

Trends in early school leaving education essay

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As stated by the Joint Committee on Education and Skills (2010, p. 19), early school leaving in Ireland refers to leaving education prior to completing the Leaving Certificate or the equivalent. The Combat Poverty Agency (2001, p. 3) defines Early School Leaving as ‘ non participation in school before reaching the ages of 16 or before completion of the three years post-primary education, whichever that comes first’. However, Hannan, Hövels, Berg, and White, (1995, p. 326) argue that the common yardstick applied to determine early school leaving is the age on leaving full-time education, or the attainment of a ‘ basic’ level of qualification. Alternatively, the Department of Education and Science defines early school leavers as those who are following different pathways in schooling such as youth-reach, FAS programmes, including apprenticeship training and community training workshops, also those who set for leaving certificate at a non-recognised school (Byrne and Smith 2010, p. 3). Heid and Fischer (2012, p. 13) defined early school leaving from the European Union perspectives as ‘ those who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less and who are no longer in education and training’. Taking into consideration all the above definitions one thing remains clear, that if young people do not finish their primary or secondary school, they are categorised as early school leavers and many factors therefore account for the reasons why these young people fail to complete their school programmes before leaving school.

2. 3. Trends in Early School Leaving.

Although the number of Early School Leavers is reducing, a small percentage of young people still leave school each year before they achieve a recognised qualification (Lee 2008, cited in Conroy 2009, p. 5). This results in

huge economic consequences both at personal and societal degree for the early school leavers. Lally (2012, p. 3) tells us that in Ireland, retention in schools depends on their geographical location. For example, in 1999 Dublin city's rate of retention in post primary school was very low at 72% compared to County Leitrim which had the highest figure of 91. 2%. The differences in retention rate across the country points to the fact that the problem early school leaving needs more local and community interventions to enable maximum participation of young people in schools (Lally 2012, p. 3).

2. 3i. Disadvantaged areas

In relation to disadvantaged areas, Conroy (2009, p. 5) found that early school leaving is more common within disadvantaged areas, both in rural and the urban areas. The report further states that the way early school leavers are stigmatised academically in the society often leave them with literacy problems, lack of social skills, and difficulty in assessing training or employment. The person may suffer from long-term unemployment or low skilled employment due to not having a recognised qualification.

2. 3ii. Poverty

American Psychology Association (2012, p. 1) stated in their report that a strong link exists between poverty and high school dropout rates in America. That school children from lower socio-economic background families are more likely to drop out of high school five times more compared to school children from higher socio-economic background families in 2009 (APA 2012, p. 1). Interestingly, an Irish study by Healy, Mallon, Murphy and Reynolds, (2012, p. 182) made it clear that Socio-economic background is associated with early school leaving as a huge number of early school leavers come

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from low-skilled manual backgrounds. Also the relationship between employment opportunities and earning power are closely linked with the amount of education a person attains. Healy et al (2012, p. 182) went further to say that people with little or no qualifications are those who are mostly unemployed and when they are eventually employed, are less likely to be promoted in their jobs.

2. 3. iii. Demographics

In 2010, the rate of young people who left school in Ireland was 10. 5%. It is said to be decreasing compared to figures in 2002-2010 (Mallon and Healy 2012, p. 24). However, in 2002 14 % of young people left school and government's intention were to reduce it to 10. 5% by 2010. Although this is a good measure early school leaving is still remains a major problem in the country and the Irish government has engaged numerous policy directives to reduce the level of early school leaving to about 8% (Mallon and Healy 2012, p. 24). Considering an international perspective, research conducted by Ensminger, Lamkin, and Jacobson (1996) points to the fact that in the USA, male African Americans who are in high school in Chicago living in neighbourhood with just 40 per cent of all residents working in white collar jobs were three and half times more likely to drop out of high school (Ensminger, Lamkin, and Jacobson 1996; cited in Woolley, Grogan-Kaylor, Gilster, Kerb, Gant, Reischl, and Alaimo 2008, p. 135). Within the Irish context, the Lally (2012, p. 10) study shows that in 2008, just about 50% of Travellers young children finished their junior certificate and only 13% progressed to the senior cycle. The report also shows that people from the travelling community have the tendency of dropping out of school. However,

Travellers are not the only group in the country who leave school early. In the same report it was reported that asylum seekers and refugees who have dropped out of school in their own country due to war, conflict, and displacement and do not have good English language command are amongst those who leave school early because they find it difficult to integrate into the school system which sometimes may jeopardise their school completion (Lally 2012, p. 11). As far as gender is concerned, within the Irish context different studies have shown that boys are more likely to drop out of school before completion than girls (Audas and Willms, 2001 Battin-Pearson et al 2000 cited in Markussen Froseth Sandberg 2011, p. 227). However, the Barrington and Hendricks study of (1989) found no gender differences in relation to school completion and dropping out of school (Barrington and Hendricks, 1989; cited in Markussen et al 2011, p. 227). In the same light, Lally (2012, p. 9) argues that gender differences amongst early school leavers are obvious, they justified their arguments by stating that in 2008, 15% of men aged between 18-20 left school early in comparison with only 8% of female from the cohort. The study further observed that across the country there are twice as many male early school leavers as females (Lally 2012, p. 9).

2. 4. Causes of Early School Leaving

The reason (s) why young people leave school early are not straight forward due to multi-factorial reasons and comparisons are quite difficult. In this literature, the factors associated with young people leaving school early will be analysed.

2. 4. i. Predictors of early school leaving

In order to understand the causes of early school leaving, it is necessary to explore the explanations and interpretations of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological Theory of human development. According to Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bio-Ecological theory, a child's development has intimate connections with his / her social environment. As Woolley et al (2008, p. 134) explains that the proximal process, that is the social connectedness that supports the development of a child acts as a risk to positive as well as negative outcomes. For example, if a child lives in a neighbourhood that has lots of support available, it can act as a positive outcome for that particular person. In contrast, some risk factors such as if a child lives in a poor community with less economic resources available in the neighbourhood this will worsen the child's school and academic outcome (Richman, Bowen and Woolley, 2004; Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor, 2006; cited in Woolley et al 2008, p. 134). In other words collective socialization influences children's attitudes, social behaviours, and beliefs as they acquire these traits from the surroundings or neighbourhoods from which they reside such as schools, churches, and social gatherings. These social forces determine their school outcomes and become drivers or draw backs which influence their abilities to work hard or not to work hard, which influence their success in school. These social environmental forces are also conditioned by the presence of adults and parents within the environment in which the child lives (Jencks and Mayer 1990 Mayer and Jencks 1989 cited in Woolley et al 2008, p. 134). In promoting resilience in young children with regards to retention in school, any intended intervention must be within their families, school, communities, and the larger society (Grotberg 2003, p. 5).

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2. 3ii. Resilience Theory

Resilience Theory talks about the influence of a parent or caregiver in the life of a young person by helping them to cope with adversities, which suggest that adults can support their children to identify resilient behaviours more easily in themselves and others, such as using vocabulary to reinforce these feeling and beliefs to promote resilience and to guide their own children's behaviour. Therefore, the greater their opinion for acting in the way that helps children met situation such as crisis in their lives (Grotberg and John 1997, p. 26).

2. 4. iii. Deviance

Bradshaw, O'Brennan, and McNeely (2008), state that general deviance theory makes us believe that student who are somewhat involved with drugs, alcohol abuse, or other unacceptable behavioural norms tend to leave school early (Battin-Pearson et al 2000 cited in Bradshaw et al 2008, p. 21). Another theory that support this claim was by Gilmore Hawkins Day and Catalano 1992 cited in Bradshaw et al (2008, p. 21) which noted that deviant affiliation theory postulate the possibility of peers beliefs about school having impact on their academic achievement, and plays a part in their friends behaviour and attitude about school. This research will look at studies previously done nationally and internationally about the causes of and consequence of early school leaving; then extract the relevant literature needed in this case. However, it is very important to note that the causes of early school leaving are multi factorial. What seems to be the cause for one person might not be for another. For the purpose of the research, different

causes such as family background and economic factor will be explained drawing from different literatures available.

2. 5. Family background

Family structure has been identified by different literature as one of the reasons young people leave school early, especially lone parent, or step parent families (Ekstrom Goertz Pallack and Rock 1986 cited in Eiver Ryan and Brinkley 2000, p. 7). Interestingly, a number of researchers identified that less parental engagement and aspiration in their child's schooling, lack of appropriate supervision and tolerable parenting style links to early school leaving and underachievement by young people (Astone and McLanahan 1999 Runberger 19995 cited in Eiver et al 2000, p. 8). However, there have been a focus on the family and home environment regarding early school leaving, which suggest that in family socialization theory, student's academic achievement or underachievement in school can have a strong link with their home environment (Battin-Pearson et al 2000 cited Bradshaw et al 2008, p. 21). In saying this, there are other factors which can contribute to a student's reason of dropping out of school, such as parental divorce, family conflict, and losing a loved one can have an impact on child's behaviour both in and outside of school (Bradshaw et al 2003, p. 21). In addition, parent's level of education (literacy) and how they support their child's learning and involvement can negatively or positively affect the child's sense of school environment (Bradshaw et al 2003, p. 21). Other studies nationally and internationally have similar result which shows that there is a strong link between parental education and school completion (Beckhoven and Dekkers 2005 cited in McGarr 2010, p. 14). Also parent who are privileged to have

high economic status are said to have much higher level of education and usually more kin and involved in their children's education (Hango 2007 cited in McGarr 2010, p. 14). On the other hand, parent who attained lower level of education are less likely to care and encourage their children to achieve a better outcome in their education (Barnados, 2009; cited in McGarr 2010, p. 14). However, the Barnados (2006) studies show that youngsters particularly from the Travelling Community are more prone to dropping out of school and 80% of 12-15 year old Traveller children do not attend school in general (Barnados, 2006 cited in McGarr 2010, p. 15). Also that those who came from a family that do not speak English are more likely to drop out of school, but those who speak English are less likely to drop out (Marks 2007 cited McGarr 2010, p. 15).

2. 6. Economic factors

Several studies conducted in Ireland in the area of early school leaving over a period of 50 years strongly believe that there is a correlation between socio-economic factors and educational outcomes, as well as retaining young person in school, which propose that poverty and deprivation is situated at the centre of early school leaving (Greaney and Kellaghan 1984 cited in Joint Committee on Education and Skills 2010, p. 42-43). Egrees (2005) in his study concluded that 10 per cent of children in EU member state reside in families that are at the benchmark of poverty threshold (Egrees 2005 cited in Dale 2010, p. 18). Walther and Pohl (2005, p. 9) support this idea by stating that absolute poverty affects how most parents provide for their children. Meanwhile, relative poverty impact on their social connections, the status of employment and general wellbeing of young children and their families

(Walther and Pohl 2005, p. 9. cited in Dale 2010, p. 18). Therefore, social inequality is highly connected with early school leaving (Walther and Pohl 2005, p. 9 cited in Dale 2010, p. 18). They went further to explain other connections relative and absolute poverty has such as dangerous lifestyle, for example, substance abuse, criminality and in some cases leads to homelessness (Dale 2010, p. 18). There is a studied prove of less participation in school from young Irish children who came from poor homes according to the NESF report (1997). The report indicates that 85 per cent of early school leavers came from a family where one parent is out of job in comparison with less than 20 per cent of the total participants (NESF 1997 cited in Kritikos and Ching 2005, p. 79). Kritikos and Ching 2005, (p. 79) supports this idea by furthering this argument that in Estonia, poverty is the motive behind young people leaving school early. Also that young people who are homeless and not having any form of parental guidance are likely to quit school. Similarly in Travelling Community in Ireland, a study by Kritikos and Ching (2005, p. 79) shows that when young Travellers reaches the age of 15, 80 per cent of them will leave school. In saying this, only about 40 per cent of Traveller young children who are between 12-15 years, take part in any form of education. Although, there has been several supports system through the government in this regard for the Travelling Community, early school leaving is still a problem amongst them due to socio-economic disadvantage they face.

2. 7. Consequences of Early School Leaving

Various numbers of studies have studied the outcome of early school leaving regarding a range of later consequences in Ireland and other international

countries (Levin 2009 Smyth and McCoy 2009 cited in Byrne and Smyth 2010, p. 16). Interestingly, early school leavers in Ireland are most likely to face disadvantages in terms of accessing further education, greater employment, employment quality, and broader societal outcomes (Byrne and Smyth 2010, p. 16).

2. 7. i. Further education

Research done in Ireland has emphasised on the 'one way' method of the Irish educational system. According to the study, people who have completed their Leaving Certificate and with a higher grade will be more privileged to have access to furthering their education and progressing to higher education and training (Byrne et al 2009 cited in Byrne and Smyth 2010, p. 16). Interestingly, apprenticeship training a well-known entrance route for junior certificate holders; now attract a significant number of young men with Leaving Certificate Qualifications. Furthermore, there are other post leaving certificate training which is sponsored by the government (Byrne McCoy and Watson 2008, p. 31), such as youth reach programmes, FAS specific skill course, faite Ireland courses, nord isacaigh mhara (BIM), training in fishing and Teagasc certificate in farming. Moreover, there has been a wide range of activities in Netherland to develop the apprenticeship system, and early school leavers have been one of the new target group' for recruitment into the programme. These improvements are not just for early school leavers but in generally at those who have been in the labour market for some time (Hannan et al 1995, p. 339). However, similarly in the UK, an initiative was introduced in the late 1980s called Youth Training Scheme (now called Youth Training). After the introduction of the initiative it was

made possible that every early school leaver will be granted a place in the programme at their wish. The programme provided them with vocational and occupational training experience. A recent research shows that there was an increment on the early school leaver's qualification by one sixth since entering the programme (Hannan et al 1995, p. 339).

2. 7. ii. Unemployment

The labour market experience of early school leaver's research done in Ireland reveals that early school leavers are often confronted with difficulties in progressing to the world of workforce after leaving school (Breen, 1991, NESF, 1997 cited in Boldt Devin Devitt and Morgan 1998, p. 79). When it comes to comparison between early school leavers and unemployment in other countries, it shows that Ireland is not by any means different in this context, and shows some commonalities (OCED 1995 cited in Boldt et al 1998, p. 79). An interesting figure of 25. 2% of 18-24 year olds living in Ireland without job was revealed in this study while the rate for early school leaver was twice that number in 2009 (Healy et al 2012, p. 182). Therefore the greater possibility of unemployment linked to early school leaving pose the need to give greater focus to this issue (Healy et al 2012, p. 182). For example, Ireland, United Kingdom, and USA, early school leavers have unemployment figures which are quite higher compared in some other countries (OCED 1995 cited in Boldt et al 1998, p79). However, within the population between 25-34 years of age, the rate of unemployment was almost six times higher among those who are early school leavers. Moreover, in Switzerland, there seems to be no association between early school leaving and job prospect (Boldt et al p. 80).

2. 8. Preventative Measures to Tackle Early School Leaving in Ireland

A number of literatures have been written on preventative measures in place to tackle early school leaving, however, this study will focus on measures put in place by the Department of Education and Science. Measures put in place to tackle early school leaving operate at different level (Flemming and Murphy 2000, p. 16). For example, some of these programmes targets young people in different stages in the educational level, such as pre-school, primary or post primary. Some programme tend to focus on improvement of child's self-esteem, some towards developing some capacities in students themselves or the environment they live in. others work with parent directly to maximise their child's development (Flemming and Murphy 2000, p. 16). The establishment of scheme in disadvantaged areas in 1990 by the Department of Education and Science made provision for teaching post, home school and community liaison, and grant for general management and school/books (Flemming and Murphy 2000, p. 16). In recent times, the scheme had widened which include the following; home school and community liaison, early start programme, breaking the cycle, remedial teachers, 8-15 initiatives, stay in school initiatives, junior certificate school programme, youth encounter, and transition year (Flemming and Murphy 2000, p. 16).

2. 8. i. Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School (DEIS).

The DEIS action plan for social inclusion aim is that most educational needs of young children and young adult mostly in disadvantaged areas will be of paramount importance in terms of addressing their needs. Their plan

includes a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage by joining together couple of on-running programmes (Department of Education and Science 2005, p. 27). There is however large number of schools which are included in the new targeted School Support Programme (SSP), such as 600 schools comprising of 30 schools in rural area and 300 in urban area as well. Also included in this are 150 second level schools (DES 2005, P. 27). It also includes the promoting school attendance, retention of young pupil in school, and advancement are central to DEIS (Social Inclusion Unit 2009 cited in Conroy 2008, p. 25). To support this agreement, a statement was made by Professor Davies and John Lee (2008) stating that ' school need to be supported in ensuring that they provide a safe environment' (Conroy 2008, p. 25).

2. 8. ii. School Completion Programme

School completion is a Department of Education and Science initiative which aims at supporting pupil's retention both in primary and post-primary school and to complete their senior cycle or equivalent (DES 2005, p. 6). Their concept is based on integrated services. It is a project that was designed by the government to track and retain young people who have the tendency of leaving school early (Conroy 2008, p. 25). School completion programme however work collaboratively with families, communities, youth, and other sporting organisation to provide a stable environment for the at risk group (DES 2005, p. 6). When it comes to attendance tracking, school completion programme specifically target and track where possible those who have been identified by teachers or principles both in primary and post-primary schools, so they will not be discriminated, and offer some support to make

school more interesting for them (DES 2005, p. 8). The school completion programme offer other programmes such as homework club, after school club, breakfast club, transfer programme for the at risk group. Also out of school support programmes are available for those who have left school prior to completion of junior certificate or leaving certificate to encourage them return back to education (DES 2005, p. 13-24).

The following are the main features of the programme

To move the at risk group to the upper levels of education and supporting them as they progress. To provide more support both at primary and post-primary level as regards to tackling of educational disadvantage. To encourage young people who have left school to return back to education and providing them the necessary tools they need. To involve more on government policies regarding early school leaving in the education system (DES 2005, p. 6).

2. 8. iii. Home School Community Liaison

Home school community liaison is a government policy which was established in 1990 to promote the collaboration between teachers and parents. The aim in this regard is to promote the learning outcomes of those at risk of leaving school early and to keep them in the education system (Conaty 2005, p. 8). Again the policy supports the partnership between local communities. It works in two ways such as involving the school with the community and their counterparts where the young person lives, and involving the community and their counterparts in the school (Conaty 2005, p. 8). However, this policy place more emphasis in the influence adult figure has on the educational development of a young child (Conroy 2008, p. 27).
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The following are five aims of this policy

To support those who are marginalised especially those who are at risk of leaving school early. To promote a great rapport and consistency between homes, school, and community the child lives in promoting educational need of a child. Encourage parent to have an input in their child's educational attainment, and make them realise the importance of adult figure in young person's educational progress. Put all measures in place to retain young people in the educational system both at primary and post-primary, even in third level and pursue of lifelong learning if they wish. To carry out their duties by leading good example which will be reflected in the work they do to tackle early school leaving in the educational system (Conaty 2008, p. 8).

2. 8. iv. The National Education Welfare Board

The national education welfare board was established in 2002 under the Education Welfare Act, 2000. This is an advanced government policy which aims at encouraging highest level of attendance, participation, and retention of young people in school (NEWB 2012). NEWB has different projects linked with them such as SCP, HSCL, and Education Welfare Service (EWS) who work in partnership and harmony to ensure that a young person attain an exceptional educational outcome both in primary and post-primary school (NEWB 2012).

2. 8. v. Youthreach

Youtheach in Ireland is an integral part of government initiative programme that seek to give a second chance education and training to young people who left school uncompleted, and want to follow the pathway of life-long learning (Meierkord and Massimiliano 2012, p. 11). The youthreach <https://assignbuster.com/trends-in-early-school-leaving-education-essay/>

programme is geared towards the unemployed early school leavers aged 15-20. The programme offers the young people engaged in the programme a life time valuable opportunity to identify and pursue a meaningful life by providing them an opportunity to attain a certificate through the programme that will enable them move forward academically or get into workforce (Youthreach n. d.). The programme is funded by the exchequer under the National Development Plan (NDP) in Ireland and is run by two different departments namely; Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The training centre is circulated around 45 community training centre (Youthreach n. d.). However, participants aged 16-17 who are enrolled in this programme are paid a training allowance of €44 while those aged 18 years and over are paid €188. They might also be entitled to additional allowances for example, travel expenses, meal and are paid by VECs (Department of Education and Skills 2011, p. 22).