

**Cristina Anca COLIBABA**

Gr.T.Popa University of Medicine and Pharmacy

**Stefan COLIBABA**

Al.I.Cuza University, Iasi, Romania

**Cintia Lucia COLIBABA**

Universitatea de stiinte agricole si medicina veterinara Ion Ionescu dela Brad Iasi, Romania

**Ovidiu URSA**

Univ. de Medicina si Farmacie, Cluj-Napoca /QUEST Romania

# SCHOOL&WORK

## HOW TO HELP TEACHERS AND STUDENTS COPE WITH CHANGES

Case studies

---

### Keywords

*Competences*

*E-learning*

*Dropout*

---

### JEL Classification

X00

---

### Abstract

*The School&Work project (2014-1-UK01-KA204-000071), co-financed by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme, intends to capitalise the existing results of previous European projects addressing the early school leaving issue with a view to establish a more concrete and effective cooperation between schools and the world of work, which will enhance students' motivation to learn and complete their studies. The article introduces e-learning resources focusing on strategies teachers could use in order to help students unveil their interests and aptitudes. This will enable teachers plan and implement personalized educational paths and guidance services and valorize students' talents through curricular and extracurricular activities , which will motivate students to stay at school.*

## 1. Introduction and context

The current challenge of early school leaving is an important issue on the Europe 2020 Agenda. The document highlights that there is a close connection between early school leaving and unemployment by pointing out that 52% of early school leavers in the EU are either unemployed or outside labour market. Even when they work, they earn less, tend to be in more precarious jobs, and more often dependent on social assistance. They participate less in lifelong learning and re-training; it seems that this educational disadvantage can increase in time. It goes without saying that one of the targets on the Agenda tackles the issue of early school leavers, aiming at reducing the dropout rate to 10% from the current 15%, whilst increasing the share of the population aged 30-34 having completed tertiary education from 31% to at least 40% in 2020. (European Commission, *EUROPE 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, Brussels, 3.3.2010, COM(2010) 2020).

Many projects have been financed at European level in order to better understand the main causes of early school leaving, to prevent the phenomenon through appropriate measures and to train teachers, administrative staff and families on how to deal with students at risk. Within these initiatives one issue seems to be not fully explored: the role that Job orientation counseling services provided by schools can play in motivating students to stay at school and fulfill their educational and training path. Job orientation services and experiences are nowadays a widespread practice within schools, but they are mostly provided to students near the end of their secondary education studies or provided by external services once school is finished. Moreover, job orientation is perceived as the conclusion or the follow up of the study path at school.

## 2. Case studies – School&Work project

The aim of the School&Work project is to highlight specific professional and sectoral skills and competences companies and job market consider when recruiting staff resources; the project also holds that the qualifications and transversal knowledge needed to get a job can be achieved only by successfully completing one's educational process.

The School&Work project (2014-1-UK01-KA204-000071) is co-financed by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme and brings together 7 contractual partners based in 6 different European countries (Italy, Belgium, France, Lithuania, Romania and Spain).

The specific objectives of the School&Work project are to:

- provide school teachers and advisors/mentors/counselors with the necessary skills and tools for better understanding pupils' individual attitudes, interests and potential skills

they could make use of in their future career and valorize them in their learning process as a means to overcome pupils' demotivation.

- provide school teachers and advisors/mentors/ counsellors with the information related to the transversal skills that companies and recruiting services are looking for when selecting staff, in order to use them as a tool to motivate students at risk of early school leaving to continue their studies rather than drop out to follow the illusion of finding a job.

- Establish a direct cooperation between the world of work and schools and promote the importance of accomplishing school studies for acquiring the transversal skills needed to get a job.

## 3. Planned activities and expected results

Creation of a tool-kit for counsellors and teachers:

The project partners have developed a tool kit for school counsellors and teachers to design and implement personalized guidance services in order to motivate students at risk of early school leaving to complete their studies, by analyzing the personal attitudes of the student and whether they match with what is requested on the job market.

The tool-kit contains:

- Information on the transversal competences (literacy, ICT, numeracy, communication, entrepreneurial spirit etc.) that companies and recruiting services take into account to select staff resources. The information has been collected through a direct analysis of the job offers available on the market and through the submission of ad hoc questionnaires. The information collected has been organized and is available on the project portal.

- Tools to analyze and highlight students' attitudes, interests and skills in order to identify what their most appropriate professional career is and to develop personalized guidance service to motivate them to follow their educational path and proceed to the next level of education provided they have completed the previous level.

- Information about Crowdfunding initiatives and how to use them to motivate students.

E-learning package:

The project partners have created an e-learning based course for teachers and counsellors on how to deal with students at risk of early school leaving and motivate them to continue and complete their educational path at school, by identifying their attitudes and specific skills, and motivating them to study; the package highlights the importance of acquiring the transversal skills that are required by companies and recruiting services.

Testimonials from entrepreneurs and success people:

Project partners have collected videos of interviews with entrepreneurs and success people, focusing on the importance of not abandoning school too early. The interviews have been carried out by teachers and students with the support of the experts of the project partners.

#### **4. E-learning package**

To help teachers and students cope with changes, project partnership experts created an e-learning based course for teachers and counsellors on how to deal with students at risk of early school leaving and motivate them to continue and complete their educational path at school.

#### **4.1 Understanding students**

The module focuses on the psychological aspects to be addressed and taken into account in order to understand students' personal aptitudes and characteristics and identify those aspects that must be considered to personalize their education pathway towards the career and life style that might suit them best. The first chapter highlights the importance of understanding students during different school stages and provides teachers and counsellors with tools for effective coaching and counseling on career guidance as well as early school leaving prevention. The second chapter describes different roles that staff professionals play and the importance of their collaboration in providing career education and guidance services at school. Activities to be carried out by the staff at the beginning of the school are also pointed out in the second chapter. The third chapter highlights the effectiveness of tools to be used by teachers and counsellors in helping students to make the right decisions on their further education path. Psychological and assessment questionnaires, interactive wizard tests help counsellors to identify and highlight the students' interests and potentials in order to motivate them to stay at school and continue their educational pathway. Qualified counselling based on trust and cooperation helps enhance students' self-esteem and self-confidence, strengthens motivation to learn and leads to a successful choice of educational path. The fourth chapter focuses on the importance of the relation between school and the world of work for a student's career guidance and future life. School and work integration, collaboration among school staff and entrepreneurs is highly appreciated and needed and also important for a student's successful integration into the labour market. The chapter introduces real life cases of successful integration into the world of work in order to justify its point. The fifth chapter covers best practices, experiences and success stories related to career planning, guidance and counselling. Entrepreneurs, employees and successful people share their experience about their education and

career pathways. A collection of articles, surveys, video interviews, lectures, career development plans, best practices of teachers and counsellors, psychologists and other specialists, descriptions of successful career planning events, career guidance fairs, and successful projects related to career education are presented in this chapter (School&Work partnership, *Understanding pupils*).

#### **4.2 Capitalising on students' interests and skills**

The module focuses on how to unveil students' interests and aptitudes in order to plan and implement personalized educational paths and guidance services to valorize these talents through curricular and extracurricular activities, which could motivate students to stay at school. The first chapter of the second module defines interests, aptitudes and key competences as well as school autonomy and learning styles and highlights the role they have in students' performance. The second chapter enables teachers to recognise students' interests and skills by providing them with tools including useful information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities, and interests which can be associated with occupations/jobs. These tools are invaluable instruments enabling teachers to better understand students' individual attitudes, interests and potential skills and to valorise them in their learning process as a means of overcoming students' demotivation. The chapter also highlights the importance of parent involvement in children's development and success at school and in life. The third chapter focuses on teaching methods used to capitalize on students' interests and skills. The materials also offer examples of curricular and extracurricular activities, which are best means to stimulate students' interests and skills by helping students discover that the lessons they learned inside or outside the classroom can be related to future challenges at the workplace. The fourth chapter highly recommends that we create a culture of continued learning, which should be implemented in schools and where people see their learning journeys as a lifelong, expansive and evolving experience. The last chapter focuses on success stories, experiences and practices, which teachers can use with their students in classes. Such powerful examples are effective ways to improve learning and experience as students learn better from examples than from the logical development of a theory. They provide students with valuable lessons of life and examples to follow (School&Work partnership, *Capitalise on pupils interests and skills*).

#### **4.3 The world of work**

This module focuses on students' transition from school to work and on all tools and mechanisms available for young people to make a successful

and smooth transition from school to the world of work. Apart from this, the module also compiles information about the most demanded professional profiles within the job market as well as basic and transversal skills that companies and recruiting services take into consideration when selecting human resources. The first chapter concentrates on the relation between the school system and the labour market as well as skill mismatches. The second chapter compiles the figures within the school that help students to decide about their future. Chapter three is focused on different tools teachers can use to help students to build their professional profile before entering the labour market. The fourth chapter reflects the wide range of opportunities the European Union offers to young people when they have finished their school. And finally, the last chapter highlights great examples that teachers and school counselors can use with their students in order to motivate them to complete their studies [4].

#### 4.4 Innovative Entrepreneurial Experiences at Schools

Supporting entrepreneurship has never been as important as today. Enhancing entrepreneurship education in schools, vocational schools and universities will have a positive impact on entrepreneurial dynamism in our economies. Apart from its contribution to the creation of enterprises, including social enterprises, entrepreneurship education will increase young people's employability and will make them more "entrepreneurial" in their work and within existing organisations, in the social, public or private area". (Trainers' guide 2013). Entrepreneurship is one of the eight key competences of the European Lifelong Learning framework defined in 2006, and developing entrepreneurial competences is part of the measures initiated by the European Commission in "Rethinking Education" in 2012. The role of entrepreneurship as an instrument to improve employability levels is also emphasized in "Annual Growth Survey 2013". The first pillar of the action plan "Entrepreneurship 2020" proposed by the European Commission is to develop entrepreneurship education and training. Indeed, funding entrepreneurship education is one of the most profitable investments Europe can make. Surveys show that 15 to 20 % of the students who take part in a "junior achievement" programme ("creation and management of a small-sized company in a few months during the school year") during secondary school later create their own business; this is three to five times more than the rest of the population. Even if they set up a commercial or social enterprise afterwards, young people who have received entrepreneurial learning acquire knowledge about professions in companies as well as essential skills and competences, such as

creativity, initiative, tenacity, team work, understanding risks and a sense of responsibility. Thanks to this mindset entrepreneurs can turn ideas into actions and employability is increased. The "Innovative entrepreneurial experiences at school" module is part of this dynamics. It gives teachers, educators, guidance counselors etc. a lot of information on how to implement an enterprise project at school and what its benefits are. The module develops the necessary steps in creating an enterprise project at school, from teacher training to managing an enterprise and searching for funds such as crowd funding. It also offers teachers, educators, and guidance counsellors a series of best practices they can take inspiration from (School&Work partnership, *Innovative Entrepreneurial Experiences at Schools*).

#### 4.5 Mobility to Learn and Work

This module focuses on how schools can motivate students to complete their school path in order to be ready for the job market through the exploitation of opportunities to study, carry out voluntary service and work experience abroad making use of mobility funding and cooperation initiatives. The first chapter deals with general information about mobility, some statistics and European policies, goals and benchmarks on the topic. The second chapter presents the importance of mobility focusing on its impact on social life, intercultural understanding and transversal skills that can be acquired. Chapter 3 and 4 give new insights into the operative aspects of mobility opportunities for learning and working by providing the users with application forms and procedures to be followed. The last chapter is a collection of successful mobility stories of other students (School&Work partnership, *Mobility to Learn and Work*).

#### References

- [1] European Commission, *EUROPE 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, Brussels, 3.3.2010, COM(2010) 2020. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>
- [2] School&Work partnership, *Understanding pupils* Retrieved from <http://schoolandwork.pixel-online.org/training1.php>
- [3] School&Work partnership, *Capitalise on pupils interests and skills* Retrieved from <http://schoolandwork.pixel-online.org/training2.php>
- [4] School&Work partnership, *World of work* Retrieved from <http://schoolandwork.pixel-online.org/training3.php>

[5] School&Work partnership, *Innovative Entrepreneurial Experiences at Schools*

Retrieved from <http://schoolandwork.pixel-online.org/training4.php>

[6] School&Work partnership, *Mobility to Learn and Work*

Retrieved from <http://schoolandwork.pixel-online.org/training5.php>