencing different degrees of the problem and that for some it was a relatively new phenomenon.
- Participating countries had different degrees of segregation/integration within their schools systems, e.g. in relation to pupils with SEN and Roma pupils.
- There were variations in the extent to which vocational education was integrated with academic education within participating countries.
- There were variations in the degree to which formalised exclusion from school was used as a concept and strategy.

7.3 Learning points

Participants at the meetings identified the following learning points for education strategists, policy makers and practitioners. These could be divided into three areas/levels:

- national/systems awareness
- pupil level
- local level.

National/systems awareness

- The need to have an awareness of how educational structures impact on disaffection.
- The need for robust evaluative data on the impact of interventions addressing issues of student disengagement.

- The need to 'future proof' initiatives, i.e. to ensure that successful interventions are sustainable, despite policy or government changes etc.
- Interventions may need to be inter-generational at a range of different levels, i.e. pupil/school/local authority/regional and national level.
- The need to have reliable data on the extent of the problem at a national level.

Pupil level

- The importance of students being able to determine the pace of their learning allowing them to make choices when they are ready.
- The need for students not in school to have access to formal accreditation.
- The usefulness of 'time out' provision, e.g. for behaviour problems but also for new learning opportunities outside of school.
- The need for effective forms of guidance to ensure that students are making the right choices.
- The benefits of mentoring from both inside and outside the formal education system.
- The benefits of individualised learning routes with action plans for pupils and schools.
- The need to have a proper diagnosis of individual causes of disengagement, i.e. the tools for diagnosis.
- The importance of active parental involvement.

Local level

- The importance of local responses to local needs, e.g. using local community workers to provide support.
- The importance of multi-agency partnerships and the need for effective communication between agencies ensuring that the duplication of work is avoided.

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Useful websites

Austria

Zentrum für Schulentwicklung: http://www.zse1.at/

England

Government Department for Education and Skills (DfES): http://www.dfes.co.uk

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted): http://www.ofsted.gov.uk

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER): www.nfer.ac.uk

QCA: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority: www.qca.org.uk

Flanders

The King Baudouin Foundation. This is a public benefit foundation helping to improve people's living conditions. The Foundation has total annual expenditure of 39 million Euro; 84 per cent of which is allocated to projects: http://www.kbs-frb.be

Hungary

National Institute of Public Education (OKI): http://www.oki.hu/english.php

Netherlands

Dutch Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO): http://www.slo.nl/e22/Slo21/guest/000/000/000/001?iConId=0

Norway

The Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education: http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/

Spain

Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa (CIDE): http://www.mec.es/cide/

Switzerland

Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education: http://www.skbf-csre.ch/index_en.html

Wales

Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC): http://www.accac.org.uk

The Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales: http://www.estyn.gov.uk

The Welsh Assembly Government's Training and Education website: http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk

Welsh Baccalaureate: www.wbq.org.uk

Appendix A Strategies to address disengagement

Whole-school level			
	Attendence-related focus (monitoring and maintaining strategies)	**Non-curriculum-related focus (pupil behaviour, attitude, relationships strategies)**	**Curriculum-related focus (curriculum-adaptation strategies)**
Policies	**Attendance policy** • Dissemination to parents	**Behaviour policy** • Staff working parties on behaviour • Classroom management • Positive behaviour strategies • Codes of conduct • Pupil devised rules **Anti-bully policy** • Strategies • Infra-structure/procedures	**Differentiated learning policy** • Working parties • Resource development • Classroom-based research
Structures (organisation-timetable)	Registration by IT, e.g. BROMCOM, SIMS, SWIPE CARDS, analysis, checks, sweeps.	Increased form-tutor time, IT programmes to monitor behaviour and bullying.	Alternative vocational qualifications, e.g. RSA, GNVQ, Youth Awards, AB own-school certificates, achievement classes.
	Continuous day Reducing lunchtime disaffection, disruptive incidents, bullying (a more intense morning working period).		
	Breakfast club (8.00–8.40)	Lunchtime supervisor training. Behaviour targets for classes/individuals.	GCSE subject support club. Homework club. Tutorial support for numeracy and literacy.
		Withdrawal isolation units • Supervision by existing senior staff using class work • Pupil self-referral • Parental involvement/contact on entry	
Rewards and sanctions	**Records of achievement**		
	Certificate of attendance/prizes, vouchers, awards • Class • Individual • Certificates of punctuality	• Credits etc. • Certificates • Merits • Rewards such as mugs, pens, book tokens	
	Detention, exclusion on report, referrals		

Source: Kinder et al. 1995

School-based roles

	Attendence-related focus (monitoring and maintaining strategies)	Non-curriculum-related focus (pupil behaviour, attitude, relationships strategies)	Curriculum-related focus (curriculum-adaptation strategies)
New staff roles	**INSET provision**		
	IT system: installation Monitoring		
	Research on • Causes of attendance and behaviour problems, and patterns • Link between attendance, behaviour and achievement • Parent attitudes		
	• Counselling/buddying role (non teaching), e.g. EWA, school counsellor		• Negotiating reduced timetable
	• Additional office staff – first day telephone of absence	• School community education officer	
	Targeted pupil support (groups or individuals) • Group work on self-esteem cooperative/team building • Behaviour modification programmes • Mentoring and counselling • Transition/link teacher		**In-school** • Trips • Vocational initiatives, e.g. Junior Wheels **Extra-curricular**
	Dedicated staff in referred pupil supervision		• In class • In 'special units'
	Provision of parental support and networks		
	Liaison with primary feeders/induction work		
	Liaison with other community agencies		
Pupils' roles	**Peer minders** • Accompanying post-registration truants between lessons	**Peers** • Mentoring and mediation	**Peers** • Curriculum support

Source: Kinder et al. 1995

External support			
	Attendence-related focus (monitoring and maintaining strategies)	**Non-curriculum-related focus (pupil behaviour, attitude, relationships strategies)**	**Curriculum-related focus (curriculum-adaptation strategies)**
Community and other institutions	• Attendance hot-line • Pupil pass systems • Truancy watch	• Youth workers • Police • Community groups	• Work experience • Part-time college attendance
	Theatre in Education and other arts interventions		
Local authority provision	**Targeted pupil support in school** (groups or individuals) • Behaviour modification programmes • Self-esteem building • Cooperative/team building • Career and future planning (with curriculum support) • Training for staff		
	Focused off-site provision (full- or part-time) • Long-term non-attenders • Pupils with behavioural difficulties • Excluded pupils		
	Training about attendance and behaviour issues		Subject-specific support from advisors
	Extended schools • Siting other statutory and voluntary services (e.g. social workers, health workers, doctors, youth workers) at school, and offering community facilities (e.g. advice and drop-in centres, nurseries, banks/credit unions, adult learning opportunities on site)		

Source: Kinder et al. 1995

Other publications from NFER and CIDREE

The *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) meaures trends in children's reading literacy achievement and collects information about reading and literacy policies and teaching practices every five years in year 5.

Available for free at www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/international/progress -in-international-reading-and-literacy-study-pirls.cfm

The *Trends in Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) analyses trends in mathematics and science achievement in years 5 and 9 every four years. It enables researchers to collect extensive background information about the quantity, quality, and content of teaching that can be used to make comparisions between participating countries.

Available for free at www.nfer.ac.uk/timss2003

The integrated person: how curriculum development relates to new competencies. This CIDREE Yearbook 4 presents examples of emerging good practice on competency development from a selection of European countries. A highlight is the issue of quality assurance in an increasing policy environment, focused at deregulation and autonomy at the school level.

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Cross-curricular themes in secondary education. The first intention of this project was to bring together experiences from schools working with cross-curricular themes, by means of case studies. The second intention was to look for more information: since cross-curricular work has always been an under-theorised and under-researched issue, the project team wanted to identify the evolution in literature and research since 1998.

Available for free at www.cidree.org/toon/10/280

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Reclaiming those disengaged from education and learning: a European perspective

Young people's disengagement from education and learning is an issue of concern across Europe. Since the early 1990s, the National Foundation for Educational Research has been involved in research focusing on the reasons for, and possible solutions to, this problem. Nine members of the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe met to explore the issues of disengagement and discuss strategies that were seen as effective in addressing the problem, in a number of different European contexts. This book reports on the outcome of their meetings.

The discussion covers the contextual factors that affect disengagement, common factors that impact of the level of disengagement, and the preventative and curative initiatives and practices that are in place to address the problems.

Supported by a cross-national bibliography and full country-by-country comparison information, the report identifies a number of learning points at pupil, national and local levels, making it important reading for education strategists, policy makers and practitioners alike.